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Editor's Report

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It is with great pleasure that we present the 22nd issue of Explorations, which brings together a diverse and rigorous collection of eleven research articles, one reflective essay, one scholarly conversation/interview, two memorial tributes, an appreciation piece, and two book reviews. This issue opens with a heartfelt letter by Prof. Dipti Ranjan Sahu on Prof. Abha Avasthi, the renowned feminist scholar and a towering figure of the Lucknow School of Sociology. The issue also features a compelling conversation between Prof S.M. Dahiwale and Dr Anurekha Chari Wagh, offering critical reflections on the state of Indian sociology, caste, and higher education. The issue engages with urgent and enduring themes in contemporary Indian sociology, including agrarian markets, gendered labour, educational exclusion, infrastructural violence, livelihood precarity, and the politics of knowledge production. The contributions in this volume draw on a range of epistemologies and methodologies from autoethnography and bibliometric analysis to ethnographic fieldwork, content analysis, and non-metric multidimensional scaling to critically examine the lived realities of marginalised communities and agrarian households across India. A reflective essay by Sonali Wakharde on virtual sociology opens new pathways for understanding digital inequality and online knowledge production, while two moving tributes to André Béteille and T. K. Oommen, both of whom passed away in early 2026, honour their foundational contributions to Indian sociology.

This issue of Explorations coheres around a central, recurring theme: the structural production of precarity and the everyday negotiations of dignity. Whether examining working women's double burden in Nagaland, night-shift security guards' fragmented sleep in Kolkata, transgender individuals' exclusion from livelihoods in Delhi, or tapioca farmers' reliance on middlemen in Tamil Nadu, the papers collectively demonstrate how caste, class, gender, institutional arrangements, and market asymmetries shape unequal access to resources, time, and social recognition.

Several contributions revisit and extend classical sociological frameworks. Pitheli K. Jimo re-examines Arlie Hochschild's concept of the 'second shift' through the lens of working women at Nagaland University, revealing how mom-guilt, time poverty, and lack of institutional support such as day-care facilities in remote locations exacerbate gendered inequalities. Her article also integrates Moser's triple role framework to capture women's

reproductive, productive, and community management roles, offering actionable policy recommendations. Neelima and Minaketan Behera foreground the vulnerabilities of transgender individuals in Delhi, documenting how family rejection, educational exclusion, police harassment, and the hierarchical gharana system push them into begging, badhai (greetings), and sex work. Their study powerfully demonstrates how systemic denial of rights produces livelihood precarity.

A second cluster of papers interrogates the paradoxes of India's developmental and educational policies. Lekha N. B., using an autoethnographic lens, unpacks the class and caste stigma attached to government schooling in Kerala. Despite the state's progressive SCERT curriculum, upper-middle-class families abandon public schools for private unaided institutions even when they follow the same syllabus, revealing how school choice becomes a performance of class distinction and caste anxiety. Aniruddha Naik analyses science textbooks in Odisha, showing that scientists are overwhelmingly portrayed as male, Western, and modern, with no female scientists and only one Indian scientist (S. N. Bose) mentioned across grades III to X. His study raises critical questions about how curricular content shapes students' aspirations and reproduces epistemic hierarchies.

Two papers examine the intersecting vulnerabilities of labour and infrastructure. Reeti Sarkar offers a novel sociological analysis of sleep among night-shift security guards in Kolkata's gated communities, arguing that fragmented rest is not merely a biological response but an embodied marker of class and informal work. Her concept of 'fragmented work, fragmented sleep' reveals how precarious employment conditions systematically infiltrate the most intimate aspects of workers' lives. Shougrakpam Utam Kumar Singh documents the impact of the Mapithel Dam on Tumukhong village in Manipur, showing how displacement, loss of fertile land, water scarcity, and the transformation of independent sand collectors into dependent wage labourers have eroded livelihoods, cultural practices, and psychological well-being.

This issue also features an important contribution to agrarian sociology. Lalith's article, "Farmers' Reliance on Middlemen: An Exploratory Study of the Tapioca Trade in Salem", adopts a mixed-methods framework using Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) and cluster analysis to examine why tapioca farmers in Tamil Nadu continue to rely on intermediaries despite the presence of processing cooperatives like Sagoserve. The paper offers a nuanced, transaction-cost-based understanding of middlemen's persistence in horticultural markets. It also provides actionable policy recommendations, including better price information systems, storage technologies, farmer-producer organisations, and rural infrastructure investments. This article advances the sociology of agrarian markets beyond the conventional exploitative versus functional binary.

The issue further includes a bibliometric study and a reflective essay. Daly Paulose Meppurath and colleagues map four decades of single-motherhood research, identifying dominant clusters around poverty, health, parenting, and policy while noting the relative absence of intersectional, cross-cultural, and

strengths-based perspectives. Sonali Wakharde introduces virtual sociology as a tool for democratising access to sociological knowledge, particularly for students from marginalised backgrounds, while critically examining the digital divide and the ethical implications of online learning platforms.

Three memorial and appreciation pieces honour the legacy of Indian sociology's stalwarts. As noted, the issue opens with Prof. Dipti Ranjan Sahu's letter on Prof. Abha Avasthi, a formidable feminist scholar and former head of the Department of Sociology at Lucknow University. Following this, two tributes by Prof. B. K. Nagla and Prof. R. Thirunavukkarasu reflect on the lives and legacies of Prof. André Béteille (1934–2026) and T. K. Oommen (1935–2026).

This issue concludes with four incisive book reviews and a conference report by Tanweer Fazal, Lam Khan Piang and Rabi Prakash. Taken together, the articles, reflections, conversation, tributes, and reviews in this issue offer a rich and critical interrogation of how structural inequalities of caste, class, gender, geography, and market access are reproduced, contested, and navigated in contemporary India. They underscore the importance of grounded, interdisciplinary, and policy-relevant sociological research. We extend our deepest gratitude to all contributors for their scholarship, to the peer reviewers for their rigorous engagement, and to our readers for their continued support.

We welcome submissions for future issues that continue to expand the sociological imagination, particularly from early-career researchers and scholars working in under-represented regions and institutions.

Thank you for your continued support.

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In memoriam: Abha Avasthi

Author: Dipti Ranjan Sahu

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In memoriam of Prof Abha Avasthi

--Dipti Ranjan Sahu

Among the prominent figures of the Lucknow School of Sociology, there is a woman who stands out, a woman who revived the legacy of a department that had been the home of great scholars like Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji, and A.K. Saran, among others.

Prof. Abha Avasthi did not just write about feminism; she was a true embodiment of it. She was a part of the Department of Sociology, University of Lucknow, from the 1970s until the 2000s. She led the department as the head in the 1990s, where under her stellar leadership, everyone witnessed a new flourishing era. Post-retirement, she actively continued as an Emeritus Professor under the UGC. She was also appointed as a Council Member of ICSSR, an Executive Council Member at CSJM Kanpur University, and a University Executive Council Member at the University of Lucknow. She also served as a subject panel member for the UGC.

An intimidating and resilient leader who commanded every room she was in, Prof. Avasthi was the most empathetic person who always stood by her people. The strong matriarch who kept the show running, her kindness was her biggest strength. A true philanthropist, she was the first one to stand by her students, staff, and others in all situations.

With a scholarship specializing in feminist studies, gender studies, modernity and social empowerment, Prof. Avasthi's work reflects her strong commitment and dedication to academic pursuits. She edited D.P. Mukerji's memoriam titled, 'Social and Cultural Diversities: DP Mukerji in Memorium'. One of her most important books is 'Modernity, Feminism and Women Empowerment'. She also was one of the architects of NCERT sociology textbooks.

Prof. Avasthi was an active member of Indian Sociological Society. She actively organized and participated in many conferences, seminars and was a frequent presence in the newsletter of the organizations. During her tenure at University of Lucknow, she started the initiative of taking the lead and organizing seminars and conferences, a tradition which continues even today. She also delivered the reputed Prof. S.C. Dube Memorial lecture in September 2014, titled 'Village Marriages: Changing Preferences, Performances and Folk Practices'.

Blessed with a strong aesthetic sense, she was not just confined to the academic world. Prof. Avasthi was well-known for her creative interests. She was an extremely gifted artist and skilled sculptor. Her house reflected her fine artistic taste, filled with souvenirs from her international trips, and her stunning dolls who sat in the drawing rooms waiting to have a conversation

with her guests through their expressive eyes. Every corner reflected her exquisite craftsmanship. Her bedside was adorned by her books, which took her on adventures with Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie. She was the most gracious and elegant host, very popular for her 'Holi Milans'. She was a mother to her students, a grandparent to their kids, the most warm and cheerful person who touched so many lives and brightened every room she walked into.

A great teacher, fearless administrator and a creative soul, who inspired many and shaped the lives of all her students, Prof. Avasthi has left behind a legacy of academics, adminisistrators, and teachers, who carry forward her values. Her presence continues through the conversations of her loved ones, her stories live through the anecdotes her students share, her name lives through her timeless works, her passion lives through her precious dolls, and her love shall always live in the hearts of all those she left behind.

Prof. Dipti Ranjan Sahu, Professor, Department of Sociology, Lucknow University, Lucknow, U.P. 226007

President, Indian Sociological Society, New Delhi

In memoriam: André Béteille

Author: B. K. Nagla

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André Béteille (1934–2026): Reason, Inequality, and the Moral Vocation of Sociology

--B K. Nagla

The passing of André Béteille on 3 February 2026, at the age of 91, marks the end of an era in Indian sociology. He died in Delhi following age-related illness. News of his demise reached me while I was at the University of Jammu, where I had been invited to deliver the valedictory address at a national seminar organised by the Department of Sociology in memory of Professor Jayaram Panda. A condolence meeting was held just before the inaugural session, a moment that poignantly underscored the collective sense of loss within the sociological community.

Only a week earlier, I had visited Professor Béteille's residence in Delhi. His daughter, Radha Béteille, informed me that he had been admitted to hospital and was in the ICU, making a meeting inadvisable. I did, however, spend some time with his wife, sharing tea and speaking about his failing health. That quiet interaction now stands as a personal reminder of the passing of a life devoted to scholarship, reflection, and public reason.

Born on 30 September 1934 in Chandannagar, then under French colonial rule, André Béteille was the son of a French father and an Indian mother. This mixed parentage was not merely biographical detail but an intellectual resource. It endowed him with a comparative sensibility and a cosmopolitan outlook that would later inform his sustained engagement with both Indian social realities and Western sociological traditions. The clarity, balance, and restraint that characterised his writing were rooted in this early exposure to cultural and intellectual plurality.

Béteille received his early education in Patna, followed by a B.Sc. (1955) and M.Sc. (1957) from the University of Calcutta, and a Ph.D. (1964) from the University of Delhi. He later became Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Delhi, where his association with the Delhi School of Economics proved formative for generations of students. Over the course of his career, he also taught at leading international institutions, including Oxford, Cambridge, the University of Chicago, and the London School of Economics. In addition, he served as Chancellor of the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, and later of Ashoka University, reflecting his sustained engagement with institution-building in Indian higher education.

His scholarly eminence was widely recognised. He was a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow (1968–1970), a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin (1989–1990), and was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1992. In 2005, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan for his contributions to sociology. The same year, he

was appointed to the Prime Minister's National Knowledge Commission, a role he relinquished in 2006 in principled opposition to proposed expansions of caste-based reservations. This resignation exemplified his lifelong insistence on intellectual autonomy and reasoned public argument. In 2007, he was appointed National Research Professor by the Government of India.

André Béteille's scholarship transformed the study of caste, class, inequality, and social stratification in India. Beginning with *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (1965), his work combined rigorous empirical inquiry with theoretical sobriety. Subsequent volumes—*Castes: Old and New* (1969), *Inequality and Social Change* (1972), *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* (1974), *Inequality among Men* (1977), *The Backward Classes and the New Social Order* (1981), *The Idea of Natural Inequality and Other Essays* (1983), and *Essays in Comparative Sociology*—collectively established a framework for analysing inequality without reducing it to ideology or moral rhetoric.

As Ramachandra Guha has noted, Béteille wrote with insight on nearly all the major questions confronting modern India: its encounter with the West, the tension between religion and secularism, the relationship between caste and class, the persistence of poverty and inequality, the fragility of public institutions, and the ethical responsibilities of intellectuals. What distinguished his work was not polemical force but analytical clarity and moral restraint. He remained deeply sceptical of easy answers, ideological certainties, and intellectual fashions.

Béteille was also a reflective commentator on the discipline of sociology in India. He argued that Indian sociology often "starts in India and ends in India," paying only ritual homage to classical theorists such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. He did not see this as a failing born of dependency but as a consequence of sociology's relatively late institutionalisation in India. Rather than advocating theoretical nativism or epistemic rupture, he urged sociologists to learn seriously from diverse traditions while remaining grounded in Indian empirical realities. His respectful engagement with scholars such as G.S. Ghurye and M.N. Srinivas reflected this balanced position. Here, I analyze André Béteille's key writings, situating his arguments within broader scholarly debates and contrasting them with alternative perspectives.

Rethinking Caste, Class, and Power: A Critical Reassessment of André Béteille in Indian Sociology

The study of caste has remained central to the development of modern Indian sociology. Since the colonial period, sociologists and anthropologists have attempted to understand caste as a complex system of hierarchy, social organization, and inequality. Among post-independence scholars, André Béteille occupies a prominent position for his empirical and theoretical contributions to

the analysis of social stratification. His work sought to move beyond earlier textual interpretations of caste by examining the interaction of caste, class, and power within concrete social contexts. Through detailed village studies and comparative sociological analysis, Béteille argued that social hierarchy in India cannot be understood solely through ritual status but must also be examined in relation to economic and political structures (Béteille, 1965).

However, the significance of Béteille's contribution has been the subject of considerable debate. While some scholars regard his work as a major methodological advance in the sociological study of caste, others argue that it remains limited by its reliance on classical Western sociological frameworks and liberal normative assumptions. A critical evaluation of Béteille therefore requires situating his scholarship within the broader intellectual trajectory of caste studies and examining its relationship to alternative theoretical perspectives, including Ambedkarite, feminist, and decolonial critiques. This paper reassesses Béteille's contribution by comparing his work with earlier sociological approaches to caste and evaluating the extent to which his ideas represent a paradigm shift in Indian sociology.

Classical Approaches to Caste: Textual and Cultural Interpretations

Early sociological analyses of caste were strongly influenced by Indological and textual traditions. Scholars such as G. S. Ghurye emphasized the historical and religious foundations of caste by drawing on Sanskritic texts and Brahmanical social philosophy. In his influential work *Caste and Race in India*, Ghurye described caste as a complex institution characterized by endogamy, hereditary occupation, and ritual hierarchy (Ghurye, 1969). Although his analysis recognized the diversity of caste practices, it largely treated caste as a cultural and civilizational phenomenon rooted in Hindu social traditions.

Similarly, the French anthropologist Louis Dumont offered a highly influential interpretation of caste as an ideological system. In *Homo Hierarchicus*, Dumont argued that Indian society is fundamentally organized around hierarchical values derived from the opposition between purity and pollution (Dumont, 1980). According to this perspective, caste hierarchy reflects a broader cultural logic in which social inequality is justified through religious and symbolic principles. While these approaches provided a systematic framework for understanding caste as a cultural system, they have also been criticized for privileging textual and ideological sources while neglecting the material and political dimensions of caste inequality. Critics argue that such interpretations risk presenting caste as a static cultural tradition rather than as a dynamic structure shaped by historical change and social conflict.

Empirical Sociology and the Shift Toward Social Processes

An important methodological shift occurred with the work of M. N. Srinivas, who emphasized the importance of ethnographic fieldwork in the study of Indian society. Srinivas introduced concepts such as Sanskritization and dominant caste to explain processes of social mobility and political power in rural India (Srinivas, 1962). These concepts highlighted the dynamic nature of caste relations and demonstrated that social hierarchy is influenced by economic and political factors as well as ritual status. Srinivas's fieldwork-based approach encouraged sociologists to examine caste as a changing social institution embedded in everyday practices. This shift toward empirical research laid the groundwork for later sociological studies that sought to analyze caste within broader frameworks of social stratification and modernization.

André Béteille and the Multidimensional Analysis of Stratification

Building upon this empirical tradition, Béteille developed a multidimensional approach to the study of inequality in India. Drawing on the stratification theory associated with Max Weber, he argued that social hierarchy in India must be understood through the interaction of three interrelated dimensions: caste, class, and power. His influential study *Caste, Class and Power* examined these relationships within a South Indian village, demonstrating how ritual status, economic resources, and political authority intersect in shaping patterns of inequality (Béteille, 1965). This framework represented a significant departure from earlier cultural interpretations of caste. Instead of treating caste hierarchy as an autonomous ideological system, Béteille showed that it interacts with class relations and political structures. Economic changes, educational opportunities, and democratic institutions have altered traditional patterns of authority, leading to new forms of social differentiation.

Béteille also emphasized that caste is not a uniform or static institution. In many local contexts, sub-castes function as effective social units, and their relative status may vary across regions. By highlighting these variations, Béteille challenged simplified models of caste hierarchy and emphasized the importance of local social dynamics. At the same time, he argued that modernization had transformed but not eliminated caste. Democratic politics and economic development have created new opportunities for social mobility, yet caste identities continue to influence access to resources and positions of power (Béteille, 1991). In this sense, caste persists as a significant element of social stratification in contemporary India.

Merit, Reservations, and the Liberal Sociological Perspective

Béteille's liberal sociological orientation becomes particularly visible in his writings on affirmative action and social policy. While acknowledging the

historical disadvantages experienced by marginalized communities, he expressed concern that caste-based reservations might reinforce caste identities rather than diminish them (Béteille, 1992). From his perspective, democratic institutions should ideally operate according to universal principles such as equality of opportunity and merit.

However, critics argue that the concept of merit itself is socially constructed and shaped by historical inequalities. Scholars such as Gopal Guru have pointed out that educational achievement and professional success are deeply influenced by unequal access to social and cultural resources (Guru, 2002). Consequently, meritocratic discourse can obscure structural inequalities by presenting socially produced advantages as individual accomplishments.

The implementation of reservation policies following the recommendations of the Mandal Commission intensified these debates within Indian society. While supporters viewed reservations as essential for addressing systemic inequalities, critics including Béteille feared that such policies might deepen caste divisions in political life.

Ambedkarite and Decolonial Critiques of Mainstream Sociology

A deeper critique of mainstream caste sociology emerges from the intellectual tradition associated with B. R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar conceptualized caste as a system of graded inequality that structures social relations through exclusion and domination. In his view, caste is not merely a form of social stratification but a system of oppression that must be dismantled through radical social transformation (Ambedkar, 1936/2014).

From this perspective, sociological analyses that treat caste primarily as a hierarchical system risk underestimating its political and ideological dimensions. Ambedkarite scholars argue that the study of caste must foreground the experiences and struggles of marginalized communities rather than focusing solely on institutional structures.

Decolonial theory provides another important lens for evaluating caste sociology. Scholars such as Aníbal Quijano argue that modern social sciences are shaped by what he describes as the "coloniality of power," in which European theoretical frameworks dominate global knowledge production (Quijano, 2000). In the context of Indian sociology, this critique raises questions about the continued reliance on Western sociological categories for interpreting local social realities.

Alternative perspectives developed by scholars such as Gail Omvedt and Sharad Patil attempt to address these limitations by integrating caste analysis with broader theories of social movements, class struggle, and gender inequality (Omvedt, 1994; Patil, 1998). These approaches emphasize the transformative

potential of anti-caste movements and highlight the intersection of caste, class, and patriarchy in shaping social inequality.

Personal Reflections and Interconnected Legacy

Beyond his writings, Béteille was an inspiring teacher and interlocutor. I recall numerous conversations at seminars and during my editorial work for *Bhartiya Samajshastra Samiksha*, where he appeared reflective, self-critical, and committed to reasoned dialogue (Mookherjee, 2018). My personal visit to his home shortly before his passing reinforces the interconnectivity between his scholarly life and lived reality—a reminder that his intellectual rigor was inseparable from human warmth and ethical engagement.

At the core of Béteille's sociology was a moral vision: to build a rational society in which entrenched hierarchies of caste, class, and privilege are critically examined. His work exemplifies an approach to social reform guided by evidence, ethical responsibility, and reasoned critique rather than ideological fervor.

The death of André Béteille is an irreparable loss to Indian sociology. Yet his legacy endures in his writings, the institutions he helped shape, and the ongoing work of scholars inspired by his commitment to clarity, restraint, and intellectual integrity. In an era marked by polarization, Béteille reminds us of sociology's highest vocation: to understand society without illusion, and to critique it without dogma.

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In memoriam: T K Oommen

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In memoriam of Prof T K Oommen – A Sociologist and a Defender of Democratic Spirit

--R. Thirunavukkarasu

Professor Oommen who passed away on 26th February 2026, left an indelible mark in sociology in particular and social sciences in general with his remarkable contributions. It is not an exaggeration to state that he was one of the pioneering figures in sociological research. The journey was not a cake walk. Imagine this situation! Sometime in 1965, just after submitting his PhD thesis under the supervision of Prof Y B Damble in Pune University, he appeared for a lectureship interview in Delhi University where he was asked by one of the tallest figures in Indian sociology 'Is your PhD thesis a sociological work?' Such a sarcastic question would have simply rattled a young researcher; Prof Oommen however reminded quite nonchalant and firmly defending the sociological significance of his work. When sociologists at that time were overwhelmingly absorbed into studying family, marriage, kinship, caste, rural India, Prof Oommen pioneered in studying Gramdhan movement of Vinobha Bhave. His field work in eighteen villages in Rajasthan laid a broader foundation for next generation researchers to study movements from sociological prism. His study more than focusing on collective mobilization brilliantly upended the conventional research orientation in India at that time – applying a western framework to study Indian reality. Prof Oommen persuasively argues in this work that charismatic authority need not be system changing as Max Weber postulated, it could well be system stabilizing. This originality is significant for more than one reason. This has provided the necessary impetus to the long cherished transformation from Sociology *of* India to Sociology *for* India. As young lecturer in Delhi School of Social Work in the late 1960s, Prof Oommen embarked upon another pioneering work to study modern professionals – the Doctors and the Nurses. A study of this kind was unusual at that time in sociology. Intended to study the occupational role structure of the two modern professionals namely the Doctors and the Nurses, Prof Oommen carried out this study for little more than five years with structured interviews and observations. A little less than five hundred doctors and a little more than five hundred nurses were interviewed. With an aim of studying how professionalization equips these two professional groups to react to bureaucratic hospital situation was truly a pioneering work those times.

When the southern state of Kerala elected a communist government in a democratically held elections, many policy experts and social scientists began studying the changes the communist government initiated. Prof Oommen was one of the earliest sociologists to study the agrarian reforms carried out in the state by the communist government. His work, now revered as a classic, 'From Mobilization to Institutionalization' dispassionately probed the structural changes of land reform policies. He highlighted the complementary nature of several sociological categories such as caste, class and political status in the mobilization as well as institutionalization process. This

perspective enraged some and emboldened them to tag him a permanent reactionary. All of his initial works were deemed unconventional at the time of their publication. His path breaking research on social movements and collective mobilizations in India opened up new avenues for sociological scrutiny.

His subsequent works are no different. His foray into ethnicity, nation, nationalism and citizenship are profoundly encouraging and offered truly refreshing perspectives. There has always been a tendency not only in India but across the globe to bring all forms of socio-cultural categories under the term 'ethnic'. This, Professor Oommen strongly argues, would effortlessly lead to conceptual haemorrhage; hence provided a sustainable framework to analyse what is an ethnie and what cannot be. Similar conceptual clarity was strongly pronounced in his assessment on nation and nationalism. While the academia is trying to arrive at certain 'objective' categories to definite nation, he proposes both language and territory as the two unassailable, non-negotiable categories and their fusion forms the nation. This may have certain structural inadequacies. However, this perspective provided a robust justification to declare India as a 'multi-national State'. There are many nationalities in India who are State renouncing nations asserts Prof Oommen. The sociological significance of this perspective is immense. It, within the conventional social sciences, strongly defends the multi-cultural character of Indian society while many scholars speak along the lines of civilizational unity in the subcontinent. Even more intriguing is the way India is envisaged as an internally homogenous Hindu religious community. Such conundrum tacitly endorses majoritarianism as a legitimate and genuine political ideology. As history has taught us how the triumph of majoritarianism tenaciously drag a system into fascism. Therefore, Prof Oommen's contributions are not merely about 'understanding' the contemporary society clinically. It latches its faith and foregrounding its arguments in favour of a multi-cultural social order and sustaining a democratic spirit within the social system. This distinguishes him from many sociologists of our times. His contributions in the field of citizenship and civil society are indeed intellectually stimulating. For a long period, these fields remain well within the disciplinary boundaries of political science. The sociological dimension brought in by Prof Oommen while studying citizenship and civil society has led to a vital juncture that multi-disciplinary approach has indeed become the norm in contemporary academia.

Prof Oommen as an institution builder is an important dimension that many may not be aware of. India's growth as a post-colonial polity is coupled with the rise and progress of modern academic institutions. It was widely believed that modern institutions would make us 'modern' or constitute modern consciousness. This assumption is a historical fallacy as the graded hierarchy – the quintessential character of the country is intensely manifesting itself even today in our 'modern academia'. In fact, in one of his recent books '*Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs: Life and Times of a Sociologist'* Prof Oommen cautioned us to be careful about such inflated egos and vindictive personalities damaging our academic institutions.

> We all know that production of knowledge in social science cannot be completely divorced from one's biography. It seems to me that in India there are gurus and disciples, patrons and clients but not professionals and colleagues. And unless this transformation takes place, our efforts to create a knowledge society will remain aborted. (p. 112)

These words of caution must alert us to protect our academic institutions as we are at the cusp of a total take-over by vested interest groups. Our dream to bring in socialism has ended up strengthening bureaucratic regimentation and our desperation to establish a capitalist order has ushered in crony capitalism. Our institutions have unfortunately ended up promoting loyal disciples and replicating quasi-feudal values. Thus, his determinism to establish professionalism in higher education institution is certainly an ingenious modes operandi to dismantle the old feudal system and inaugurate modern socio-cultural milieu in our academia. It is a serious question as how many social scientists ever bothered about the nature and character of our 'modern' academia. This is what distinguishes him as a unique democratic voice among many social scientists.

One of the finest contributions of Prof Oommen outside the academia was his seminal role in the Prime Minister's High-Level Committee or what popularly came to be known as 'Sachar Committee'. This committee's recommendations will be remembered for its long-term implications as it laid down a broader framework to establish an inclusive social order in our country. His deep apprehensions that our academia is increasingly becoming insensitive to the plight of marginalized sections is getting vindicated with the number of atrocities reported against students from subaltern communities. It goes without saying that atrocities include suicides as the structural violence widens the vulnerability of students from subaltern sections of our society. Thus, despite strong opposition from fellow social scientists, Prof Oommen strongly spoke in defence of organizations taking up caste discrimination at the UN sponsored Durban conference way back in 2001.

His argument that India is a multi-national State irked the cheerleaders of majoritarianism; his contributions in drafting the recommendations of the Sachar Committee enraged the communal bigots; his enthusiastic support to organizations speaking up against caste discrimination at the UN conference in Durban antagonized caste elites. Despite the sinister designs of the ruthlessly powerful status-quoists within the academia, Prof

Oommen relentlessly advocated his ideas to have an inclusive, democratic and egalitarian social order where equal opportunity must be available to every Indian citizen. More than two dozen of his books and little more than two hundred research papers published in internationally reputed journals have reminded us of one of the germane entitlements of our constitution – Egalitarian, Inclusive and Democratic social order must be the axiomatic foundation of the country. With the passing of Prof Oommen, we have lost not only a pioneering sociologist but also a sane voice that has always defended this democratic spirit.

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Conversation: S.M. Dahiwale in Conversation with Anurekha Chari Wagh

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S.M. Dahiwale in Conversation with Anurekha Chari Wagh

[Transcript of Interview held in April 2026]

Towards Building Alternative Sociology: Reflections by Prof S. M Dahiwale.

Professor S.M. Dahiwale began his teaching career as a lecturer in 1971, eventually joining the University of Pune (now known as SPPU) as Professor of Sociology in 1996, where he served until his retirement in 2006. During his distinguished academic career, he was elected as a member of the Managing Committee of the Indian Sociological Society (1999-2005) and a member of the International Sociological Association (2006-2017).

Prof. Dahiwale's pioneering research has made significant contributions to the study of Sociology of Marginal groups, Social Movements, Social Development, Migration, and Globalization. His publications include Emerging Entrepreneurship among Scheduled Castes of Contemporary India (1989), Rural Poverty and Slums (1997), Understanding Indian Society: The Non-Brahmanic Perspective (2005). His forthcoming book is titled, 'Dialectics of Brahmanism and Un-Brahmanism: Historical Probings' by Routledge, 2026. He was awarded a fellowship under the Canadian Studies Faculty Research Award Program during which he undertook research on entrepreneurship among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. He has published many articles in national and international journals and book chapters, and articles in various dailies and periodicals.

Prof. Dahiwale was an expert member of the Backward Classes Commission of Government of Maharashtra (1993-99) and a Consultant on Social Justice and Empowerment for the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Tenth Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India. He was nominated as a member of the Advisory Board of the Dalit Resource Centre, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad, and as a member of the Scientific Committee for Intellectual Capital Management by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences, Zanjan, Iran (2010-2013). He delivered more than 100 lectures at various national and international universities on sociological theory, entrepreneurship, criteria of backwardness, myths of Hinduism and other topics.

ACW: You worked over three decades as a teacher. What is the idea of a university teacher according to you? Please share your reflections.

SMD: As a teacher I believe that creating a generation of intellectual scholars is a responsibility of a university teacher. A university teacher has to be a person of ideas. The best example is that where all the three professors, including Prof Sujata Patel and Prof Sharmila Rege, have not given any scope for religious rituals. A teacher has to update the subject knowledge. I always tried to simplify the topics of teaching. In relation to the students' performance, I always tried to be objective and fair to all. I must mention that I have encouraged bright and sincere students of regional language background to opt for English medium. I also wish to state that I have guided a few research students and their works have been published in reputed journals and in the book form, namely by Dr Sampat Kale's thesis published by Routledge. Thus, for me, a teacher is one who nurtures ideas and operates on principles of social justice and is ethically grounded.

ACW: What about your role as a researcher and an institutional builder?

SMD: I have always focussed on the issues of the deprived classes. This is the rationale as to why I made 'entrepreneurship' the topic of my research. I view it as an alternative to service jobs. Even for the Canadian Studies Award Program, I conducted study on 'Entrepreneurship Among the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada', and that study was published in *Sociological Bulletin*. Further I conducted a UGC funded study on Slum Dwellers and Migration in Kolhapur, Maharashtra and that study was published under the title *Rural Poverty and Slums*. Besides I have published several studies based on both secondary data sources and field-based data collection, which have been published in reputed journals. Some of the following works are important contributions towards sociological theorising such as the Ambedkarian Revolution, Annihilating Caste, Consolidation of Maratha Dominance, Insensitivity of Mahar Officers in the case of Khairlanji, Achievement of the American Blacks and Hate Campaign Against the Muslims.

As an institution builder, I have focussed on building the intellectual strength of the department. As you recall, Pune university attracted students across the sections. The student came for learning new knowledge and getting newer insights. The department made every attempt to develop advanced curriculums. I introduced a course on

'Sociology of Globalisation'. I also believed that for the academic development of the department we needed good scholars. During my tenure as head of the department, I took interest in the appointment of Prof Gail Omvedt. Besides, to provide exposure to the students to diverse critical views, I took interest in the publication of some monographs of seminars and guest lectures organised by the department. The copies of the monographs were given to all students and visitors free of charge. Moreover, my focus was on strengthening research as well as publications. When I was the Coordinator of Special Assistance Programme (SAP), the work by a post-doctoral scholar in the department has published on the topic, 'Women Executives', in *Sociological Bulletin*. Additionally, I have also conducted and organised refresher course to update the subject knowledge of the college teachers.

ACW: You have written extensively both in Marathi and English? What does writing in Marathi mean to you as a sociologist?

SMD: For me, as a man of social movement, writing in Marathi is crucial and important. For awakening the common people, I understand that we have to communicate in their language. It is also important to recognize that social reformers of the times wrote in regional languages in their periodicals and books to awaken and conscientize the masses. I have followed their ways and means through which they achieved their goals. I wrote on issues of contemporary relevance and social justice such as Gandhi- Ambedkar debate, eradication of untouchability, hate campaign against Muslims, and civil rights movement of American Blacks. I believe that writing on these crucial issues in Marathi is an important responsibility of a sociologist.

ACW: You have mentioned that you focus on alternative sociology. How do you understand and conceptualise alternative sociology?

We need to have a relook at our own established sociology of Indian society, religion, *varna* and *jati* phenomena, dominant caste, Sanskritization and Indian tradition. All these are majorly studied from Indological perspective as based on *Dharmashastra*. We use this perspective to characterize Indian society as homogenous, harmonious and united. In reality, both historical and empirical facts speak differently. When we examine Vedic scriptures, we find that there were issues of privileges over the performance of Vedic rituals. Post-Vedic scriptures denied the Vedic rights to both *shudra* and *ati-shudra* classes Empirically,

we have diverse cultural and local beliefs and practices which have no relation to Brahmanic practices.

ACW: In the present times, why is it crucial to engage with alternative sociology?

SMD: My contention is that India was not a monolithic society. Ours is a multilingual and multicultural society. The 1961 Census listed as many as 1652 languages and the Peoples of India project of the 1990s identified as many as 4635 communities. We understand a community by its shared beliefs and practices. Numerous communities signify identities of multitude of cultures. Even so, Indologists described India as a Vedic India. This is a myth. If we examine roots of Vedic India in both Indo-Iranian historiography and Indo-European historiography, we find roots in Iran and Europe. For instance, the Vedic religion is known for its cult of sacrifice of animals. The Brahmins monopolised knowledge and they developed Indology, and the Brahmanical perspective was made popular through studies based on Indological scriptures. The fact is that India remained a land of heterodox traditions. We have a history of conflict between the Vedic and Dravidian civilizations since ancient times. Our *shastras* denied Vedic rituals to the non-*dwija* communities. Therefore, we have to move from Vedic India to other multifarious historical and empirical understandings. I call alternative sociology as Un-Brahmanic and of heterodox traditions. The need to engage with alternative sociology has arisen in present times, because the present education has failed to create intellectuals, scholars and intervening social agents.

ACW: Sir, what are then epistemological concerns and methodological demands of pursuing alternative sociology?

SMD: My concern is un-brahmanism, which does not believe in birth-basis, but believes in performance and righteous conduct. I have elaborated its history with empirical references in my forthcoming book, the '*Dialectics of Brahmanism and Un-Brahmanism'* to be published by Routledge. The book addresses the complex and diverse society in India, which are marked by constant conflicts between Brahmanic and Un-Brahmanic forces that shaped Indian society's ideological and philosophical traditions. This book argues that Brahmanism emphasized divine worship, purity and hierarchy, while un-Brahmanic traditions, include Shramanic systems of Jainism and Buddhism, preached and practised humanitarian values, equality and rationality. The volume

explores the evolution of social reform movements in India from those under the leadership of Bhakti saints to revolutionary figures like Jotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu, E.V. Ramasamy Periyar, Narayan Guru, and B.R. Ambedkar. It examines how their roles and perspectives contributed to resisting caste hierarchies, Brahmanical patriarchy, and oppressive traditions through education, legislation, and activism.

Further, I must mention gender studies, which already emerged and established as an alternative to the *Dharamshastra* based patriarchal society. The scholars in gender studies questioned the mainstream knowledge of patriarchal hierarchy and masculinity. Over the decades, the scholars contributed to their studies both in theoretical and empirical understandings. Today, it is established as an inter-disciplinary study. We also have studies in social movement and subaltern perspective. To what extent we make these studies and perspectives as part of our curriculum, is a question. What I want to stress is that we have to look beyond the Indological perspective to frame our scholarship.

As far as the methodological concern of building and doing alternative sociology, un-brahmanism as a perspective may help locate icons who opposed Brahmanism, and for sources we have to record their oral history as well as published material in regional language.

ACW: What are pedagogical issues important for alternative sociology?

SMD: In the context of pedagogical issue, I believe that the present system of knowledge does not address the issues of violence on girl child, women, minority communities, social inequality and social injustice. The educated lot is passive and unconcerned today. Students and teachers have to play their positive role in the construction of society. They have to become responsible citizens, agents of social change. We have Paulo Friere's work, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' to guide us.

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Article: Revisiting the Concept Of 'Second Shift' Through The Lens Of The Working Women In Nagaland University, Nagaland India

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Revisiting the Concept of 'Second Shift' Through The Lens Of The Working Women In Nagaland University, Nagaland India

--Pitheli K Jimo[1]

Abstract

The term 'second shift' is commonly associated with feminist Sociologists who examine the dual burden of paid and unpaid labor, particularly for women. This research is an attempt to gain a holistic understanding of the real challenges that working women in Nagaland University face. Interviews with 50 working women in the University across the 3 campuses are drawn to deliberate on certain specific issues that working women/mothers grapple with. The samples drawn were across different schools, departments, cells, sections, teaching and non-teaching faculty to bring forth diversities in their opinions and discussions. The study looks into how the working women navigate through different roles, how they use their time, manage their existing work burdens both at home and at work and challenges they encounter with as working women irrespective of whether they are single, married, widowed, with or without children. Mom guilt is a universal phenomenon experienced by women of all ages and at all stages, especially during the child-bearing years and when children are young and unable to find a footing for themselves. Working mothers experience this guilt trip every now and then, either by their own expectations of themselves or through societal expectations of how a 'good mother/woman' should be. Work-Life balance struggles, adoption of different measures to mitigate, ways of negotiations by women in different stages of their career, nuances that working women navigate, subtle ways of presenting themselves both at work and at home all forms an integral part of the study.

Keywords: Second shift, Working Women, Navigate, Challenges, Negotiate, Nagaland

Introduction

The division of labor has always been the centerpiece of argument-with regard to how patriarchal institutions function. As societies across the world progressed from agricultural and hunting-gathering tribes, capitalist institutions were born. Since then, patriarchy, along with the gendered division of labour, has been deemed as the perfect way to make larger society function. This division of labour essentially laid down different labouring rules for men and women. Men were expected to leave the domestic sphere, and accumulate wealth for their families, whereas women were expected to cater to the domestic requirements and provide their families with male children, who could represent the patriarchal lineage. However, over the centuries, women have protested against this gendered division

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of labour, demanding their right to engage in paid work. Although the overall, larger scenario has not changed much-nowadays, in many urban, middle-class, heterosexual families, it is seen that both partners engage in paid work, in order to earn their own bread. However, as much as many may argue that this is a sign of progress, the gendered and sexual division of labour has remained quite the same as before.

In all countries, women and girls do the bulk of unpaid care work. On average, women spend twice as much time on household work as men and four times as much time on childcare. Women also work longer hours than men overall when both paid and unpaid work is taken into account. According to the research conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), India is the second nation in the world after Mexico in which women spend the majority of their time engaging in unpaid labour. The unpaid employment consists mostly of doing chores around the home and providing personal care for family members.

The term 'double burden' or 'second shift' as coined by Arlie Hochschild refers to the workload of people who work at paid jobs while also having responsibility for a significant portion of unpaid care work. 'Working women' essentially spend their days performing double-shifts. In many families, even though women are leaving the domestic sphere and engaging in paid labour-unpaid, household chores are expected to be undertaken by them alone. Most 'working women' bear the double burden of work, as opposed to working men. Moreover, it is very common to come across millennial couples in the urban spaces, claiming to be open-minded in terms of accepting the changing domestic scenario, but not portraying the same through their actions. Among the urban 'working' couples, it is the women who engage in almost all the domestic work.

Women already take on so much more housework and childcare than men that employed mothers are often said to be working a 'double shift.' Even during the pandemic, that double shift burden has grown, with mothers three times as likely as fathers to do most of the housework and care giving. Decades of research also show that women do significantly more housework and childcare than men—so much so that women who are employed full-time are often said to be working a "double shift/second shift."

Objective of the Study

The study will investigate how the working women in Nagaland University navigate through their different roles. How they use their time and manage their existing work burdens both at home and at work, how they shoulder these responsibilities simultaneously. The challenges that they encounter as a working mother, and finally the compromises that they have made along the way are some of the issues that will be highlighted through this study.

The dual roles of women in managing career and family inherently bring them to a crossroads in seeking a balance between home and work. In juggling the roles, their commitment to career may somewhat be declining, thus hampering them from seizing the opportunity for career growth. The study is an attempt to understand women's conflicting roles and how they persist in climbing the ladder, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with working women in Nagaland University both teaching as well as non-teaching staff. The interviews will be structured to discover patterns in women's career growth and how they manage both professional and family goals. The study will offer insights on the importance of growth mindset and lifelong learning to capacitate women in realizing their abilities and potential to embrace both professional and domestic challenges.

Uniqueness of the Study

Nagaland University, Nagaland headquartered at Lumami is located in one of the remotest parts of Nagaland and thus far away from towns and cities where the working women could avail services and facilities that are available to those working in towns and cities. The services, facilities and support system that working women could avail while they attend to work without having to stress are not available at their disposal. Absence of childcare support facility, day cares, laundry services, domestic help, medical facilities, etc, hamper them in balancing their commitment to both work and home.

While women have become more involved in their careers, most are still the primary caregivers. Thus, many women must juggle time spent between work and family. While currently there is a blurred line that divides the public and private spheres represented in the dual-earner household trend—women are still the primary caregivers of children, the elderly, and the household.

Theoretical Model

The Second Shift theory of Arlie Hochschild: In 1989, Arlie Hochschild introduced the concept of second shift to define 'a specific extra burden among employed women who are in a heterosexual marriage with a working man, which includes many more hours of unpaid work, without context or qualifications'. Hochschild (1989) contends performance of the second shift stalled women's progress in pursuing gender equality and equity at the height of the women's movement. The impetus of Hochschild's 1989 work, *The Second Shift*, was the influx of women joining the paid labor force after the 1960s and her own personal experience as a working mother. Once women joined the paid labor force, which Hochschild (1989) defines as revolutionary; women became overwhelmed and inundated with work. A first shift in the paid labor force and a second shift at home constrained their time and created unbearable stress and tension in their new lives as working women. While women's roles changed and expanded in the

public sphere, their male dominated workplaces and men in general showed little to no change.

Hochschild contends:

• Women primarily engaged in traditional gender roles of cooking, housework, and caring for children.

• The work women did in the homes, such as homework and childcare, was unpaid and devalued by spouses and society.

• Women were often disillusioned by their perceived desires to have equitability in the relationship.

Hochschild (1989) found some women 'talk about sleep the way a hungry person talks about food'. Particularly, since mothers are more likely to do mundane tasks of childcare, whereas fathers usually do the fun tasks. Hochschild (1989) demonstrated when women and men reported their domestic work as equal, it turned out that it was inequitable.

'*Most women without children spend much more time than men on housework; with children, they devote more time to both housework and childcare. Just as there is a wage gap between men and women in the workplace, there is a 'leisure gap' between them at home. Most women work one shift at the office or factory and a 'second shift at home' (Hochschild, 1989, p. 4).*

Moser's Triple Role Framework: Moser's (1993) triple role framework, outlining women's reproductive, productive and community roles, provides theoretical equipment to examine and understand the gendered nature of public and private spaces and the complexities associated with the transference of work into the home.

Reproductive Role

The reproductive role comprises the childbearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks undertaken by women, required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the workforce (husband and working children) and the future workforce (infants and school-going children) (Moser, 1993: 29). It depicts capitalist notions of women's subordination where females are not only natural 'biological reproducers' but also 'labour force reproducers' (Moser, 1993).

Productive Role

Moser summarizes the productive role as work done by both women and men for payment in cash or kind. It includes market production with an exchange value

and subsistence/home production with an actual use value and a potential exchange value. For women in agricultural production, this includes work as independent farmers, peasants' wives, and wage workers. (Moser, 1993: 31) Women, contrary to the patriarchal dogmas of 'male breadwinning', play an essential and central part in the labour force.

Community Management Role

The community management role refers to the responsibilities (such as religious, political, and social) performed by women at the community level as an extension of the reproductive role. The assumption is that since they care for 'children' at home, they should extend the same to other 'infirmed' communities. The sole purpose is to ensure the delivery and safeguarding of scarce communal resources such as water, health care and education.

Method

Purposive sampling has been used to select women of different profiles to reach a diverse sample. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions were conducted to gain a better understanding of the opinions of the professional and personal implications of navigating their different roles. The in-depth interview was the selected method because it provides the type of rich and detailed narratives that help reveal subjects' interpretative frameworks, supporting the analytic goals of linking individual women's experience with their social context.

Doing the Interviews

This article draws data from in-depth interviews that were conducted as part of a larger researcher project which is being undertaken at present. The interviews were manually transcribed and codes were formulated. From the codes the important themes were identified. This is an exploratory study and working women were purposively chosen representing different departments, cells, sections, schools and campuses. A total of 50 respondents has been drawn to form the crux of the study across the three campuses of Nagaland University representing different schools, departments, sections, cell and centres.

It is a necessary requirement to understand the socio-demographic background of the respondents before discussing the major themes. Table 1 depicts the respondents' age, marital status, number of children, age of children, designation, and the total number of working years in the University and specific campuses of the respondents.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Sl No	Socio-Demographic Profile	Respondent No (%)
1	**Age Groups**	
	30-40	29 (58.0)
	40-50	11 (22.0)
	50-60	10 (20.0)
	Total	50 (100.0)
2	**Marital Status**	
	Married	48 (96.0)
	Widowed	02 (04.0)
	Total	50 (100.0)
3	**Number of Children**	
	No children	03 (06.0)
	1-2 children	36 (72.0)
	3-4 children	11 (22.0)
	Total	50 (100 .0)
4	**Age of Children**	
	2 months-3yrs	21 (24.1)
	3yrs-10 yrs	41 (47.2)
	10yrs & above	25 (28.7)
	Total	87 (100.0)
5	**Designation**	
	Professor	05 (10.0)
	Associate Professor	05 (10.0)
	Assistant Professor	23 (46.0)
	Deputy Registrar	01 (02.0)
	Internal Audit Officer	01 (02.0)
	MTS	01 (02.0)
	LDC	06 (12.0)
	UDC	03 (06.0)
	Junior Steno	01 (02.0)
	System Administrator	01 (02.0)
	Library Assistant	02 (04.0)
	Junior Engineer	01 (02.0)
	Total	50 (100.0)
6	**Total No of Working Years**	
	1yr-10yrs	19 (38.0)
	11yrs-20yrs	19 (38.0)
	20yrs-30yrs	12 (24.0)
	Total	50 (100.0)
7	**Location of the Respondents**	
	Lumami	30 (60.0)

	Meriema	10 (20.0)
	Dimapur (SET & SAS)	10 (20.0)
	Total	50 (100.0)

Source: Field data collected from January 2025- June 2025

Multiple Roles Played by Women as a Given

Women as a whole are expected to play multiple roles simultaneously irrespective of whether they are married, single, widowed, with or without children. They manage to carry on fulfilling all expectations without any questions raised. All the respondents in the study are effectively managing their different roles through time management, task prioritisation, support systems and work life balance. They use technology to streamline tasks, delegate when necessary and set clear boundaries. They create efficient schedules, communicate openly, set realistic expectations and seek personal growth demonstrating grace and resilience in their roles. The gender role that is assigned to them by the society hinders their full concentration in the workplace (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Demands from the family, focus on women's conventional role in the family, lack of consideration from family members, at times adds up making it difficult to balance home and workplace. Women struggle with the demands of the profession and the family, as well as the multiple roles that they are expected to play. Gendered role stereotyping bind women to household and childcare duties, thus pushing them to the edge of the profession (Sinha & Asmita, 2023), which causes a hindrance in maintaining a balance between personal and professional life as well. Household and children are still associated with women as part of their gendered role identity. Hochschild also shows through the second shift that in spite of entering the labour force women still make maximum contribution to the household duties (Gorp, 2013).

Some of the mechanisms and strategies adopted by working women to manage the multiple roles is knowing how to manage time, where prioritising becomes very important whether she is a working professional or a working mother, and a wife. It was also found that in some cases, compromising one role over the other role in order to do some justice to the multiple roles at hand. Compromises in life such as neglecting career so as to be available for the children, for the family and at times neglecting the home front for career progression. However, knowing and sticking to one strategy has never worked as one tries to cope up as per the given circumstances, they go with the flow as things presents themselves. Juggling along with the different roles is an ongoing struggle where you may find an answer, one cope up as situation emerges.

The Constant Juggling Act

Working mothers juggle their jobs and caregiving, yet they enjoy financial independence, intellectual stimulation, and adult socialization. Mothers like

earning money and relieving stress from their husbands to provide financially. Also, they like to maintain their identity outside of the house. Goffman (1959) claims that people embody multiple selves that arise subject to the type of interaction. Working mothers divide their self into both a mother and a professional. Women in the study were strongly of the opinion that they will always be homemakers irrespective of their achievements in the workplace. The designation at the workplace only remains at work and the world of home is totally elusive of that, once they step out, they are only recognised as the 'wives' who is dependent on their husbands. In order to fulfill their professional selves and "don't get stuck in the mommy brain," working women go to seminars and events where they are "intellectually stimulated and enjoy adult interactions." To maintain the old self, some working mothers challenge the all-encompassing bubble of motherhood. Women are known to be multi-taskers, and they continue to evolve and grow taking on roles that both meet the societal expectations and of themselves in ways that pushes them to find themselves either being successful or failing at times. They find themselves proving their capabilities by making working arrangements that benefit them by offering better work-life balance, increasing job satisfaction and greater autonomy. Proper communication and monitoring mechanisms also help mitigate potential failures and setbacks while still supporting the needs of working women in the modern workforce.

Knowing how and when to manage time and work around that will enable working women to find their footing. For the most part, priority has always been for the children, in being a mother even at the cost of their career taking a back seat. Children's needs are always attended to first and secondly to their own work. Challenges that hamper women from progressing ahead is the societal expectations and gender roles which expects women to be back home by a certain time irrespective of whether she is out on an official work and attending meetings. There is the existence of male mindset that continues to strain the growth of women in her career progression and works against her. Motherhood completely takes over and the time that used to be theirs is no longer theirs but to be shared and negotiated at every step of the way.

The Universality of Mom-Guilt

The study revealed that women, with proper support can actually have it all, be a wonderful mother, a successful career-oriented professional making a name for herself. However, there are women who have done it all but at the cost of their personal lives. The societal expectations of women to be a certain way pressurize women to go guilt tripping at every step of the way. Being a working mother has also its downside. Working mothers do their best to juggle their "serial careers," yet they feel guilty. Women describe the "mommy guilt" as a feeling that they are at work while their children could be needing them. While tearing up, Marisa states, "The guilt is on many levels. It is not only about time, but also what you wish you could do for them and you can't." Mothers also struggle with feeling

guilty when they cannot measure up to the "good-mom" stereotype, as Sarah conveys, "When I miss moments, it is hard." Also, mothers don't want their children to be a "latchkey kid," who is a child raising himself with no support. Berger and Luckmann (1966) claim that the use of labels—such as "mommy guilt" and "latchkey kid"—institutionalizes experience and creates a common understanding. The "mommy guilt" shows that there is something specific about this guilt that only working mothers could relate to. Working mothers of preschoolers or disabled children confront a bigger challenge.

The struggle that women face when it comes to guilt is ever mounting against them where they cannot always be present for their children. Mom guilt is a universal phenomenon and there is no one-way strategy to combat the overwhelming feeling of not being available when she is needed the most. They are torn and sandwiched between their desire to be a loving, ever present mother and a competent confident woman at her work. Communicating with this challenge serves as a way of relieving themselves of their inability to always be present, especially for those who can relate and resonate with them. Trusting and believing in the support system in the form of spouse, extended family members and also helpers help them navigate this ever-nagging emotion.

When 'I' Becomes 'My Kids'

As a result of devoting themselves to their children, some women almost lose their old selves. Vanessa states, "The only consideration is yourself, you work, you stop as and when you wish to, but you realise that once you get married, your time is no longer yours anymore. Every decision that you take was to be in conjunction in consideration of others around you, your husband, family members". Lindsay explains the loss of self by saying, "You no longer have time for yourself because you can never be and give enough." A loss of self goes with "losing your life and your independence," especially for mothers of newborns and preschoolers. Yet Sophie criticizes the idea of a loss of self: For some women, motherhood comes with a loss of self, postponing dreams and goals. I think it is absurd! As if being a mother cannot coexist with self-love and self-care. But it makes sense because that's what they have been taught. Aware of socialization, which acts as a structural force, Sophie embodies agency. She proposes that women can fulfill their roles as mothers while taking care of themselves, demonstrating how people's agency can constantly challenge structure in everyday practices.

Having a career makes women more independent, capable of improving family welfare, and generating economic resources. However, working in the public sphere also divides some women between two roles: professionals and family caregivers. This division doubles their burden as they must continually shift between their roles and duties. Not only do they have to climb up the career ladder, but they also need to cater to their family and domestic chores. In

contemporary society, working women reflect women's independence and strength in improving the welfare of the family. Modern society also believes that professional work and domestic duties go hand-in-hand; however, studies show that women and their families are still unable to balance the two because of problematic gender roles (Febrianto et al. 2022).

Sasaki et al (2010) further states that professional work for mothers is like a double-edged sword; on the one hand, it develops women's competence, but on the other, it erodes such competence if their spouses do not share domestic responsibilities. Having a professional job in the public sector is a joy for some women as it can foster a sense of independence. Working women can gain their own income which helps in feeling satisfaction. Despite the additional household income used to improve the family's economic conditions, working outside the house can reduce women's happiness due to a lack of family time (Mencarini and Sironi, 2010). Similarly, if women decide to prioritize their families, their professional performance may decline. As a result, working women are held to the expectation of performing well on both fronts. The division between work time and family time is often unequal for these women, creating problems that increase if they do not have adequate support from their families.

Women with higher education levels are more aware of gender issues and dynamics, enabling them to create a partnership marriage and reduce this double burden. Moreover, in gender conscious contemporary societies, both spouses are highly educated, and domestic duties rarely escalate to a point of creating serious problems within the family structure.

Diverse Workload of Working Women

Previous studies suggest that women's household burden increases when they have children less than 16 years of age (Tower and Alkadry, 2008) as they need more intensive care, nurturing, and learning assistance from their parents. The respondents expressed that they spend a lot of time providing care as mothers and wives. Even when both parents have jobs, husbands spend less time with children than their wives, especially when the children are sick (Maume, 2008). The women, therefore, face more of a burden than their husbands due to having more varied duties and roles. Striking a well-balanced time management strategy is a challenge for working women having children. Navigating dual roles can create problems for women when their families do not provide a safe and comfortable place, resulting in conflicts, lack of time with children, illness, and stress (Darmawati, 2019). Without a good family support system, women can suffer from heavy burdens and imbalances.

Husbands' involvement in childcare is an important part of creating an egalitarian family. In Canada, France, Norway, and the United States, husbands perform several domestic duties but do not spend as much time as their wives (Treas and

Lui, 2013). Even so, this contribution eases the wives' domestic burden and can create egalitarian husband-wife relationships while simultaneously reducing conflicts. Offer and Schneider (2011) state that mothers are more involved than fathers in tight time, performing mental works, and managing family activities.

Husbands involved in childcare reflect good partnership. Partnership-based relational pattern between husband and wife can either reduce or create double burdens (Hidayati, 2015). Domestic conflict and psychological pressure on women can be overcome if there is a good relationship between the spouses. Meanwhile, previous studies have found that a double burden is generally experienced by middle to lower class women who struggle from economic pressure, requiring them to work and take care of the household at the same (Nofianti, 2016). However, this does not rule out women from other social classes that experience double burden as regardless of class, Indonesian families still adhere to the traditional values of women's roles in the domestic sector.

Lee et al. (2018) found that women in South Korea, especially married women, experience a higher rate of suicide because they struggle with the dual burden of managing professional jobs and households. The associated psychological pressure makes it extremely difficult for women to decide what to prioritize, their jobs or domestic duties. In Islam, married women are essentially independent from the responsibilities held by their husbands. However, in practice, cultural factors cause women to bear several burdens (White, 2010). This study also illustrated that cultural factors further blurred the divide between professional and personal responsibilities during the pandemic.

Several women are unaware that they experience a double burden because they are accustomed to it (Ramadhani, 2016) a phenomenon that is especially common in traditional societies where domestic duties are considered a women's obligation. At the end of the day, women who experience this double burden are simply left to complain about lacking domestic cooperation from their husbands. Further, the social system in traditional societies has not been able to provide a comfortable space for career-oriented women. Conversely, Eastern European countries have accommodated working women by reducing the double burden through institutional arrangements, job security, and low-pressure competitions (Ghodsee, 2014). Unfortunately, the social system in Indonesia still adheres to traditional cultural values and is not keen on women pursuing careers. Apart from assisting and caring for children, women are responsible for cooking. Even though the respondents were burdened with multiple tasks, they were still required to cook for their families.

Work Life Balance

Valk & Srinivasan (2011) are of the opinion that in India, the role of women as 'homemakers' and 'caretakers' are deeply entrenched within the society, making

work-life balance issues very challenging. The work-life balance has been a source of constant confrontation and with paid work being dominated by men, women are already marginalized and make maximum contribution towards unpaid work. Generally, in most countries of the world, women, regardless of employment status, invest more time in child and family care (Carli, 2020). Work-life balance is an important factor for working women because if women dedicate more time or energy to one side of the duality, conflict could occur. Jimo (forthcoming 2025) pointed that in the past, women have been primarily associated with the world of home and men with the world of work and with the prevailing societal norms and beliefs in most societies, and women are expected to look after the domestic responsibilities. With the varied socio-economic and emotional issues pressing on working women today, it becomes challenging for many women to balance family and profession proficiently. However, with greater occupational mobility and the emergence of new economic patterns made possible by the introduction of modern education, the traditional view regarding women's place and role is slowly losing ground in present day society.

Women today are more educated and independent and are engaged in a domain that was earlier dominated by men. But when women have children and still choose to continue working in their paid jobs, they must engage with the consequences of the dual role as a result of prevailing traditional role expectations and obligations that is attached to the motherhood role. Acharya (1998) states that women are now passing through a phase between subjugation and emancipation and have now left behind the old tradition of being confined to domesticity. However, with this change it is also notable to point that as the number of women seeking paid employment only continues to increase, the adversity lies in the increasing number of children under the age of 6 who have to spend part of their being cared by others (Meece, 2009) which thereby signifies the prominent aspect of childcare challenges for dual earner families.

In the present scenario, as many educated women continuously shift their allegiance to the paid workforce and break the traditional mold, obligations attached to family responsibilities in particular, childcare poses a vital challenge for many women. Therefore, working women who decide to leave behind their traditionally assigned role and strive to retain top positions in their careers are presumed to be the most vulnerable to encounter conflict between the societal value systems which continue to dictate women's career ambitions and their motivations to work outside the home.

Maintaining work–life balance is a continuous lifelong process, and the balance will tilt toward different domains. This tilting is normal; sometimes we need to give more to work, other times to family. The goal is not to 'achieve' work–life balance, because this implies that there is some type of finality to the journey. Instead, the journey toward work-life balance is dynamic, requires regular reflection, and is different for each person. Therefore, the goal is to be aware of

the different roles that we are balancing and to evaluate whether we are meeting those responsibilities in a way that we are satisfied with. Through self-evaluation and self-awareness, we learn more about what balance means to us. The aim is not to treat work life balance as a single goal, which, once achieved, is ignored and never addressed again. Sometimes the balance will shift toward work; sometimes it will shift toward personal life. The point is to be aware of feelings about work and personal life and to engage in behaviors that will buttress against the negative effects of stress and of the scale shifting too much toward one particular life domain (Nortje, 2021). Another consideration is that work-life balance is not a universal, absolute value. In other words, two people can achieve balance in different ways and at different points along the work–life spectrum. Reiter (2007) makes a convincing argument that 'balance' is subjective; instead of striving toward an absolute value of work-life balance, it is better to strive toward optimal functioning within different life domains with as little conflict as possible between them.

Triple Role of Working Women in the Present Scenario

According to the triple role of women as suggested by Moser, women in the present study apart from the paid and unpaid work are also equally involved in the community role. Apart from the productive as well as the reproductive work entailed as part of the stereotypical gender roles, they are also involved and engaged in the welfare of the community. Community life in Nagaland is one of solidarity and cooperation where every member of the society is expected to contribute in the religious, social and cultural life of the society. The close-knit society expects even more so from the educated section of the society with their time, resources and contribute for the common welfare. Women in the study allot time for different purposes as per their schedule ensuring none of their roles clash, proper management of their tasks, time and resources enables them to not neglect but delegate meticulously. Judicious spending of their time and delegation of their varied tasks is how they successfully maneuver throughout the day.

Their domestic work, such as childbearing, cooking or cleaning and caring for the family is non-monetised and or concealed as 'not real' work (Delaney and Macdonald, 2018). For a long time, this has 'weaken[ed] their position within the labour market, contributing to their low wages and poor conditions as waged workers' (Ortner & Whitehead, 1981: 11). However, there have been notable changes that have seen women become active players in the labour market. McLaren et al. (2020) argue that the work performed by women is only routine, with limited visibility and valuation, as males comparatively gain a greater propensity to rise into leadership positions, professional specialisation, and higher earnings. For this paper, we define the productive role as work with an exchange value, that is, paid work, where women also take part in the labour market and formal employment. Unlike for men, where this is ordinarily political and paid work, for women, it is often voluntary unpaid work undertaken in 'free time'

(Moser, 1993). This contrast highlights how women remain subordinated even at community levels, seemingly performing arduous, unimportant, and undervalued roles (McLaren et al., 2020). Moser (1993) iterates that once women try to penetrate the so-called 'masculine' world and challenge gender subordination in community management, they become confronted for not conforming to their gender-ascribed roles.

The present study tries to demonstrate strong theoretical grounding by linking respondent's narratives directly to key feminist frameworks. The lived experiences of working women in Nagaland University are interpreted through Hochschild's 'Second Shift' theory revealing how unpaid domestic labour continues to shape women's professional trajectories. Nancy Fraser's redistribution and recognition (2004) and Butler's gender performativity (1990) further illuminate the persistence of gendered expectations in both domestic and institutional spheres. The integration of these theories moves the discussion beyond description, providing a critical analytical understanding of why patriarchal labour divisions endure despite women's participation in paid employment.

The study also endeavored to move beyond individual accounts and situate women's experiences within the broader structural and institutional context of the university. Leave provisions, flexible work arrangements and gender representation in leadership positions are analyzed to show how institutional practices perpetuate inequality. This structural lens demonstrates that the 'second shift' is not only a personal struggle but also a systemic issue rooted in organizational and cultural frameworks.

Learning Trajectories of the Study

The findings of the study reveal how women develop coping strategies, resilience and adaptive learning to navigate dual responsibilities. Drawing on the concept of 'growth mindset', it discusses how continuous learning, support from spouse, helpers and colleagues and self-efficacy help women balance academic and domestic obligations. All the respondents describe adopting proactive time management, prioritizing and boundary setting techniques demonstrating how agency operates even within constraining structures. The study not only describe the challenges and constraints that women face while navigating the dual role but also highlighted how they are able to achieve their own empowerment and develop their capacity for growth within the system.

Conclusion: The Way Forward

The second shift is less of an issue for dual-earner households in today's society than it was a few decades ago, it is still an issue that needs to be addressed simply for the fact that it is still predominantly women who perform the core household

tasks associated with the second shift. The amount of work that is required of those performing the second shift has diminished, but the fact that there is still an apparent contradiction in the expectations of women in today's society means that the second shift is not an idea of the past. Until household tasks are divided evenly based on the amount of time each spouse spends working outside the home, there is a fear that the second shift will continue to be an issue for women, especially mothers and wives, who work in the public sphere.

The study sought to understand how working women manage when the work directly intersects with the home space, where existing cultural and religious biases push them to the forefront of reproductive and care functions. McLaren et al. (2020) worry that this conflation of reproductive and productive spaces brings additional burdens to women compared with their male counterparts. Women know that motherhood entails hard work, but it is also a joyful experience. Georgia (name changed) captures this point: "I never thought it would be so hard and so rewarding at the same time." Since pregnancy and motherhood vary from case to case, unpredictability is part of women's discourse.

The arising of the second shift was an inevitable consequence of women joining the paid workforce with an uncooperative workplace and unchanging gender norms. According to Hochschild (1989), in order for women to have made a successful transition into the paid workforce, "The workplace would allow parents to work part time, to share jobs, to work flexible hours, to take parental leaves to give birth, tend a sick child or care for a well one… (I)t would include affordable housing closer to places of work, and perhaps community-based meal and laundry services".

Men in today's dual-earner households are much more willing than their predecessors to contribute to housework. Housework is no longer looked at as an emasculating task, as it has become much more socially acceptable in recent years for men to share the household responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and childcare. In fact, many men find it more rewarding to share in the duties of the second shift so as to avoid the animosity women experience when forced to take sole responsibility for the housework and childcare. While men have become more willing to share housework, women have simultaneously found it more acceptable to put less effort into housework.

Hochschild connects time pressures, time allocation, family breakdown, and unpleasant labor to gender inequities. Hochschild asserts women's work is often devalued to rationalize the extra hours of labor they perform during the second shift. She contends the second shift is integral to the 'stalled revolution' women experienced in the United States, whereby men maintain their status and power as the 'breadwinner' and women, despite working in the paid labor force, continue performing traditional domestic roles. According to Hochschild (1989) gender ideologies and expectations frame women's experience of the second shift.

Women and men are socialized in their childhood to value traditional gender roles. When men and women join in marriage, they do so with preconceived gender ideologies, which impact how they operate in the relationship. In many cases, working women often times sacrifice their values and desires for the sake of saving their marriages. Thus, working mothers even more so than working women live a daily life constrained by working two shifts. Most working mothers cannot outsource their 'mother' and 'wife' duties and obligations. They are expected to contribute to the overall household income as a dual earner of the home, while also tending to menial daily household chores and their children's needs. Men are often times excused from care work, in part, because they are able to use their socioeconomic status as breadwinner to negotiate power in the household.

Moser's triple role theory resonates with the women in Nagaland University as the community is close knit where citizens are expected to play their specific roles and also beyond. Productive and reproductive roles have always coexisted since time immemorial so as the contribution to the social, cultural and religious life of the society is deeply entrenched. Working irrespective of whether they are single, widowed, married with or without children equally take active part in the well being of the society and live in peaceful coexistence. They ensure that they plan out their days and weeks well ahead of time to not fail the expectations of their fellow members, they chalk out schedules and contribute in their own capacities. Women of this age and time are aware of their tasks and responsibilities and manage as per the circumstances.

To avoid oversimplifying working women's experiences to merely quantifiable shifts that do not give a big picture of working women's everyday lived experiences; we must undertake a more in-depth analysis of the second shift. This paper aims to deconstruct the second shift by engaging a critical analysis of working women. Most work on second shift highlights the struggles of working women balancing work and home life. However, achieving balance is an ongoing struggle for women irrespective of their age and in whichever stage they may be either in their career or at home. In the workplace setting, working women are expected to have the career capacity and characteristics of a man whereas at home she is expected to be culturally prescribed ideal mother or ideal wife. The opinion of the respondents varied according to the socio-demographic background. Married women with children from 10 years and above are able to strike a balance and have thus created a niche for themselves as opposed to those working women who have young children and are just starting out on to their career. It is very crucial for those at the initial phase of their career and also motherhood that they are in the throes of creating a space for themselves both in the family and at work.

Actionable Policy Recommendations and Institutional Reforms

This section has been expanded to include practical and policy-relevant recommendations derived from the study's findings. Some proposed measures include:

1. **Establishing a well-maintained Day-Care Centre with competent/efficient teachers:** It is vital to provide a well-maintained Day-Care Centre with competent/efficient teachers as the university is located in one of the remotest parts of the state and accessibility is limited unlike others living in towns and cities. Working women can be saved the anxiety of their children being in proper care to be closely monitored by trained teachers, helpers and the like. Create university-managed day-care centres at main campuses to support working mothers and fathers. Affordable and reliable childcare will reduce stress, improve attendance, and promote work–life balance.
2. **Establish a Work–Life Balance Support Cell**

   A specialized cell under the Women's Studies Centre or Equal Opportunity Cell should offer counselling, mentorship, and coordinated support for women experiencing role strain.

3. **Improve Gender-Responsive Infrastructure**

   Ensure provision of lactation rooms, clean restrooms, safe transportation options, and rest spaces to foster an inclusive workplace environment.

4. **Conduct Annual Gender Audits**

   Institutional audits will help assess gender representation, policy implementation, and workplace conditions, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.

All these recommendations will enable the insights drawn into concrete actions that can transform institutional reforms thereby bridging the gap between academic inquiry and real-world impact.

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Article: Exploring a Lifestyle Sport: The First Decade (2010-2022) of Randonneuring in India and Hyderabad, its Birth and Growth

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Exploring a Lifestyle Sport: The First Decade (2010-2022) of Randonneuring in India and Hyderabad, its Birth and Growth.

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Abstract:

The sporting landscape of India has been largely dominated by cricket, but in the past decade, there has been a growing interest in urban spaces for lifestyle sports such as running and cycling. This article is an overview of the history of randonneuring, a sub-culture of cycling which has more than a hundred years of history. This article presents the growth of randonneuring in India and especially in Hyderabad. The article relies on primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources include first-hand semi-structured interviews and participant observations made by the first author during fieldwork (2016-2018) in Hyderabad, India. The secondary sources include data from randonneuring websites. Audax India Randonneurs (AIR) and Hyderabad Randonneurs have successfully conducted randonneuring events since their inception in 2010 and 2012, respectively. This article highlights the efforts of several key individuals whose relentless efforts during the past decade have secured India the top spot in the randonneuring world by most homologated (officially recognised) kilometres in 2021.

Keywords: *Sport history; Cycling culture; Randonneuring; Urban Lifestyle; Hyderabad and India;*

Introduction

Randonneuring is a subculture of cycling. Cycling is the physical activity of riding a bicycle. According to the Meriam Webster dictionary, a bicycle is a vehicle with two tandem wheels, handlebars for steering, a saddle seat, and pedals by which it is propelled' (Merriam Webster). The word bicycle signifies different things to different people at different times in history (Vivanco, 2013).

The sporting landscape of India has been largely dominated by cricket, but in the past decade, there has been a growing interest in the urban spaces towards lifestyle sports such as running and cycling. The concept of lifestyle sports is relatively new in India. This emergence of lifestyle sports calls for research and understanding as alternatives to the dominant sports culture in India. These new arenas of sports are given various labels by academics and scholars. These sports are termed 'alternative', 'lifestyle', 'post-industrial', 'postmodern', 'action-sports', and 'extreme' sports that continue to grow the world over.

According to Belinda Wheaton (2004), the 'labelling' of specific sporting activities appeared in the 1980s with the work of Nancy Midol on the 'new sports' and 'whiz' sports movement in France. Midol and Broyer (1995) together developed an argument indicating 'new sports forms and new communities' based on 'whiz sports'. Scholars such as Rinehart

(2000) attempted to list the activities ranging from indigenous folk games to ultra-marathoning to various media spectacles such as skateboarding, BMX (Bicycle motocross) and snowboarding. 'Extreme' sport became an all-embracing label in North American popular media discourses that included 'alternative sport' (Wheaton, 2004). The increasing number of labels is indicative of the wide range of activities labelled as sports.

The distinctions between sporting activities are being made on multiple grounds, i.e., forms of play, artistic sensibilities and risk. Wheaton suggests "to move beyond simplistic and constraining dichotomies such as traditional versus new, mainstream versus emergent, or other related binaries such as sport versus art" to understand the meanings attached to sporting activities.

The differences in the sports forms are highlighted by the debates, their meanings, values, identities, and so on, which can be endless, but what is significant is its potential challenge to traditional ways of 'seeing', 'doing' and understanding sport (Rinehart 1998b; Midol and Broyer 1995 in (Wheaton, 2004)). The elements of the various sporting activities interchange and have few characteristics that are different from the traditional rule-bound, competitive, and masculinised dominant sports cultures (Ibid). Even though Lifestyle sport is a less all-embracing term, it is used in the article as it is relevant to categorise randonneuring.

Running long distances started making its way into people's lifestyles in the mid-2000s in India. A glance at the urban behaviour concerning physical activity and sport will suggest the gaining popularity of 'running culture', which gave rise to a sub-culture known as 'marathon culture' in the last decade. Similarly, this decade (from 2010-19) is marked by the growing popularity of 'Cycling Culture', which is giving rise to a sub-culture known as 'randonneuring'. Randonneuring is a long-distance organised cycling sport and is categorised as an endurance cycling sport. It is also known as audax riding. Randonneuring is an international event present in more than 60 countries. It has been practised for a little over 100 years. Randonneuring is growing exponentially in India and other countries such as the U. S. A, Japan, apart from the European countries and France, where it has originated. Randonnuering is now a "Global culture." The ubiquitous nature of sports in this contemporary world is undoubted (Dyck, 2004).

Another notable factor is that the riders participating in randonneuring events are neither professional athletes nor have relevant sports careers. Contrary to what is generally understood, they are people from everyday life having regular jobs. Making a note of this, Heike Bunte (2015, p. 157) writes, 'these riders neither make a profession of their adventurous extreme sport nor are they specially born to this kind of activity'. It is intriguing that ordinary people accomplish such physically and mentally

demanding efforts, i.e., riding 200 km, 300 km, 400 km, 600 km, 1000 km, and 1200 km within the set time limits. How do they finish these events, which might, for most people, appear to be an extraordinary achievement and, for some, a ludicrous activity on the surface? The article explores the specific sub-culture of cycling – randonneuring culture, i.e., randonneuring experience, events, and riders in the context of Hyderabad, seeking a profound understanding.

This article is broadly divided into three parts. The first part of the article outlines various events related to the origin of the bicycle. What a bicycle is closely related to the evolution of the machine and the multiple meanings and images that it embodies. This article also explores the multidimensional character of bicycles as objects. Using the concept of critical estrangement, 'making the bicycle strange', helps one understand the complex socio-technical object whose meanings are shaped through its histories, production, and uses. Therefore, a brief history of the cycle is given to understand the emergence of the bicycle as a technology and its adaptations, which are fundamental to holistically understanding cycling as a culture. All of these provide the necessary historical context in which randonneuring originated.

The second part of the article moves on to the history of randonneuring. The 'what' and 'when' questions are pivotal to the emergence of randonneuring. The third part of the article focuses on randonneuring in India, particularly in the city of Hyderabad.

A Brief History and Evolution of the Cycle:

The cycle was invented in the early 19th century. It went through many changes during the last two centuries. It is considered one of the simplest forms of technology today. The origin and details of the bicycle are debated by historians. The term 'bicycle' is understood to have come into use during the 1860s giving birth to a new consumer culture for cycles. The cycle industry emerged as one of the first and most expensive mass-produced luxury durable consumer goods in Europe and the United States of America. The cycle industry led to the 'good roads' movement promoting quality roads and streets and, therefore, to the rise of the automobile industry. Bicycles also played a vital role in Victorian-era social transformations, including women's rights. The Velocipede, the high-wheeler, and the safety bicycle are the most general cycle types discussed by historians (Vivanco, 2013).

It all began with a dream of inventing a horseless carriage. This became a reality in Germany in 1817, with Von Drais unveiling the horse replacement vehicle, a 'Laufmaschine' (running machine). It had a frame and wheels with no pedals. It was propelled by running. It was variously known as the 'velocipede', 'Draisine', and 'hobby horse' (Vivanco, 2013). It took two more decades, i.e., in 1839, to become a mechanically driven

bike. Even though there is little evidence, much credit for the invention of the cycle was given to a Scottish Blacksmith, Kirkpatrick Macmillan. By the 1860s, the bicycle was manufactured using a wooden frame, metal tires with pedals, and a crank on its front wheel. For its uncomfortable ride on the not-so-well-laid roads, it earned the nickname-'Boneshaker'. Improving on the design, Eugene Meyer, in the 1870s, created the High-Wheeler bicycle. It was made with a metal frame and rubber tyres, which offered a much more comfortable ride. It had two spoked wheels, a large one in front and a small one at the rear. It resembled a British penny and farthing coins hence known as 'Parth Farthing' in Britain. It became popular during the 1870s and 1880s.

The actual bicycle, which is very similar to a modern bicycle, was born in 1876. It featured a strong metal frame, a metal chain powered by two pedals and two wheels. It was invented by the Englishman Harry John Lawson and is known as the safety bicycle as the rider was closer to the ground, making stopping easier, and the power shifted to the rear wheel, keeping the rider's legs safely away from the rotating front wheel. A breakthrough came through another Englishman in 1885, John Kemp Starley, who developed the first commercially successful version known as the Rover. Another significant improvement came through an Irish Inventor, John Boyd Dunlop, in 1888 after his son was prescribed a dose of cycling by a doctor. Therefore, to make his son's ride comfortable, he fit tyres that could be inflated, and this clever idea revolutionised the bicycle.

The critical aspects attributed to the success of the bicycle are the innovations in production, designs to increase the efficiency of manufacturing, and cost-cutting measures to make it affordable to larger populations. One of the notable figures in expanding cycling was Col. Albert Pope, who saw a business opportunity. He established his company Columbia Bicycles, and became the largest bicycle manufacturer in the world. The departmental specialisation and some other key advances in metallurgy and other relevant standard and interchangeable parts were pioneered at the company. The electrification of the factory to provide lighting for night shifts which further helped to create a continuously moving assembly line, was provided by Thomas Edison. This was considered one of the first for mass production (Vivanco, 2013). By the 1890s, in Europe and the United States, bicycles became a craze as interest in two-wheeled machines grew significantly. An article from *the New York Times* in 1896 enthused that 'the bicycle promises a splendid extension of personal power and freedom, scarcely inferior to what wings would give' (Andrews, 2017). The activity was viewed as liberating as it promoted 'auto-mobility'. The users attached new meanings and status to bicycling as it became a symbol of progress and being modern (Vivanco, 2013). Like many innovations, the bicycle promoters too, were not free of social controversies. There were concerns about the health consequences of cycling, the perception of

cyclists by other road users and the surrounding social reform among women.

The mass production of bicycles contributed directly to the automobile industry's rise and laid the foundation for a new concept of personal mobility. Bicycle historian Aronson writes, 'The bicycle did the dirty work for its mechanised successor in a variety of ways' (Vivanco, 2013, p. 34).

The early 20th century saw the explosion in bicycle designs with simple variations to the safety bicycle that penetrated well into European and American markets. This was the first bicycle boom that appealed beyond the upper and middle classes to the masses. The bicycles were exported to colonised regions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia as a global commodity and technological artefact (Anrold & DeWald, 2011; Vivanco, 2013). Bicycles made it to India during the colonial period. India was one of the important markets for the British colonial economy. The annual importation has scaled up dramatically from thirty-five thousand by 1913-14 to more than two hundred thousand by 1951-1952. Even though there was competition from Germany, other European producers and Japan, Britain held the major share of the Indian market with manufacturers such as Raleigh, BSA, and Rudge-Whitworth (Anrold & DeWald, 2011). By the mid-1940s, Indians started their domestic industries that created a host of local goods such as bells, stands, carriers and services for bicycle users. After independence, the introduction of high import tariffs and changes in postcolonial policies brought down imports that gave rise to domestic manufacturers such as 'Hind Cycles' (Anrold & DeWald, 2011, p. 976). Advertising and the evolving marketing techniques with hire-purchase and loan agreements led to the sharp decline in prices of bicycles that diffused to small towns and villages by the 1950s (Anrold & DeWald, 2011).

Apart from the broader safety, the bicycle played as a common inexpensive transportation machine, with numerous improvements, like the addition of gears and suspensions. Vivanco (2013) recognises an important feature of technology that it changes as it 'evolves'; this feature marks the central idea of the contemporary consumer culture too. The aerodynamic design made the bicycle lighter and stronger, making it more efficient. The pace of innovations in bicycle technology is high, making it common for bicycle enthusiasts to claim that the bicycle was invented yesterday (Vivanco, 2013, p. 40). Over time, advanced motorised vehicles like motorcycles and automobiles have replaced pedal-powered machines as a convenient means of transport. This eventually caused the bicycle to degrade into an inferior machine. The motorised vehicle became the adult norm and a symbol of high status. School-going children and economically weaker sections who cannot afford a motorcycle use the bicycle.

In the 1970s, new meanings attached to the bicycle as an alternative to automobiles began circulating. One of the factors for the change was the oil crisis. The people of America became aware of the benefits of bicycling for physical health and as an energy-efficient transportation. Furthermore, the greenways movement promoted the bicycle and advocated for cycling paths. The above factors gave rise to the demand for cycling, which came to be known as the 'second bicycle boom' (Vivanco, 2013, p. 106). This spike in demand has accelerated the upward trend towards specialisation and increased versatility of the bicycle.

In India, during the past decade, the second bicycle boom is starting to emerge in major urban cities. The second bicycle boom is marked by the wider use of lightweight geared bicycles by adults as they make health-conscious decisions regarding physical exercise, transportation and recreation.

The year 2017 has been celebrated as the bicentennial year of the cycle by various cycling-related organisations worldwide (washingtonpost, 2017; Vishnavi, 2017). Cycling has been adopted by numerous people for various purposes. It was used as a vehicle for transportation in Europe. Later it became a sport during the 1860s with a race in France. During the 1880s, it became a recreational activity and continued ever since.

Randonneuring: a sub culture of cycling

For most non-cyclists, the terms randonneuring and brevet may be new. These terms have been explained in the following section. The term 'randonneur' has its roots in the French language and has been adopted by the cycling community. Another term with French roots associated with cycling is 'brevet'.

The term 'randonneur' originates from the French term 'randonee', roughly translated as a long trip or an outing. For example, multi-day hiking, backpacking trips, long-distance trekking and cross-country skiing can be considered. Therefore, a person who engages in such kinds of activities is called a 'randonneur'. In cycling, it means a rider who attempts to ride a long distance within a time limit is commonly referred to as a 'randonneur'.

Randonneuring is a form of cycling, though it is hard to define because of its multi-faceted nature and the different meanings associated with it by every randonneur. Another way of understanding randonneuring is to specify what it is not. It is certainly not a race or a competition with other riders. It is an endurance test for oneself against the time, the weather and the route. Every rider who finishes the ride is treated the same. In randonneuring, unlike competitive races, the riders are not focused on

winning. The principal aspect of randonneuring is self-sufficiency; the rider can only get help available at the checkpoints along the route. If a rider seeks assistance from the supporting members in between the checkpoints, they will have to face a time penalty or even disqualification from the event. Randonneurs are free to buy food supplies or get their bike repaired at any shops they come across in their course. Any rider who has completed a 200 Kilometre 'brevet' will be entitled to be called a 'randonneur'. The term 'brevet' also originated from France and translates into a 'patent', 'certificate', or 'diploma' (Randonneurs USA). In randonneuring, long-distance riding starting with a 200km course is usually referred to as a 'brevet'. The riders have to carry a brevet card throughout the course that is to be produced at the checkpoints and get it stamped with timing details by the event official. It is proof for the rider. Table 1. shows the distances and the time required for the riders to finish the brevets and opt for the respective medals.

Table 1: Showing brevet time limits for each brevet distance

Distance (in Km)	200	300	400	600	1000	1200	1400
Time (in Hrs.)	13.5	20	27	40	75	90	116:40

Origin of Randonneuring

The 'audacious' effort of a group of Italian cyclists on the 12th of June 1897 between Rome and Naples, a distance of 230 Kilometres, marked the start of randonneuring. The group stuck together with a captain leading and setting a sufficient pace to get the job done in a day without anyone dropping out. It was a unique accomplishment as the riders were commoners, not specialists or trained riders. The riders were successful in proving that even ordinary riders can ride long distances. Randonneuring is associated with the term 'Audax' as the riding clubs are named so, and events are known as 'Audax riding'. The Latin root word 'audax' means 'to dare'. Long-distance cycling enthusiasts have garnered much attention in the press (Randonneurs USA). Later in 1904, Henri Desgrange, founder of the Tour de France, initiated Audax France to promote long-distance cycling among enthusiasts. As a result, the Audax Club Parisien (ACP) was newly created by Audax France in the same year, which became the authority to certify brevet riders under Audax rules in France.

Only 200 km were regarded as a brevet prior to World War I, but it quickly gained popularity in France and now includes several additional clubs. Here, awards were given to the clubs or groups with the most number of members who completed the challenges successfully. It is important to ride in a group since, unlike in racing, the rider is not attempting to outride other riders.

After the war, in 1921, the ACP split and some of the riders created L'Union des Audax Cyclists Parisiens (UACP), which is now known as L'Union des Audax Francaises (UAF). The rides organised by UAF are known as Brevets Audax, which is to be ridden at an average speed of 22.5 kilometres per hour under the direction of a ride captain, whom riders should not overtake (Audax Club Parisien History). The following paragraph discusses the history of Audax Club Parisien.

Audax Club Parisien (ACP)

21st September 1921 is marked as the inception of ACP. The major distinguishable factor from UACP is that the riders in the events organised by ACP can ride at their own speed hence called the 'allure libre' club, which is considered free speed bicycle tours comprising various distances. The members of the ACP retained the name 'Audax Club Parisien' and organised brevets des randonneurs, adding the first 300-kilometre event on the 11th of June, 1922; the first 400-kilometre event on the 22nd of July, 1923; and the first 600-kilometre ride on 30th of June and the 1st of July, 1928 to the existing brevet of 200kms. On the 15th of August 1934, the first 1000-kilometre event was organised (Audax Club Parisien History).

Since 1976, ACP has spread to many other nations. During its initial phase, it was restricted to a few European countries and was called Brevets Randonneurs Europeans. Later on, in 1983, in nine countries, it came to be known as the Brevets des Randonneurs Mondiaux (BRM). The ACP sanctioned brevets are now followed with the same rules and regulations in all the 60 nations (as of 2019) of the Randonneurs Mondiaux. These international events, with their location and schedules for every year, are displayed on the ACP website. The ACP/BRM events are the only eligibility criteria to participate in the Paris-Brest-Paris or get awards such as Randonnuer-5000 or Super Randonneur medal (Randonneurs USA). Most riders attempt to become a Super Randonneur. One has to complete a 200, 300, 400 and 600 BRM in a single season in order to be considered for the Super Randonneur Medal. The title of Super Randonneur is the most sought-after and one of the biggest motivators for participating in the brevets. Today, the participation numbers themselves demonstrate that Audax Club Parisien is one of the largest cycling clubs in France, and its presence is across the globe (Audax Club Parisien History).

Randonneuring in India

The emergence

In India, Audax India Randonneur (AIR) is recognised by Audax Club Parisien (ACP) for conducting and overseeing all Brevets de Randonneurs Mondiaux (BRM) and Audax events. The first 200 km

BRM was conducted in India on January 31st, 2010, in Mumbai. BRMs were initiated and promoted by Satish Patki, a long-distance cycling enthusiast from Mumbai. India's first overnight 400 km brevet in August 2010 and 600 km brevet in September 2010 was organised in Pune. Therefore, providing a complete Super Randonneur series for the riders in 2010. This event helped the riders to qualify for the 17th edition of Paris-Brest-Paris in 2011. In India, Divya Tate has been a national representative and has facilitated all the brevet events under AIR since 2011 by coordinating with ACP. She is also one of the first group of riders from India and the first women rider in India to qualify for the 1200 km Paris-Brest-Paris, an Audax ride in France, 2011 edition (Audax India Randonneurs; Shyam, 2019).

Established in 2010, Pune Randonneurs is the oldest randonneuring club in India. In 2011, there were a total of three clubs, including Pune Randonneurs, registered with ACP. The other two are namely Randonneurs India and Bangalore Brevets. All the riders who do not have a club to affiliate register with the Randonneurs India club. The rides prior to the establishment of the official website in 2014 were more personal. The riders were more responsible during the entire brevet. They created the route, chose the event dates, and used automatic checkpoints, so there was no official person from the organisation to verify. The cyclists followed all ACP regulations while riding in various locations across the nation.

Just to get a perspective, there were 340 riders who finished various brevets, i.e., homologations and ridden a total of 1,01,100kms, i.e., homologated kilometres, by the end of the 2011 season (Audax Club Parisien History).

The term "homologation" in randonneuring refers to the procedure used by the governing body to formally acknowledge and validate the completion of a brevet or an Audax event. Homologation makes sure that participants' accomplishments are recognised and documented for a variety of reasons, including keeping records, presenting certifications, and determining eligibility for additional randonneuring events. Brevet cards, control points, time verification and brevet stamps are all part of the process. The randonneuring events are homologated to ensure their standardisation and integrity and to give participants the opportunity to have their accomplishments recognised and acknowledged. It also creates a historical record of the successes and advancements of riders in the sport.

Audax India Randonneur (AIR): Its Growth

The popularity of randonneuring in India has been growing since its inception (see Table 2). In 2010, the riders registered with AIR clocked 30,100 homologated kilometres in the whole year, while the total

mileage stopped at 44,14,600 km in 2021, with India taking the number one spot in the country rankings. All the years have seen an incremental increase in the number of clubs, the rider's participation and the total number of kilometres ridden, with the exception of 2020, as there was a drop in the numbers because of the pandemic situation. The participation records have been consistently broken.

Since 2014, AIR has become organised with a website allowing riders in India to know all the event details, i.e., the route, elevation gain, checkpoints, and fellow riders. A few long-distance cyclists created the website that acted as a platform, which has further accelerated the growth and popularity of the event. There is clearly a visible jump in numbers from 2013 to 2014, i.e., from 2,78,500km to 6,90,100km, and this can be attributed to the opening up of the website. Similarly, there is a big spike in 2021. The reason for the more than 3X spike is that the centenary BRM 200 is organised by various clubs throughout the world. The global community of Randonneurs turned up in an unprecedented number to participate in the 200km BRM on 11th September 2021 that, commemorated the centennial year of ACP. 4,750 riders registered at 60 clubs from across the country for the centenary brevet (Singh, 2021). The historical event has contributed significantly and made India top the world country ranking with 44,14,600 homologated kilometres. India obtained the top position with a significant gap compared to other countries. Japan and Russia have secured second and third positions with 22,48,000kms and 15,58,400kms, respectively (Audax Club Parisien History).

Table 2: Shows the growth of Audax India Randonneurs (AIR) participation from its inception and the number of homologations in each event. Source: Audax Club Parisien website documents. [URL: https://www.audax-club-parisien.com/en/our-organizations/brm-world/]

Total Indian Clubs	Country Rank	Year	200km homologations	300km homologations	400km homologations	600km homologations	1000km homologations	Total homologations	Total no. of Kilometres ridden
		2010							30,100
3	19	2011	174	81	47	37	1	340	1,01,100
7	14	2012	436	150	100	48	3	737	2,04,000
9	14	2013	627	183	110	72	11	1,003	2,78,500
15	10	2014	1379	459	262	203	50	2,353	6,90,100
19	11	2015	1567	505	316	254	29	2,671	7,72,700
25	6	2016	2595	938	579	418	54	4,584	13,36,800
34	3	2017	3156	1279	916	723	52	6,126	18,67,100
49	3	2018	4092	1785	1251	1073	260	8,461	27,58,100
63	4	2019	4312	2031	1556	1283	127	9,309	29,90,900
74	3	2020	2225	1080	673	543	45	4,566	14,09,000
75	1	2021	8625	2720	2002	1783	3	15,133	44,14,600

Homologation refers to an approval process whereby certification is issued by ACP. A single rider can have multiple homologations.

From its inception, long-distance cycling enthusiasts have been pivotal in forming clubs in their respective cities and towns, registering with AIR for conducting the brevets. As a result, more cyclists started venturing into randonneuring, taking it as a challenge and popularising randonneuring in India. The growth has been multi-fold. As we can see from Table 2, as of 2021, 75 clubs in various cities are part of Audax India Randonneur, which organises the brevets in their respective cities. The total number of brevets went up from 50 in 2011 to 830 in 2021, excluding Brevet Populaires (Audax India Randonneurs).

Brevet Populaire events are 100km-entry-level events for riders interested in long-distance cycling. These kinds of events aim at popularising the randonneuring culture. With the rise of the Brevet Populaire (BP) events from 2019, the total number of events related to randonneuring jumped significantly to over 1000 events. As we can see in Table 3, with the increase in the number of qualifying events, the number of Super Randonneurs went up from 185 in 2015 to 957 in 2019. The drop in the number of Randonneurs achieving the Super Randonneur (SR) title in 2020 is due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 3: Shows year-wise Audax India Randonneurs Total Super Randonneurs (T.SRs), total no. of Super Randonneur Qualifiers (SRQs) and Brevet Populaire (BP) taken place. Source: Audax India Randonneurs website. [URL: https://www.audaxindia.in/events.php]

Year	T.SRs	SRQs	1000km	1200km	1400km	Fleche	BP	Total Events
2015	185	249	4	4	0	1		258
2016	324	274	7	4	0	2		287
2017	451	386	13	7	0	1		407
2018	787	439	22	5	1	3		526
2019	957	639	21	16	0	5	148	829
2020	415	745	27	13	3	9	219	1016
2021	708	830	1	2	0	0	195	1028

The overall growth in the riders achieving the SR titles reflects the immense possibility and inherent capabilities of being human. Even though there are multiple factors which contribute to growth, the most important is the ability to transform themselves by constantly pushing their physical and mental limits. As the first author experienced the event first-hand by riding 200kms, 300kms, 400kms and 600kms and acquired

a Super Randonneur title in 2018 shares and agrees with the narratives of various super randonneurs that the activity of randonneuring has a fundamental transformative nature. The activities certainly test the limits of the riders while facing uncertain challenges like riding at night, with sleep deprivation, and with varying temperatures and terrain. In the process, the riders have to dig deep inside to find mental and physical strength to finish the challenge. Going through such difficulties, the riders find meaning. For each individual participant, randonneuring has a different meaning. It could entail discovering inner peace, enjoying adventure, forging relationships, growing self, or connecting with nature. Through the goal of endurance and the community's shared experiences, randonneuring provides a platform for self-discovery, pushing boundaries, and finding fulfilment.

India and international participation

Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP)

Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP) is a premier event in randonneuring. It is one of the toughest of all cycling events. In 1931, ACP created the prestigious 1200 km randonneuring event: 'Paris-Brest-Paris Randonneurs', which is organised every four years. PBP was conducted as a race till 1931. The same brevet rules apply. The cut-off time to finish the PBP ride is 90hrs. Considering the mortal nature of the ride and a real test for the cyclists, from 1975 onwards, ACP made some of the events mandatory if one wished to participate in the PBP. Before attempting PBP, a rider must qualify for Super Randonneurs Qualifying events; in other words, it is necessary to finish the Super Randonneur series, i.e., 200, 300, 400, and 600 km rides in the same year in which PBP will be organised (paris brest paris website).

For the PBP 19th edition organised by ACP during 18-22 August 2019, 6674 riders registered, out of which 6418 turned up at the starting line. These participants were from 66 countries. Three hundred twenty-five participants represented India through AIR in this oldest and most prestigious international event. Considering India's third representation, it is quite a big jump in numbers compared to its first two representations, i.e., in 2011 (15 participants) and 2015 (53 participants). (Audax India Randonneurs).

London Edinburgh London (LEL)

London Edinburgh London (LEL) is a 1500 km self-supported cycling event conducted every four years with a 2-year gap between LEL and PBP. The time limit for the event is set to 125 hrs to finish the ride. It offers a unique way to experience the United Kingdom. There are no qualifying events per se to participate in the event. Eight participants from India have attempted LEL 2013 edition, out of which 1 participant

finished in time. A much larger contingent of participants from India attempted LEL 2017 edition. 10 out of the 53 participants finished in time, and another 7 completed the distance but were outside the time limits (Audax India Randonneurs).

Hyderabad Randonneurs Club

Hyderabad Randonneurs Club is situated in Hyderabad, Telangana, India. Hyderabad Randonneurs Club is an organisation that conducts Audax rides under the name AIR. It is one of India's largest and fastest-growing clubs in terms of riders qualifying for SRs and by the total number of homologated kilometres.

The unique topography of the Deccan poses a challenge to the Audax riders. Cycling needs certain familiarity with roads that cyclists regularly encounter. As Wolch recognises, 'it is impossible to understand human society without accounting for its geographical underpinnings' (Palmer, 1996, p. 48). Indeed, the landscape exists independently of cyclists, but its perception is shared by the cyclists. The sensual world of cycling paints a territorial map of its own. A cyclist's sense of the world is characterised by a multimodal, immersive experience that blends speed, intimacy, shifting perspectives, and emotional engagement. It develops a strong feeling of location, a connection to the natural world, and an appreciation for its beauty and complexity. The cycling terrain and environment allow cyclists to build key strategies for rides for various purposes, from serious training to leisure riding. Noting the significance, Palmer writes that 'landscape has the power to inform and transform social relations' (Palmer, 1996, p. 49). Cycling builds a profound understanding of the environment and geography, which no other conveyance medium could provide. The geographical landscape of the Deccan plays a crucial role in the construction of cycling as social practice.

For anthropologists, it is common to see the environmental descriptions in the ethnographical accounts and their implications in the production of cultural landscapes. The first few pages of ethnographies often describe the ambience of the field sites.

Hyderabad is a cosmopolitan and multi-cultural city; its various developments in the past few years have certainly affected the economy and shaped the social life of the population. According to study findings in their "City Momentum Index" (CMI) 2018 and 2020 released on their website, one of the major businesses specialising in real estate services, Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporation (JLL), Hyderabad topped the list of global short-term growth metropolis among 130 cities. (JLL website). Hyderabad has been leading India's prowess in global Information Technology. With favourable governmental policies, Hyderabad picked

the pace to develop facilities and attract multinational companies. The majority of the randonneurs in the city are IT professionals.

Hyderabad Randonneurs and its beginning

Hyderabad Randonneurs was established in 2012. It was previously known as Hyderabad Brevets. Typical of the other clubs in India, the rides before 2014 were conducted on a personal level. Few riders took the initiative to build a standard platform to help the riders participate in the event. Initially, Sunil Menon, a fitness enthusiast, took responsibility for conducting the brevets. Later the initiative to conduct the events was taken up by 'The Bike Affair', a cycle store in Kondapur, Hyderabad. Slowly, the cycle store emerged as the hub for conducting and operating all activities related to the Hyderabad Randonneuring Club.

One of the earliest randonneurs in Hyderabad, who played a significant role in organising the randonneuring events, recalled that in 2013, riders were given only a cue sheet that mentioned the route. As there were no manned checkpoints, it was hard to verify the ride, i.e., to check whether the rider had followed the specified route and obeyed the Audax rules throughout the ride. The randonneur states that it was difficult at times to contact the club or the respective representative. The detailed calendar of events was not presented. The riders felt the need to make it more informative, which could help them plan the ride in a better-informed way and enjoy the spirit of randonneuring. When asked about the spirit of randonneuring, he says, 'It is like a long meditation on the bicycle, being with oneself for long periods and being self-sufficient' (From field notes).

A group of cyclists, all like-minded, who have at least completed a brevet and have a detailed understanding of the randonneuring, came together to form the first organising body to take responsibility for the Randonneuring events in Hyderabad. The organising body consisted of Dr. Muralidhar Nannapaneni (President), Mr. Raushan Kumar (Vice-President), Mr. Abhimanyu Pamulapati(General Secretary), Mr. Krish Aggarwal (Treasurer), and the Executive members were Mr. Krishnendu Basu, Mr. Gokul Krishna, Mr. Bharath V Reddy, Mrs. Anitha K Manda, Mrs. Anupa Lakshmi Murthy, Mr. Kanthipudi V S Kishore, Mr. Rajeev Kalva, Mr. Pradyumna Penmetcha, and Mr. Krishna Mandava. The Hyderabad Randonneurs Club has coordinated with Audax India Randonneurs (AIR) representative Divya Tate of Pune Randonneurs. AIR, too, was at a formulation stage at that point. The AIR website became operational in 2014. The website acts as a platform for riders that provides all the necessary details of the brevets. It registered itself as a society to take care of conducting events and all affairs of randonneuring. There is a ride responsible for every brevet, who takes care of all the formalities and leverages the resources to organise the brevet. Generally, the ride responsibility is taken up by randonneurs who

have substantial exposure to randonneuring. These volunteers are widely known and respected in all cycling communities.

Ethnographic interviews revealed that very few randonneurs have taken up the role of ride responsibility for a majority of the brevets conducted in the Hyderabad Randonneurs. While other randonneurs occasionally joined them, helping by volunteering to take care of certain checkpoints. In the 2014-2015 season, there were nine brevets organised by Hyderabad Randonneurs, and Krish Agarwal took the role of ride responsibility for all of them.

The 2015-2016 season was a significant year for the Hyderabad Randonneurs Club as it gained much more visibility and enthusiasm from the riding community. Unlike any other season, the 2015-2016 season saw the largest number of randonneurs taking the role of ride responsibility, i.e., seven riders for the twelve brevets during that season. The season also explored some new courses and start points for the brevets, which are used in the following seasons. The season ended with the first 1000km randonneuring event, 'The Gran Fondo'. In the 2016-2017 season, a total number of eleven brevets were organised in which Rajeev Kalva played the role of the ride responsible in six, Gokul Krishna in two and one each by Anupa Lakshmi, Anita Manda and Christopher Blessing.

During the 2017-2018 randonneuring season, while conducting fieldwork, there were twelve brevets organised in total. Out of these, seven were taken care of by Rajeev Kalva, three by Hemanth Sai Chandan and two by Gokul Krishna. Rajeev Kalva was the organiser for all four brevets, in which the lead author of this article conducted participant observation as a rider/ randonneur.

The season 2018-2019 is special, as it preceded the Paris-Brest-Paris 2019. Keeping in view of PBP, the brevet calendar was prepared. Riders were given a greater number of options to qualify for the PBP event. It saw the highest number – sixteen brevets in the season while Rajeev Kalva was the ride responsible for fourteen, and the rest two were taken care of by Hemanth Sai Chandan. This season also saw the introduction of the 'Fleche 24-hour' event. The rules for the Fleche are quite different from regular brevets. Fleche is more focused on team riding, with at least three riders finishing the ride together. It should be ridden continuously for 24 hours with no stops for more than two hours. At least 25 km must be ridden in the last two hours; therefore, to verify there is a '22-hour' control point. The minimum distance for the Fleche 24-hour ride is 360 km.

Hyderabad Randonneurs Club: Growth

The growth of the club is visible and demonstrated through the numbers

in Table 4. The overall mileage has increased exponentially. A significant jump in the numbers was seen in 2018 due to the anticipation and the euphoria of PBP. In order to be eligible to apply to the most prestigious randonneuring event, i.e., PBP in 2019, hence known as PBP year, riders must finish the SR series. Table 4 shows the highest number of participations in the 1000km event, which reflects the interest of the riders who are testing themselves and bracing to take up the 1200 kilometre PBP challenge.

A closer examination of Table 4 shows a drop in the homologated kilometres and participation since 2019. The reason for that is not a lack of interest but the establishment of Secunderabad Randonneurs and Karimnagar Randonneurs clubs in the Telangana State. Some of the riders who were previously affiliated with Hyderabad Randonneurs chose to associate with the new clubs. Thus, resulting in lesser participation numbers in the Hyderabad Randonneurs.

Table 4: Shows year-wise Hyderabad Randonneurs participation data from its inception. Source: Audax Club Parisien website documents. [URL: https://www.audax-club-parisien.com/en/our-organizations/brm-world/]

Year	200km event	300km event	400km event	600km event	1000km event	Total no. of participants	Total km
2012	27	8	12	6		53	16,200
2013	57	17	3	3		80	19,500
2014	101	38	19	12		170	46,400
2015	158	39	34	18		249	67,700
2016	257	137	53	37	6	490	1,41,900
2017	181	63	44	27	9	324	97,900
2018	227	82	71	88	46	514	1,97,200
2019	184	76	56	49	13	378	1,24,400
2020	30	14	3	4		51	13,800
2021	331	52	24	34		441	1,11,800

The no. indicates the participants in the event

Randonnuering clubs in major cities that have experienced rapid growth in numbers have established new clubs adjacent to the old ones. For example, New Delhi has two Randonneuring clubs, namely: Delhi Randonneurs and Lakshya Randonneurs. Similarly, Mumbai has three clubs, working in the name of Mumbai Randonneurs, Cycling for All and Navi Mumbai-Kalyan.

Start points, Controls, and other significant places

The places in which the brevets are conducted are determined majorly by the course direction. During the initial seasons, the starting point of the brevets in Hyderabad was usually the bicycle store 'The Bike Affair'

(TBA), Kondapur, located on the western part of Hyderabad city for all sorts of distances. Later on, based on the direction of the ride, the starting points are chosen. St. Martin's Engineering College was chosen to be the point for the brevets whose course of direction is towards the northward of Hyderabad. Likewise, Decathlon-Shamshabad for the South, GVR Convention Centre-Manneguda for the South-East and Decathlon-Uppal for the East. Eventually, the bike station 'Hyderabad Bicycling Club' (HBC), Gachibowli, replaced TBA for brevets running towards the West. The starting points of the brevets are chosen mainly on the outskirts of the city to avoid heavy traffic and pollution. Table 5 provides the links to all the major brevets in Hyderabad.

Table 5: Providing links for all the prominent Hyderabad randonneur events route maps

Hyderabad randonneuring events	**Distance**	**Route maps**
Heaven & Hell	200	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/26393153
Bhongir Fort Ride	200	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/12037624
Knight's Ride	200	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/12285018
Myriad Monkeys & Pocharam	200	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/16705564
Tour of Neelagiri	300	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/10976391
Hyderabad-Nizamabad-Armoor	400	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/9555955
Into The Wild	600	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/10010964
The Two States	600	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/11857395
The Gran Fondo	1000	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/18534242
Sir Arthur Cotton Ride	1000	https://ridewithgps.com/routes/26695187

Generally, there are three to four 200 km brevets offered by Hyderabad Randonneurs Club in each season. The greatest number of riders with varying levels of experience take part in the 200 km brevets. Every season starts with 200 km brevets and progresses upward towards 600 km and 1000 km brevets with three weeks break in between the brevets. The breaks allow sufficient time to rest and recover. The 200 km brevet titled 'Heaven and Hell' is a very widely known brevet among the cycling community in Hyderabad, which often sees the largest participation. The Heaven and Hell brevet explores the western part of the Telangana, the Ananthagiri Hills and Kotepalli Lake. It is often organised twice in every randonneuring season, once in winter and once during the monsoons. The other 200 km brevet covers the east part of Telangana, and the highlight of the brevet is Bhongir Fort. The 'Myriad Monkeys and Pocharam' 200 Km brevet is the third one that covers the smaller section of the northern side of Telangana, and the highlight of the ride is the experience of riding in the Narsapur forest. Unlike the three brevets mentioned above that are ridden during the day, the fourth one is organised to experience and adapt to riding at night, which is necessary

for someone looking to challenge themselves to get a Super Randonneur title. This is often organised in the month of April, when the temperatures begin rising while the night is cooler.

There are two brevets each of 300 km, 400 km, 600 km and 1000 km in every randonneuring season organised by the Hyderabad Randonneurs Club. They are arranged in such a way that a rider could qualify to become a Super Randonneur twice in one season. One set of the series at the beginning of the season, i.e., from November to January and the other set of the series at the end of the season, i.e., July to September. The two 300 km brevets are set in opposite directions, one towards the north-west, i.e., Yellareddy, Narsapur side and the other towards the south-east, i.e., Miryalaguda, Nalgonda side of the Hyderabad city.

For the 400 km brevets, there is only one route which is often used, that is the Hyderabad-Nizamabad-Armur, which is towards the north side of Hyderabad city. Close to 90% of the ride is on the National Highway-44.

For 600 km brevets, the most often used route is towards the Northeast part of the Telangana, i.e., Karimnagar. The course ventures into deep forest sections; hence the event is titled 'Into the Wild'. Another route is also used for the 600 km brevet that goes towards the south of Hyderabad city, covering parts of Mahabubbagar and Kurnool.

Apart from the series of brevets that benefit the rider to qualify for the Super Randonneur title, the Hyderabad Randonneurs Club also offers 1000 km brevets for someone who is looking to go beyond the SR title. There are two events one is titled 'The Gran Fondo', and the other one is known as 'Sir Arthur Cotton Ride'. The 1000 km brevets support the riders who are looking forward to the international brevets such as Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP) - 1200 km and London-Edinburgh-London (LEL) – 1500 km events. The brevets act as a bridge in filling the gap between 600 km and 1200 km events. Overall, the brevets organised by the Hyderabad Randonneurs Club cover all directions from Hyderabad city, offering a wide array of riding experiences to the randonneurs.

A lifestyle sport

Randonneuring is a lifestyle sport. Similar to other lifestyle sports, randonneuring is primarily done for personal fulfilment rather than for competition. Participants often benefit from the physical and mental challenges of distance cycling and also appreciate the sense of adventure and exploration that comes with riding in unfamiliar and new locations. Randonneurs also give value to the camaraderie and social connections that come with participating in organised events and training with fellow cyclists. Randonneuring often requires a significant investment of time and resources. The commitment to the randonneuring can be seen as part

of a broader lifestyle that values physical fitness, personal challenge, self-reliance and outdoor exploration.

Conclusion

The emergence of randonneuring in India and Hyderabad depended primarily on the activities of key individuals from varying backgrounds who provided the time, energy and technical expertise in building a community to establish the sport. Randonneuring has picked up the pace, and it is only going to accelerate from here on as more and more awareness is created through the Brevet Populaire events to popularise the brevets, with rising health consciousness among the city dwellers backed by cycling-friendly infrastructure in urban spaces. The growth will not only be restricted to cities as several two-tier and three-tier towns in India are conducting randonneuring events.

The Indian government, in the recent past, has started addressing sports persons before and after events, especially the Olympics and Commonwealth Games. Such actions imply that India is making efforts to move from a unicentric (one sport dominating and having a gigantic impression) to a multicentric sporting nation (having varied sports interests), for example, from the identity of a Cricketing giant to bringing back the lost glory in India's national sport, i.e., Field Hockey, and now making its mark on the international stage in Shooting, Badminton, Boxing and Wrestling. This will transform the way sports and sports persons are looked at, building a positive environment and enhancing the culture of the sport.

All of these factors will eventually contribute to more cyclists participating in randonneuring events, making it a growing sports culture in India. The changing culture of sports and sports behaviour, as suggested by this article, indicates the shifting ideas of leisure and lifestyle among urban dwellers in India. Understanding these changes can help in forming better bottom-up, environmental, health and transportation policies for sustainability.

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Article: Stigma And Schooling: Kerala's Public Education Paradox

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Stigma And Schooling: Kerala's Public Education Paradox

--Lekha N B

Abstract

Kerala's educational system forms a central pillar of the acclaimed "Kerala Model of Development," which links high literacy, accessible healthcare, and improved women's status in a synergistic cycle of human development. This chapter critically interrogates an emerging contradiction within this model: despite Kerala's widespread access to free, high-quality public education, especially under the state's SCERT curriculum, there is a growing trend among upper-middle-class families to prefer private and unaided schools, often while still opting for the same state syllabus. Using an autoethnographic lens, the author, an academic and parent of children enrolled in a government school, explores the class-based, socio-cultural stigma attached to public schooling. A key component of the chapter is a content analysis of the SCERT curriculum, which is notably more gender-neutral and inclusive than many other state curricula in India. The paradox lies in the fact that, despite its progressive content and structural accessibility, government schools are increasingly abandoned by the socio-economically privileged. The chapter investigates why families who could access free public education choose instead to spend tens of thousands of rupees annually on private schooling, revealing that motivations often stem from perceptions of status, peer group, discipline, and language instruction rather than educational quality alone. This class-driven educational choice shapes the larger social fabric and indirectly reinforces inequality, even within a state known for its egalitarian ethos. By unpacking this contradiction, the chapter sheds light on the deeper ideological and aspirational forces that challenge the sustainability of the Kerala Model's commitment to universal, equitable development.

Key Words: Kerala Education, Class, SCERT, Private School

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone of human development, fostering not only individual well-being but also societal progress. Numerous studies underscore the transformative role of education in enhancing social stability, economic productivity, and inclusive growth (Mallick et al., 2016; Nayyar, 2008; Barro, 1979; Lucas, 1988; Ravallion & Chen, 1997). Beyond its instrumental value, education generates positive externalities, such as improved health, civic participation, and intergenerational mobility, benefiting both individuals and the wider community. At its core, education contributes to human capital formation, which is central to stimulating economic expansion and innovation. By equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities, education enhances employability and productivity (Teixeira & Queirós,

2016). Hence, investment in educational infrastructure and support systems must be considered a policy imperative for sustainable development. Educational institutions, especially schools, play a vital role in facilitating learning outcomes. They offer structured learning environments, quality teaching, and support services, all of which are critical in ensuring equitable access and achievement. In this context, Kerala's educational achievements are particularly notable.

As a fundamental pillar of the "Kerala Model of Development", education has been instrumental in the state's socio-economic transformation. The model emphasizes universal access to education, public investment, and equity-focused policies, all of which have significantly contributed to Kerala's progress. According to the Census of India (2011), Kerala recorded a literacy rate of 94%, significantly surpassing the national average of 73% (Government of Kerala, 2011). The roots of Kerala's educational success can be traced back to the nineteenth century, a period marked by a major shift in educational access. The arrival of Christian missionaries catalyzed the spread of mass literacy, as they established schools across Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. Crucially, these initiatives aimed to overcome entrenched caste and gender disparities. As Ramachandran (2001) points out, the missionary-led expansion of schooling focused on inclusive education, thereby setting the groundwork for Kerala's later achievements in universal literacy (pp. 266, 268–269, 271).

Despite Kerala's celebrated public education system and its progressive SCERT curriculum, a growing number of upper-middle-class families increasingly opt for private unaided schools—even when these follow the same state syllabus. This trend reflects not educational shortcomings but deeply entrenched class and caste biases that shape school choice. While government schools remain the primary institutions for children from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), many privileged families perceive these spaces as lacking in "standard" and "discipline," often coded references to caste-based social discomfort. Parents frequently cite fears of their children mingling with "slum children" or acquiring "bad language," revealing how caste operates subtly but powerfully in decisions framed as class-based. Language, particularly the preference for English-medium instruction, adds another layer to this symbolic hierarchy. Thus, even within a state committed to equitable, high-quality education, private school preference becomes a cultural performance of class aspiration and caste distinction. The resulting bifurcation of Kerala's schooling landscape risks eroding the very ethos of inclusion and egalitarianism that underpins the Kerala Model of Development. It is within this complex interplay of class, caste, and cultural perception that the researcher positions this study, aiming to unpack the socio-symbolic reasons behind the socio-economically privileged community's withdrawal from government schools.

The Social History of Education in Kerala

The history of education in Kerala is marked by a blend of indigenous practices, significant missionary and princely state initiatives, strong social reform movements, and post-independence government policies, alongside more recent shifts towards privatization and persistent challenges for marginalized communities. The history of education in Kerala is deeply intertwined with the early efforts of reformers who challenged caste-based hierarchies and sought to democratize learning. One such pioneering figure was Thunchath Ezhuthachan, widely regarded as the father of the Malayalam language and a transformative force in Kerala's educational history. A non-Brahmin who had studied the Vedas, Ezhuthachan directly challenged the Brahminical monopoly on knowledge and the notion of a 'divine right' to education that excluded lower castes (Menon, 1987, p. 111). Ezhuthachan initiated a radical movement by establishing Ezhuthupallis, village schools designed to offer elementary education to all children, regardless of caste or social status. These institutions symbolized a reaction against the prevailing inequalities of the time and promoted a vision of mass education that became a legacy in Kerala's social transformation. Historically, Kerala featured two major types of indigenous educational institutions. The Matts, operated at the household level, were exclusive to Brahmins, while the Ezhuthupallis (also known as Kudipallikudams or village schools) catered to non-Brahmin communities. These schools were often community-run, held in separate sheds, and teachers were compensated by the local population. This grassroots model fostered a decentralized, inclusive learning culture (Varghese, 1999).

The 19th century marked a turning point in the history of education in Kerala, driven by the dual forces of missionary activism and progressive state interventions. Christian missionary organizations such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Basel Mission, and the London Missionary Society played a foundational role in introducing modern education to the region. Their efforts focused on mass literacy, particularly among marginalized and lower-caste communities, thereby directly challenging Kerala's entrenched jathi-based hierarchies. These missions were also instrumental in introducing printing technology, which had far-reaching implications for educational and cultural development (Jeffrey, 1992). Parallelly, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin enacted progressive reforms under enlightened rulers like Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai and Rani Gouri Parvathy Bai, who declared education a public responsibility. In a historic proclamation in 1817, Rani Parvathy Bai permitted the establishment of schools that were open to lower castes, an unprecedented move in caste-bound Indian society. Another important milestone was the founding of the Trivandrum Public Library in 1829 by Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, which encouraged public reading and lifelong self-education (Menon, 2007). Further incentivising education, the grant-in-aid system provided financial support to private and community-run schools, resulting in a proliferation of educational

institutions (Mathew, 1997). By 1891, literacy rates in Travancore (13.4%) and Malabar (12.9%) were significantly higher than the national average of 5.8% (Government of India, 1891).

The early 20th century witnessed the rise of powerful social reform movements that positioned education as a tool of emancipation and empowerment. Movements led by the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, representing the Ezhava community, the Nair Service Society (NSS), and the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) founded by Ayyankali, were pivotal in expanding educational access to previously excluded castes. These organizations not only established their own educational institutions but also made them inclusive across caste lines (Nossiter, 1982). One defining moment in Kerala's educational and social history occurred in 1914, when Ayyankali organized an agricultural workers' strike after a Dalit girl was denied admission to a government school. This act of resistance marked a critical juncture in the Dalit assertion for educational rights and challenged systemic exclusion (Devika, 2018). Reformers in Kerala also strongly emphasized female literacy, far ahead of many other Indian states. They embraced the idea that "literate women have literate children," which became a powerful guiding principle that linked women's education with broader developmental goals (Ramachandran, 2001). These movements embedded a long-lasting culture of public advocacy for inclusive education and gender equity.

Following the formation of Kerala State in 1956, education became the cornerstone of its development policy. Successive democratically elected governments prioritized education as a right and a public good. By the 1980s, public investment in education peaked, with educational spending rising to 6.5% of the State Domestic Product (SDP), enabling nearly 96% of Kerala's schools to be either fully state-run or state-supported (Government of Kerala, 2017). The Kerala Education Bill of 1957 and the Kerala Education Act of 1958/59 were landmark legislative efforts that regulated private school functioning, ensured treasury-based teacher salary disbursement, and aimed to make elementary education free and compulsory. By 1969-70, elementary education had become free across the state, and in 1972, Kerala emerged as one of the few Indian states to offer free higher education (Tilak, 2003). The state's commitment to lifelong learning was also bolstered by the Kerala Granthasala Sanghom, a library movement founded in 1945 that evolved into the Kerala State Library Council, promoting adult education and cultural engagement. However, the 1990s introduced a new wave of educational reforms under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), which emphasized community involvement, retention, and curricular modernization. These changes were aligned with the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and the Kerala Curriculum Framework (2007), which championed critical pedagogy and inclusive learning. Organizations like the Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishath (KSSP) were instrumental in implementing these reforms. Simultaneously, a marked increase in private

unaided institutions, particularly in technical and professional education, altered the landscape of access and affordability. By 2016–17, such institutions accounted for over 30% of total enrolments, signaling a transition from publicly funded inclusivity to market-driven exclusivity, which now presents a challenge to the egalitarian ideals of the Kerala model ((Mathew, 2020)

Expansion, Diversification, and the Class Paradox: Rethinking School Choice in Kerala's Education System

Over the past few decades, Kerala has witnessed a significant expansion in its school education infrastructure, reflecting the state's ongoing commitment to broadening access to education. The total number of schools in the state rose from 12,133 in 1990–91 to 12,981 in 2016 -17, marking a steady increase in educational institutions across both public and private sectors (Government of Kerala, 2017). This growth, however, has been accompanied by a noticeable shift in the distribution of schools by management type. By 2016 -17, the number of government schools had increased to 4,695, while private unaided schools saw a significant rise, reaching 1,066. In contrast, private aided schools, long a dominant force in Kerala's education landscape, declined slightly in number to 7,220, indicating a slow but emerging realignment in the preference and provisioning of school education (State School Education Statistics, 2017).

Parallel to these changes, Kerala also experienced a dramatic proliferation of schools affiliated with non-state syllabi, such as those under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). In 2001 -02, there were only 439 such schools, including 331 CBSE and 71 ICSE institutions. By 2016-17, this number had more than tripled to 1,436 schools, with 1,229 CBSE and 157 ICSE institutions, alongside others following international and alternative syllabi (Kerala Education Report, 2017). Among Kerala's districts, Malappuram stood out in 2016-17, registering the highest number of schools at 1,558, including the largest number of both government and unaided schools. This spatial expansion further illustrates Kerala's policy emphasis on educational inclusivity, aiming to reach diverse socio-economic groups and respond to evolving demands for curricular choice and medium of instruction. While the growth in the number of schools reflects an increase in educational access and diversification, it also signals underlying socio-cultural shifts and class-based preferences, especially in the rise of unaided and central syllabus institutions. These trends warrant critical attention to ensure that Kerala's egalitarian ethos in education is not undermined by emerging inequalities in access, quality, and affordability.

Numerous studies have established that parents are key stakeholders in the educational ecosystem, as their decisions significantly shape children's academic trajectories (Pandey et al., 2009). School choice is not merely a rational or academic decision, but a complex process influenced by socio-economic status,

cultural capital, household aspirations, and perceptions of school quality (Chaturvedi, 2021; Kaur, 2017). Research further highlights that infrastructure and the perceived superiority of learning outcomes in private schools strongly affect parental preference (Lohan et al., 2020; ASER Centre, 2022; Ministry of Education, 2021). Consequently, across India, there has been a growing shift away from government schools to private unaided institutions, especially among higher-income households (Kingdon, 2020; Kumar & Choudhury, 2021; Singh, 2015). While national trends reflect a decline in government school enrolment, Kerala appears to defy this trajectory, having recorded an increase in public school enrolment since 2018–19, largely due to the state's Public Education Rejuvenation Campaign initiated in 2016 (State Planning Board, 2019). This initiative aimed to revitalize public education by improving infrastructure, pedagogy, and governance while strengthening the role of teachers, parents, and local communities in school functioning. Despite these gains, government schools continue to serve predominantly students from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds, whereas upper-income and socially privileged households increasingly opt for private schools, even when those schools follow the same SCERT-prescribed state syllabus (Directorate of General Education, 2021; Narwana, 2019).

This apparent contradiction, where public schools offer free, quality education using a progressive and inclusive curriculum, yet fail to retain upper-class enrolment, raises critical questions about the interplay between class, perception, and school choice. The present study seeks to investigate the household-level factors, including symbolic capital, class-based aspirations, and peer group expectations, that drive socio-economically advantaged families in Kerala to bypass government schools in favor of private institutions offering the same academic content. By doing so, the research aims to uncover how entrenched class identities and social anxieties subtly undermine the egalitarian ethos of Kerala's otherwise successful public education system.

Methodological Approach

Autoethnographic Lens and Researcher Positionality

This study employs a qualitative methodology, anchored in an autoethnographic approach, complemented by in-depth interviews. As both an academic and a parent, the author occupies a unique dual positionality that informs the research. This reflexive engagement is not merely anecdotal but forms the epistemological core of the inquiry. The research was initially sparked by a personal encounter: when the author attempted to enroll their child in a nearby government school in Thiruvananthapuram, the headmistress expressed both surprise and admiration, noting, "Even though you are a lecturer, you chose to admit your child to a government school." This moment of interaction raised a critical question, why do so many socio-economically privileged parents, including those employed in the

public sector, opt for private unaided schools, often following the same state syllabus? It was this moment that catalyzed a deeper investigation into the class-based perceptions and structural inequalities embedded in Kerala's educational choices.

In-Depth Interviews and Site Selection

To complement the autoethnographic reflections, the study also incorporates in-depth semi-structured interviews with parents who have enrolled their children in unaided private schools in Thiruvananthapuram district. This district was strategically selected for multiple reasons. It hosts the second-highest number of unaided schools in Kerala, offering a robust context for examining trends in private school enrolment. Moreover, as the state capital and an administrative hub, Thiruvananthapuram attracts a diverse population from across Kerala, particularly middle- and upper-middle-class families who have migrated for government or professional employment. The district thus serves as a microcosm of Kerala's aspirational middle class and offers a socially and economically heterogeneous population, making it a representative site for studying broader educational trends. The author's own relocation from Thrissur to Thiruvananthapuram for professional reasons mirrors this broader migratory pattern and deepens the reflective engagement with the subject. By combining autoethnographic insight with grounded empirical data from parent interviews, this research aims to unravel the nuanced motivations, anxieties, and aspirations shaping school choice among Kerala's privileged classes. This dual approach allows for a critical understanding of the gap between Kerala's inclusive public education policy and its actual uptake among different socio-economic groups.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify participants who had actively chosen private unaided schools despite the availability of nearby government schools offering the same SCERT syllabus. This ensured that the study specifically targeted decision-making among socio-economically advantaged groups, which is central to the research problem. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of six months from 2024 October to 2025 March, during which continuous engagement was maintained through school interactions, parental networks, and observational reflections. This extended duration enabled the researcher to capture not only stated preferences but also evolving attitudes, informal conversations, and socially embedded perceptions that are often inaccessible through short-term data collection.

Primary data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews with 23 parents. The interviews were designed to explore key dimensions such as reasons for school choice, perceptions of government versus private schools, concerns related to peer group, discipline, and language, as well as the underlying aspirations and anxieties shaping children's social mobility. Conducted in a flexible and open-ended format, the interviews allowed respondents to articulate

their views in their own terms, enabling the emergence of nuanced insights. This approach proved particularly effective in uncovering implicit biases, coded expressions, and socially sensitive attitudes, especially those linked to class and caste dynamics. In addition to interview data, the study incorporates systematic autoethnographic observations. These include interactions with school authorities, informal conversations with parents, and the researcher's lived experiences within the government school setting. Such observations were carefully documented as field notes and subsequently integrated with the interview data during the analytical process, allowing for a layered and reflexive interpretation of the findings.

Stigma Surrounding Government Schools

In the context of Kerala's educational landscape, the paradox of high literacy coexisting with elite abandonment of public schools reveals the deeper social forces at work. Despite the Kerala government's sustained efforts to promote equitable and inclusive education through public schooling, a persistent stigma surrounds government schools. This stigma, far from being grounded in the actual quality of education or pedagogical effectiveness, is shaped by symbolic associations with class, status, and caste. Public schools have come to be seen as spaces that are socially 'inferior', not because they are inherently lacking, but because they are perceived as institutions that primarily serve the economically and socially marginalised.

A recurring narrative among upper-middle-class parents revolves around the social image of public schools. These institutions are widely viewed as sites where "poor children" study, children who are often associated with lower castes, slum dwellers, and "undesirable" peer groups. As Bourdieu (1984) would argue, the educational field becomes a space for class-based distinction, where choosing a particular school becomes a symbolic act of identity assertion. This symbolic value extends beyond infrastructure or outcomes; it is fundamentally about who else is in the school.

One mother, an advocate by profession, whose child studies in a private unaided school in Thiruvananthapuram, expressed this sentiment bluntly during an in-depth interview:

No, I can't send my kid to a government school. They don't have any standards. My child will mingle with children from the slums, learn bad language, and develop bad habits. It's just not possible. It would be disgusting.

This narrative lays bare the underlying class anxieties and cultural prejudices that inform educational choices. The concern is not merely about educational content or quality; it is about contamination, a fear that association with lower-class children will somehow dilute or corrupt one's own child's values, manners, and

aspirations. Such narratives, while rarely articulated in public, are frequently exchanged in private conversations and among peer groups, reinforcing a shared cultural script that equates government schools with backwardness.

Though Kerala is widely acknowledged for its progressive educational achievements and near-universal literacy, the subtleties of caste-based discrimination continue to surface in spaces assumed to be egalitarian—particularly public schooling. While education is constitutionally mandated to be inclusive, the social practices surrounding school choice reveal a persistent discomfort among upper-caste and upper-class families when it comes to sharing educational spaces with the socially marginalized. These perceptions are often veiled in coded language around "quality," "culture," "standard," or "discipline," but their roots trace clearly to caste-based anxieties. Though framed around concerns of "standards" and peer influence, the mother's narrative discloses underlying caste anxieties. The term "slum children" operates here as a social marker, implicitly referencing children from Dalit, Adivasi, or Other Backward Class (OBC) communities who form the majority in Kerala's government schools. Her fears are not pedagogical in nature but social: they stem from the imagined cultural contamination of her child by associating with students of lower caste and economic status. The school becomes not just a space for learning but one of symbolic purity or defilement.

Another respondent, a mid-level government officer originally from Kottayam and now settled in Thiruvananthapuram, shared:

We thought about the government school - it's near our house and they teach the SCERT syllabus. But then we decided against it. My wife was worried our daughter wouldn't have the right company. We want her to grow up in a refined environment.

Here, the term "right company" and "refined environment" subtly reference a desire to segregate their child from students of perceived lower social status. The decision to avoid public schools despite agreeing with the quality of the curriculum was motivated not by doubts about pedagogy, but by fears of social exposure. This narrative, too, reflects the persistence of caste-coded distinctions masked as class aspirations.

Another respondent, a software engineer and first-generation graduate from a backward caste, stated:

My father went to a government school, but now times have changed. If I can afford a private school, why shouldn't I give my child that exposure? The world is competitive. And let's face it, there's a different crowd in government schools.

Even when parents themselves are products of public schooling, their upward mobility tends to disassociate them from their roots, reinforcing a belief that success now requires entry into elite spaces, including elite schools. Thus, public schools, rather than being seen as symbols of democratic progress and inclusion, become markers of a social status one has supposedly outgrown.

This distancing is further aggravated by neighbourhood gossip and peer surveillance. Several mothers shared that they felt pressure not only from family but also from their social circles. One said:

If my neighbour sends her kid to St.Thomas and I send mine to the nearby government school, what will people say? That we are not doing enough for our kids? It's shameful.

These anecdotal but powerful narratives show that school choice is as much about social belonging as it is about education. The decision to not enroll one's child in a government school is often pre-emptive, to avoid judgement, criticism, or perceived downward mobility. In such a context, public education loses its universal appeal and becomes coded as the last resort of the underprivileged.

Language, Discipline, and the Myth of "Quality"

Another major determinant in the avoidance of government schools is the perception that they lag behind in key areas such as English-language instruction, discipline, and overall educational "standards." This is despite evidence suggesting otherwise, Kerala's public schools have well-qualified teachers, inclusive curricula, and improved infrastructure, often superior to many private unaided schools (State Planning Board, 2021; Government of Kerala, 2019).

English-medium instruction has become a symbolic currency in Kerala, representing global aspirations and social mobility. Many parents believe that private schools offer better English training, which they equate with better job prospects and social status. A young father working as a government clerk explained:

Look, it's not that I think the syllabus is different. My son could learn the same science and maths in a government school. But will he speak English fluently? That's what matters now.

The fetishisation of English often overshadows all other dimensions of quality. Public schools that teach in Malayalam are seen as provincial, while English-medium private schools, regardless of the actual fluency of their teachers, are seen as gateways to success. This has prompted even low-income families to stretch their budgets to send children to unaided English-medium schools.

Discipline is another recurring theme. Parents perceive private schools as being more structured and better at enforcing codes of conduct. Some worry that in government schools, "students roam around," "teachers are not strict," or "classes are not serious." Again, these are often stereotypes rather than first-hand observations.

A mother who worked as a nurse in a private hospital said:

In the private school, the children are well-behaved. They respect the teacher. In government schools, it's all chaos. And the children from poor families don't have manners.

Here, discipline is conflated with class background. The assumption is that children from lower-income families bring with them an undisciplined, disrespectful culture that will negatively influence other children. These fears are deeply classist and reflect broader societal biases about the poor as being unfit for structured, moral social life.

The final myth revolves around academic quality. While multiple studies have shown that learning outcomes in public schools are often comparable, and sometimes superior, when socio-economic variables are controlled (ASER Centre, 2022; Kumar & Choudhury, 2021), the dominant narrative continues to privilege private schools. This is partly because success stories are more visible and celebrated in private school contexts, and because public schools are rarely featured positively in media or advertisements.

During interviews, a few parents conceded that they never actually visited or evaluated a government school before deciding against it. As one father put it:

I just assumed it would be bad. That's what everyone says. When you hear something 10 times, you believe it.

This reveals how public perception becomes self-perpetuating. The belief that government schools are inferior leads to their abandonment by the middle class, which in turn reduces the diversity of the student body and reinforces the stigma. Teachers, administrators, and even children begin to internalise this narrative, leading to a cycle of symbolic erosion despite material investment.

As a researcher and academic, I find myself personally situated within this counter current. When I decided to enroll my two children in a nearby government school, I encountered a moment that illuminated the entrenched societal assumptions at play. The headmistress, visibly surprised by my decision, asked, "Even though you are a lecturer, why did you choose a government school?" I responded candidly: "That is precisely why I'm doing it. If I, as an educator, cannot place trust in the public education system, then who will?"

This exchange became the starting point of my inquiry into the symbolic and class-laden devaluation of public schools in Kerala. My experience has shown that, contrary to popular belief, government schools are not deficient spaces. On the contrary, my children have been thriving, socially, academically, and emotionally, without facing any of the difficulties commonly associated with public schooling. The teachers in government schools are well-qualified, often possessing professional degrees and undergoing regular in-service training mandated by the education department. Such training, particularly aligned with curriculum updates, equips teachers to effectively manage classroom diversity and adopt progressive pedagogical strategies.

By contrast, many teachers in private unaided schools, particularly those that charge exorbitant fees, work under precarious conditions, often with low salaries and limited professional development opportunities. Despite this, parents continue to assume that private schools inherently offer better education, an assumption largely rooted in cultural imaginaries rather than empirical evidence. From a financial perspective, the disparity is even more glaring. While parents in private unaided schools typically spend upwards of ₹50,000 annually per child, covering tuition fees, books, uniforms, transport, and other hidden costs, government schools provide education that is not only free but also rich in academic content and inclusive values. Despite this, these schools are systematically underutilized by the socio-economically privileged, revealing how deep-seated stigma continues to shape educational choices in Kerala, albeit in subtler, more insidious ways.

Thus, my personal narrative adds another layer to this broader inquiry. It illustrates that the abandonment of public schools is not simply a rational calculation about quality or cost. Rather, it is a cultural and ideological act, a reflection of aspirations, anxieties, and class-bound imaginaries. Until this stigma is openly confronted and collectively dismantled, Kerala's celebrated model of universal education will remain compromised by symbolic hierarchies and silent exclusions.

Class, Caste and Cultural Perceptions of Schooling

The schooling preferences of Kerala's middle- and upper-class households, particularly their shift away from government schools despite shared syllabi, must be understood not merely as responses to material differences, but as complex enactments of cultural identity and class distinction. This shift is less about educational quality in objective terms and more about what schools come to symbolize in the sociocultural imagination of different classes. Theoretical contributions by Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1991) offer valuable tools to unpack this layered phenomenon, particularly his notions of cultural capital, habitus, and symbolic violence.

In Kerala, the distinction between government and private unaided schools, often using the same SCERT syllabus, has become a potent marker of class identity. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital helps explain how schooling becomes a site where middle-class families negotiate and reproduce their social status. Cultural capital, in this context, is not merely academic knowledge or credentialing; it encompasses a family's aesthetic preferences, language practices, and assumptions about propriety, cleanliness, and "standard." These values are transmitted to children not just at home but through the institutional environments parents choose for them. Thus, private schools, even those offering the same syllabus, are preferred not for pedagogical superiority but for their alignment with certain cultural signals of success and prestige.

Integral to this is the concept of habitus, the durable system of dispositions through which individuals perceive and respond to the world (Bourdieu, 1977). In Kerala, families who have themselves moved into the aspirational middle class often act according to a habitus formed through past social mobility. This habitus pushes them toward schooling choices that align with their desired cultural identity rather than their past experiences. For example, a mother interviewed during this study, a practicing advocate, categorically dismissed the possibility of enrolling her son in a government school. "They don't have any standard," she said. "My son will mingle with children from the slums and pick up bad language. That would be disgusting." Such statements are not isolated opinions, they are expressions of a class-specific habitus that interprets proximity to poverty as a threat to one's social standing and moral values.

Further, the symbolic value of private education in Kerala acts as a mechanism of distinction, reinforcing Bourdieu's assertion that schooling systems help preserve social hierarchies under the guise of meritocracy (Bourdieu, 1984). Private schools become cultural markers not just through their facilities, uniforms, or extracurricular programming, but through the type of parental community they attract. School events, parent-teacher interactions, and even WhatsApp groups become arenas where class boundaries are reinforced and reproduced. Government schools, though publicly funded and often boasting well-qualified, well-trained teachers, remain stigmatized as the fallback option for those without means.

Language also functions as a crucial medium of class distinction. English-medium instruction is not merely a pedagogical preference; it is a symbol of modernity, employability, and class mobility. Bourdieu's (1991) work on linguistic capital explains how fluency in dominant languages, especially English in postcolonial societies, operates as a gatekeeping mechanism for social and economic advancement. Parents in Kerala often express concern that Malayalam-medium instruction in government schools may disadvantage their children in future competitive spaces, despite research showing little correlation between medium of

instruction and learning outcomes when controlling for socio-economic background (ASER Centre, 2022; Kumar & Choudhury, 2021).

Despite Kerala's strong state commitment to equitable education, including well-funded programs like the Public Education Rejuvenation Campaign (State Planning Board, 2019), these cultural biases persist. It is not material deprivation or pedagogical inadequacy that drives the abandonment of public schools by the privileged, but the entrenchment of class-based perceptions of purity, discipline, and prestige. Bourdieu's framework thus enables us to see how education, though designed to be a vehicle of social mobility, often becomes an instrument for social reproduction, sustaining the very hierarchies it claims to dismantle.

Conclusion

Kerala's educational paradox, universal access to quality public education coexisting with an increasing preference for private schooling among the socio-economically privileged, offers a powerful lens through which to examine the enduring impact of class and cultural perceptions on education. At the heart of this paradox is a symbolic rupture, where the egalitarian ideals of the "Kerala Model" clash with the lived realities of class-conscious decision-making. This study, grounded in Bourdieu's theoretical insights, shows that education in Kerala functions not merely as a means of knowledge transmission but as a symbolic field in which social identities are crafted, defended, and reproduced. The abandonment of government schools by the middle and upper classes is not rooted in empirical assessments of quality, but in the misrecognition of public education's value, a misrecognition that is fueled by symbolic violence, aspirational habitus, and cultural capital. Parents choose schools not just as places of learning but as sites of cultural distinction. This distinction is embedded in the language of instruction, the peer networks schools offer, and the institutional aesthetics of private education. Government schools, despite offering the same state syllabus and often superior teacher training, are stigmatized as being associated with poverty, disorder, and backwardness. This stigma is maintained and circulated through parent narratives, peer expectations, and institutional branding.

Yet, the presence of conscious counter-narratives, such as those by teachers, academics, and reform-minded parents, demonstrates that this process is not deterministic. Acts of resistance, though isolated, can disrupt the dominant narratives of stigma and revalorize public schooling. Initiatives like Kerala's Public Education Rejuvenation Campaign have made significant inroads in this regard, especially in enhancing infrastructure and community participation. However, structural reforms must be accompanied by cultural and symbolic interventions. Without these, the system risks entrenching a dual-track model of education: one for the privileged, and another for the rest. To reclaim the democratic promise of public education in Kerala, efforts must go beyond

quantitative targets and address the qualitative domain of perceptions, aspirations, and symbolic hierarchies. This involves creating public discourse that celebrates the value of inclusive education, dismantling myths about discipline and language in government schools, and fostering a culture in which trust in public systems becomes a collective rather than an individual aspiration.

In sum, Kerala's case is not merely a story of educational achievement, it is a cautionary tale of how even the most progressive systems can be undermined by cultural perceptions rooted in class. Understanding and addressing these perceptions is crucial not only for education policy but for the broader project of building a just and inclusive society. Addressing the stigma associated with public schooling requires not only infrastructural improvements but also symbolic and cultural interventions. The state could consider initiatives such as: (1) public campaigns that highlight success stories from government schools, (2) strengthening English-language confidence without compromising the mother tongue, (3) fostering socio-economic diversity through inclusive school zoning policies, and (4) creating platforms for greater middle-class engagement with public education. Without such interventions, the risk of a dual-track education system segregated along class and caste lines will continue to undermine Kerala's egalitarian educational vision.

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Article: Voice from the Margin: Life, Livelihood and Vulnerabilities of Transgender in Delhi

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Voice from the Margin: Life, Livelihood and Vulnerabilities of Transgender in Delhi

--Neelima & Minaketan Behera

Abstract

Transgender people experience identity crisis, prejudice, shame, and limited livelihoods. This article examines Transgender community's livelihood, social dynamics, vulnerabilities, and harassment using data collected from in-depth interviews with thirty Transgender individuals from Delhi, India. The research shows that Transgender individuals survive through begging, Bhadhais, and sex employment but face discrimination, harassment, and systemic inequities, including limited employment, healthcare, abuse, and denial of ancestral property rights. The research reinforces a determined effort to strengthen legal protections and change society to respect transgender rights. The study also emphasizes the urgent need to protect transgender rights, ensure dignity, access to quality education, healthcare, and employment, and shift societal norms towards inclusivity and respect.

Keywords: Livelihood Vulnerability, Gharana system, Sex Work, Social Structure, Risk Behaviour

Introduction

In Indian Society, transgender individuals, commonly known as Hijras, who claim to be neither male nor female, are socially excluded. A Transgender person is an individual whose gender does not match the gender assigned to that person at birth. It includes Trans-man or Trans-woman (whether such a person has undergone Sex Reassignment Surgery, hormonal therapy, laser therapy, or other therapy). A person with intersex variations, Genderqueer, and persons having socio-cultural identities such as Hijra, Aravani, and Jogta. (The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019). Transgender persons are spread across the country and are known by various local names such as hijra, Kinnar, Kothi, Aravanis, Jogtas, Jogappas, Khusras, and Shiv-Shaktis (Agoramoorthy,2015). According to the Census report, there are 4.88 lakh transgender individuals, and their literacy rates were found to be 56 percent lower than that of the general population (74 percent); out of this population, 78,811 belonged to the scheduled caste, which makes them even more vulnerable. In Delhi, the total population of transgender individuals is 4,213, of which 490 are identified from the Schedule Caste communities, and the literacy rate is 62.99 % (Census, 2011). Transgender individuals in India have historically faced social stigma and violence due to their non-conforming gender identity (Reddy, 2005). However, they have also been traditionally attributed with the ability to bestow fertility, hence granting them socio-religious acceptance (Sahastrabuddhe et al., 2012; Setia et al., 2006).

Transgender individuals tend to assume the role of receptive partners in sexual partnerships. They face numerous prejudices and human rights violations due to the legal system's lack of social support, healthcare, education, and access to goods and services. It was in 2014 that the Honorable Supreme Court of India granted them transgender constitutional status as a "third gender," formalizing transsexual recognition using the Yogyakarta Principles. The court ruled that transgender individuals have the right to self-identify as transgender. (The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019). The 2019 Transgender Protection Rights Act has talked about removing discrimination in the workplace, educational institutions, and daily life by family or society. In hindsight, this act fails to understand the complex mechanism of Indian Society when it comes to Transgender Rights.

The act is still discriminatory. The absence of guidelines on gender-offering procedures is the act's biggest loophole (Jain, 2022). Forced sex reassignment surgery has been discussed (Bhattacharya. et al., 2022 and Khanna, 2022). Decriminalizing 377 and the 2019 Transgender Person (Protection Rights) Act have given a strong space to the LGBT community to enjoy their rights, but gender-variant identities are still struggling with proof of identity. Trauma and mental health problems are caused by an intersectional awareness of gender-based sexual violence, heteronormative structural hurdles, and transphobia, as well as their intersectional impact or experience (Hammond, 2020). In many facets of life, such as education, employment, healthcare, voting, personal freedoms, legal safeguards, marriage, and familial ties, transgender people experience abuses of their human rights. With this background, the paper examines the key questions of livelihood, vulnerability, violence, social relations, the *Gharana* system, and harassment experienced by transgender individuals in different contexts within their daily lives in Delhi. It shows how rejection by family, denial of education, control through the *Gharana* system, unequal healthcare access, and harassment by police push transgender people into begging, *badhai*, and sex work. By linking everyday survival strategies with structural discrimination, the study highlights how livelihood insecurity is produced and sustained by social and institutional barriers.

Data and Methods

The study employed an exploratory and descriptive approach, using a non-probability purposive sampling method using the snowball technique. The target study area is Delhi, and the sample size is 30 transgender individuals. The participants were chosen in collaboration with the NGO *Mitr Trust*, an organization dedicated to advocating the rights of transgender individuals in Delhi, India. Delhi was chosen as the study site, since it is a metropolitan city that attracts migrants from different states in search of employment and anonymity. For many transgender persons, migration to Delhi is a response to stigma, violence, and exclusion they face in their home regions. As the national capital,

Delhi offers a wider range of livelihood opportunities, support networks, and state institutions, making it an important space to understand both possibilities and persistent exclusions. Studying Delhi helps capture the lived realities of transgender people at the political and administrative centre of India. The data were collected from March to May 2023 via open-ended in-depth interviews, using a descriptive statistical approach to investigate respondents' experiences, difficulties, and requirements. The questions covered various topics, including personal profiles, transgender issues and challenges, societal dynamics, Police cooperation, their relationships with friends, co-workers, gurus, family, policy, and legal information. During this study, the key ethical considerations were the participants' identity and anonymity. The participants were briefed on the study's objective, which helped them provide informed consent.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondent

In this section, the demographic profile of the respondents is presented, along with their experiences in narrative form. Table 1 shows that 33 % of respondents belong to the general caste, 37 % to the scheduled caste, and 13 % do not adhere to the caste system. There was no respondent from the scheduled tribe community. The table also shows that 40 % of respondents are between 20 and 25, while 27 % are between 25 and 30. 13 % are in the 15-20 age group, and 20 % are in the 30-35 age group. Hinduism is the preferred religion of 70% of respondents. 13% identify as Christians, while 17% identify as Muslims. No respondents belong to the Sikh religion.

Table 1: Caste, Age, and Religion of the Respondent

Caste	Percentage	Age	Percentage	Religion	Percentage
General	33	15-20	13	Hindu	70
OBC	17	20-25	40	Muslim	17
SC	37	25-30	27	Sikh	0
Others	13	30-35	20	Christian	13
Total	100	Total	13	Total	100

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Table 2 presents the respondents' and parents' educational background. 37 % of the respondents are pursuing Under-secondary Education, while 47 % are enrolled

in a graduation programme. 10% of participants are enrolled in (other) vocational programmes, such as English language training and beauty school. 3% of people never attended any school, and 3% of respondents completed senior secondary education. The mothers of 50 % of the respondents have never attended school. 17 % have a senior secondary education, whereas 30 % have an under-secondary education. Only 1 of the respondents' mothers (3%) has a doctoral degree. The fathers of 34 % of respondents are graduates. Fathers of respondents make up 23 % of those with only an Under-secondary Education. Merely a minority, specifically 20 %, of the fathers belonging to the participants have successfully attained their secondary education. The significance of parental education lies in its ability to shed light on the correlation between education and the acceptance of a child's gender expression. The findings indicate that 34% of participants reported having fathers with a Graduation degree. However, it is noteworthy that these respondents did not experience readily accepting attitudes from their fathers towards their gender manifestations. The lack of gender understanding within the education system is the underlying cause. Such thoughts of inclusiveness should be imbued well in the education system so that people have a positive acceptance towards the transgender community and their issues.

Table 2: Education of the Respondent and their Parents

Education	**Percentage of the Respondents' education (%)**	**Percentage of the Mother's Education (%)**	**Percentage of the Father's Education (%)**
Uneducated	03	50	23
Under secondary Education	37	30	23
Secondary Education	03	17	20
Graduation	10	0	34
Others	47 (Vocational)	3 PhD	0
Total	100	100	100

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Employment and Livelihood

Transgender individuals in India have historically faced discrimination and were denied education, employment, and social welfare programs (Ganju & Saggurti, 2017; Thaker et al., 2018). According to the researchers, it has been shown that around 85 % of transgender individuals rely on sex work as their primary means of income. (Jayadeva, 2017; Kalra, 2012). The conventional practice of begging and performing at wedding ceremonies within this group has experienced a decline due to the rise of urbanization and evolving social frameworks. Consequently, a significant number of individuals have transitioned into the sex work profession within metropolitan areas (Sahastrabuddhe et al., 2012; Setia et al., 2006). In addition to engaging in sex work, hijras traditionally participate in various cultural practices. These include performing *Badhais*, which are ritualistic acoustic music performances, working as *Laganwalis* by dancing at weddings and childbirths, and participating in *Chhalla*, which involves standing at road crossings or public transport stops to solicit monetary contributions from passers-by and commuters. (Dasgupta et al., 2021). Most participants are involved in the informal sector and have experience working in several occupations. The primary sources of income for individuals in question encompassed occupations related to the sex industry, traditional professions known as *Badhais*, and engaging in begging activities.

Neha (Pseudonym) mentioned, " I never choose that (work). I never wanted to work that. But I have to because people left us with no other options; I started working as a sweeper in an office because of my gender identity. They fired me. Nobody gives other works to transgender. So, for survival, I have to do this (sex work, *Badhais*, and begging)".

Lakita (Pseudonym) states, "For me, money is everything. When I send some money to my home, my parents will talk to me; otherwise, I am only a sin to them. And for money, I have to work. And in our society, reputation work is not for transgender; society forces us to choose such works."

There is no employment of transgender individuals within the government sector. Some respondents are working in NGO's. Our field data shows that 53% of respondents have monthly incomes between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 15,000, 23% have incomes between Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 20,000, 10% have incomes over Rs. 25,000, and 14% have incomes between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 25,000. (Table 3)

Table 3: Monthly Income of the Respondent

Monthly Income	Percentage
10,000-15,000	53

15,001-20,000	23
20,001-25,000	14
More than 25000	10
Total	100

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Social Structure and Transgender Community

A heteronormative-patriarchal society favours heteronormativity and leaves less space for the existence of any other expression of gender identity. It strictly compartmentalises the fluidity of gender and asks for a rigid way of performing gender. In such a society, any gender fluidity either occurs within or outside the heteronormative-patriarchal structure.

Within heteronormative-patriarchal structures such as family peer groups, schools could be a safe space for the community; however, the blatant Transphobia in Society turns these fundamental structures of society against the concerns of the Transgender community.

Discrimination by Family Members

Transgender individuals in India face unique challenges within families due to cultural, sociological, and legal factors. They face marginalisation in the judicial system, public arenas, and familial contexts. Navigating these relationships can be challenging, as fathers and brothers often reinforce societal gender expectations (Indian Exclusion Report, 2013-2014). In Indian Society, Transgender issues are still largely misunderstood, and families may not be aware of Transgender identity and experiences. The first time a transgender faces gender-based discrimination, it is from the members of the family. Of the 30 respondents, four who were living with the family were closeted. That would mean they show their Trans-identity outside, but in the family, they live while hiding it from their family. They stay in families as cis-heterosexual men; when they leave home, they embrace their Trans-identity and change their appearance in public restrooms; and before returning home, they bring themselves back to the performativity of cis-heterosexuality. The families in such cases become an institution that not only forces cis-heterosexuality but also represses trans identity. Many transgender people see their family relationship as based only on money, where they have to provide money to the family instead of the social security they provide.

Komal (Pseudonym) explains, "We have to buy relationships. There is no assurance that someone with us today may not be there tomorrow. Families ask for us only when they need money."

Rupi (Pseudonym) says, "The family members had harassed me, had completely occupied me, were not letting me out anywhere."

Similarly, most respondents leave the family due to family restrictions and non-cooperation. On physical abuse, many respondents have agreed that it happens in the family, while others feel uncomfortable talking about this topic.

A Transgender (*Priya*, name changed) working as an intern in Delhi and staying at *Grima Greh* says, "I am here in my female identity, but at home, my parents did not allow me to do that. I was uncomfortable with the gender assigned to me during my birth, but she maintained both of their identities for safety and security reasons. Her parents ask her to be herself abroad but not in India, because India is unsafe for transgender people".

Forty Percent of Transgender respondents survived sexual harassment at the hands of relatives. Kamla, narrates,

"I realised about my Trans-identity late. In a male body, I used to feel like a woman. I secretly liked to dress as a woman. At that time, I had not heard the word transgender. The Assamese do not know about Trans-identity. When the family members started noticing my flamboyant nature, and everyone in the neighbourhood started noticing and assuming that I was getting spoiled in the world. There was no other way or means to come to terms with my identity, and so they persisted in my marriage within a heterosexual framework. And this happened: the marriage lasted six months, and the divorce case lasted two years. Under mental trauma, I used to vomit blood. Then I left my business, my home, and came to Delhi. I miss my mother, whom I abandoned, but I console myself by remembering the old days."

Discrimination in Educational Institutions

The researchers enquired about the classroom environment and school experiences. The transgender individuals were affected by the educational institution's lack of knowledge and care. For many transgender individuals, high school and beyond were distressing. They were teased for not following gender norms. When their difference becomes obvious, transgender adolescents experience segregation, harassment, bullying, and even sexual abuse from educators and classmates. Such trauma made them feel self-loathing and led to low self-esteem, which forced them to drop out of school or college. In addition, financial restrictions prevented them from attending school or getting a good education. The respondents also confessed to having left their homes because of

familial violence or fear of repercussions if they reported it to the concerned authorities. Such situations forced some of them to drop out of school/college. Academic underachievement can lead to psychological suffering like despair, suicide ideation, and difficulty making friends (India Exclusion Report, 2013-14). Another observation is that the people living in metropolitan cities like Delhi and those connected to NGOs tend to approach education more positively. Conversely, transgender individuals who have immigrated and are connected to the *Gharana* system have stopped their education. Additionally, open education and IGNOU courses are suggested for individuals who are studying rather than taking a full-time course. The respondents did not feel at ease when questioned about the health and education systems and vehemently denied receiving favourable feedback from either.

Asma (Pseudonym) said, "School time was not good, there was harassment, bullying, and more bullying. I left school because of my gender identity." Another respondent says, "I left the school when I was in class 9 due to discrimination and ragging".

Bihu (Pseudonym) tells the reason behind her leaving the school, "The boys in the school used to bully me for my effeminate behaviour. When puberty hit me, I was turning more effeminate, and my breasts were getting enlarged. Because of this, I faced sexual abuse and harassment. Nobody supported me. I had thought of committing suicide when I was in eighth standard, but then I eloped from my home."

Harshita (Pseudonym) narrated an incident: "A group of 3 boys were sexually assaulted during the hotel management course in Haryana. One day, they sexually assaulted (rape) me. I dropped out of college and told my father what they had done to me. My father told me that it would not have happened, if I would not have shown such effeminate behaviour. That day, I felt so low and tried to commit suicide. But suicide is not the solution. So, I left my home and moved to Chandigarh. A police report was not filed against the assaulters because I was considered a boy at that time."

Gharana System and Vulnerability

It was observed from the field study that transgenders under the age of twenty are not included in the *Gharana* system (also called the Guru-Chela system). The *Hijra* social structure is the *Guru-Chela* System, in which hijra society follows a hierarchical *Guru-Chela* system. Typically, they are associated with a hierarchical clan or *Gharana*, which means 'house'. Each *Gharana* is overseen by a guru, who serves as the leader and mentors numerous followers within the system. Gurus have significant control over their pupils' daily lives and offer guidance on communal customs and rituals (Kalra, 2012). A *Nayak* (topmost), Guru mentors, guides, and defends a group of *Chelas* (disciples). *Guru-Chela* relationships are

often founded on loyalty, respect, and support. *Gurus* teach *Chelas* how to live and perform rituals. Despite the taboo surrounding gender fluidity in various religions, transgender individuals still identify with one or another religion. This aside, religion has provided them with work, as they are invited to perform *Badhais* rituals at wedding functions and at the birth of a child. *Hijras* live communally in "Hijra Houses" or *Hijra Gurukuls*. These residences allow hijras to live, learn, and support one another. "The *Hijra Gharana* system represents a way of life that is institutionalized and built on many types of opposition against the heteronormative notion of a family. The distinctive internal traditions and culture that the *Gharanas* legitimize are built on an informal structure that gives many people a place to negotiate their identities and helps India develop a counterculture". (Goel, I., 2018). A *Guru* runs each Hijra House and guides the residents. Rituals and ceremonies are important in *Hijra* culture. The societal structure is characterized by a rigid hierarchy, wherein the life of a eunuch is governed by a set of regulations established by their immediate superiors. (Sibsankar, M., 2018) The *Nirvana* or castration ritual removes *Hijra's* genitals. *Hijras* with experience execute this rite of passage. New *Hijras* are initiated into the community, and Eid and Urs are celebrated. *Hijras* have always had few job options. To survive, they have created their businesses. *Hijras* beg, bless, sing, and dance at weddings and births. It is vital to understand that not all *Hijras* work in sex work. South Asian *Hijras* have a distinct social rank. They are generally considered transgender. *Hijras* are recognized for their cultural and religious values, yet they are marginalized and discriminated against. *Hijras* are invited to perform at significant ceremonies to bring luck in some traditions. Now, if they work under the *Guru-Chela* system, they will follow the rules laid down by their *Gurus*, and if they go against them, they will be punished. If transgenders do not follow the rules, they are evicted; due to this, they do not adopt other families and do not get work, making living difficult. Society does not give them work; they have to opt for sex work, where they are at risk. The phenomenon of spatial mobility is occasionally linked to the practice of prostitution. The recent rise in the incidence of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among the *Hijra* community can be attributed to their engagement in commercial sex work. (Sibsankar, M.,2018) While operating alone, they remain in touch with an NGO. Only one of the Transgender persons works for the *Tolly* (*Badhais*) system and is a member of the Gharana system. The age group under 30 is employed in a variety of jobs, including sex work, *Badhais*, NGO work, and others. Older age groups participate in *Badhais* and begging. Age is a determining factor in the division of labor among the members of the Transgender community. Apart from this, age is also a crucial factor in determining the awareness of the transgender person and access to the resources for their benefit.

Discrimination in Healthcare Institutions

Transgender individuals in India face significant challenges in accessing quality healthcare due to discrimination, lack of treatment protocols, low health literacy,

poor healthcare behaviors, education, gender-based violence, socio-economic barriers, and health system barriers (Pandya & Redcay, 2021).

Rani (Pseudonym) states, " How can we feel safe in this society where the most educated people are most insensitive? Doctors are not supportive; they are very insensitive to us. They taunt us. Hospital staff use inappropriate words. I am not feeling comfortable going there (hospitals)"

Aarti (Pseudonym) said, "Hospitals!! If we go to the general OPD, other patients look at us like we are aliens from another planet. The staff put us in the male queue, where I felt uncomfortable because I consider myself a woman. But they don't care. They touch us like we are untouchable to them. So how can we say the government is doing good for us?"

Healthcare professionals often lack the training to address transgender needs, leading to a lack of sensitivity toward this population. Transgender individuals often face hostile attitudes and discrimination, leading to the "stigma-sickness slope." Hospitals also exhibit discriminatory behaviour towards HIV-positive patients, and many transgender individuals experience discrimination within sexual minority organizations and health programs (India Exclusion Report,2013-14). All of the thirty respondents are taking hormone therapy. When asked about the hospital's behaviour toward them, they said the staff members were not cooperative. The staff considered them unworthy of any attention. Despite legal recognition of transgender as the third category of gender based identity, many transgenders complained about the unavailability of option to choose transgender as a gendered category on various forms that were to be filled out to avail services at any given hospital. Due to such negligence and discriminatory behaviour toward them, they mostly avoid going to hospitals.

When asked about health care support, TG card, and the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, Bharti (Pseudonym) said, "There are many complexities in the process of taking advantage of government schemes. Firstly, a TG (TransGender Identity Card) is a long process. We can apply for an Ayushman card after changing our names on our other identity proof. And I don't know any transgender people who benefit from the scheme. I am not talking about lowering someone; this is all my experience and my knowledge; even the higher authorities sitting in the government offices have no idea what the scheme is about, for whom it is, and what the process is!"

Risk, Harassment, and Police Behavior

Despite the implementation of legal reforms, transgender individuals in India still encounter persistent violence and threats. This encompasses acts of physical assault, instances of sexual harassment, and occurrences of emotional abuse. Instances of violence are frequently carried out by individuals within familial

relationships, communities, and even those in positions of authority within law enforcement agencies. *Gharnas* are places where transgender people can feel secure, as community members live together. However, the *Gharana System* is no exception to the hierarchy practiced in any institution. *Chelas* give their *Guru* half of what they make. Respondents in the *Gharana* system do not feel joyful, whereas independent respondents do. Most respondents no longer believe living in *Gharana* to be appropriate and have left it.

The head of the *Gharana Dera* claims that "we don't do sex work." However, their disciples do, and if they are earning through sex work, they must give a certain amount of their earnings to the Dera head, which allows them to do the work in the region.

How does *Rupali* (Pseudonym) meet a client? When asked about it, she says, "Janakpuri tourist spot, district center are the places where clients can be found. Whatever activity they have to do, they do it in the car of the client. Most of the time, only oral sex happens; this work is done in cars. Money is received based on that". She further explained, "I always use condoms, but most of the time, clients force me to do activities without condoms. If I oppose them, they become aggressive. Many times, we have to risk our lives to arrange for a meal a day. We have no other option left but to earn through sex work!"

Teena (Pseudonym) states, "Most of the time, risk depends on the client's alcohol consumption, his mood, family conditions, and many other factors. They often come and only talk about their problems; many of them come to us, give us money, lock the door and do whatever they want with us. We often oppose them and escape the room, but the chances are very low most of the time. If the door is locked once, I am only a toy for them. That's why I mostly choose to do sex work in a place that is mine. I never go to their places."

Pooja (Pseudonym), who reports making a living by begging, states:

"Our area is divided, and we must beg; we hate doing it, but we must work, even if we don't want to. Even if we get work, people won't respect us; therefore, we have no other option."

Some respondents previously worked in BPOs, call centers, and parlors but quit due to the gender discrimination they faced. They claim that they used to get bullied and were not provided with money, and most of the time they were not treated with the respect they deserved for their labor they put in the work.

Kanika (Pseudonym) explains, "I used to perform a fantastic job but was never recognized because, as with women, they aren't given opportunities. I worked in BPO, where they gave me space, but there is a lot of discrimination."

Shruti (Pseudonym) describes the issue she is having at work by stating, "Before fully identifying myself, I used to handle the business of products needed in worship, whose turnover was in lakhs, but the family members used to have conflicts with me because of my identity. I was unable to bear it, so I left my home. My brother manages my labor-intensive business, from which I do not receive a single rupee, and now I am considering starting a new tea company. Still, I'm having issues obtaining finance and establishing my identity. NGOs are being spoken to, but nothing is happening."

Muskaan (Pseudonym) says, "When they (renter) call, they say yes! The room is empty, but as soon as we go to see the room, they refuse to see us because of our gender, or they increase the rent of the room."

Some respondents revealed that they were also asked for sexual favors in exchange for a room.

Renu (Pseudonym) said, "The place where I live is in the city's outer suburbs, and it is mostly people like me who live there. The contractor of the house keeps drinking alcohol and calls us alone. When I go to pay the rent, he asks me if I do the same dirty work that all these people do? I said no, I work in an NGO. A transgender woman (my neighbour) told me that if the rent was late for a day, the renter would come to the room and sexually exploit her. That time, I felt terrified, and I always try to pay rent on time and try to avoid the renter."

At a young age, many Transgender persons left their home. They were mocked, cast out, and humiliated by family members and neighbours, resulting in psychological distress, as a result many transgender individuals prefer to avoid public interactions. In educational institutions, transgender face negative experiences being teased or using derogatory terms by their peers, such as *Chakka*. Teachers and schools avoided them. Their family did not support them. They face economic distress. Also, in the *Hijra* tradition (*Gharana System*), they face many problems. Under *Nayak*, they are exploited mentally and physically. Violation of the rules of the *Gharana* leads to punishment, humiliation, and expulsion from the *Ghrana* by the *Nayak*. (Arvind, at. al. 2022). Representation, Disclosure, and Transition are the key concepts for studying the workplace barrier of transgender. It is important to study the pattern of exclusion, fear, anxiety, and the complexity of the nature of social segregation in terms of gender identity. (Ozturk and Tatli, 2016) The three emerge when studying Transgender issues in the workplace are coming out in the workplace, lack of support from employees and higher authority, and properly pronouncing and choosing names during the transition to being acknowledged. (Dietert and Sentence, 2009) While studying through sexual citizenship theory, the Trans-Person experienced discrimination in three rules: 1) Civil, 2) Political, and 3) Social. The study adds new knowledge and a lens to the way discrimination exists (Rosich, 2020).

Sex workers are often assaulted. It can be mentally and emotionally taxing. Stigma related to sex work, discrimination, and shame can cause shame, guilt, and loneliness. Such work often involves close consumer contact, which can be stressful. In places where sex work is criminalized or stigmatized, sex workers may be unwilling to seek legal protection or report violent incidents. They may be defenseless without legal representation. In a stigmatized and criminalized environment, clients, pimps, and police may harass, exploit, or assault sex workers. The literature mentions that in India, 85 % transgender people reported harassment. Social strain among transgender individuals is the result of persistent transphobia in society, fear of adjusting and not adapting to social norms (Safren. et.al., 2006). Harassment, verbal bullying, and sexual violence are perpetrated by parents, teachers, peers, and society (Bund, 2013; Reddy, 2005). The other studies show psychological distress characterized by fear related to the potential loss of the relationship, internalized transphobia, identity disclosure, and coming out. (Chakrapani, 2010; Satpathy et al. 2018). These are enforced by multiple oppressions and social inequities in the name of housing insecurity, employment discrimination, and poverty. (Ganju and Saggurli, 2017).

Transgender individuals frequently encounter instances of mistreatment from law enforcement personnel. They experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence because of their sexual orientation and gender identities (Azad & Nayak, 2016). They face harassment, bribes, and extortion, are often viewed as criminals, and often drop out of school due to a lack of legal options (India Exclusion Report 2013-14). The field study shows that 40 percent of the respondents described their experience with the police as traumatic. It could be due to the harassment and exploitation faced by them at the hands of the police. About 27 percent agreed that the police officials were never helpful in the case of Transgender issues. It is mainly because not many legal protections are granted to transgender people that leaves them vulnerable at the hands of the police. Study shows that 22 percent (Male Sex with Male), and 43 percent of transgender women faced police harassment. This strongly indicates human rights violations (Logie et al., 2011). About 20 percent of the respondents expressed that the police help them depending on their mood. The lack of legal protection for the Transgender community allows police to work at their will. Only 10 percent of the respondents felt the police attitude toward them was 'sometimes helpful', and only 3 percent experienced a 'helpful' attitude at the hands of the police (Table 4). Much of the harassment and the injustices at the hands of the police go unreported. Not only this, but sex workers may also abuse drugs and alcohol. Substance use can help in sex work, performance, and coping with pressure, performance anxieties and stress. The adverse effect of drug and alcohol abuse is that it impairs judgment and makes people more vulnerable to exploitation and risky situations.

Table 4: Police Behavior

Police Behavior	Number of Respondents	%
Helpful	01	3
Sometimes helpful	03	10
Depends on mood	06	20
Never helpful	08	27
Traumatic	12	40
Total	30	100

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Behaviour of the police is governed by the social attitudes toward transgender people, which are fundamentally transphobic. The lack of legal measures to ensure the fundamental rights of transgender individuals adds to the transphobia in society, leaving transgender individuals vulnerable. Due to this vulnerability and the tendency to fall prey to the transphobic attitude of the police, transgender individuals hesitate to visit the police when their rights are violated.

Sonia (Pseudonym) Reacts, "It is better to stay away from the police. They do not listen to our pleas. Going to them asking for help is an addition to our problems".

Tannu (Pseudonym) said, "Police! No! Never! Never! They arrest us for no reason and file a charge sheet against us. We try never to stay a night in a police station, even when there is an arrest. The police can beat us to our death; they rape us. That is why even when we have to visit a police station, we go in groups."

Lokita (Pseudonym) explains, "I went to *Tihar* (jail in Delhi) as a master trainee to train the staff in gender sensitization. Interesting that they beat me first, then invite me to teach them."

Kritika (Pseudonym) narrates, "A few years ago, a boy came to our NGO. He had eloped from his home. We sheltered him with proper identification in the *Garima Greh*. Later, the boy's family came looking for him with the police. We asked them to come in the morning as, at that time, everyone had fallen asleep. The parents pleaded that they wanted to see their son. They met but, in the course of the talk, forcefully took him away. We went after the boy to the police station. The parents did not allow the boy to stay with us. The police had beaten me so much that I was in a wheelchair for months. We went to the courts, but in vain. In

the end, they came to us to seek an apology, but it made no sense after the humiliation we received."

Discussion

Transgender people experience discrimination and harassment daily, which impacts their professional and personal lives. Due to the heteronormative patriarchal structure of society, the lack of acceptance of transgender people, and other factors, transgender people suffer tremendously. The realization of their entire human potential and the preservation of their gender dignity have been impeded as a result (Mal, 2018). Sexual assault, physical abuse, and cultural and social marginalization, affect transgender people. These problems can only be solved if anti-discrimination legislation and policy initiatives from the public and private sectors are considered and put into execution. Some progressive steps that include raising awareness of transgender people and their identities, lending financial support to community groups established by transgender people, increasing media coverage of transgender people, and supporting civil society organizations. They flee to the *Gharana System* because neither their family nor society can accept them as they are. Because of this, people frequently find themselves forcibly removed from their homes, which can lead to feelings of alienation and marginalization. The transgender population experience homelessness, which is further worsened by police brutality, public harassment, and health problems. Respondents reported encountering verbal abuse or contempt in various public accommodations, including hotels, restaurants, buses, airports, and government organizations (Grant et al.,2011; More, 2021). Transgender people are at risk for harm due to the lack of secure employment opportunities. Because of societal pressures, they are unable to obtain respectable employment to lead fulfilling lives; as a result, they gravitate towards low-wage occupations and sex work. Managers, receptionists, or even sweepers are common jobs for them at NGOs. They face discrimination in the workplace and social circles because of their gender identity. The threat of physical violence, bullying, and harassment is a major reason for transgender people to quit their work. People who identify themselves as LGBT in India may face hostile environments, threats, and prejudice in many settings, including but not limited to the workplace, schools, hospitals, and social assistance programmes. When it comes to sexual favors and services, looks do matter. The gorgeous and well-behaved are usually the ones chosen. Because of their experiences with sex work, harassment, and exploitation, transgender people are more likely to contract HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The primary concerns that emerged from the literature and field research were the family's acceptance and the persistent discrimination. According to this research, the biggest obstacles experienced by transgender individuals are authority and ignorance of transgender-related procedures and norms. Gender and related concerns must be brought to the attention of all public officials. Systemic

structural discrimination is the second form of prejudice, and it manifests itself in the persistent marginalization and disadvantage of transgender people as a result of institutionalized biases and prejudices in the political, social, legal, and economic spheres. This complex prejudice manifests itself in various ways throughout society and has a profound impact on transgender people's lives. The basic misunderstanding is that all they do is perform as prostitutes, beggars, and dancers. Despite not having a high school diploma, many of the people who participated in the study have developed self-assurance, strong communication skills, and strong occupational abilities with the help of non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, non-NGO-affiliated individuals who relocated to Delhi from elsewhere are struggling to make ends meet. Few details regarding their characteristics are known, leading to their categorization as "secondary citizens"; furthermore, government programmes such as the *Awash Yojana* and pension schemes for the elderly do not include them. It is important to address these concerns inside the family to foster an inclusive workplace and prevent similar situations in the future.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Transgender in India encounter various challenges, including social ostracism, economic marginalization, psychological distress, and political disenfranchisement, primarily as a result of prevailing social stigmas. The results emphasise that the vulnerabilities are not just individual issues, but as outcomes of systemic denial of recognition of essential rights and resources in urban areas. To effectively tackle these concerns, modifying prevailing societal norms, strengthening legal safeguards, and establishing inclusive environments is imperative. Transgender social welfare programs ought to encompass a comprehensive range of services, such as counselling, education, and awareness training. State governments need to acknowledge transgender individuals in official documents such as passports, driving licenses, and bank accounts. Welfare boards must ensure the provision of fair and just access to public healthcare services, including gender transition therapies. Education must be improved by promoting transgender knowledge and understanding in schools and colleges. Healthcare providers play a crucial role in addressing inequities faced by trans people by creating a welcoming environment, educating professionals on their unique health needs, and conducting workshops with medical educators. It is imperative to ensure that transgender individuals are afforded opportunities for employment, financial autonomy, educational attainment, access to healthcare, and secure housing. Additionally, support and cooperation from the public authorities will help them feel safe and at ease, as they move from one place to another, often staying vulnerable at the hands of strangers. Such external support at all times is essential for an individual's freedom to move, to live and to seek self-development as an individual in the country. This study contributes to ongoing debates on gender justice and inclusive development, emphasising the urgent need for coordinated policy interventions and social transformation.

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Article: Making of Scientist's in school science textbooks: A case study of Odisha, India

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Making of Scientist's in school science textbooks: A case study of Odisha, India

--Aniruddha Naik

Abstract

who constitutes the "scientist community" and what their nationality, gender backgrounds, and whether they are from the ancient or contemporary world have deeper pedagogic and psychological effects on students' conceptualisations of who become scientists across the world. As school textbooks are a defining source of pedagogic communication in most countries, the present study aims to understand the framing of scientists by analysing their occurrence, nationality, gender backgrounds, and whether they are from ancient, medieval, or modern periods. The study used content analysis technique to understand the covert and overt meanings associated with the framing of scientists by looking into the number of times a scientist has been given spaces in all these textbooks, the frequency of the mentions of scientists, whether they are part of the appendix or main body. Textbook makers in Odisha state have used the school science textbooks to inform and socialise students about the achievements of scientists in the school textbooks. Government and non-government-aided school textbooks prescribed for grade 3 to grade 10 students of Odisha are used for analysis. The quantitative content analysis technique addresses the nature and number of scientists portrayed in all the school science textbooks. The study reveals that these textbooks have portrayed scientists as a profession exclusive of the male domain with the dominance of Europeans. Indian or other scientists have a minimal role in making a scientist's bodies; however, the textbook makers followed the selection and organisation of the contents based on the principle of dominant narratives with the exclusion of the scientific contributions of the female and non-western scientists and scientists from the ancient and medieval times. It shows the textbook maker's failure to acknowledge the diversity of the science field by the scientific community. The textbook makers should change the stereotyping of scientists and make science more inclusive and incorporate scientists based on the NEP 2020 suggestions to include scientists from all genders, nationalities, and different historical periods who made scientific contributions and should give space to Indian male and female scientists to make it more contextualisations debates which are taking place.

***Keywords**: Odisha, Scientist, Indian Scientists, Science textbook, Stereotype, content analysis*

Introduction

Who used to be scientists? What are their nationality, gender backgrounds, ethnic and racial identity, and are they from ancient, medieval, or modern times? These are some of the sociological questions that used to be pondered in the sociology of science education. Scientists' roles and achievements are celebrated on different platforms such as films, children's stories books, news

media, and school textbooks. However, in all these platforms, the school used to take the dominant position in disseminating the role as it has more significant social, ideological, and political implications. States used to frame the school knowledge of scientists' lives and their contributions using the school pedagogic and textual materials. As a part of its ideological or political implications, popular media and news work as a part of school knowledge in the form of pedagogic and textual material. The inclusions or exclusions about or on the scientists played a significant role in informing or educating school students on the scientist's lives, their scientific achievements, and their role in nation and society building.

Students' stereotyping of scientists' images is quite visible in all the available platforms where students used to know about scientists. Scholars have observed that students used to have stereotypical images of scientists which reflected in the drawing of scientist images and the various children's biographies as part of pedagogic communications (Chambers,1983; Chrisstidou et al.2012; Dagher & Ford, 2005; Farland-smith et al.2014; Finson,2002; Newton& Newton,1998; Mead & Metraux,1957).)

Studies across the different parts of the globe on framing scientists in school textbooks in general and school science textbooks, in particular, noted that textbook makers used to frame "school knowledge" on scientists by using the principle of exclusions and inclusions while framing the scientist roles, their lives and their contributions to the society (Hite, 2021; Kaur, 2015, Yacoubian et al.2017; Murray et al.2022; GÖKSU & İNALTEKİN, 2020). Studies have noted that many countries, from the global north to the global south, maintain the dominant narrative that scientists are male and Western-centric while delegitimising the part of female scientists and black scientists (Hite, 2021; Murray et al. 2022).

The studies show that the textbook makers celebrate scientists from Western countries as part of the scientific community. School knowledge of "scientists" used to work as the ideological state apparatus in giving spaces to only the male white western scientists as the authentic or valid school knowledge on scientists while delegitimising or derecognising or maintaining a culture of silence on the lives, contributions of the scientists from the marginalised communities. Scientist from other races is hardly taught as part of the scientist's biographies and in science contributions in science textbooks. Asian, African, or, for that matter, Australian scientists hardly get space in the science curriculum, which is reflected both in the Western world and also in Asian countries, for example, India, Lebanon, and Turkey (Kaur 2015; Yacoubian et al. 2017; GOKSU & İNALTEKİN. 2020; Vesterinen et al.2013). The studies done on the textbooks of scientists in countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and India reveal that national textbooks prepared by the national agencies in the respective countries have stereotypical images of the science field and the scientists as the Western-dominated field. Kaur (2015) reveals

that the NCERT[1] school science textbooks hardly mention Indian scientists in the school textbooks except for SN Bose. She highlights the absence of Indian scientists in grades IX and X of NCERT science textbooks. She argues that textbooks made a gendered portrayal of scientists, with all scientists being male.

However, studies show that females are slowly getting into the school curriculum and in the popular media and children's biographies (Rossiter, 1982 & 98). Textbooks have slowly given female and black scientists space to make the science field its actual due and place in society. It might be due to the subaltern politics along with the intervention of feminist politics and feminist historians in science, which raised the question of the delegitimisation of female and black scientists. The politics of knowledge production and reproduction have more significant social and ideological implications in the students' minds regarding who scientists are and what their backgrounds are. Scholars have noted that slowly, the UK, US and other scientists have acknowledged the changes in the framing of school knowledge on scientists in these school textbooks with the inclusion of female, black, and scientists from third-world countries.

In India, school textbooks dominate in producing and reproducing scientists' school knowledge. Though science exhibitions[2], scientists' images on the walls of the schools and the celebration of Science Day[3] also have a role in the dissemination of knowledge about scientists on various occasions, which are very much shaped by the student's participation in the science exhibitions and the ways the schools used to celebrate the science days. Otherwise, school textbooks are the only resources for students to have knowledge or information on scientists as they are accessible to every student, unlike science exhibitions and science days, where only a few students who are good at science participate. However, considering that textbooks are often the dominant instructional tools that influence the delivery of instructional content in India (Kumar, 2005), the present paper focused on science textbooks as the primary resource for analysis.

[1] NCERT: NCERT stands for National council for education, research and training. It is the central agency for preparing school textbooks in india for the central governments and Navodaya vidyalays schools. Various states government also used to recommend NCERT school textbooks for their state students by translating in their respective languages.

[2] science exhibitions are used to be held in different levels in India starting with blocks, districts, state and national levels where various events such as quiz competitions, display of science projects used to take places. Students from each school participate in the block levels followed by if they selected in the first positions go to districts and next succession levels. as a part of the events, scientists lives are displays, questions are asked on scientists in quiz competitions.

[3] Science Day is celebrated in the birth anniversary of physicist CV Raman who won Nobel prize in physics for the Raman spectroscopy in 1930. In this occasion, schools sued to discussed on the lives and contributions of CV Raman in the respective schools.

As the school science textbooks are central in informing and teaching about scientists' live and their social and nationality, the present study aims to understand the following objectives:

a) To understand the presence and absence of the scientists in making scientists community from their occurrence in the different historical periods. By doing so it tries to understand how far school science textbooks acknowledge the role of history (in giving space to scientists from ancient and medieval) and the acceptance of new knowledge in providing space to the scientists who have made new inventions and discoveries to the existing knowledge)
b) To examine the nationality and gender backgrounds of the referred scientists to understand how far Odisha school science textbooks make the science field more democratic and just

c) To analyse how far Indian scientists from different genders, historical periods have been mentioned as part of the making of Odisha school science knowledge on scientists, thereby analysing Indian position in the world science and contextualisation of school science textbooks
d) To understand whether all scientists get equal spaces or few get more or few get fewer spaces in Odisha School science

The purpose of the study is not to delegitimise and criticise the scientific contributions of the great scientists who are part of the official knowledge on scientists in the school textbooks, dividing them on gender, nationality or scientists from the different historical periods in Odisha instead; it attempted to understand the making of science field which could have been better provided the due spaces to the invisible scientists who are invisible from various reasons.

Theoretical Framework: Making of official scientists in schools

Sociological literature on framing what is valid or authentic school knowledge and who decides authentic or official knowledge meant for school students has noted the social construction of school knowledge organised on the principle of power, politics, identity, and ideology of the society (Apple, 2014). Apple (1982) argued that the things identified as school knowledge are socially constructed knowledge shaped by a complex process of politics, ideology, and markets. The science field is always objective in its approach. Though making scientists in schools seems objective, selecting and classifying a person as a scientist is always organised in the principle of politics of mention in who to select as a scientist. Is it restricted to modern scientists, or is it also to include ancient and medieval scientists?

The examinations of scientists' presentations in the popular media, such as movies, schools, and educational material, have been under scrutiny by subaltern politics, which has challenged the politics of knowledge production in terms of what constitutes knowledge. Subaltern politics has led to acknowledging and recognising the invisible as visible and recognised in the

popular media and by the states. Movies such as Hidden Figures[4]and the web series "The Rocket Boys[5]" are a few that show that the making of scientists is also very much shaped by the politics and ideology of the ruling party and dominant social groups.

Stereotyping of scientists in the school science textbooks is a dominant form of analysis, which shows that scientists from blacks, women, and non-western are used to be invisible in making official knowledge of scientists in schools (Kaur 2015; Yacoubian et al. 2017; GOKSU & İNALTEKİN. 2020; Laçin-Şimşek,2011). Scientists are presented as the only Western scientists with no or fewer contributions than non-Western scientists. One reason could be the conventional approach by textbook makers in the Global South, who still judge scientists based on discoveries of things or theories. However, few scientists are still out of the school curriculum despite their exemplary achievements.

Few studies have noted the silence of the scientific contribution of black or African American scientists in school textbooks. Till recently, African-American scientists are not been part of the school curriculum. However, the rise of African-American politics is one of the key factors that has caused scientists from America to slowly become part of the school curriculum in the United States. Therefore, competitive politics also has a role in shaping the construction of school knowledge, which shows that knowledge is socially constructed.

The 1960s and 70s, scientists were assumed to be male only in the United States and female scientists' contributions were never acknowledged or recognised by the scientific community or the state(Rossiter, 1982 & 98). The invisibility of female scientists is one of the key areas where feminist historians and politics raised concerns. It led to the recognition of American female scientists in public spaces such as media, education and popular movies.

Studies across various countries have noted that the scientists' textbook making is stereotypical in making the science field from the perspective of its makers or contributors. Scientists used to be viewed as modern professionals, and there was no science in the ancient or medieval era. However, the studies have failed to acknowledge the ancient civilisations and the modern non-western countries where science also existed.

What constitutes school knowledge, who prepares the school knowledge, and what are the stakes of states and society in producing the stocks of school knowledge are a few of the questions? which are the centre of debates and

[4] Hidden Figures is an American biographical movie which depicts the contributions of three african-american mathematicians who work for the NASA released in 2016. it bring out their lives and stories to the public domain.
[5] Rocket boys came in 2022 and it shows the lives and struggles of two indian scientists Vikram Sarabhai and Homi Jehangir Bhabha.

discussions among politicians, academics and the making of school knowledge across the world. It has been an issue of contestation (Naik & Gundemeda, 2023). What is school knowledge and who is identified as the producer of knowledge, are very important issues concerning social science in general and sociology and education in particular (Jamatia & Gundemeda, 2019).

The present study is carried out to study the biographical notes on the lives of the scientists in the Odisha SCERT-prescribed science textbooks for grades III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X. It tries to analyse if these have elements that reinforce or counter stereotypes of scientists.

Methodology

Science as a school subject is taught to children from grade III onwards, with both social science and science content across Indian schools. However, science as a school subject exclusively focused on science content is formally taught from grade VI onwards. Therefore, the study selected school science textbooks from grade III to grade X prescribed by the Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha, for the government and government-aided schools in Odisha. The study is restricted to the grade X as science is taught as a compulsory subject to all students in India, after which those who choose science only study science. The textbooks claim they are prepared according to the National Curriculum Framework-2005 and the State Curriculum Framework-2007 [6] (SCF). The textbooks are written by a committee composed of three to six members. Textbooks from Grade I to Grade VIII are prepared by the Directorate of Teacher Education and SCERT[7], Odisha, and have undergone a process of evaluation from time to time to meet the needs and aspirations of society, fulfil the changing nature of markets and economy through an editorial committee and a committee on contents (Samikhyaka Mandala). The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) prepares the textbooks for Grade IX and Grade X in Odisha, which has also undergone various changes in keeping with socioeconomic needs, market demands, and the state government's objectives. Grades IX and X have two science textbooks, one for physical science and the other for life science. Ten textbooks are used for the analysis. The study has used the content analysis technique to study school science textbooks from Grade III to Grade X written in the state's official language, Odia, to explore a curriculum's manifest and latent functions in framing the nationality, gender and ancient or medieval or contemporariness of scientists. Only quantitative content analysis has been used to examine the contents of the school textbooks on scientists. The textbooks are printed in Odia script. The latest edition of each textbook has

[6] NCF Stands for national curriculum framework for school students is prepared based on the national education policy in india. so far india has madefour NCF in 1968,88,2000,2005.
SCF stands for state curriculum framework which is preared by the respetives states in india by keeping NCF as the reference model.

[7] SCERT stands for State Council of Educational Research and Training. Every state in india used to have SCERT who prepare school textbooks for their repective states. it is similar to the NCERT which work in the national level in india.

been used for the present analysis. The paper focuses on textbooks prepared by the state government which gone through various changes and reprints, such as the grade III textbook first prepared in 2010 got reprinted in 2019; grade IV in 2010 and reprinted in 2019; grade V in 2010 and reprinted in 2019, grade VI in, 2010 and reprinted in 2017, grade VII in 2011 and revised in 2020, grade VIII in 2018, grade IX physical science textbook prepared in 2014 and reprinted in 2017, grade IX life science textbook printed in 2012 and reprinted in 2018, both grade X science textbooks are prepared in 2013 and revised in 2021.

Data collection and analysis

The sample for the study is the school science textbooks prescribed for the school students, identified as subjects that portray the scientists. Surgeons, Doctors, Engineers, Environmentalists, Astronauts and Scientists are some professional textbooks recognised as the discoverers and inventors of various scientific achievements. However, the present study is restricted to scientists, such as environmental scientists, biologists, astronauts, etc. It ignores the astronauts, ecologists, and doctors who haven't discovered it, such as astronauts like Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins. Scientist's contributions are mentioned in the school science textbooks in three places. One is in the main body of the lessons, where their theories or discoveries are discussed without keeping scientists' information in boxes. Second, in the main body, in the boxes as a part of the "additional information" on the scientists. Thirdly, in the "Do you Know" section their contributions are given at the end of the lesson. The study analysed the main text and sections on the scientist's lists above, including additional information and "Do you Know"? Sections to understand the making of school science knowledge on scientists in Odisha science textbooks.

Sometimes, a scientist's name comes up several times in different lessons or themes; therefore, these scientists are evaluated in the number of their appearances, with one appearance in one lesson as one and the next in other lessons or themes as two. By doing so, the study analyses the importance the school textbook makers give to the scientists.

The selection and organisation of valuing scientists are very much visible in the spaces given to them in the school textbooks, where some scientists' information is given in detail with an extensive description. In contrast, some are given only one or two lines. Therefore, the study examines the spaces given to individual scientists.

In the quantitative content analysis, the number and percentage of representations and frequency of scientists were calculated based on their appearance. The study examines who is part of the scientific community, who constitutes scientists in the schools who are not part of the official scientists prepared by the textbook makers, and the nature of spaces provided to different scientists. Therefore, the quantitative content analyses the scientists who dominate the scientific profession and their occurrences in history,

gender, and nationality. The total number of pages of analysis is 1135, and the total number of chapters is 87, spread across ten textbooks.

Table 1. Summary table of the selected textbooks analysed by the number of chapters and pages.

Grades	Name of the Textbook		No. of chapters	No. of pages
III	*Jana Ajana*		10	146
IV	*We and Our Environment*		10	199
V	*Environmental Science*		21	200
VI	*Science*		18	98
VII	*Science*		17	221
VIII	*Science*		18	230
IX	*Life science*		6	106
	Physical Science		9	141
X	*Life science*		10	162
	Physical science		9	177
Total			87	1135

The number of times the word scientists has been evaluated is based on the frequency of the appearance of scientists from the history of science. i.e., ancient, medieval or contemporary, on their nationality and their gender backgrounds. For some scientists, the textbooks mention their contributions to the science field without any reference to their nationality and the images of the scientists, therefore the researcher tries to find out the nationality and the gender background of the scientists from various sources.

In this study, the scientist's data is evaluated on three themes.

1. Whether scientists are from ancient, medieval, modern or contemporary periods
2. Nationality
3. Gender

History: The study aims to categorise the scientists based on the time they have been associated with. In doing so, it underscores the importance of the science field in incorporating new knowledge and professionals. In the historical periods, history defines ancient means up to the 7^{th} century, medieval period from the 7^{th} to 14^{th} century, and contemporary means times from the 14^{th} century onwards. Some scientist's information on their birth and death year has been mentioned while giving information on the scientists, while for some scientists, it is not given. Therefore, when there is no information on the scientist's birth and death, the researcher notes the year of the scientist active in their scientific journey by looking into their life from various sources.

Nationality: Nationality refers to the textbooks mentioning the scientist's nation. Some scientist's information on their nationality has been mentioned while giving information on the scientists; for some scientists, it is not given. Therefore, when there is no information on the scientist's birth and death, the

researcher notes the year the scientist was active in their scientific journey by looking into their life from various sources.

Gender: gender refers to the male and female genders of the scientists mentioned in the study. Looking into the images of the scientists, the researcher noted the gender background of the scientists. When there was no image of a scientist, the researcher found various sources to verify the gender of a scientist.

The analysis doesn't look into the scientist's community as the picture or the contents don't reflect on the racial identity.

Results

The study noted that the Odisha school science textbooks referred scientists 102 times across the eight grades combined. However, some scientists are referred to multiple times based on their number of scientific inventions or discoveries. Students encounter scientists for the first time in grade V. Grades III, IV, and VI don't have scientific references in the science textbooks.

Few Scientists are more important to students.

Table 2 noted interesting results in giving space to the individual scientists in the school textbooks. Not all scientists mentioned in these textbooks are given equal spaces and the same portrayal. While giving information on some scientists, the textbooks provide spaces in a detailed manner with images of the scientists, their educational journey and the awards they received. However, for a few other scientists, the textbooks reference their discovery in single or two lines. Scientists such as Newton, Einstein, Faraday, and Galileo are noted by the study as the scientists who received much attention. In contrast, scientists like Marconi, Graham Bell, and others are restricted to a single page.

Few scientists are referred to multiple times in the study, few are referred to only once, and few are not even part of these texts. Newton referred to four times in these texts: "Force and Pressure" (VIII), "Force and Laws of Motion," "Gravitation" (class IX physical science), and The Human Eye and the Colorful Life (X) lessons. Galileo was referred to three times as part of the "Heat and Heat conduction" and "Motion and Time" lessons in grade VII and "Force and laws of Motion" in the grade IX physical science textbook. Volta refereed two times in two lessons on "Electricity" and "Magnetic effects of Electric Current" (class X physical science). Antoine Lavoisier referred to two times in these lessons: "Is matter around us pure?" and "Atoms and Molecules" (class IX physical science).

Is science a modern profession? The textbook says it is, yes.

The study noted that science is organised in a way that seems to be a modern enterprise. The number of scientists referred to in these school textbooks

shows that only modern scientists are celebrated as part of their theories and scientific discoveries from the 15th-century world. Only scientist Archimedes is referred to at once in these textbooks as part of the scientific community. He is referred to in the textbook as the discovery of the principle of buoyancy. His principle has been detailed and discussed in one full page. (Class IX, Physical science textbook, P,105). Scientists from the 15th century onwards are referred to in all types, with varying spaces given to individual scientists.

Western scientists dominate the science field.

The science field meant for school children of Odisha has tried to incorporate the scientist's contributions to scientific knowledge systems by incorporating scientists in the individual lessons in life and physical science in odisha school science textbooks. Regarding the scientists' nationality, when Table 2 is analysed, the study shows that scientists from the developed countries of Western Europe and the United States have become overwhelmingly prominent across all grades. Concerning the nationality of the feature scientists in the textbooks mentioned that can be categorised, table 2 shows that the nationality of some scientists is not specified across the grades; however, searching it claims that the not specified section has most scientists from Europe and America. Scientists from Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Austria and America dominate the scientists in the study area. Non-western scientists who are part of the school's knowledge of scientists are scientists from India and Russia, with one in school textbooks.

Indian scientists are not worth teaching.

Table 2 noted that except Satyandra Nath Bose, no Indian scientists are part of the "scientists community" portrayed as the makers of science in the Odisha school science textbooks. He is mentioned in the physical science of grade IX. In the additional information section, he is referred to as part of the Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC), a fifth stage of the matter. He is known for collaborating with great scientists (grade IX, Physical science textbook, P, 12 & 13). He is referred to as a person who made calculations on the matter from where Einstein predicted the fifth stage of importance based on his calculations. Except for him, no other male or female ancient, medieval or contemporary scientists of India are part of the scientific community in these textbooks.

All scientists are male

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of scientists who constitute the scientific community for their scientific achievements in Odisha school science textbooks. Of all the scientists mentioned in the school textbooks as scientists as words 102 times across the physical and life sciences, Not a single female scientist from any country has given space in these textbooks. The result aligns with the various studies on the scientific contributions of female and male scientists noted by multiple scholars (Kaur, 2015). The study noted the role of Odisha school science textbooks in celebrating male scientists'

scientific achievements. The textbook makers failed to recognise the female scientists worldwide who made their unique name in the scientific field through their outstanding achievements. Male scientists are referred to as "scientists" in these textbooks in covert and overt ways. Ironically, textbook makers didn't find a single female scientist's scientific contributions to the field.

Table 2: Nationality and Gender of the scientist referred to in the SCERT science textbooks

Class or Grade	Nationality	Ancient, Medieval or Modern	Male or female
V	All are from western countries	All from modern era	All are male
VI	All are from western countries	All from modern era	All are male
VII	All are from western countries	All from modern era	All are male
VIII	All are from western countries	All from modern era	All are male
IX	Indian	Archimedes	All are male
X	Russian	All are from modern era	All are male

Discussions

The study noted the exciting result of making the scientist's community part of school knowledge in the school science textbooks in odisha. Few scientists are given more space regarding their lives, nationality while some scientists are given only one or two-line references with just their discovery. Few are referred to more times (frequency) than other scientists, while some scientists are not even part of the making of "official scientist" in the Odisha school textbooks. This shows the selection and organisation of the information on scientists by the Odisha textbook makers and the odisha state. The scientist's contribution as part of the respective theme needs to be celebrated and informed to the school students, but giving a few scientists more space and a few scientists less space shows the organisation of the contents based on the principle of exclusions and inclusion and textbook makers more emphasis on few scientists might have a differential symbolic attachment to the individual scientists. The works of Einstein, Newton, Faraday, Volta, and Robert Hooke need to be informed to the odisha students; however, just mentioning their discovery to a few scientists such as Marconi, Graham Bell, and so on gives injustice to these scientists.

The analysis of all the scientists mentioned in these textbooks reveals the making of odisha regional state "school science" as a modern enterprise, which subtly says that science started in the contemporary enlightened era. The Discovery of the atoms, planets and solar systems to the origin of life lay the foundations of science textbooks, which hardly have historicity of the theories and concepts. Therefore, the organisation and selection of the text work in trying to portray science as a modern field. Except for one scientist

from the ancient society Archimedes, all 101 scientists mentioned in these texts are from the modern world. The school knowledge is organised to celebrate modern scientific contributions while delegitimising and derecognising ancient and medieval scientists. Therefore, school knowledge is seen as modern enterprises without substantial ancient or medieval footprints. As Poskett (2022) argues, the classification of science in phases where ancient science is in civilisation countries such as China, India, and Egypt and modern science in Europe and North America.

The scientists referred to in the textbooks primarily discovered new materials or theories. The study noted that Scientists from European countries have large numbers on the making of the scientific community in the Odisha school textbooks. This shows that Britain, Germany, Italy, France, and America have made significant contributions to the field of science, which is very accurate since the inception of modern science in the world. The large number of scientists is due to the infrastructure in the science and technology field they have built over the period in history and the priority over the science and technology field, which the non-western countries are slowly adopting. Though textbooks attempted to give equal space to scientists from all the countries known for their exemplary works, they somehow failed to give non-Western scientists their true places in the school textbooks as very few non-Western scientists got part of the "official knowledge" on scientists.

The absence of Indian scientist CV Raman from textbooks who won a Nobel prize for a discovery negated the theory that school textbooks only give space to the scientists who discover some things or theories. However, the mention of SN Bose might be his association with the great scientist Einstein. When science is challenged to make it more context-specific to a country or a society, then the failure of the inclusions of scientists such as Meghnad Saha, Vikram Sarabhai, M S Swaminathan, Homi Jehangir Bhabha from the textbooks shows the textbook makers still teach science in the traditional and conventional western-centric ways.

The analysis of the textbooks reveals that not a single female scientist is mentioned in any of the grades combined. This has politics of making of school knowledge on scientists where feminists and historians of science address the silencing of the contribution of the female scientists throughout since feminists movements. The textbook makers in Odisha still practice the same model that Western countries used, where males are referred to as scientists and females are not part of the scientific community. But thanks to the progressive politics of the feminists, the Western countries are slowly giving due respect and places to the female scientists. The missing female scientists, such as Marie Curie, who has two Nobel prizes in her name in physics and chemistry, show that Odisha textbook makers still follow the same conventional mindsets. The failure of scientists such as Anna Mani, Tessy Thomas, Franklin Rosalind, and so on from the domain of science reveals that textbooks ultimately maintain and erase the contributions of female scientists by making the field completely male-centric. Women have no role to play in

the scientific fields, which sends a negative message to the student community in Odisha in general and female students in particular. Females might think they are incapable of science fields and fail to relate to male scientists portrayed worldwide or in India. This might explain why women are underrepresented in STEM fields (Charles & grusky, 2004).

Conclusion

The paper's objective was to evaluate the contents of selected school science textbooks in Odisha regarding the magnitude of representations of scientists and their nationality, gender backgrounds, and historical periods. The study used quantitative content analysis techniques to understand the framing of scientists in the school science textbooks prescribed for the government, non-government, and private schools in Odisha. Scientists are portrayed in these Odisha school science textbooks for their unique scientific contributions, what they achieved, and their social identity.

Though the school science textbooks attempt to provide equal space to all the scientists mentioned, a few scientists, such as Dobereiner, Mendeleev, Faraday, Galileo, and Newton, are mentioned more in the science textbooks compare to others. It makes these scientists more essential to know for the school students by the textbook makers. At the same time, scientists such as Marconi, Charles Babbage, Alexander Graham Bell, Robert Boyle, James Watt, and so on are given only one line of information on their discoveries or achievements.

The studies noted the prevalence of scientists from Western countries in making the scientists community in all these texts, which is very accurate given the fact that the global north dominated the science field; however, the failure of the textbook maker to give space to the non-western scientists in making the science field in school problematic. The textbook makers still follow the dominant narratives that delegitimised and derecognised the contributions of scientists from non-Western countries in contemporary times and ancient and medieval times. Though organised science started in the Enlightenment era, it should also be seen how science is a continual process with the scientific community's revision of existing ideas and theories. The textbooks should try to give diversity in making the scientific community from non-Western scientists such as region from African, Latin American, or Indian scientists.

Including female and male Indian scientists should open the door for the contextualisation of science, where debates are going worldwide to make science contextual and specific to society and nation. Therefore, scientists from India should be included based on the themes, and students should be informed about the scientific journey and achievements of Indian scientists, which might be helpful for them to take them as role models for their future endeavours as scientists. The study noted that no female scientist constitutes the scientific community in these odia science textbooks, which has serious pedagogic and educational implications for students and girls in general. The

textbooks should challenge the science field, seen as primary men in space, with men becoming scientists and getting Nobel prizes. Including female scientists from across the globe and giving space to Indian female scientists within the science textbooks could make it more contextualised to the Indian and Odisha contexts.

The present National Education Policy (NEP[8]) 2020 has highlighted and suggested the state and the national government to include scientists from India in the school science curriculum to make science more Indian-centric and make students feel that India also contributes to the knowledge production process. It is an excellent attempt to have the scientific contributions from scientists from the ancient to the contemporary scientists who helped in the successful mission of the agricultural revolution to the Mars mission to the moon mission. It will motivate the students to make their role models in the form of scientists, which they can aspire to. However, in the name of decolonisation and Indianization of school science, unscientific claims from past or hypothetical contributions of individuals as scientists shouldn't be promoted as they deviate from the central theme of the science field and give a bad name to India in front of the scientific community of the world. The study can contribute to science education by adding a regional dimension.

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Article: Dam, Displacement, and Livelihood: A Study of Tumukhong Village in Manipur, India

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Dam, Displacement, and Livelihood: A Study of Tumukhong Village in Manipur, India

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Abstract

The construction of dams has given significant benefits to the surrounding people, also strong induce impacts on the natural environment and the neighbouring habitation. The present study examines the impact of the Mapithel Dam on the people of Tumukhong village in Manipur. By using an anthropological lens, it closely explores the everyday lives, struggles, and changes experienced by the villagers since the construction of the dam. Tumukhong village, situated near the dam, has faced physical and social consequences as a result of the project. The study has focused on the livelihood patterns, water sources management, culture, environment, and psychological aspects in the neighbouring communities. The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted, and primary and secondary data collection were carried out by visiting government offices, local communities, etc. This research seeks to elevate the voices of the community by listening to local experiences. The present study adds important insights into the various development projects regarding the local lives and cultures of the people therein.

Keywords: Mapithel Dam, Tumukhong, Livelihood, Water, Environment, Psychological aspects

Introduction

Water is one of the most essential commodities for all living beings, including both plants and animals. It covers more than 70 per cent of the earth's surface, which is also better known as a universal solvent. According to the historical background of human civilisation, most of the developed societies emerged from the banks of rivers and the seashore, such as the Indus Valley civilisation and the Egyptian civilization, etc. So, water and human civilisation are not separable, and they managed and preserved water to fulfil their needs.

The history of the construction of dams is quite old. The oldest known dam in the world was recorded in the Middle East around the 4th millennium BC. The purpose of the construction of a dam is to store water. From early periods, people relied on the collection and storage of surface and rainwater. From time to time, people develop a model of a dam with the new equipment (Angelakis et. al., 2024, p. 4). In the contemporary world, dams are constructed for human welfare and

development, such as irrigation, hydroelectric projects, industries, and domestic consumption.

On the other hand, dams induce is one of the largest displacements and their notable impacts on human society (WCD, 2000); they also distinguish the variation of impacts by both men and women (Mehta, 2000). In India, around 164 lakh people were displaced from 1951 to 1990 due to the development of large and medium-sized dams; among these, 63.21 lakh people are tribes, although 15.81 lakh displaced tribal people were resettled (Mohanty, 2005, p. 1318).

There are many projects in India, which are deeply impacting many people living in and around the dam projects. The development of Narmada Sagar and Sardar Sarovar projects impacted several villages, particularly among the Bhil and Tadavi tribes, leading to an increase in the risk of food insecurity, forced evictions, joblessness, changes in education, and loss of livelihood (Singh, 2020, pp. 286-287). Indira Sagar Project in Polavarram has impacted the tribal community to loss of self-sustained livelihood and dependence on the daily wage labour work (Kumar & Chikkala, 2021, pp. 212-213); seven projects in Orissa, the people lose their land and common property resources, affecting the marginalized women (Pandey, 1998); Upper Kolab multipurpose project in Orissa has impacted the fishing tradition (Patnaik, 1996, pp. 177-178); displacement destroyed common natural resources in northeast India (Singh, 2015, p. 30). Displacement gives eight risks, i.e. landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food security, morbidity, loss of access to common property resources and community disarticulation (Cernea, 2000, pp. 3662).

People construct dams for good reasons, but sometimes it contrasts with severe effects on the ecosystem and nature. Malaysia has an extensive impact on the surrounding ecosystem, destroying the forest land and habitats of several endangered species (Aiken & Leigh, 2015, pp. 78-79). In Nigeria, due to the construction of the dam, the channel was completely changed, reducing the river width and the growth of vegetation was altered after the post-dam construction of Kiri Dam (Tukur & Mubi, 2002, p. 95). The Three Gorges Dam has impacted the terrestrial biodiversity and ecological processes by flooding the vegetation and aquatic animals (Wu et. al., 2004, p. 244).

In northeast India, Assam, the construction of embankments for flood control may have been responsible for the shrinkage of feeding and spawning grounds for many species of fish (Menon et. al., 2003, p. 5). The purpose of the Tipaimukh dam in Manipur plays an important role in strengthening the Indo-Bangladesh relationship. Although the people from both sides oppose the dam project, people are afraid of

displacement, loss of livelihood, loss of agricultural land, environmental degradation, hydrological drought, etc. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 52). In Mapithel Dam, some communities were forcefully displaced from their ancestral land (Langhu, 2019); Chadong and Tumukhong villages faced multiple impacts, such as losing their food, land, water, and resources (Wangkhrakpam & Takhellambam, 2021, p. 3).

The issues of resettlement and rehabilitation are continuously becoming an issue and neglected everywhere (Somayaji, 2006, p. 478). In Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, laws for rehabilitation and resettlement were enacted in 1985, 1986, and 1987, respectively (Guha, 2005, p. 4799). After independence, there is no proper national resettlement and rehabilitation policy for development projects in India. The draft of the national R&R began only in 1985, and the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NPRR) for project-affected families was issued in 2003. However, this policy does not fulfil all the criteria, so the new National Rehabilitation Policy (2006) emerged for minimising displacement (Fernandes, 2009, p. 102).

The World Bank has played a significant role in managing water resources by engaging in extensive discussions with stakeholders and borrowers. This approach can help in reducing poverty and also improve the social and environmental performance of water management (World Bank, 2004, p. 38).

Statement of the Problem

The construction of the Mapithel dam has led to significant changes and challenges for the people who were settled near the dam. This dam project has brought changes, including displacement, resettlement, ecological damage, and the livelihoods of people living near the dam. Due to these particular changes, many challenges have been facing among the villagers in their social, cultural, economic, and livelihood aspects, such as disturbance in their social and cultural practices, economic insecurity, and loss of traditional livelihoods, etc. The particular Tumukhong village, one of the closest villages to the Mapithel Dam, has been heavily affected in many ways. Therefore, the present study tried to explore the impacts of this village through close observation and adaptive responses.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present paper are to study the livelihood patterns, identify their water sources, and the water management practices of the Tumukhong village, and also to analyse the cultural, environmental,

and psychological impacts on the villagers after the construction of the dam.

Area of Study

The Tumukhong village is in the Imphal East district of Manipur, and it is around 25 km from the capital of the state. The village is under the Tumukhong/ Moirangpurel Gram Panchayat. This village consists of a total of 924 (482 males and 442 females) living in 194 households. (ASHA Census. April-May, 2025). This village was nearly 200 years old and was called as '*Oinam'* village in earlier days because the people of *Oinam's* surname were settled first in the area. The people are very close and so affiliated with the river, as their main economy is dependent on the river.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Tumukhong village, Imphal East, Manipur, during the period of February to June 2025. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods of data collection were employed. The primary data were collected through an interview schedule, observation, focus group discussions, and case studies. Whereas, secondary data were collected from census reports, articles, books, and data from ASHA and Anganwadi workers, etc. Primary data were collected from the respondents, who are mainly engaged with the quarry works, including both men, women, elderly persons, and youth of the village. The present study was analysed by using thematic and narrative analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The Mapithel Dam is one of the largest dams in the state of Manipur, India, constructed on the Thoubal River. It is originated from the Huimi regions of the Ukhrul district. The dam has impacted many adjoining villages. The dam has displaced some of the villages, such as Louphong and Phayang. Several upstream villages, such as Chadong, Riha, Ramrei, Thoyee, Lamlai Khullen, Lamlai Khunou, Lamlai Monbung, Sikibung, etc., were particularly affected. Among these villages, Chadong is one of the most severely affected villages. The people are displaced; the church, school, agricultural land, and road are submerged under the water. The villagers use bamboo rafts and boats as a means of transportation. The downstream villages, such as Tumukhong, Moirangpurel, Itham, Laikhong, Nungbrang, and Keithelmanbi, have also been impacted. The villagers are severely affected in accessing their livelihood, social-cultural, health, and environmental aspects.

Tumukhong village lies in the easternmost part of Imphal East district in Manipur, primarily inhabited by the Meitei community. It is one of the first downstream villages of the Mapithel Dam, and its livelihood economy depends on sand quarrying and agricultural activities. The household economy of the village was numerically very weak; most people worked as daily wage labourers, and a small number of government employees in the community. Most of the villagers were born in the Tumukhong village; however, their ancestral forefathers had migrated before independence in search of livelihoods. This trend of migration continued up to the time of the pre-dam construction period because this area is quite popular for sand quarrying in the region.

Livelihood Patterns

The livelihood patterns of Tumukhong village have been severely affected by the construction of the Mapithel Dam. The following are the consequential changes that the villagers experienced before and after the dam construction.

Table 1: Concept of the sand quarrying activities pre- and post-dam

Pre- Dam	Post- Dam
● Sands are deposited on the riverbank by the natural flow of the river. ● Workers work independently without any interference. ● Direct payment from the buyer.	● Development of a quarry site on the riverbank. ● Owner (From a different community) ● Involves the village authority. ● Workers receive payment from the owner. ● Raise the concept of master and worker.

Pre-dam Construction: Before the dam was built, the villagers enjoyed the benefits of the river and easily accessed its water without any hindrance. The villagers can generate income at any time by collecting and selling the sand deposited on their riverbanks brought by the natural flow of the water. Despite having a full deposit of sand on the nearest riverbank, people were able to gather the sand at any time

of the year without any interference. Therefore, the villagers can receive the direct payment by selling the sand to the customers.

The villagers also enjoy catching the indigenous fish from the river, such as *ngaton, ngawa, ngapang, ngatup, nganap, ngapai* and many more. They happily used the river water for drinking and agricultural purposes. Their fields also thrived without the need for chemical fertilisers for their crops, as the fields were full of fertile soil when the river floods during the monsoon season. The quality of the water was also quite good, and the villagers even used the river water for grand feasts such as marriage ceremonies *(luhongba)*, birth ceremonies, death rituals, ear piercing *(Nahut nareng), and* weaning (*chak-umba*), etc., which were conducted in the village.

Post-dam Construction: In the 1980s, the government approved the construction of the Mapithel Dam and examined the area for its development. The construction blocked the natural flow of the Thoubal River, leading to the establishment of the Mapithel Dam as part of the Thoubal Multipurpose Project. The project was proposed to provide drinking water to the valley region, generate electricity, and supply water for irrigation facilities to the downstream villages. Unfortunately, after the construction of the dam, the adjoining villages were left without providing the essential needs like drinking water supply, irrigation system, and proper drainage system, etc. The quality of road connectivity in these villages is extremely poor compared to other neighbouring villages. Moreover, the affected villagers were not given appropriate job opportunities.

The Tumukhong village has suffered more as a result of the dam's construction. The land of the village is scattered, the paddy fields are less fertile, the environment is also changing, and so the weather changes drastically. It is mentioned by the villagers that the crops from the village paddy field lack flavor because the river does not deposit fertile soil and sand in these fields. The condition of the riverbed has also worsened, and it is hard to find good-quality sand, because the natural flow of water that brings good sediment is blocked by the project.

Presently, the village has a very limited amount of cultivable land, which is owned by only a few families. These small cultivable lands are not able to produce sufficient food for the villagers. As a result, many of the villagers were pushed to work in sand quarrying as daily labourers. Most adult men were employed at the quarry site for their livelihood, while women managed the household chores in addition to working at the quarry. The literacy rate is quite low in the village. Therefore, most of the villagers focus on their daily work. The daily wage workers typically can earn an average of R.s 600-700 per day.

At present, the people of the village have become dependent labourers due to the construction of the dam. As the source of sand has disappeared in the nearby area, they depend on another community or village where the dams don't affect. In the meantime, the people of Tumukhong village are engaged in quarrying work under the custodian of the village authority.

The owners of the quarrying site are from the unaffected villages. They contact and coordinate with the village authority for opening the quarrying site. Consequently, sand is being excavated and brought by digging the red sand from the hillside and transporting it to the riverbank with the permission of the village authority, so the village authority plays the role of host for providing the dumpsite for sand along the riverbank. The village authority acts as caretaker and management of the private quarrying site and is also responsible for providing jobs to the villagers. Individuals need to take verbal permission from the village authority, and after the consent is granted, they can join the work. But the village authorities were not taking part in any financial work; it was only done by the owner. For example, dealing with customers, daily expenses and workers' payment, etc.

The village authority assigned the work to the villagers and began to refine the red sand by washing it in the river. These activities alter the natural colour of the river water, turning it from pure and clean to a reddish colour, which escalates in contaminating the water quality. As a result, people in the downstream villages are unable to use the water properly.

Figure 1: Quarry Site at Tumukhong Village

***Work Conflicts*:** The quarry workers in the village are engaged 6 days a week, except on Sunday. On Sunday, the owner of the quarry went to the church as they were mostly Christian, and so, they had to shut down the sites. As a result, the owner instructs the village authority and workers to halt operations on Sunday as a sacrifice to God.

However, most of the workers in the sand quarry are non-Christian and do not attend church for prayers. As a result, those willing to work on Sunday are unable to work. Although they try to seek other options in search of job, such as the collection of wood and other vegetation in the nearby hills. However, they are strictly prohibited by the hill people because of local inter communities issues.

Division of labour: The division of labour in the quarry site has been divided into three phases:

Phase 1: The unrefined muddy sand is excavated from the hillside using machinery, such as excavators and then transported by truck drivers who are employed by the quarry owners to the quarry site, which is located near the riverbank.

Phase 2: The muddy sand is primarily refined by the village workers, including men, women, and adults who are employed by the quarry owners. They refined the sand by using tools such as a spade, shovel, refining baskets (*kharai*) and carrying baskets *(polang)*. Each individual can refine at least one *pawah*, made of 30 carrying baskets of sand in a day and earn around 600 rupees of labour charge from each *pawah.*

Phase 3: The refined sand is mainly loaded by the strong male labourer on the truck, and transported for sale to various places, including individual house builders, commercial construction sites and marketing sites, etc.

Water Sources and Management

The sources of water for the village come from hill streams, rivers, and ponds. There is no public water supply, so villagers rely on hill streams for drinking, household, and agricultural activities. They also used river and pond water for household activities and agriculture, but not for drinking water.

Since there is no proper water supply scheme, the people have made efforts to develop their water facilities. After the post-dam construction, villagers began to prioritise their water from the hillock stream over river water. There is also the fear of using the stagnant river water. For their needs, the villagers constructed tanks along the roadside to store water from the hill-stream collected through pipes. The use of river water has decreased drastically due to a severe reduction in river flow, leading to poor water conditions in the dam's catchment area for daily use.

Water Management: For management purposes, the water tanks are located on the roadside of the village, divided into three localities known as *leikai* (locality*).* Two water tanks have been constructed for each *leikai,* and two watch-keepers (choukidar) have been appointed for each *leikai.* The watch-keepers are responsible for providing the essential water distribution to the household. For their services, the villagers contribute either two baskets of rice or Rs. 500 (those who are not able to contribute the rice) from every household and give it to the watch-keepers annually during the harvesting (October-November) season.

Figure 2: Water Tank at Tumukhong Village

It is informed that the villagers are cooperative and also understand how to properly maintain the tank and make an effort to keep it clean. The village authorities allocated some funds and held an annual grant feast for the hill's chief for fetching the water from the hill-streams, as they belong to the hill dwellers. To meet the immediate needs, the village authorities and local volunteers are also digging the village ponds (*pukhri*) along the river route that is no longer used for the water flow, under the MGNREGA scheme. These ponds are used for rearing indigenous fish for their village funds and also provide water during the dry season.

Figure 3: Village Pond at Tumukhong Village

Cultural Impacts

With the construction of the dam, the cultural significance of the village faces certain challenges. Particularly in 2019, the ritual activities of the village deity were greatly affected due to the absence of the villagers. As mentioned by the villagers, in the year 2019, the people ran away from their village and took shelter temporarily in other villages and other safe areas due to the leakage of the dam. As a consequence, from that year, people could no longer perform the traditional ritual of *Lai Haraoba*, which was traditionally held in May or June every year. They could not perform the ritual practiced annually since then. In the last five years, they have observed only once, and last year, 2025, there was no plan for the ritual as well. So, with the irregularity of their ritual ceremony, they believed it was a bad omen in the village. Not only this, they cannot organise the other rituals and culturally related functions such as Holi (*Yaosang*), Panthoibi Puja, etc.

Environmental Consequences

The significant environmental changes have been observed in the villages, including loss of biodiversity, land infertility, alterations in river routes, and declines in water quality. The dam has impacted their agricultural productivity, now producing around 20-30 bags of rice per quarter hectare (one *sangam),* which was 30- 40 bags per *sangam* before, due to the low fertility of their agricultural land. The produce is quite insufficient for a single household, and the paddy fields are now relying on water from nearby hills, which only flows during the rainy season. These fields can only be utilised once a year, from May to October. Throughout the other months, the fields remain dry due to a lack of water for crop cultivation.

The greenery in the village has significantly reduced since the construction of the dam. In the earlier days, the village had plenty of different varieties of fruits and vegetables, but today it resembles an abandoned barren areas, with very few scattered trees. However, there has been no improvement in the infrastructure or facilities for the villagers.

The villagers faced health issues with different types of diseases, such as skin rashes, itching, irritation, and bacterial infections, every year when the dam water is released during the rainy season. The water quality and fishing have also been affected; the water body has an unpleasant smell as it flows through the village.

The local fish varieties are also disappearing rapidly from the village river and the practice of traditional fishing culture are losing day by

day. During the rainy season, the villagers can no longer catch the local small fish from the paddy fields, as the breeding site for local fishes especially in stagnant water bodies are not available in the fields for fish breeding. The villagers have lost approximately 20 acres of agricultural land due to the dam. However, the authorities have not been allotted the alternative land to the affected villagers for their agricultural activities; they have only received the compensatory money for their lost land.

Psychological Impacts

The villagers are experiencing psychological problems and emotional distress. They are worried or fear about the situation on how long they will survive in this land. They feel that the land became infertile after the construction of dam, as all the fertile soil carried away from hills was blocked before reaching their village agricultural field, so their land became infertile. The cultivation of vegetation was decreased or lessened in the post-dam; such continuity will impact their future generation for livelihood. It makes them psychologically burdened with regards to their ability to survive, availability of food, water, livelihood, environmental degradation, etc. Their rice cultivation has suffered, and the vegetables are not growing well. As a result, they are forced to purchase essential items at high prices, and fishing at the riverside has also disappeared.

Before the construction of the dam, they worked independently, freely, and were directly attached to natural resources. After the construction of the dam, their society has emerged as daily wage labourer system for the work, where they did not earn freely, and people are also unable to earn enough money for their families. Sometimes they think about migrating to another fertile place. Additionally, there is also a significant gap between the government's policies and their implementation, leading the villagers to feel dissatisfied with both their situation and the government programs meant to assist them.

Government Policies and Community Response

The government provided some incentives and financial support to the villagers who were affected by the dam. Although there was no displacement in the village, the villagers are experiencing challenges after the construction of the dam. Therefore, the government provided some incentives to those households, at around 1.5 lakh rupees per household, to support livestock rearing. However, these incentives have not adequately fulfilled the needs of the villagers. This particular village has faced a lot of issues, and it did not fulfil everything.

The community of the Tumukhong village eagerly awaits the clean and hygienic water. They have dreamed of a water supply scheme for their village, but so far, no developments have been made for reliable water sources. The people are also concerned about the nearby hills that cover the entire village, the hills and the forest. Currently, they are not allowed to utilise the hill's land as informed by the villagers. If any change on the appropriation of resources, they can also utilize advantage of these resources and support their families, manage their children's education.

The neighbouring hills are rich with wild vegetables, fruits, and medicinal plants. Due to the restrictions, villagers have purchased the vegetables and necessities from the far market. Despite this major project, people of the adjoining villages continue to face the multifaceted impacts, especially in social-cultural, economic, environmental, and psychological aspects. In response to these impacts, the entire village formed a Joint Action Committee called "The Mapithel Dam Downstream Affected People". And they demand proper benefits and compensation from the government, but their hopes are yet to fulfill. The community members of the village hope for good and long-term support and a better life for the affected downstream villagers.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant impact of Mapithel Dam on the Tumukhong village in various aspects, including social interaction, livelihood, cultural activities, psychological conditions and their natural environment. Manipur is a hilly state, where many rivers rise from the hilly regions and flow into the plain region. Therefore, the government has undertaken the construction of major dams in different parts of the state, particularly in the adjoining area of hills and valleys, for different benefits and aspects. However, these activities impacted the adjoining villages in the hills and the plain region of the respective dams.

The Tumukhong, one of the proximate villages of Mapithel Dam, has awaited the fruitful benefit of the development project for the past many years. However, from the narratives of the villagers, the affected people faced a bitter taste from the developmental projects. In the shadow of the construction of the major dam, there are different impacts, including loss of livelihood, soil degradation, environmental issues, droughts and water scarcity. Therefore, the government need to take serious steps for the welfare of the affected people at the right moment for the welfare of the local people.

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Article: Fragmented Work; Fragmented Sleep: Night-Shift Security Guards in Gated Communities in Kolkata

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Fragmented Work; Fragmented Sleep: Night-Shift Security Guards in Gated Communities in Kolkata

--Reeti Sarkar

Abstract

This study positions sleep as a socially stratified act through the experiences and narratives of night-shift security guards working at various gated communities in suburban Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Although work and sleep are typically viewed as opposite ends of a spectrum, this study explores their co-constitutive relationship. Using sleep as a window into the nature of work among night-shift security guards, this paper traces how varied patterns and experiences of sleep evolve from conscious negotiations to embodied practices in relation to work dynamics. The everyday sleep and rest practices of security guards in this study unveil how sleep is not merely biological. Rather, it is deeply embedded within their socio-cultural positioning, particularly in relation to the temporal demands of night-shift work and the informal labour arrangements that characterize their employment. Moreover, the kind of work individuals engage in is itself ingrained in broader societal structures that perpetuate social identities and embodied inequalities, thereby distinguishing both the sleeper and their sleep.

Keywords: Work, Sleep/Rest, Night-shift, Security Guards, Informal Work, Social Class, Work-Sleep Negotiations

Introduction

Work and sleep are two crucial aspects of human life. However, sleep has long been regarded as a break or time-out from social life due to its form of inaction, unlike work that structures our waking hours. But in fact, sleep, although a non-waking activity, is very much part of the everyday social milieu, much like work. Together, work and sleep encompass about two-thirds of everyday experiences. Given such a significant presence in our daily lives, we all seem to have narratives about both that often come up in our conversation. In these accounts, work frequently appears as the thread around which sleep stories are woven. For instance, people often talk about how a work deadline kept them awake over the weekend or how an upcoming job interview has been so stressful that they woke up anxious in the middle of the night, or mention spending their whole day off sleeping.

Likewise, the amount and quality of sleep we experience affect how we feel about work and approach other wakeful activities. For example, an early morning college lecture often feels overwhelming when one didn't get enough sleep the night before. New mothers frequently complain about feeling irritable throughout the day due to disrupted sleep at night from caring for their new-born. Similarly, commercial drivers often report feeling drowsy and struggling to focus while driving after inadequate sleep. These narratives reveal how work frames our sleep experiences, just as our sleep experiences

influence how we make sense of work. While work and sleep are conceptualized as binary opposites (with one being conscious and productive while the other being unconscious and unproductive), they get intertwined in our everyday lived experiences. The binary understanding of work and sleep overlooks the complex ways in which these two realms intersect and shape each other. Rather than viewing them as mere opposites, this study examines their complex relationship, revealing how these two spheres are interconnected aspects of human experience that mutually influence and constitute one another.

This work-sleep relationship becomes quite evident among night-shift workers, whose temporal work schedules create conditions for varied sleep patterns and routines that differ from the conventional practice of sleeping through the night. These include police officers, medical professionals, hospital and emergency services staff, security guards, support-service workers in the IT sector, transportation service workers, among others. Although all these workers perform night shifts and consequently follow alternative sleep patterns in their day-to-day lives, these patterns are not uniform across all professions. Those working night shifts in formal sectors experience their night work differently than those in the informal labour force. Formal organized sectors typically provide structured working conditions with defined 8-hour shifts, designated break times, weekly day off, established workplace environments and standardized pay with additional night-shift allowances, among other benefits, unlike informal work. These factors have a significant impact on workers' lives, which further influences their sleep practices and sleep management. This indicates that sleep patterns among night-shift workers are not shaped solely by the temporality of their work, but rather emerge from a combination of work timing and employment conditions. That is to say, it's not just 'when' people work that affects sleep, but also 'where' and 'how' they work that creates different sleep experiences. This calls for a closer examination into the sleep patterns among night-shift workers within the informal workforce.

This study focuses on night-shift security guards as a specific occupational group engaged in informal employment in order to explore their everyday sleep patterns and experiences. Through exploring the work-sleep relationship among these security guards working at various gated communities in suburban Kolkata, West Bengal, the study examines how they navigate and negotiate their sleep patterns within their work arrangements and social life. The night-shift security guards represent an intersection of two labour dimensions: the temporality of night-shift work and the precarity of informal employment. This dual positioning creates distinctive sleep challenges for them that go beyond mere schedule disruption, making their daily negotiations around sleep more complex compared to night-shift workers in formal organized sectors.

The term *fragmented work* which appears in the title of this paper captures this twofold nature of their employment. It highlights both the temporal disruption caused by their night-shift schedules and the unstable employment

arrangements characterized by irregular contracts, lack of job security, poor working conditions, long working hours with low pay. This not only shed light on the everyday work realities of these night-shift security guards in the informal workforce but also reveals how such fragmentation extends into their sleep experiences, resulting in *fragmented sleep* (explored in detail in the following sections).

The ubiquitous presence of security guards in modern society has attracted considerable academic attention, resulting in an increasing body of scholarly work that examines various aspects of their work experiences, employment conditions, and occupational challenges. Nevertheless, significant gaps remain in understanding their sleep patterns and experiences in relation to their work. While several studies have examined the impact of night-shift work on security guards' sleep quality and related health outcomes (Alfredsson et al., 1991; Cannizzaro et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2022; Singhania et al., 2024), and others have explored the precarious employment nature of security guards (Upadhyaya, 2011; Gooptu, 2013; Vyas, 2016), little attention has been paid to understanding how the temporality and informality of work intersect to shape sleep experiences among the night-shift security guards.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the diverse sleep patterns employed by night-shift security guards that embody the fragmented nature of their work. Furthermore, by examining sleep as a site to understand their work conditions, this study reveals how the constant negotiation between work and sleep shapes the ways these workers perceive, manage, and embody sleep, whereby sleep emerges as both a consequence of and a response to their work and broader social lives.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine work-sleep negotiations among night-shift security guards. It investigated their sleep/rest patterns, which provided a lens into their work dynamics, while reciprocally analysing how their nature of work and social positioning shaped their sleep practices within everyday social life. The study was conducted through ethnographic fieldwork over five months, from June to October 2024, in various gated communities located in suburban areas of the Kolkata metropolitan region in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, India.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit fifteen male security guards across different age groups working night shifts. The selection of an all-male sample was not intentional but rather reflects the gendered nature of this work. The sample comprised three distinct categories of security guards based on their work schedules and arrangements: eight participants worked exclusively night shifts (typically 8 PM to 8 AM) and returned home each morning after their shift; four participants followed a rotating schedule, alternating between day and night shifts on a weekly basis; and three participants worked continuous shifts while remaining at the workplace.

All participants provided verbal consent to conduct the study. However, their names and the names of the gated communities where they work have been anonymized, as they were not comfortable sharing this information for the present work. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to express their perceptions and experiences freely. Interviews were conducted primarily in Bengali, with some conducted in Hindi to accommodate non-Bengali speaking participants. The interview excerpts presented in this work have been translated into English.

Scheduling interviews with the participants presented significant challenges due to their work patterns. Conducting interviews during their working hours proved difficult as it interrupted their duties. Moreover, as a female researcher, interviewing the male security personnel after hours was discouraged by most of the gated community secretaries and security guards themselves, which further limited interview opportunities during their night-shift hours. Additionally, reaching the participants outside their shifts was equally challenging due to their personal commitments. Therefore, most interviews were conducted during shift transition periods (either on their way back home, while accompanying them to the nearest rail station, or at tea stalls near their workplace), with some conducted during their working hours with prior permission from the respective gated community secretaries. This approach ensured their maximum participation without intruding much into their daily work and personal routines.

'Doing' Sleep: A Lens into the Lives of Night-Shift Security Guards

When, how and where do the night-shift security guards sleep? This question serves as the point of departure for this investigation. One might ask 'why sleep' considering its state of unconsciousness. What does sleep unveil about their social lives, particularly their nature of work? All individuals engage in some form of sleep routine in their day-to-day lives, establishing sleep as an everyday phenomenon. However, sleep has long been neglected as a topic of social inquiry and dismissed as a non-social experience; separate from the conscious engagements of everyday life. Over the years, there have been several insightful developments in this direction within Western social science scholarship, with studies shedding light on the sociocultural, economic, and political dimensions of sleep.

These include works by Aubert and White (1959, 1960) and Schwartz (1970), who proposed a social interpretation of sleep; Taylor's (1993) work shifting from the notion of 'being asleep' to the 'doing' of sleep; and recent works by Williams (2002, 2005, 2007, 2011; Williams & Bendelow, 1998; Williams & Crossley, 2008, Williams et al., 2010) focusing on sleep and health, the socially appropriate ways of sleeping and the politics of sleep. Additionally, social researchers have explored gendered aspects of sleep (Hislop & Arber, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Meadows, 2005; Meadows et al., 2008; Venn et al., 2008) along with several other factors including age (Venn & Arber, 2011)

and socioeconomic and marital status (Arber et al., 2009; Meadows & Arber, 2015) in relation to sleep and sleeplessness.

These works have not only contributed to the emergence of a sociological study of sleep, establishing sleep as inherently social rather than purely biological, but have also provided a window or means for approaching and understanding the social world. However, this area remains underexplored in social science research in India, with studies concentrating on the conscious affairs of the everyday world. Although sleeping is a form of inaction, the conscious wakeful moments before and after sleep essentially shape how one sleeps. Following this line of thought, this study adopts a 'doing' sleep approach (Taylor, 1993), shifting from viewing sleep as a passive state to considering it an active, socio-culturally situated practice, to understand the everyday work realities of night-shift security guards working at various gated communities, while contributing to the limited exploration of sleep as a social phenomenon in Indian sociological research.

Sleep has traditionally been linked to night, when darkness signals the end of formal activities and the close of each day. While the consolidated block of sleep at night is a contemporary idea, sleeping once daylight fades has been a common practice throughout centuries. In pre-industrial societies, people practiced 'segmented sleep' with wakeful intervals during the hours of darkness (Ekirch, 2005). Although the phases of repose have transformed over time, the association between darkness and sleep remains constant. This reflects an underlying biological rhythm. William Charles Dement, the father of sleep medicine, explains:

> "This precise time mechanism [the circadian rhythm] plays a fundamental role in the wide variations of sleepiness and alertness that we experience throughout every day, keeping us alert during daytime and allowing us to sleep during the night - as nature intended" (Dement & Vaughan, 1999, p. 76).

While night-time is the most common time for sleep among the majority of people, for a significant portion of the population, this is when their workday begins. The night-shift security guards in the study are on duty at various gated communities, awake and alert during the nocturnal hours. For them, night-time is work time, unlike the majority of the population for whom it represents a period of sleep/rest. The nature of their work demands staying wakeful through the hours when their circadian rhythms signal for rest. They watch over others' sleep, often at the expense of their own sleep time. The question might then be posed: if these security guards are working during society's designated sleep hours, when and how do they manage their own rest?

Most of the participants in this study work night shifts exclusively. Some follow rotating schedules that alternate between day and night shifts weekly, while a few work continuous shifts and remain at the workplace. Although their shift patterns differ, staying awake during night-time hours is a common

experience among all participants. In response to such work schedules, these security guards follow varied rest patterns in their daily lives. Those engaged in night shifts usually sleep during daytime hours after returning home from their shifts. However, this reversed sleep schedule presents significant challenges. Many respondents reported difficulty falling asleep after completing their night shifts, which typically end in the morning hours. One respondent described the experience of feeling physically exhausted yet mentally alert post-shift, stating: "I feel tired but I am unable to sleep immediately after work because my mind is still working." This indicates a state of sustained alertness among these guards due to their constant vigilance throughout the night, which is further complicated by circadian rhythms that naturally promote wakefulness during daylight hours.

Additionally, factors such as rising daytime temperatures, busy road sounds, construction noise, and neighbourhood sounds, combined with family responsibilities, create constant interruptions, limiting their rest to a maximum of 3-4 hours of fragmented rest. These challenges are intensified by their living arrangements, as most of them share rooms with family members who follow regular daytime routines and activities. This temporal conflict makes it even more difficult to create an environment favourable for daytime sleep, unlike night-time hours. Due to these constraints, the security guards often catch rest in multiple shorter periods rather than one consolidated sleep session.

To manage sleep, these security personnel employ various strategies for rest throughout their daily routines. As evidenced by their narratives, they often utilize their commute time by napping or dozing during bus or train journeys to and from work, extending their sleep practices beyond 'private' spaces (see Taylor, 1993). Yet, these nap times are filled with anxiety and fear of missing their stop, which further disrupts their rest. A common rest period reported by these night-shift security guards was napping in the afternoon after lunch, which they refer to as *bhaat-ghum* (a period of nap after having rice). This post-meal sleep, although brief, is usually uninterrupted since afternoon napping is a common practice among the majority of Bengali households, creating a more accommodating environment for their rest.

These afternoon naps are also prevalent among the participants who work full-time security shifts. Since they face difficulty finding proper sleep time due to their work demands, they strategically nap during late afternoon hours when potential visitors to these residential communities are comparatively fewer. Additionally, as these guards explain, the risk of being caught dozing at work by residents is lower during these hot hours, as most residents remain indoors, either at their workplaces or in their homes. However, such napping periods are characterized by resting in outdoor areas, either in shaded parking lots, or under available shade on plastic chairs or wooden benches provided to them. Since this occurs within their working hours, there is a constant need to remain available and alert, which ultimately prevents them from achieving proper rest.

A similar pattern of workplace napping was reported by some of the night-shift security guards in gated communities. During nocturnal hours when everyone around them is sleeping, staying awake appears to be quite challenging for these guards. Sitting idle in such a quiet environment with limited activities to keep themselves engaged, they often feel lethargic and drowsy. To combat this sleepiness, they explained taking power naps during their night shifts to sustain their alertness for longer periods. A respondent shared his experience of finding some rest time between work duties by informally coordinating with his co-worker, allowing each other brief periods of rest while the other maintained vigilance.

This workplace napping provides them a sleep experience that significantly differs from conventional sleeping arrangements. They rest on chairs within security booths under artificial lighting while dressed in duty uniforms, frequently disturbed by mosquito bites and their constant buzzing around their ears. Such sleeping environments, combined with the need to remain alert for security concerns, results in their poor-quality rest. This stands in contrast to what Walter de la Mare (1939, cited in Taylor, 1993) terms 'uniform of sleep', characterized by designated bedrooms, proper beds, and sleepwear, which necessarily serves to differentiate 'the sleeper'. This demarcation of sleep embodiments among these security guards is not merely a reflection of their temporal work schedule, but rather provides deeper insight into their social positioning.

The night-shift security guards belong to the informal workforce, a sector that has grown substantially following the country's economic liberalization in 1991 (Kundu & Sharma, 2001). One of the prominent reasons behind the massive increase in informality within India's labour force is urbanization and the growth of new cities, among other factors (Patel, 2018). The emergence of urban spaces with increasing populations and rising demand for service-providing jobs has been a key driver of urban job growth in India, leading to massive internal migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of employment. The security guards represent one such manifestation of this expanding informal workforce that has emerged to meet the growing demand for security services in modern times. However, employment growth did not necessarily result in quality jobs per se (Chakraborty, 2021).

The security guards in this study typically work 12-hour shifts from 8 PM to 8 AM, with some working full-time and residing within the gated communities in small quarters that lack basic amenities. Most participants were hired through security agencies, while others were recruited directly by committee members of the gated communities through informal contacts. Regardless of their hiring channels, most worked without formal contracts, relying instead on verbal agreements with security agencies or resident associations. A respondent shared his hiring process, revealing that his connection to the agency had been facilitated through a friend from his hometown in Purba Burdwan (a district in West Bengal) who was already working for the same agency. He clarified that he had never received any formal appointment confirmation nor signed any employment contract, explaining that everything

had been arranged through a word-of-mouth referral by his friend. These guards work 30 days a month with little or no provision for days off. Any attempt to take leave not only results in immediate salary deductions but can also lead to termination, demonstrating the lack of job security that defines their employment status.

The respondents reported salaries ranging between Rs 7,000 and Rs 9,000, determined by their previous experience in security positions and whether they work night shifts. However, a 74-year-old full-time security guard reported earning significantly below the standard salary range mentioned by other participants. He earned Rs 4,200 per month. When asked why he continued in such poorly paid work, he explained: "When there's a need for money, what won't a person do? [...] At this age, what other work can I do? No one will employ me. [...] Whatever I can get is good enough." The security guard's response highlights how informal work is often driven by immediate survival needs, limited employment options, and economic desperation among people from economically weaker backgrounds that forces acceptance of substandard pay and work arrangements. Their disadvantaged position often prevents them from negotiating better pay and working conditions, forcing them to accept whatever is offered. These accounts reveal the precarious nature of work among these security guards, characterized by lack of standardized pay scales, absence of job security, and long working hours, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. This indicates what Upadhyaya (2011) observes: although the security service industry is organized, the employment of security personnel is highly unorganized.

This work informality becomes further complicated by their night-shift work schedules, extending their vulnerabilities beyond the workplace into the most intimate aspect of their lives: their sleep. The disrupted sleep practices and fragmented rest cycles experienced by these workers reflect broader patterns of social exclusion, whereby precarious employment conditions systematically infiltrate their private spaces of rest and isolate them from the regular rhythms of social life. While their everyday sleep patterns reveal underlying social marginalization embedded within their work arrangements, this marginalization is further perpetuated through their everyday sleep experiences. As Williams and Crossley (2008, p. 6) rightly observe, 'sleep, like so many other embodied practices, is structured in part by wider patterns of social inequality.' Sleep, despite being an unconscious state, underscores the broader social structures that govern our lives, creating sharp social divides around access to rest. The sleep patterns of night-shift security guards thus reveal how social disparities penetrate and shape sleep itself, further reinforcing their disadvantaged position. The nature and extent of these disparities and their implications in these workers' lives form the focus of the subsequent analysis.

Work, Sleep and Social Class: A Dynamic Interaction

Occupation, as Bauman (1998) observes, encompasses broader contours of personal and social existence, influencing not only economic status but entire

life trajectories, social standing, and patterns of daily living. While an individual's social positioning determines their work opportunities, their work, in turn, forms and reinforces their position within the broader social structure. Wander argues that work and employment-related concerns extend beyond working hours, influencing what we wear, what we eat, what we read, our conversations, interpersonal relationships, and the way we structure 'our leisure time.' (see Wander's introduction to Lefebvre, 2017 [1984]). Work thus transcends mere economic activity, shaping other aspects of human life. However, the way in which work shapes life is not uniform across all forms of employment but rather depends on the nature of the work itself, which determines the degree of its influence on workers' daily rhythms, social relationships, and bodily experiences. The 12-hour night-shift schedules of security guards in this study illustrate a work pattern that consumes half of their everyday temporal experience, around which they reorganize their other activities and daily engagements. Among the many activities altered by their work routines, one significant component of their daily existence becomes disrupted, namely their sleep. While their night-shift work demands wakefulness during nocturnal hours, their bodies demand sleep, creating a conflict between these two indispensable everyday phenomena.

This work-sleep conflict, however, does not arise simply from night-shift scheduling but reflects deeper economic constraints that shape their labour choices. For these security guards, working night shifts rather than sleeping is a calculated decision driven by their survival needs. They sacrifice their circadian rhythms for the marginal increase in earnings offered by night shifts compared to day shifts. Though the pay differential is modest, it becomes vital for these workers living on subsistence incomes, where every rupee matters to make ends meet. This points to a contradiction surrounding sleep in relation to one's social standing. While wealthy residents of gated communities pay for security services to ensure their peaceful sleep, the security guards are paid to remain awake and alert, guarding these residents while they sleep. The irony is stark: the night-shift security guards who safeguard others' sleep are themselves denied the very rest they secure for others, highlighting a social disparity that determines who can afford the luxury of uninterrupted sleep throughout the night and who must sacrifice it to make a living.

The socioeconomic disparity further extends to how these security guards conceptualize sleep itself. While sleep science emphasizes quality night-time sleep as fundamental to health and well-being, associating sleep deprivation with serious health problems including hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cognitive impairment (Schultes et al., 2005; Colten & Altevogt, 2006; Cappuccio et al., 2007; Ramar et al., 2021), these security guards understand sleep differently, a perspective that contradicts dominant narratives about sleep being essential for overall well-being. The participants' understanding essentially stems from economic necessity, which requires prioritizing work even at the cost of sacrificing sleep, since sleep generates no income. As one respondent put it: "I will get money for working, but who will pay me for sleeping?" This reveals how their priorities around work and sleep

are shaped by the broader social structure at play. Although sleep discourse positions sleep as vital for physical and mental health, night-shift security guards view sleep as a negotiable commodity to be traded for income generation. They do not just choose work over sleep, rather, they are in a state where sleep appears as a lesser concern when economic survival becomes the dominant reality. This effectively captures how financial obligations force these security guards into a position where they cannot afford to consider sleep as a biological necessity essential for well-being, but rather as something that must be managed and altered around work demands.

Under such circumstances, sleep emerges as a negotiated act subjugated to work imperatives. However, this is not to say that sleep disappears entirely from their consciousness. Rather, it appears as a consideration, but only in relation to their work. The night-shift security guards explained that for them, sleep becomes less a bodily need and more about maximizing their ability to remain alert during work hours. They approach sleep as a tool, a means to sustain their capacity for vigilance through the night. In this context, the fragmented rest patterns of these security personnel represent a survival strategy, where they seize moments of rest from whatever opportunities their demanding schedules allow in order to continue their work. Their relationship with sleep is thus entangled with their work, where rest becomes meaningful as it serves their need for prolonged wakefulness at work, rather than being prioritized in its own right.

This reflects the 24/7 framework of late capitalism that conflicts with human needs for rest, as resting is considered an unproductive state opposed to an active, productive body, which is highly emphasized within capitalist society (Crary, 2013). However, such devaluation of sleep creates a society filled with sleep-deprived people, which further poses challenges to maintaining the very productivity that the capitalist economy seeks to enhance. This aligns with what Simon J. Williams describes as the 'politicisation of sleep' in the late modern age, arguing that, sleep is simultaneously *'problematised'* due to the loss of productivity and performance resulting from poor sleep and *'championed'* through a variety of products and practices designed to achieve the 'perfect night's sleep' (2011, p. xiv). This politicization is evident in how night-shift security guards navigate between the economic imperative to sacrifice sleep for work and resting in fragments to ensure efficiency at work, revealing how sleep is being instrumentalized to meet work demands, either by restricting it or by strategically allowing it.

Nevertheless, this raises critical concerns about social and economic disparities in sleep health, as not everyone has equal access to the products and services available in the marketplace that promise good sleep. The host of commercial products that promote quality sleep, including customized mattresses, smart pillows, blackout curtains, decaffeinated coffee, herbal tea, and so on, essentially cater to the privileged sections of society. With their high price range, these commodities become an unachievable illusion of proper sleep for individuals belonging to the lower strata of society who cannot afford them. The security guards in this study illustrate this stark

reality: they lack both knowledge and the economic means to purchase these sleep-promoting products, perpetuating a cycle where economic disadvantage leads to compromised sleep health.

Though studies reveal that a greater percentage of sleep-deprived individuals are found among those in lower socioeconomic positions (Stamatakis et al., 2007; Chatzitheochari & Arber, 2009), they are the ones who are systematically deprived of the products designed to promote good sleep. This creates space for questioning whether quality sleep is a right for all, or a luxury for some. Such disparities stem from how sleep has evolved into a consumer good that is being 'pursued if not consumed' through these sleep-conducive products, driven by increased awareness about sleep health and its importance for well-being. People's ability to 'buy into' these commodities further differentiates the sleeper's embodied experiences, providing markers of class and status (see Bourdieu, 1984; Williams & Boden, 2004). That is to say, distinctions in access to good sleep create not just the sleeper as a category, but their actual lived, bodily experiences of sleep, reflecting the embodiment of class within sleep practices.

Social class thus emerges as a crucial determinant around which sleep becomes stratified. The everyday sleep patterns of the night shift security guards exemplify this class distinction that shapes their relationship to sleep. Their fragmented rest patterns display 'a high degree of *socio-cultural plasticity* or *variability*' (Williams, 2005, p. 3), which reflects their class identity. This identity is not just ascribed but rather internalized through their everyday living. Within such arrangements, sleep becomes what Mauss (1973 [1934]) terms a 'technique of the body'– a socially influenced and culturally determined practice that embodies their social position. Such embodiment reflects a particular rhythm that is 'learnt' (Lyon, 2020) and becomes manifested in their bodily experience and expressions. They actively adopt and routinize these rhythms through sustained engagement within their social context.

These security guards' rest patterns are not merely a response to their night-shift work but an adaptation and internalization of their class status that is reinforced through their employment arrangements, where such disrupted sleep patterns become normalized when survival needs are at stake. This represents a form of embodied adaptation that emerges along class lines, where fragmented sleep becomes the new norm among these night-shift security guards. Such adaptation essentially reveals that uninterrupted nocturnal sleep, characterised as 'normal' sleep in modern times, is a social privilege rather than an attainable reality for all.

Conclusion

The fragmented patterns of rest evident among the night-shift security guards indicate a form of slumber that differs fundamentally from restorative sleep in its true sense. While sleep is indeed a form of rest, it is characterized by extended, uninterrupted periods that facilitate complete sleep cycles (see

Colten & Altevogt, 2006), in contrast to the fragmented rest experienced by these workers. While night-shift work disrupts their sleep patterns, this disruption becomes increasingly complex at the intersection of their precarious employment conditions. Their participation within the informal workforce stems from structural constraints that govern their economic opportunities, thereby shaping their embodied experiences within daily life. This reflects broader class structures that operate to shape their entire lived reality, from work to sleep.

The everyday sleep patterns of night-shift security guards represent more than just workplace adaptation; instead, they reflect deeper class-based embodiments, becoming markers of their social class. Their fragmented rest patterns highlight their social positioning, where mere survival necessitates prioritizing work over sleep, creating embodied practices that further reproduce their marginalized status, which in turn erodes their access to quality sleep. Within such a context, their sleep emerges as a contested space, continuously negotiated and re-negotiated around work demands imposed by their class position to sustain their livelihood. As a result, sleep unfolds as a socially stratified act marked by embodied class distinctions, revealing how even the private, unconscious moments of life reflect social hierarchies. The embodied experiences and expressions of night-shift security guards in this study thus demonstrate how work and sleep are organized in relation to social class, mutually shaping and reshaping one another while reflecting broader structural inequalities.

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Article: Access to Higher Education among Scheduled Castes in Telangana State

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Access to Higher Education among Scheduled Castes in Telangana State

--Ch. Krishna Rao

Abstract

Higher education is an important instrument for social transformation, economic development, and empowerment of marginalized communities. In a diverse and hierarchical society like India, access to higher education has historically remained unequal among different social groups, particularly for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), who have faced centuries of social exclusion, discrimination, and educational deprivation. After the formation of Telangana, the state government initiated several welfare and educational measures aimed at promoting inclusive growth and reducing social disparities in higher education. These measures include reservation policies, fee reimbursement schemes, scholarships, residential educational institutions, hostels, coaching facilities, and other support mechanisms intended to improve the participation of SC students in higher education.This paper focuses on the issue of access to higher education among Scheduled Castes in Telangana State. It examines the extent to which SC students are able to participate in higher education in comparison with non-SC students in both government and private colleges. The study aims to analyze disparities in enrolment, educational opportunities, institutional access, financial support, and socio-economic conditions affecting participation in higher education. It also explores the role of government policies and welfare measures in improving educational access for marginalized communities.The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from students studying in selected government and private colleges across Telangana through interviews and structured questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from government reports, educational statistics, census data, books, journals, and policy documents. The methodology adopted in the study is empirical, descriptive, and analytical in nature.The findings of the study reveal that although the participation of SC students in higher education has increased over the years due to affirmative action policies and welfare schemes, significant inequalities continue to exist between SC and non-SC students. Non-SC students enjoy comparatively better access to quality educational institutions, financial resources, academic support, digital facilities, and professional courses. SC students continue to face challenges such as poverty, weak schooling background, social discrimination, lack of awareness, and limited access to private institutions due to high educational costs. The study concludes that despite the expansion of higher education and government interventions, access to higher education remains unequal, and SC students continue to be underrepresented in several aspects of higher education in Telangana State. The paper suggests the need for stronger policy implementation, increased institutional support, and inclusive educational strategies to ensure equitable access and participation of Scheduled Castes in higher education.

Key Words: Higher education, Scheduled Castes, Telangana

Introduction

Higher education is widely recognized as one of the most important instruments for social transformation, economic development, and human empowerment. It contributes not only to the growth of knowledge and professional skills but also to the development of democratic values, social awareness, and individual capabilities. In contemporary societies, access to higher education has become increasingly important because educational qualifications determine employment opportunities, income levels, social status, and participation in public life. In a developing country like India, higher education plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive development and reducing social inequalities. It enables individuals from disadvantaged communities to improve their socio-economic conditions and achieve upward social mobility.

The importance of higher education has further increased in the era of globalization and technological advancement. The modern economy requires trained human resources equipped with knowledge, technical skills, innovation, and adaptability. As noted by scholars, higher education is closely associated with the creation of skilled manpower, scientific progress, and national competitiveness. It also promotes critical thinking, leadership qualities, and social responsibility among students. Therefore, expanding access to higher education has become a major policy objective of governments across the world.

Despite the expansion of educational institutions in India after independence, access to higher education remains highly unequal among different social groups. Indian society has historically been characterized by caste hierarchy, social exclusion, and economic inequality. These structural inequalities have significantly affected educational opportunities for marginalized communities. Certain sections of society, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and religious minorities, have experienced centuries of discrimination and deprivation. Among these groups, the Scheduled Castes have remained one of the most socially and educationally disadvantaged communities due to the practice of untouchability and caste-based exclusion.

Historically, members of the Scheduled Castes were denied access to education, temples, public places, and social resources under the traditional caste system. Education was largely restricted to upper castes, while Dalits and other marginalized communities were excluded from formal learning processes. Even after independence, the legacy of social discrimination continued to affect the educational participation of SC communities. Poverty, lack of awareness, poor schooling facilities, social stigma, and economic insecurity have acted as major barriers to their educational advancement. Consequently, the representation of SC students in higher education remained very low for a long period.

Recognizing these inequalities, the Constitution of India provided special safeguards and affirmative action measures for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections. The Indian state adopted a welfare-oriented approach to ensure social justice and equal educational opportunities. Several constitutional provisions such as Articles 15(4), 16(4), 46, and 338 emphasize the promotion of educational

and economic interests of SCs and STs. Reservation policies in educational institutions and government employment were introduced to improve their representation and participation. In addition, various scholarship schemes, fee reimbursement programs, hostels, coaching facilities, and remedial support systems were established to encourage students from marginalized communities to pursue higher education.

Over the decades, the Government of India and state governments have made considerable efforts to expand the higher education system. Universities, colleges, professional institutions, and open universities have been established across the country to improve educational access. Special attention has also been given to weaker sections through exclusive institutions such as social welfare residential educational institutions and special hostels for SC and ST students. These initiatives have contributed to a gradual increase in enrolment among marginalized communities. However, disparities in access, participation, retention, and completion continue to exist between SC students and non-SC students.

The issue of access to higher education becomes particularly important in the context of Telangana, one of the newly formed states in India. Telangana was formed in 2014 with the expectation of achieving social justice, regional development, and inclusive growth. The state has a significant population belonging to Scheduled Castes, and the government has introduced several welfare and educational programs to improve their socio-economic conditions. Telangana has implemented schemes such as fee reimbursement, scholarships, residential educational institutions, overseas scholarships, and skill development programs for marginalized students. The state government has also emphasized expansion of educational infrastructure and access to professional and technical education.

Although Telangana has made progress in educational development, inequalities in higher education access still persist. Students from SC communities continue to face challenges related to poverty, inadequate schooling background, lack of guidance, language barriers, social discrimination, and limited access to private educational institutions. The growing privatization and commercialization of higher education have also created new forms of exclusion because private colleges often involve high fees and additional expenses that many SC families cannot afford. As a result, SC students are often concentrated in government colleges and less represented in elite and professional institutions.

In this context, examining the access of Scheduled Castes to higher education in Telangana becomes highly significant. It is important to understand whether the benefits of educational expansion have reached marginalized communities equally and whether government policies have been effective in reducing disparities. The present study seeks to analyze the access to higher education among SC students vis-à-vis non-SC students in both government and private colleges in Telangana State. The study is based on both primary and secondary data and adopts an empirical and analytical approach to understand patterns of participation and inequality.

The study also attempts to examine the socio-economic and institutional factors influencing access to higher education among SC students. It highlights the continuing disparities between SC and non-SC students in terms of enrolment, availability of resources, educational opportunities, and support systems. Understanding these disparities is essential for formulating effective educational policies aimed at achieving equity and social justice in higher education.

Thus, the issue of access to higher education is not merely an educational concern but also a matter of social equality, human rights, and inclusive development. Ensuring equal access for Scheduled Castes is necessary for building a democratic and socially just society. Higher education can become a powerful instrument of empowerment for marginalized communities only when opportunities are distributed fairly and barriers to participation are effectively removed.

Higher education plays a significant role in the process of development of a country. Higher education is closely linked to generation of newer knowledge and skills enhancement for individual and community development, and ultimately to occupational and social mobility. The process of globalization demands knowledge, skills and performance, requiring access, quality and performance in examinations (Agarwal, 2009). However, all sections of human society do not have equal access to higher education due to historical and traditional factors. Indian society is based on diversity, inequality and hierarchy and therefore access to college for majority sections in India has been limited. These majority sections of the Indian population are socially exclusive and have differential social and historical backgrounds and have been identified and organized into special official categories for supporting their education as a constitutional commitment. These sections are knows as the OBCS (Other Backward Classes), the SCs (Scheduled Castes), the STs (Scheduled Tribes) and the religious minorities (especially Muslims). The SCs have been historically the most deprived and suppressed section of the Indian Society. Considering the educational history of higher education and the social environment in India, the government of India introduced various schemes and adopted a welfare policy for all (Wankhede,2012).

Higher education, that is, education after the higher secondary level is a cherished dream of numerous Scheduled Caste (SC) students, especially those who are the ‘first-generation’ learners. The type of social standing and stability in material life which is brought forth through attaining higher education is known to all thus, the young members of socio-economically depressed and downtrodden groups aspire for college education to become someone to be counted in society. However, lack of opportunity arising out of poverty and cultural factors restrain many such youngsters from chasing their dreams. In the absence of a proactive stance of society and state, they are unfortunately inhibited from displaying their inherent talents.

With the adoption of a ‘welfare state’ and a democratic form of government, the state and society in general are perhaps more human today than before. The Republic Indian State has not only guaranteed equality before law to everyone but has also undertaken a responsibility to provide equal opportunities for social, economic and cultural development to all citizens in all spheres of life. Liberty,

equality-social, and economic-and fraternity are the core values of the Indian Constitution. The state is committed to the eradication of all forms of discrimination based on gender, religion, race, caste and region (Article 15 and 29). It is a constitutional obligation of the state to protect and promote 'educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46).

Since Independence, our higher education policy has paid lip service to the rhetoric of equality, equal opportunity, respect for each other and so on.it promised to develop critical thinking, rationality, potentiality of everyone. But all these promises are hardly translated into the contents of textbooks and in classrooms. 'Equality' is not a thrust of the education system (Bhog et al., 2010). Instead, competition and consumerism are encouraged. Hierarchy and inequality as core value systems of the caste system are not questioned but encouraged. Instead, in order to eulogise Indian civilisation, the students are taught that 'the Varna system as an ideal system of building the social and economic structure of a society cannot be overlooked' (Manjrekar et al., 2010).

Access to higher education differs considerably between the students residing in rural and urban areas. Regional – rural-urban disparities in higher education arise due to natural clustering of institutions of higher education in and around metropolitan and urban areas (Sinha, 2008; Agarwal, 2009). Students from rural areas do not have many options to choose, which affects their participation in higher education. On the other hand, people from urban areas are having a moderate access to a variety of educational institutions and hence, they seem to be able to access education according to their choice. Furthermore, it is not only the availability of opportunity that matters to participate in higher education, a number of socio-economic factors of the households are also important. The rate of participation of people in urban areas in higher education is three times higher than that of the rural population in 2004-05 (Raju 2008). Though the enrolments in rural areas increased faster than enrolments in urban areas during the last two decades, the students from rural areas still form only 30 per cent of the total enrolments in higher education in India (Azam and Blom 2009). Describing socio-economic profile of the students entering into higher education, Hasan and Mehta (2006) based on 55th round of National Sample Survey, reported that out of the total students enrolled in colleges, as high as 63 per cent were from urban areas and the rest 37 per cent are from rural areas.

Wankhede (2016) has argued that the social backwardness of these groups results into social sufferings and economic exploitation with high degree of dependence on upper castes, which further leads toward educational backwardness. The discipline-wise distribution of students from different social groups reveals a few important aspects. Apart from overall rates of participation, we note significant differences in the enrolment of students by discipline of study. Ghuman, Singh and Brar (2009) found, based on a primary survey in rural Punjab found that as high as three-fourth of total students from rural background studying in different professional education programmes belonged to forward castes, leaving only one-fourth of total space for the socially disadvantaged sections of the society.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the paper is to investigate access to higher education of SC vis-à-vis non-SC students in both government and private colleges in Telangana State. The central question that have addressed here is the following: who gets access to government and private colleges in Telangana State. The study is empirical and analytical in nature. It is based on both the Primary and Secondary data. Primary data was collected in 2014-15. Primary data collected from two districts of Telangana of than United Andhra Pradesh on the basis of a formula, format and questionnaire provided by the ICSSR. The selected districts are erstwhile Karimnagar and Hyderabad. We made a survey in 8 Government aided and 6 Private colleges. Most of the students interviewed in the study were under graduate 2nd year students. Thus, altogether we have interviewed 128 students from government aided colleges and 96 from private colleges and the total sample size is 223.

Background

Status of SCs in Telangana

The social position of Dalit's is at the bottom of the social hierarchy, as anywhere across India. Since the early 20th century, Dalit social movements have inculcated consciousness for justice and equality among them (Yagati, 2002,2003;Jammanna and Sudhakar,2016).Formal education initiated by Christian missionary and Arya Samaj as well as Dalit and non-Dalit social reformers in the late 19th century first opened new gateways for social transformation among the Dalits. Bhagya Reddy Verma (1888-1939), a social reformer from Hyderabad, felt that education was essential for the all-round progress and upliftment of the untouchables' (Yagati, 2002:104).

Historical studies on education reveal that the first untouchable schools, also known as Adi-Hindu schools were opened during the late 19th century, though they did not benefit much the Dalits despite separate schools for labour and depressed classes. In 1931, less than 1% of Mala and Madiga were literate. In the 1920s, Dalit leaders took initiative in establishing schools as well as hostels for Dalit children. The first generation of educated Dalits played an important role in popularizing the importance of education and establishing schools in Dalit hamlets. Some Dalit associations recognised the critical importance of hostel facilities for educational advancement of Dalit children and youth. However, growth of education remained at a snail's pace. It did not improve their economic status, leading to social mobility.

In the post-Independent India, both at central and provincial levels, the state has introduced many schemes and policies. Distinctiveness of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh lies in evolving some innovative educational policies that contributed to the educational achievements of Dalits. The Andhra Pradesh Residential Schools, introduced by P.V.NarasimhaRao, was followed by AP Social Welfare Residential Schools launched by N.T.Ramarao (APSWRS) in 1985 that played an important role in promoting quality education among Dalits and facilitating their smooth completion of secondary education. In Telangana, the SC population constitutes

17.53% of the total population. The literacy is among the SCs as per 2011 census is only 52% as against State average of 66.54%. There are variations in the levels of education across all the districts.

The socio-economic condition of the SC population in Telangana has definitely improved since Independence. Reservations in government-sector jobs, admission to government and government-sponsored educational institutions, financial assistance in the form of grants/stipends/scholarship to students, and financial assistance in the form of subsidised loans for self-employment or for undertaking economic activities and special training provided for the purpose have undoubtedly helped them enormously. There has been a notable increase in the literacy level among them. Many members of this group of people are doctors, engineers and other professionals are engaged in various levels of administrative services in government and private sectors. But it appears that students who are doing well mostly belong to the wards of such people who are engaged in services and living in semi-urban and urban areas. Those whose presents are in rural areas and engaged in agricultural activities are lagging behind.

Members who are relatively economically well off particularly those living in urban areas, receive comparatively better education. Parents send their wards to the \good' schools and colleges. However, since a majority of them live in rural areas, most of them do not have access to good-quality education which can improve their life chances.

Higher Education

Access to higher education is dependent on several factors. In our analysis of access of SC and non-SC students to higher education, we have taken into account spatial location of the students, income of the family, occupation of family members, education level attained by family members, presence of English-knowing members at home, and expenditure incurred on private tuition. A comparison between SC and non-SC students would enable us to judge the relative ease of access of students of the two social groups to higher education. The data used for analysis has been collected through field survey as mentioned in methodology.

Present Place of living of the Students

Table No.1 shows the distribution of college students on the basis of their present place of living. The following points emerge from this table. More SC than non-SC students live in hostels or rented houses. This demonstrate that a larger proportion of SC students reside in remote areas compared to non-SC students. On the other hand, higher proportions of non-SC students live with their parents. Thus, accessibility to higher education appears to be a little more difficult for a larger proportion of SC students compared to non-SC students.

A comparison between rural and urban students show that a much higher proportion of rural SC students live outside their home in hostels or alone in a rented room compared to non-SC students. Correspondingly, higher percentages of rural non-SC students live with their parents. Thus, accessibility to higher education is more difficult for rural SC students compared to rural non-SC students. A similar pattern is visible for urban SC and non-SC students with a less sharp contrast, as the figures for both the categories of students are closer. However, though urban SC students are also less privileged compared to non-SC students, the level of deprivation of urban SC students is much less compared to rural SC students.

From the data on students of government colleges, it can be inferred that the pattern is similar and the proportion of SC students having difficulty in access is higher compared to non-SC students. On the other hand, the proportion of SC students having difficulty of access to private colleges in terms of their present place of living is quite high compared to that of non-SC students. A much higher proportion of non-SC students studying in private colleges are privileged to live with their parents compared to their SC peers.

Table No.1,Distribution of Participant on the Basis of lives at Present (%)

Category of Respondent	Hostels	With Parents	Rented	Others (Relatives /Friends)	Total
SC Rural	5	4	6	1	16
	31%	25%	38%	6%	100%
Non-SC Rural	2	4	2	2	10
	20%	40%	20%	20%	100%
SC Urban	9	1	4	2	16
	56%	6%	25%	13%	100%
Non-SC Urban	4	3	1	2	10
	40%	30%	10%	20%	100%
SC Govt.College	5	10	2	1	18
	28%	55%	11%	6%	100%
Non-SC Govt.College	3	10	5	2	20
	15%	50%	25%	10%	100%
SC Pvt. College	12	4	8	4	28
	43%	14%	29%	14%	100%
Non-SC Pvt. College	2	4	2	2	10
	20%	40%	20%	20%	100%
Total	44	38	30	16	128
	34.4%	29.6%	23.5%	12.5%	100%

Source: Field Survey

Family's Monthly Income

Monthly family income is the most important economic variable determining the access of students to higher education. Table No.2 shows the distribution of

students on the basis of total income of their family members. A comparison between total incomes of SC and non-SC students' families shows that non-SC students' families are in a better position compared to SC families. As a consequence, affordability and, therefore, access to higher education is less for SC students compared to non-SC students. Families of 40% of SC students' earn less than Rs.5, 000/- per month, while it is 38% for non-SC students. In the middle income range, between Rs.5, 000/- and 15,000/-, there are more non-SC families (29%) compared to SC families (27%). Families of only 9% of SC students earn more than Rs.25, 000/-per month, while this is 13% for non-SC Students.

By making a comparison between incomes of SC and non-SC students' families studying in rural government colleges, it is seen that the pattern is the same as above, but the degree of difference is much more. It is noteworthy that for both categories a much higher proportion of families have income in the lowest income range. But in the case of students studying in urban colleges, the inequality between the SC and non-SC students' families in terms of income is higher to the effect that a much larger proportion of SC families are in the lowest income class compared to non-SC families. At the same time, in urban areas, as expected, a larger proportion of both SC and non-SC families belong to the highest income group compared to their rural counterparts.

It is noteworthy that for both SC and non-SC students studying in government colleges, the largest percentages belong to the lowest income category. In the lower-middle and highest income categories, the proportion of non-SC families is higher than the SC families. It is important to note that in the case of private colleges, students' families are evenly distributed in all income ranges. Thus, affordability of higher education for non-SC students in private colleges is easier than SC students.

Table No.2. Distribution of Participants on the Basis of Total Income of HHs (%)

Respondent	Rs.5000>	Rs.5000 to Rs.15,000	Rs.15,000 to Rs.25,000	More than Rs.25,000	Total
SC Rural	6	4	3	2	15
	40%	27%	20%	13%	100%
Non-SC Rural	8	6	4	3	21
	38%	29%	19%	14%	100%
SC Urban	10	4	5	6	25
	40%	16%	25%	30%	100%
Non-SC Urban	5	4	5	6	20
	25%	20%	25%	30%	100%
SC Govt. College	4	3	2	1	10
	40%	30%	20%	10%	100%
Non-SC Govt.College	2	1	3	4	10
	20%	10%	30%	40%	100%
SC Pvt.College	3	3	3	1	10
	30%	30%	30%	10%	100%

Non-SC Pvt.College	2	3	3	9	17
	12%	17.5%	17.5%	53%	100%
Total	40	25	28	35	128
	31.25%	19.53%%	21.87%%	27.35%	100%

Source: Field Survey

Main Occupations of heads of college Student's households

Occupation of heads of family is an important factor of access to and attainments of students in higher education. It is very likely that families with remunerative, modern and respectable occupations would be able to provide their children with good-quality higher education. On the contrary, those with less remunerative occupations would face difficulty in providing higher education and especially a 'good quality' of higher education to their wards. Moreover, occupation of family members provides a cultural social milieu which is likely to determine the urge, incentive, mental strength and receptivity of the wards.

Table 2. Exhibits the main occupations of the heads of college students' households. It is revealed that highest proportion of SC College students' households are engaged in cultivation and allied activities followed by non-agricultural wage labour, petty trade/manufacturing/business, teacher government salaried employee grade III and IV, private sector and so on. Occupational pattern of heads of non-SC college students' households is, apparently, not significantly different from that of SCs. But there is a quantitative as well as qualitative difference. This is evident from the data presented in Table. The differences in occupational pattern between members of SC and non-SC students'household are as follows:

A lesser proportion of non-SC heads of HHs are engaged in cultivation and allied activities compared to SC members. Thus, lesser proportions of SC students are likely to have the necessary cultural milieu to access higher education as well as quality higher education because of lack of information, guidance, etc.

A higher proportion of non-SC family heads of HHs are engaged in teaching than SC family members. This also indicates that a higher percentage of non-SC students are in a better position to access and perform better in higher education.

A higher proportion of non-SC heads of HHs are engaged inpetty trade/business/manufacturing compared to SC members.

A higher proportion of SC heads of HHs are engaged in the occupation of non-agricultural wage labour than non-SC family members. Only 67% of SC family members as against 33% of non-SC family members are engaged in private-sector services. Due to the effect of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the size of the public sector is gradually shrinking, whereas that of the private sector is ever-expanding. Since a larger proportion of family members of non-SC students are engaged in private-sector services, they have the opportunity to have better education and employment opportunities.

Thus, it can be said that on the whole, heads of HHs of non-SC students are better placed in terms of occupational distribution compared to heads of HHs of SC students. On the other hand, rural students of both SC and non-SC categories are less lucky in getting better educational opportunity compared to their urban brethren.

Table No.3. Distribution of Participants on the Basis of main Occupation of Earning Members of Households (%)

Profession	SC	Non-SC/ST	Total
Cultivation &Allied Agriculture	25	2	27
	93%	7%	100%
Agriculture Wage Labourers	20	2	22
	91%	9%	100%
Non-Agricultural Wage Labourers	10	3	13
	77%	23%	100%
Petty Shop/Trade/Business/Self-employed	15	16	31
	48%	52%	100%
Teacher(Pvt &Govt)	12	3	15
	80%	20%	100%
Govt.Salaried Employed Gr.III &Gr.IV	8	3	11
	73%	27%	100%
Gov.Salaried Employee Gr.I.&Gr.II	1	2	3
	33%	67%	100%
Private Sector	4	2	6
	67%	33%	100%
Total	95	33	128
	74%	26%	100%

Source: Field Study

Education Level of Family Members

Education of parents, especially that of mothers and other family members including grandparents, is a crucial input in educational process and advancements of students for accessing and pursuing higher education. To analyse the comparative position of SC and non-SC students belonging to rural and urban areas and studying in government and private colleges, we have taken into consideration the education level completed by the family members of the students. It is natural that a student with more-educated members in the family and especially with higher education has a better chance in succeeding in higher education than the students who have illiterate and less-educated members in the family.

With respect to education level completed by household members, it has been revealed that there are qualitative and quantitative differences between the education level completed by family members of SC and non-SC students. From the below Table, it can be discerned that level of illiteracy is higher among members of SC

students' households compared to that of on-SC students in both rural and urban areas. Data also exhibits that family members with up to upper primary level education completed are higher in the households of SC students compared to that of non-SC students. The same is true for up to the higher secondary level education completed. But in the case of higher education, there is a big divergence between family members of SC and non-SC students. Here, proportion of members who have completed higher education is much higher among non-SC households than SC households.

The same pattern can be observed without exception in rural and urban areas and in the case of family members of SC and non-SC students who are studying in government as well as in private colleges. Therefore, from all angles, larger proportions of non-SC students are endowed with the family capital of higher education. The obvious implication is that higher proportions of non-SC students are likely to access higher education and excel in it in a better manner compared to SC students.

Table No.4. Distribution of Participants on the Basis of Higher Education level completed by Family Members (%).

Type of Students	**Not any Education**	**Upto Upper Primary**	**Upto High School (VI to X)**	**10+2**	**Graduation**	**P.G.**	**Total**
SC	45	30	10	7	2	1	95
	47%	32%	11%	7%	2%	1%	100%
Non-SC/ST	2	2	5	14	8	2	33
	6.06%	6.06%	15.15%	42.42 %	24.24%	6.06%	100%
Total	47	32	15	21	10	3	128
	37%	25%	12%	16%	8%	2%	100%

Source: Field Survey

Knowledge of English in Family Households

Table No.5. Distribution of Participants on the Basis of English-Knowing Members at Home (%).

Group	Families where Anyone knows English	English Knowing Member(Sibling)	Not Applicable	Total
SC Rural	2	10	4	16
	12%	63%	25%	100%
Non-SC Rural	4	12	0	16
	25%	75%	0	100%
SC Urban	6	10	4	20
	30%	50%	20%	100%

Non-SC Urban	5	10	0	15
	33%	67%	0	100%
SC Govt.College	5	4	6	15
	33%	27%	40%	100%
Non–SC Govt.College	6	4	0	10
	60%	40%	0	100%
SC Pvt. College	4	10	9	23
	17%	44%	39%	100%
Non-SC Pvt.College	10	3	0	13
	77%	23%	0	100%
Total	49	56	23	128
	38.29%	43.75%	17.96%	100%

Source: Field Survey

Table No.5 shows the presence of English-knowing members in the families of college students. In all, 42% of SC as against 67% of non-SC students reported that at least one person in their families 'knows English'. There is a noticeable rural-urban difference also. There are English-knowing members in the families of 12% rural SC and 30% rural non-SC students. The difference is sharper between SC urban and non-SC urban student's families. In the case of the former it is 56%, whereas it is 82% in the latter. Sharp differences also exist between SC and non-SC government and private college students' families. Thus, in regard to this variable, urban as well as rural families of non-SC students are in a better position compared to that of SC students. The implication is that higher proportions of the non-SC students are likely to be better guided in their pursuit of higher education compared to the SCs

Table 5 also shows specifically which members in the family know English. In the case of 42% of SC students and 67% of non-SC students, either one or both parents know English. This pattern is similar for the sub-categories of rural-urban and government and private colleges. It is also interesting to note that in the case of SC students none of their grandparents know English, while in the case of non-SC students grandparents of 2% students know English. Again, except the non-SC rural students know English compared to non-SC students. Another remarkable point that emerges from the data is that in all types of sub-categories, the percentage of response of English knowledge by 'self' is much higher in the case of SC students compared to non-SC students. Both of these findings indicate that quite a good number of the SC students are first-generation learners. Thus, it is most likely that their ease of access to higher education and attainments would be much less than that of the non-SC students.

Expenditure incurred on Private Tuition

To take assistance of private tutors for study has now become a wide spread practice of students at almost all levels of education in Telangana**.** The reasons may be that lessons imparted in classrooms are not much effective. It may also be the case that classes are not held regularly and therefore the syllabus is not completed within the

given time. Finally, it may be due to the mind-set of a section of students that without private tuition it will be difficult for them to pass the exam, or the meritorious students may feel that without private tuition they many not secure the expected grade in the exam.

Table 6 shows the expenditure incurred on private tuition by college students. A higher percentage of SC students incurred a monthly cost in the lowest expenditure ranges and a higher percentage of non-SC students incurred a monthly cost in the medium and highest expenditure ranges. This indicates that affordability of private tuition is higher for non-SC students compared to SC students.

Like other commodities and services in the market of private tuition also the price/coast of tuition depends on the quality of private tuition. The quality of private tuition depends upon several factors like how many students study in a batch, whether coaching is imparted to the students individually at a teacher's or student's residence, frequency of days of coaching in a week, quality of teaching and sincerity of teacher. Since the affordability of SC students is relatively low and their requirement of tuition is of higher duration, therefore, the data indicates that SC students get relatively lower quality tuition compared to non-SC students.

A lower proportion of SC students in urban government or private colleges can afford more expensive private tuition than their non-SC counterparts. Similarly a lower proportion of SC students can afford private tuitions compared to non-SC students. This inequality in incurring cost for private tuitions likely to result in differential educational outcomes for the two groups of students.

Table.No.6.

Distribution of Participants on the Basis of Expenditure incurred (in Rs.)on Private Tuition (%).

Social Groups	500>	501-1000	Above 1000	Total
SC	23	30	42	95
	24%	32%	44%	100%
Non-SC	8	10	15	33
	24%	30%	46%	100%
Total	31	40	57	128
	24%	31%	45%	100%

Source: Field Survey

Present Place of living of the Students

Table No. 7 shows the distribution of college students on the basis of their present place of living. The following points emerge from this table. More SC than non-SC students live in hostels or rented houses. This indicates that a larger proportion of SC students reside in remote areas compared to non-SC students. On the other hand, higher proportions of non-SC students live with their parents. Thus, accessibility to

higher education appears to be a little more difficult for a larger proportion of SC students compared to non-SC students.

A comparison between rural and urban students show that a much higher proportion of rural SC students live outside their home in hostels or alone in a rented room compared to non-SC students. Correspondingly, higher percentages of rural non-SC students live with their parents. Thus, accessibility to higher education more difficult for rural SC students compared to rural non-SC students. A similar pattern is visible for urban SC and non-SC students with a les sharp contrast, as the figures or both the categories of students are closer. However, through urban SC students are also less privileged compared to non-SC students, the level of deprivation of urban SC students is much less compared to rural SC students.

Table No. 7.

Distribution of Participants on the Basis of with whom the students live at present (%).

Type of Respondent	Hostels	With Parents	Rented	Others (Relatives/ Friends)	Total
SC Rural	5	4	6	1	16
	31%	25%	38%	6%	100%
Non-SC Rural	4	2	2	2	10
	40%	20%	20%	20%	100%
SC Urban	9	1	4	2	16
	56%	6%	25%	13%	100%
Non-SC Urban	4	3	1	2	10
	40%	30%	10%	20%	100%
SC Govt.College	5	10	2	1	18
	28%	55%	11%	6%	100%
Non-SC Govt.College	3	10	5	2	20
	15%	50%	25%	10%	100%
SC Pvt. College	12	4	8	4	28
	43%	14%	29%	14%	100%
Non-SC Pvt. College	2	4	2	2	10
	20%	40%	20%	20%	100%
Total	44	38	30	16	128
	34.4%	29.6%	23.5%	12.5%	100%

Source: Field Survey

Conclusion

From the data on students of government colleges, it can be inferred that the pattern is similar and the proportion of SC students having difficulty in access is higher compared to non-SC students. On the other hand, the proportion of SC students having difficulty of access to private colleges in terms of their present place of living is quite high compared to that of non-SC students. A much higher proportion of non-SC students studying in private colleges are privileged to live with their parents compared to their SC peers. The present study highlights the continuing inequalities in access to higher education between Scheduled Caste (SC) and non-SC students in Telangana. Although the expansion of higher education and the implementation of various welfare measures by the government have increased educational opportunities for marginalized communities, the benefits have not been distributed equally among all social groups. The findings of the study clearly reveal that in almost all aspects, a higher proportion of non-SC students enjoy better access to higher education compared to SC students. Differences are visible not only in enrolment and institutional access but also in socio-economic background, educational environment, financial stability, and occupational status of families.

The socio-economic and educational status of non-SC students is significantly better than that of SC students. Most non-SC families possess relatively higher incomes, better educational awareness, improved living conditions, and greater access to educational resources. In contrast, many SC students continue to come from economically weaker families with limited educational support and fewer opportunities for academic advancement. Poverty, low parental education, lack of awareness, inadequate schooling background, and social discrimination continue to affect the educational aspirations and achievements of SC students. These structural disadvantages create barriers not only in entering higher education but also in successfully completing higher studies.

The study further indicates that the ongoing process of economic liberalization and rapid privatization has not equally benefited all sections of society. The growth of private-sector employment and privatized educational institutions has largely favored socially and economically privileged groups. A comparatively smaller proportion of family members of SC students are engaged in trade, manufacturing, business, or private-sector employment when compared to their non-SC counterparts. As a result, SC families often lack the economic strength necessary to support higher education, especially in private and professional institutions where educational costs are high. This situation further widens the gap between SC and non-SC students in terms of educational access and achievement.

The increasing privatization and commercialization of higher education have created additional challenges for students from weaker sections. While government institutions continue to provide opportunities through reservations and subsidized education, the limited availability of seats and resources often restricts access. On the other hand, private colleges, which now constitute a major segment of higher education, remain inaccessible to many SC students because of high tuition fees, hostel expenses, and other associated costs. Even though schemes such as scholarships and fee reimbursement have helped many students continue their

education, delays in implementation and insufficient financial support reduce their effectiveness.

The findings of the study suggest that educational inequality cannot be addressed only through reservation policies. There is a need for comprehensive socio-economic reforms that improve the living standards of marginalized communities. Various income-augmenting measures for poorer families belonging to both SC and non-SC groups should be effectively implemented. Employment opportunities, livelihood programs, entrepreneurship development, and skill-based training programs can strengthen the economic condition of disadvantaged families. Along with economic support, quality school education, digital access, career guidance, coaching facilities and language support systems must also be strengthened to prepare students for higher education and competitive employment opportunities.

Special attention should also be given to improving the quality of public educational institutions so that students from weaker sections are not disadvantaged in comparison to those studying in elite private institutions. Government colleges and universities must be equipped with better infrastructure, qualified faculty, modern technology, research facilities, hostels, libraries, and student support services. Counseling and mentoring programs should also be introduced to address the social and psychological challenges faced by SC students in higher educational spaces.

In addition, awareness regarding educational schemes, scholarships, and career opportunities must be increased among SC communities, particularly in rural areas. Community participation, parental awareness, and institutional accountability are equally important for improving educational outcomes. Policies aimed at social justice should not merely focus on enrolment but also on retention, academic performance, skill development, and employability of students from marginalized backgrounds. The study therefore concludes that although significant progress has been made in expanding higher education in Telangana, true equality in educational access has not yet been achieved. Scheduled Caste students continue to face multiple socio-economic and institutional barriers that limit their participation and success in higher education. Ensuring equitable access to higher education requires a combination of social justice policies, economic empowerment, quality education, and inclusive institutional practices. Improvement in the income levels, educational status, and social conditions of marginalized communities will ultimately pave the way for better educational participation, higher academic attainment, and greater social mobility for future generations.

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Article: Scholarly Development in Single Motherhood Research: A Bibliometric Study

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Scholarly Development in Single Motherhood Research: A Bibliometric Study

--Daly Paulose Meppurath, Nisa James, Linda Therese Luiz, Dora Dominic

Abstract

Research on single motherhood has gained traction over the recent past with growing scholarly attention to changing family structures, gender relations and social norms. This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of single-motherhood as a research domain. By using data extracted from the Scopus database, the study analyses publication trends, influential journals, authors and institutions, as well as collaboration networks within the field. VOSviewer was used to identify dominant research themes and emerging areas of inquiry by examining co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence and theme generation. The findings reveal much interdisciplinarity within the domain with inputs from family studies, social work, sociology, public health and gender studies. The bibliometric coupling analysis indicates that existent work has largely focused on themes of vulnerability such as poverty, stressors and social limiters, while more recent research highlights resilience, agency and adaptive strategies within single-mother families. Cross-national, policy-comparative perspectives remain underrepresented as a research orientation in the body of scholarship. The findings also highlight the need for further sociological and gender-based theorisation to avoid universalising a highly heterogeneous population and overlooking its most vulnerable subgroups. It maybe inferred that the literature has not yet fully realised its potential to drive policy change, and future scholarship would benefit considerably from more deliberate efforts to connect empirical findings to advocacy, social reform and gender-just policy design.

Keywords: Single mother, family, bibliometric analysis, sociology, gender relations

Introduction

The share of single-parent families is growing steadily. Globally, around three fourth (3/4th) of single-parent households are headed by women (Khan et al, 2022). Single motherhood is a rising global social phenomenon, fuelled by sociodemographic shifts in divorce, separation, widowhood, migration and nonmarital childbearing. Based on data from 89 countries, there are at least 101 million single mothers living alone with their children (UN Women, 2019). This report excludes single mothers living within extended households. The global number of lone mothers would likely double if we included these women. The same report estimates that approximately 13 million households in India (4.5%) are led by single mothers, a figure that continues to grow due to rising divorce rates, spousal abandonment and death as part of COVID-19 pandemic's long-term repercussions (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024). Studies consistently report that single mothers navigate multiple socioeconomic,

cultural and psychological challenges. Existing literature points to recurring issues experienced by single mothers, most notably workplace constraints, financial instability, societal bias, the burden of sole caregiving and health concerns (Sharma and Prince, 2025). These patterns remain consistent across generations, as both older and younger single mothers experience similar community expectations, cultural constraints and work–family tensions. Even among educated women from urban areas who opt for separation or divorce, single working mothers testify to experiencing structural inequality, social discrimination, and bias, as well as weak institutional support for career advancement (Chandran, 2022).

Patriarchal norms and constraints are often deep-rooted in the structure of families and it is mostly women who are assigned caregiving and household responsibilities. These responsibilities are not just physical; they are cognitive and emotional too. Women disproportionately bear the burden of managing emotions within both private and public spheres (Hochschild, 1983). In the context of single motherhood, this burden is intensified, as women are solely responsible for caregiving, emotional regulation and household management. The resultant psychological burden on single mothers is significant. The psychological distress they experience arises not from inherent vulnerability, but from sustained exposure to victimisation within prevailing social, economic and institutional systems (Yuliandi *et al.*, 2018; Kulik, 2021; Dharani and Balamurugan, 2024). Without a partner to share responsibilities, single mothers often struggle with maintaining work–family balance—an essential prerequisite for subjective well-being (Chen and Edwards, 2023). Documented evidence points to frequent experiences of loneliness, anxiety, diminished self-worth and emotional fatigue among single mothers (Harish and Aquinas, 2024). In addition to the stigma surrounding sexuality and single status, ongoing moral surveillance further marginalises single mothers, urging them to avoid social engagement or employ strategies aimed at minimising public scrutiny (Widan and Greeff, 2019; Harish and Aquinas, 2024; Sharma and Prince, 2025). While many women deploy coping strategies resorting to family support groups, friendships, work groups, religious grounding and personal resilience, these mechanisms often prove insufficient in offsetting chronic stress (Bashir *et al.*, 2023; Mbamba et al, 2023).

The experiences of single mothers are shaped by the intersection of class, ethnicity, marital status and geographic location (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2019). The socio-economic status of women plays an important role in shaping their lived experiences. For instance, low-income, rural or minority single mothers often face compounded disadvantages due to overlapping systems of marginalisation (Baker, 2022; Hess et al.,2025). Factors such as educational attainment, occupational status, religion, age and disability can further complicate these lived experiences (Hughes & Bhatti, 2023; Varghese & Chakraborty, 2024). Single mothers from lower-class backgrounds may encounter social exclusion and limited access to resources even inside their own paternal home. Urban single mothers may sometimes have the benefits of

better employment opportunities, but still face high living costs, housing insecurity and social stigma (Chzhen & Bradshaw, 2022). In the Indian context, caste adds another layer to these intersecting structural inequalities, captured in the concept of Brahmanical patriarchy: The caste-based structure of Indian society expects women to live by strict norms of lineage-purity that regulate their sexuality and reproductive roles. Deviations from idealised patriarchal notions of '*pativratya'* result in social exclusion, moral policing and reduced access to community support.

More often than not, children living in single-mother households are also at the receiving end. Studies indicate comparatively lower academic effort and homework engagement among children raised in such family arrangements. These effects are more pronounced among older boys, whose mothers have lower education levels, live in economically strained conditions or work multiple jobs and long hours. The findings underscore the broader intergenerational consequences of resource constraints and limited parental time on children's emancipation (Mencarini et al, 2019; Park, 2005).

Research on single mothers is spread across multiple disciplines—including sociology, psychology, gender studies, labour economics, education, public health and social policy. This fragmentation makes it challenging to trace the evolution of the field, identify dominant knowledge areas and recognise topics that are unexplored. Most of the available studies focus on low-income single mothers and their personal struggles, some on their resilience and empowerment mechanisms (McGroder, 2000; Broussard et al., 2012; Freeman, 2017) but replicable theoretical or empirical frameworks have been largely ignored (Mehjabin and Hossain, 2025).

Research on single mothers encompasses a plethora of issues such as economic vulnerability (Bakker and Karsten, 2013; Waring and Meyer, 2020), work–family balance (Baxter and Alexander, 2008; Kushwaha et al, 2024), mental health (Dierker et al, 2025a, 2025b), child outcomes (Jackson et al, 2009), social stigma (Dharani and Balamurugan, 2025; Khan et al, 2025) and access to welfare support (Ono, 2010) to name a few. Previous assessments of single-mother research have remained confined to specific subfields such as psychology, sociology or gender studies without viewing the domain as a whole. Existing studies offer valuable insights into certain aspects of single motherhood, yet most remain either narrow in scope, descriptive in nature, or limited to qualitative assessments, leaving significant gaps in exploring the broader intellectual landscape (Moustakas, 2022; Donthu *et al.,* 2021). These limitations can be addressed by adopting a bibliometric approach, where a large body of publications is analysed through quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based overview of the evolution of the domain and identify which gaps need to be plugged. Once a comprehensive map of the field's current knowledge structure is generated, it is possible to shed light on emerging trends and future directions (Ebrahim, 2017). Interestingly, despite the global rise in single-mother households and the

increasing scholarly attention to their social, economic and psychological challenges, no bibliometric study has yet examined this domain.

With the continuous expansion of research on lone-mother families and its growing policy relevance, there is a critical need to update and consolidate existing studies to identify influential contributors and formulate conceptual clusters that reveal underexplored research domains. In the absence of a comprehensive review that maps the evolution, patterns and research gaps in single motherhood as a whole, the following research questions are pertinent.

RQ1: Who are the principal knowledge producers shaping the field of single-motherhood research?

RQ2: Which key clusters, intellectual structures and collaborative networks define the field?

RQ3: What themes have dominated the literature and what emerging areas and core research gaps exist?

Thus the key objectives of this study are to: (1) analyse the publication performance of the single-mother research domain (2) map the intellectual and thematic clusters that constitute the field and (3) uncover emerging themes and research gaps.

1. Methodology

The present study seeks to examine the structural evolution and emerging trends in research on single mothers through a systematic bibliometric analysis.

2.1 Study Subject

The authors selected the keyword “single mothers” as the primary search term because it captures a wide spectrum of studies related to the social, economic, psychological and family-related dimensions of single motherhood. Using this keyword allowed us to retrieve the broadest possible set of publications addressing the lived experiences of single mothers, their work–family challenges, general well-being, parenting experiences, coping mechanisms and the policy interventions influencing their lives.

The Scopus database, known for its extensive and reliable coverage in social science research, served as the primary source of bibliometric data. It is widely recognised as the world’s largest repository of peer-reviewed abstracts and citations (Kamila and Jasrotia, 2023). It offers comprehensive coverage across diverse subject areas and provides the metadata required for accurate and systematic bibliometric analysis (Küster and Vila, 2023).

2.2 Selection Criteria

A topical search was carried out in the databases using the keyword ("single mother*" OR "single-parent" OR "female-headed household*" OR "women-headed household*" OR "mother-headed household*" OR "lone mother*") AND ("poverty" OR "economic hardship" OR "financial vulnerability" OR "socioeconomic" OR "social exclusion" OR "social welfare" OR "wellbeing" OR "well-being" OR "quality of life" OR "empowerment" OR "gender equality" OR "social support" OR "inclusion"). These keywords were applied across the title, abstract and keywords sections, to ensure access to relevant literature. The search included journal articles, review papers, book chapters and conference proceedings published between 1973 and 2025. This period was selected because research and policy discussions on single mothers began to take shape during the mid-1970s. We intentionally broadened the document types beyond journal articles to acknowledge the value of non-journal contributions.

Overall, the search parameters were handpicked to capture the full breadth of research activity related to single mothers, in alignment with the integrative nature of bibliometric analysis. After applying these criteria in Scopus, the bibliographic information was exported in text (.txt) format for subsequent processing and analysis.

2.3 Selection of software

Two software packages designed for constructing and visualising bibliometric networks namely VOSviewer and Biblioshiny were employed to organise and analyse the intellectual structure of the field. These tools facilitate the extraction of authorship, citation and keyword metadata and supported the execution of co-citation, co-authorship, co-country and co-word analyses, enabling a deeper understanding of the thematic and collaborative patterns within the literature (Haba et al, 2023).

2. Findings

2.1 Performance Analysis

Overall, research on single mothers is represented by a total of 895 publications. Published across 484 journals, the majority are empirical and conceptual studies, while the remaining consist of book chapters and conference papers, as categorised by Scopus. Academic work on single mothers has been active for nearly four decades and the annual growth rate is 7.81%. Compared with other domains within the social sciences that emerged around the same period, scholarship on single-mother families demonstrates a steady and progressively expanding knowledge base. Collectively, the field has generated 18,881 citations (an average of 21.1 citations per document) reflecting the intellectual contribution and importance attributed to this line of study. Among these, the top ten cited works together accounted for 3286, i.e.

over one-sixth of all citations. This should point us towards trends of concentration in the earlier generation of cited works. Only 290 documents have single authorship whereas the substantial majority are co-authored, suggesting that research in this area is highly collaborative and often conducted through interdisciplinary partnerships.

Figure 1 illustrates the annual publication trends in single-mother research. While early contributions were limited, a noticeable increase began around the mid-1990s in tandem with increasing recognition of single mothers within social policy debates, mental health frameworks and developmental research. The data shows that publications began to rise steadily from 2021, accelerating further between 2022 and 2025. Recent years, particularly 2020 onward, have seen a notable surge in output. On closer examination, growing scholarly interest is observed in sub-domains related to socio-economic vulnerabilities, intersectionality and its outcomes as also in areas related to work–family conflict and parenting in the post-COVID-19 era.

Overall, the trend shows that research on single-mother households is becoming more visible and important, with the number of studies increasing steadily over the past three decades. This growth is likely due to easier online access to research databases, greater policy focus on single-mother issues and increased collaboration across diverse academic fields.

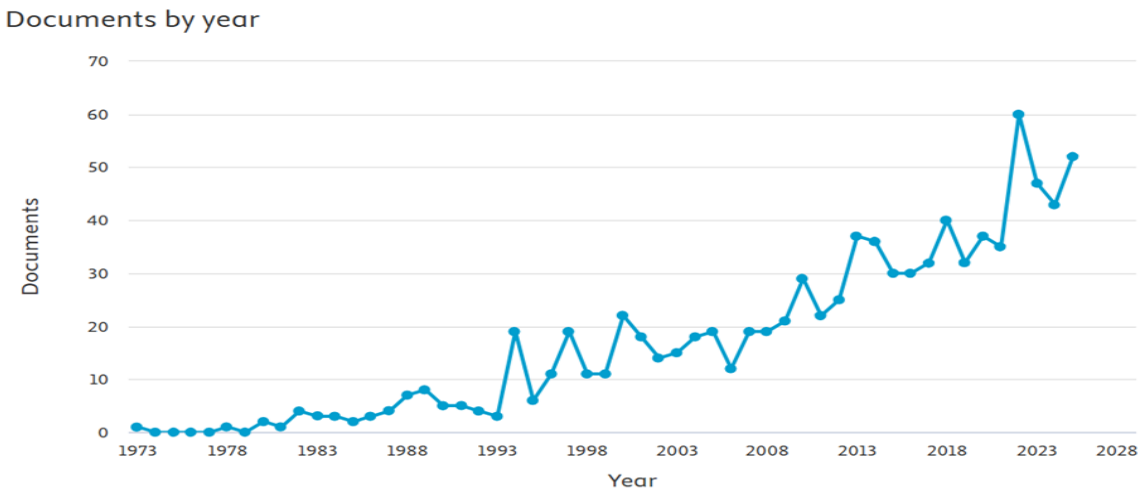

Figure 1: Annual Publication Trends

2.2 Prominent contributors

In this bibliometric analysis of single-mother research, prominent contributors are examined through country-wise and affiliation-wise publication patterns, highly cited documents and the journals with the greatest scholarly output.

This approach enables the identification of key geographic regions, institutions and publication outlets that have significantly influenced the development of the field and shaped its intellectual structure.

3.2.1 Country-wise distribution

The country-wise analysis of publications shows that the United States is the dominant contributor to single-mother research, producing the highest number of documents by a significant margin. The United Kingdom follows at a distant second, with Canada and Germany also showing notable contributions. Countries such as Australia, Malaysia, Sweden, China and Israel contribute modestly but consistently. Overall, the distribution reflects that research on single-mother households is largely concentrated in Western nations, particularly the U.S., with growing but limited contributions from Asia and other regions.

3.2.2 Affiliation wise Distribution

The classification of publications by institutional affiliation reveals that North American universities dominate the field of single-mother research, with particularly strong contributions from the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign (24 articles), McMaster University (22 articles), University of California (19 manuscripts), and University of Georgia (17 articles). The findings reinforce the longstanding engagement of U.S. and Canadian institutions in research related to family structures, gender studies and social welfare. Asian institutions also feature prominently, with The Hong Kong Polytechnic University producing 17 articles, while Malaysian universities—Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu—have contributed 15 publications each. Additional contributions come from the Islamic Azad University (14 articles), the University of Cambridge (12 articles) and the Cyprus University of Technology (11 articles).

While both American and South East Asian institutions represent a growing presence in the field, European institutions show moderate activity and African representation is sparse. This distribution suggests that scholarly inquiry into single-motherhood predominantly comes from regions characterised by robust research ecosystems and progressive social climates that recognise and legitimise non-traditional family structures and shifting gender relations (McLanahan and Percheski, 2008; Esping-Andersen, 2019). An alternative explanation could be the nature of the global publication and indexing industry that is dominated by western institutions and journals.

3.2.3 Publication distribution

The citation analysis as represented by Table 1 reveals that early foundational studies continue to shape the single-mother research landscape. The most cited work is McLoyd *et al.*, (1994) with 568 citations, highlighting the long-standing academic interest in the effects of unemployment and work

instability on African-American single mothers. Works of Brody and Flor (1998) and Brown and Moran (1997) focusing on parenting methods, intergenerational poverty, social exclusion and mental health of mothers have 443 and 363 citations respectively, while studies by Buvinić and Gupta (1997) and Jackson *et al.*, (2000) focusing on psychosocial stressors within female-headed households in developing countries are also influential contributions.

Table 1: Top cited work in the domain

Author(s)	Title	Citations	Source
McLoyd *et al.*, 1994)	Unemployment and Work Interruption among African American Single Mothers: Effects on Parenting and Adolescent Socioemotional Functioning	568	Child Development
Brody and Flor, 1998	Maternal resources, parenting practices and child competence in rural, single-parent African American families	443	Child Development
Brown and Moran, 1997	Single mothers, poverty and depression	363	Psychological Medicine
Buvinić and Gupta, 1997	Female-Headed Households and Female-Maintained Families: Are They Worth Targeting to Reduce Poverty in Developing Countries?	308	Economic Development & Cultural Change
Jackson *et al.*, 2000	Single mothers in low-wage jobs: financial strain, parenting and preschoolers' outcomes.	300	Child Development
Edin, 2000	What do low-income single mothers say about marriage?	284	Social Problems
Weitoft *et al.*, 2003	Mortality, severe morbidity and injury in children living with single parents in Sweden: A population-based study	281	The Lancet
Manning and Lamb, 2003	Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married and Single-Parent Families	254	Journal of Marriage and Family
Brody and Flor, 1997	Maternal psychological functioning, family processes and child adjustment in rural, single-parent, African American families.	250	Developmental Psychology
Harris, 1993	Work and welfare among single mothers in poverty	235	American Journal of Sociology

3.2.4 Journal distribution

The journal distribution shows that research on single mothers is relatively niche (Table 2). *Journal of Marriage and Family* (15 articles) leads with the highest number of publications, indicating its strong influence in family studies. Close behind are the *Journal of Poverty* (14), *Journal of Family Issues* (12) and *Marriage and Family Review* (12), reflecting the multidimensional nature of single-mother research across poverty, family dynamics and social challenges. Specialised journals such as *Affilia - Feminist Inquiry in Social Work* also contribute substantially. Overall, the spread indicates an interdisciplinary research landscape grounded in family studies, social work and developmental research, with inputs from sociology, gender and feminist studies, public health, education, economics, psychology and social policy.

Table 2: Most Prominent Journals

Journals	**Documents**	**Citations**	**Total link strength**	**Impact factor**
Journal of Marriage and Family	15	135	183	**3.4**
Journal of Poverty	14			**0.8**
Journal of Family Issues	12	22	30	**1.4**
Marriage and Family Review	12			**1.2**
Children and Youth Services Review	11			**1.7**
Journal of Family and Economic Issues	11			**2.9**
Affilia - Feminist Inquiry in Social Work	10			**1.8**
Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science	9			**2.6**
Journal of Family Psychology	8	26	42	**2.0**
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry	7	20	22	**2.1**

2.3 Intellectual Structure

To further understand the intellectual structure of the domain, the authors performed thematic analysis, supported by text-based keyword co-occurrence mapping using VOSviewer (which incorporates titles, abstracts and keywords). It was thus possible to visually explore conceptual linkages and clusters across the selected studies.

Three complementary bibliometric methods were employed. Keyword co-occurrence analysis identified key themes and conceptual clusters; co-authorship analysis mapped collaborative networks among authors across regions; and bibliographic coupling analysis created thematic groupings and uncovered emerging research streams. These approaches collectively provide a comprehensive view of the domain's intellectual structure.

3.3.1 Keyword network analysis

Keyword network analysis is a crucial component of bibliometric studies, where researchers examine the co-occurrence of keywords, to identify emerging areas, relevant topics and definitive conceptual linkages (Donthu *et al.*, 2021).

From the dataset, a total of 2909 keywords were extracted with a minimum occurrence threshold of five. Based on co-occurrence patterns, VOSviewer generated a multi-coloured network of terms (Figure 2) that visually represents the thematic clusters characterising single-mother scholarship. Nodes represent keywords, their size indicates frequency and the thickness of connecting lines shows the strength of co-occurrence between terms (Ebrahim, 2017)

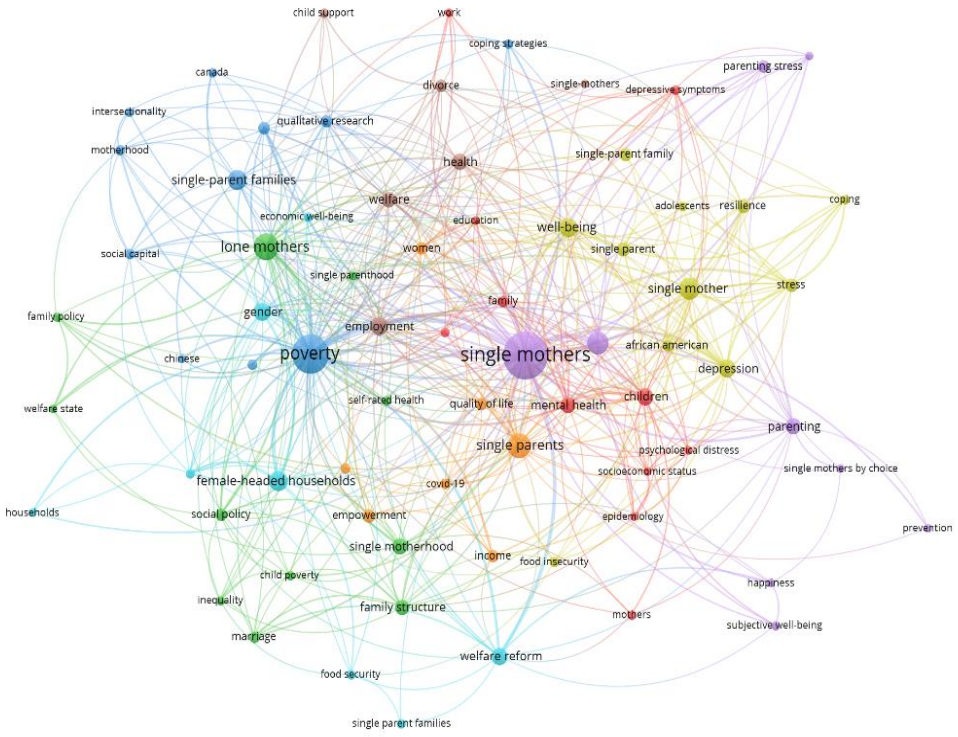

Figure 2: Keyword Network Analysis

The blue cluster seen on the left part of the map centres on issues of poverty, single-parent families, motherhood, intersectionality and social capital. This grouping dwells upon the extensive scholarly attention to the economic hardships and structural inequalities faced by single mothers, as well as the social identities that shape their lived experiences. The strong interconnections within this cluster suggest that poverty, social exclusion and social capital formation have been areas of consistent focus (Parolin and Lee, 2022).

Next to this, the focal points of the green cluster are policy frameworks, welfare systems and extended family structures. Prominent keywords such as lone mothers, social policy, inequality, welfare state, family policy, child poverty and child emancipation reflect scholarship that examines how institutional settings shape the experiences of single mothers. This cluster throws light upon investigations into the role of welfare reforms, social protection schemes and policy interventions in influencing the economic conditions, health outcomes and overall well-being of female-headed households.

The central red cluster represents the intellectual core of the keyword network. Anchored by the term ‘single parents’, this cluster represents keywords such as children, mental health, psychological distress, quality of life, socioeconomic status and depressive symptoms. This cluster emphasises how material hardship and socioeconomic disadvantage shape parental stress, psychosocial well-being and overall family functioning. The tight co-occurrence between children and mental-health-related terms suggests extensive examination of how single parenthood influences child development, emotional adjustment and behavioural outcomes.

The yellow cluster on the right part of the map exhibits research centred on coping processes and psychosocial well-being within single-parent households. Prominent keywords such as well-being, stress, resilience, coping, adolescents, African American and food insecurity point to a substantial body of work examining how single mother households struggle within a conventional and limiting sociocultural fabric. This cluster draws sustained attention to the psychological pressures faced by single mothers—including chronic stress, depressive symptoms and the overwhelming demands of single parenting. The inclusion of adolescents and African Americans highlights a focus on vulnerable subgroups, exploring the outcomes of racial and financial disparities on teenage children in single-mother families. Overall, the yellow cluster illustrates how emotional health, coping mechanisms and socio-demographic vulnerabilities intersect to shape the lived realities of single-mother households.

The purple cluster represents research centred on parenting practices, family dynamics and subjective well-being within single-parent households. Keywords such as parenting, single mothers by choice, happiness, prevention and subjective well-being reflect growing academic interest in the diverse pathways into single motherhood and the positive dimensions of family life.

This cluster highlights studies examining how single mothers—particularly those who actively choose single parenthood—navigate parenting roles, establish family routines, construct new identities and sustain physical, emotional and psychological well-being despite challenging circumstances. It also captures research focused on positive psychological outcomes, including life satisfaction, sense of happiness and independence within single-parent families. The presence of terms related to prevention indicates an emphasis on early interventions, support programs and community-based strategies aimed at promoting healthier parenting practices and strengthening mother–child relationships.

An overview of the Keyword Network Analysis gives the impression that the majority of scholarly work on single mothers pertains to the economic, psychological and health dimensions. Sociological concepts are comparatively marginal to this discourse. 'Qualitative research', 'intersectionality', 'social capital' and 'inequality' are visible only as outliers in the keyword network. Figure 3 displays a keyword density visualisation map.

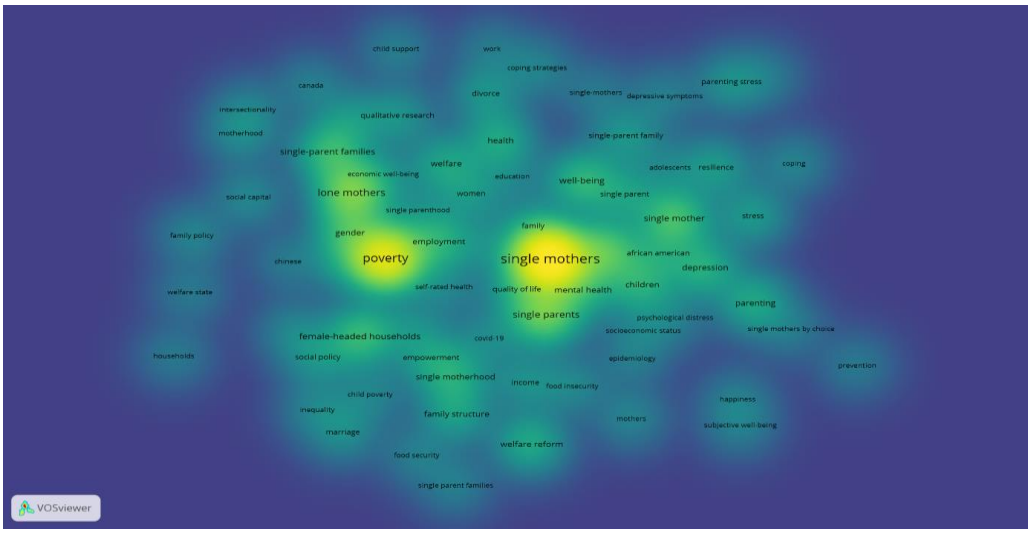

Figure 3: Keyword Density Visualisation Map.

3.3.2 Co-authorship analysis

The co-authorship network analysis shows that the United States is the central hub of global collaboration in single-mother research, with strong links to the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Australia, Japan and South Korea. The United Kingdom and Germany form the main European collaboration clusters, connecting with countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Finland. Canada, Israel and New Zealand form a smaller but cohesive group. In the Asia-Pacific region, Australia, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan show growing participation, though with fewer

connections. Overall, Western countries dominate the network, while Asian collaborations are emerging but less dense.

3.3.3 Bibliographic Coupling Analysis

The bibliographic coupling analysis revealed four major thematic clusters that structure the intellectual landscape of single-mother research (Figure 4). The first cluster, represented by terms such as poverty, single motherhood and single mothers, consists of influential work examining the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that shape the experiences of single-parent families. Recent studies related to single mothers and socioeconomic vulnerabilities include (Brady et al, 2021; Zehl, Thiel and Nagel, 2023; Lanza-León and Cantarero-Prieto, 2025; Sharma and Prince, 2025). These studies highlight the long-standing recognition that poverty is a central and persistent challenge facing single mothers and remains a dominant theme in the literature.

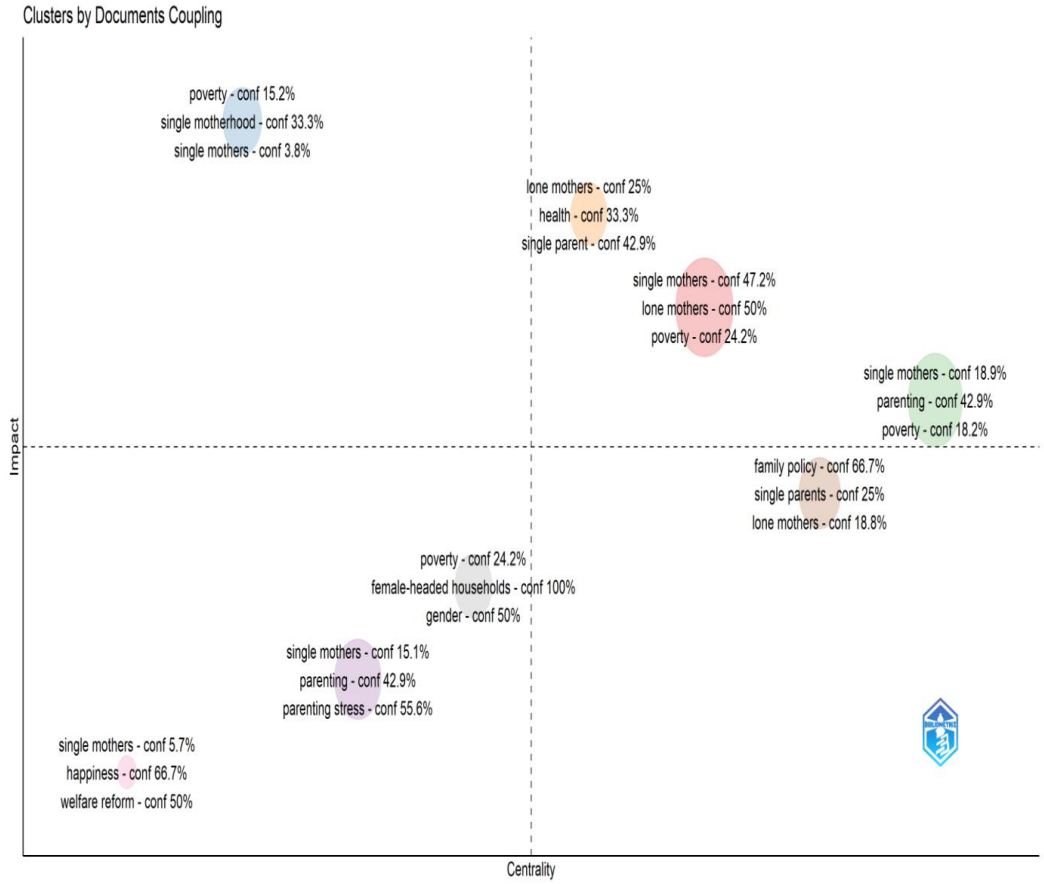

Figure 4: Bibliographic Coupling Analysis

The second cluster—labelled by terms such as health, lone mothers and single parent—represents the most central and interconnected body of scholarship in the field. (Johner et al, 2007; Caragata and Liegghio, 2013;

Kühn, 2018; Kühn et al, 2023) explore the strong association between single motherhood and the health aspect. The research documents elevated risks of psychological distress, depression and poor self-rated health among single mothers, as well as adverse physical and mental health outcomes among their children. Because of its strong ties to both economic and family studies, this cluster forms the conceptual core of single-mother research and reflects how socioeconomic strain, parenting responsibilities and mother-child health intersect.

A third cluster focuses on parenting, family policy and lone mothers. It is represented by terms such as parenting, family policy and single parents, signalling research that examines how institutional supports and policy environments shape single-parent households. Studies such as (McLanahan and Garfinkel, 1989; Roberts and Pless, 1995; Caragata, 2009; Cancian and Meyer, 2018; Weng, 2018; Bostic, 2023; Notten et al., 2023) demonstrate how welfare policies, childcare systems and family support structures influence parenting stress, parental involvement and children's emotional and academic well-being. This cluster shows strong centrality, indicating that policy and parenting research connects closely with the broader themes of poverty and family health.

The fourth cluster, characterised by terms such as happiness, parenting stress and welfare reform, represents newer or more specialised lines of inquiry. Although smaller in size and lower in impact, this group shows a renewed focus on enablers, coping strategies, subjective well-being, emotional resilience and the like. Studies in this area investigate how single mothers cope with adversity, outcomes of such coping mechanisms, the role of supportive policy interventions and such (D'Ercole, 1988; Brooks & Buckner, 1996; Brown & Lichter, 2004; Ciabattari, 2006; Johner, 2007; Ifcher, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Broussard et al., 2012; Baranowska-Rataj et al., 2014; Ifcher & Zarghamee, 2014; Berryhill & Durtschi, 2017; Joseph, 2018; Taylor et al., 2021; Casey, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023; Shamir Balderman & Shamir, 2024). While still an emerging cluster, the focus here is on resilience, self-efficacy and adaptive strategies within single-mother families. It challenges traditional problem-focused perspectives and instead portrays single mothers as empowered actors rather than merely subjects of systemic vulnerability.

3. Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric study provide a comprehensive overview of how the field of single-mother research has evolved, its intellectual foundations and the thematic directions shaping current and future scholarship. Across four decades, publication output has steadily risen. The shift underscores a global recognition of the realities faced by single-mother households and the increasing acceptance of this demographic within policy debates, public health discourse and developmental frameworks.

The performance analysis revealed a Western-centric geographic landscape, represented primarily by countries with established welfare systems and progressive social climates.

The foundational body of research has largely approached single-mother families through deficit-oriented frameworks that focus on poverty, hardship, adversities and parenting struggles. There is a notable absence of seminal work focusing on generativity, social maturity, independence and agency that emphasise empowering narratives over vulnerabilities. It may be that abstract theoretical conceptualisations are sidelined in the face of pressing issues such as poverty, child outcomes and maternal mental health that require immediate attention. Our bibliometric analysis reveals that larger structural matters therefore take up comparatively less of the conceptual space in studies on single mothers.

Five major clusters were identified through Keyword co-occurrence and density analysis. The central cluster - "single mothers" - reveals the interconnectedness of maternal health and socioeconomic conditions on parenting outcomes. The blue and green clusters highlight structural issues, including financial and welfare policy related impacts on single mother families. The yellow and purple clusters show growing scholarly engagement with psychosocial processes including stressors, enablers, coping methods and subjective well-being.

The bibliographic coupling analysis complements these findings by highlighting four core thematic clusters: (1) poverty and socioeconomic vulnerability (2) maternal and child health (3) parenting and policy interventions and (4) Resilience and coping for subjective well-being. The first two clusters demonstrate the intellectual foundation of the field, built on work linking economic hardship and health inequities to family functioning. The third cluster underscores the importance of policy design in shaping the well-being of single-parent families, while the fourth reflects emerging attention toward strengths-based approaches and the lived experiences of the cohort.

The co-authorship network reinforces western dominance of the field. The United States is at the centre, collaborating extensively with the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada and Australia, while regional clusters in Europe and Asia exist in fragmentation. Limited cross-regional collaboration highlights the need for more inclusive, globally representative research, especially from regions where single-mother households face unique challenges related to poverty, childcare access, cultural stigma and social protection. Additionally, the dominance of western studies raises concerns about the generalisability of findings to developing countries where welfare systems and socio-cultural norms differ significantly.

As this analysis has not gone into the content of the articles under review, we cannot come to conclusive observations regarding the major theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the literature on single mothers. But given the

relative scarcity of keywords covering significant areas such as standpoint theory, social capital research and familial stress theory, our preliminary impression is that empirical studies dominated over theoretical formulations. Therefore, there is scope for further theorisation, especially incorporating inputs from sociology and gender studies. This discussion would be incomplete if it did not engage with the theoretical frameworks that have most substantially shaped the scholarly discourse on single motherhood, namely feminist theory, intersectionality and the life course perspective.

Feminist scholarship has consistently drawn attention to how patriarchal structures and gendered social norms inform the experiences of mothers, particularly those parenting without a partner. Single mothers, in particular, bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities and economic precarity as a direct consequence of entrenched gender inequalities (Collins, 2019) and the bibliometric prominence of certain research themes over others may itself reflect these structural biases in knowledge production. Equally important is the framework of intersectionality, which Crenshaw (1989, 1991) introduced to account for the way multiple social identities — including race, class, gender, and sexuality — converge to produce qualitatively distinct forms of disadvantage. When applied to single motherhood research, intersectionality reveals that not all single mothers encounter the same barriers; rather, structural inequities are compounded for those who occupy multiple marginalized positions simultaneously (Garland McKinney et al., 2023). Failing to account for these intersecting dimensions risks producing scholarship that universalizes the experiences of a highly heterogeneous population, thereby rendering invisible the conditions of the most vulnerable subgroups.

Complementing these feminist frameworks, the life course perspective as articulated by Elder (1985, 1998) provides an essential temporal lens by directing attention to the sequencing, timing and trajectory of major life transitions. Becoming a single mother is not a static condition but a dynamic life course event shaped by historical context, institutional structures, and the interplay of multiple life domains over time (Struffolino & Rüttenauer, 2023). Research has further demonstrated that studies rarely account for life course-linked variations in single parenthood, such as partnership history and the timing of transitions, despite their documented significance for outcomes including health and economic well-being (Dierker et al., 2025c). Integrating these three theoretical frameworks into the conceptual scaffolding of research on single motherhood would enhance the interpretive depth of such intellectual mapping exercises. It would also bring to light whose knowledge counts, which experiences are centred, and how the longitudinal complexity of single mothers' lives is accounted for within the broader research landscape.

The findings of this study, while offering a systematic mapping of the knowledge landscape of single motherhood research, carry important implications that extend well beyond the publication performance identified.

The dominance of certain thematic clusters, particularly those centred on poverty, health, parenting and happiness in the mapped literature is not merely a reflection of scholarly interest but an index of where policy attention has been concentrated and, equally importantly, where it has remained insufficient. Research has consistently demonstrated that in countries with more comprehensive welfare programmes, single parents and their families experience lower rates of poverty and higher incomes compared to countries with limited welfare regimes, yet the bibliometric evidence suggests that cross-national, policy-comparative perspectives remain underrepresented as a research orientation in this body of scholarship. The relative marginalisation of certain geographies and populations within the mapped literature further signals a troubling asymmetry between where single mothers live and where knowledge about them is produced; as the number of single-mother families continues to grow, the development and implementation of new frameworks that support single mothers and address the gender disparities that contribute to generational cycles of poverty become ever more urgent. Furthermore, the bibliometric evidence reflects a broader tendency within social science research to individualise structural problems, a pattern that has direct consequences for how welfare policy frames single mothers either as subjects of social risk or as agents deserving of equitable structural support (Wahdan et al., 2025; Bostic, 2023). These patterns suggest that the literature has not yet fully realised its potential to drive policy change, and future scholarship would benefit considerably from more deliberate efforts to connect empirical findings to advocacy, social reform and gender-just policy design.

4. Conclusion

The study visualises how research on single mothers has evolved, the directions of change and how the manner in which research in this field is organised. By synthesising patterns across publication trends, collaboration networks, thematic clusters and citation influence, this study provides an integrated map of the research domain. Overall, this bibliometric study demonstrates that single-mother research is marching towards greater thematic diversity and methodological advancement. Viewed together, the analysis reveals a research field that is diverse, cross disciplinary and increasingly complex. Themes related to economic vulnerability, mental health, parenting and policy have produced significant empirical and theoretical contributions. At the same time, newer topics such as resilience, well-being, empowerment and single motherhood by choice signal a shift toward more holistic and strength-based narratives. This progression suggests that future research must embrace integration in the field, moving beyond isolated lenses to explore how structural, relational and psychological factors operate together. Additionally, expanding research attention to underrepresented regions such as Asia, Africa and Latin America can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of single-motherhood and support more informed policy development. The implications of this study are significant for researchers, policymakers and practitioners. For researchers, the identified clusters provide clear entry points for action-

oriented research, especially in areas where work remains sparse, such as intersectional analysis, cross-cultural comparisons and the unique lived experiences of single mothers in resource-constrained contexts. Evidence from the literature calls for policy interventions that are proactive rather than reactive, those that integrate welfare support with mental-health, community participation and protective family schemes. For policymakers, the mapping of knowledge areas reinforces the importance of designing comprehensive support systems that focus on outcome-oriented efforts in critical areas like emotional health, childcare access and employment stability.

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Article: Farmers' reliance on Middlemen: An Exploratory Study of the Tapioca trade in Salem

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Farmers' reliance on Middlemen: An Exploratory Study of the Tapioca trade in Salem

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Abstract

The present study adopts an Exploratory framework, through the Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling, to analyse the reliance of Tapioca farmers on Middlemen in Salem district of Tamil Nadu. Tapioca, has emerged as an industrial crop, over the last 7 decades in Salem, but the presence of middlemen, in between the farmers' and the processors' is intriguing, given that the processors have been successful in eliminating middlemen in sale of processed tapioca i.e., Sago and Starch. Through a cluster analysis, and structured questionnaire, the study sought responses from the farmers' and tried to identify the heterogeneity of factors, which are the main reasons for their reliance on middlemen. This method is particularly relevant to analyse broadly, all the factors that define a phenomenon in a specific area. In this study, this area-centric approach is useful, to understand the complex dynamics at play in agri-market, and more so the approaches of farmers.

Keywords: Tapioca, Middlemen, Farmers, NMDS, Exploratory.

Introduction

The dynamics of shift in policy discourse, from the consumer to the producer is highly evident in the Agricultural sector (Gulati & Juneja, 2022). From the efforts to enhance food production and food productivity in the 1960s, we are now talking about doubling farmers' income (Chand, 2017). From the discourse on subsidies for fertilizers and power, we are now discussing the value-addition of foods (Gulati, Paroda, Puri, Narain, & Ghanwat, 2023). The dynamics of agricultural trade have shifted from imports for survival to policy interventions focusing on exporting high-value processed foods. The discourse on climate-smart agriculture and integrating the Internet of Things to make agricultural practices intelligent is being envisaged. The emphasis on diversification away from crops towards the livestock sector, including poultry and fisheries, and focusing on newer varieties of crops, along with adopting newer crops from across the regions, and also reviving indigenous varieties, is being keenly studied and adopted (Gulati & Juneja, 2022). The supermarket culture has given rise to the Farm-to-Fork phenomenon, with emphasis on backward and forward linkages being emphasised in every crop. But still, the presence of intermediaries, the influence of commission agents, and reliance on middlemen[i], is hard to miss, in case of any crop, and more so in the case of horticultural crops.

In recent times, India has come to play an important role in the horticultural sector. It is today, the leading producer of many horticultural crops. With rising

incomes and changing lifestyles, the consumption of processed foods is also on the rise. In this context, agricultural reforms emphasising direct integration of farmers and consumers are necessary. And efforts to establish and encourage value-addition of crops are being undertaken. Contract farming and new commodity complexes are being envisaged to integrate farm produce with enterprises engaged in value-addition and final consumers (Narayanan, 2012). But still, the presence of middlemen is evident in many agricultural value-chains. In fact, mechanisms like direct procurement by the government for crops like paddy and wheat or farmer markets encouraging farmers to sell directly to the consumers and institutions like e-Nam, trying to integrate agricultural mandis across the country and enhancing price discovery are in vogue but still many crops aren't coming under their ambits. For many non-staple as well as many horticultural crops, these mechanisms aren't in place. In all these contexts and many more, the presence of middlemen, between the farmer and the processor or the final consumer, is evident. It is in this context that we have tried to study the Tapioca crop.

Tapioca is envisaged as a future crop, a climate-smart crop, which can be a good source of calories for human consumption (Immanuel, 2024). Also it can be used to process multiple varieties of value-added food products, as well as modified starches, bioethanol, biodegradable plastics, etc., (Edison, Anantharaman, & Srinivas, 2006). While Tapioca has emerged as an industrial crop in Salem district of Tamil Nadu, with most of the produce being processed into Sago and Starch for sale in outside markets, the integration of farmers with the processor is still not established(Linder, Giuliani, Ashok, & Arivarasan, 2017). In fact, the preliminary field study revealed the reliance of farmers on middlemen to sell their produce. And this was intriguing, given how well-established the Sagoserve Cooperative society functioned in integrating the processors and the merchants procuring finished Sago and Starch, who sold them in North-Indian Markets (Dastagiri, 2010).[ii]

Therefore, this study aims to explore the presence of intermediaries between the Tapioca farmers and the processors in the Salem region. Here, we have adopted a mixed methods framework. Given the highly perishable nature of Tapioca, and the peculiar challenges that farmers face in handling certain horticultural crops, this study tries to adopt an area-centric approach, and by incorporating variables defined through literature review, undertakes an exploratory study, analysing the perceptions and factors which are the major reasons for farmers' relying on middlemen. To achieve this, data was gathered through structured surveys and interviews conducted with 181 tapioca farmers across Salem.

The paper is arranged as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical and methodological framework, Section 3 provides details regarding the methods adopted to study the research question, Section 4 provide results and discussion, and Section 5 provides conclusion and suggestions for further research.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework:

Development literature has mainly analysed the presence of middlemen and its exploitative nature. It has emphasised the usurious nature, wherein farmers are trapped in debt due to informal credit, or the dominance they exert on the prices in unregulated markets of the hinterland. For instance, Bell (1990) examines the role of middlemen as credit providers in rural economies, noting that, while they fill the gap left by formal financial institutions, they may provide credit on the condition that their clients either sell their crops directly to them or utilise their services to facilitate the sale. This may create a cycle of dependency where borrowers struggle to repay debts and remain tied to unfavourable terms of trade. Further, despite significant efforts, the middlemen still dominate the agricultural markets and adversely affect the well-being of the farmers, as they capture the large price-spreads between the producers and consumers(P. Pingali, Khwaja, & Meijer, 2005).

In this context, the State has envisaged a role for itself, by trying to devise mechanisms to integrate farmers with millers, either through cooperative societies or Mandis, and direct procurement mechanisms, and encouraging farmer markets and supporting agricultural policies for growth of contract farming.

But the presence of middlemen, across the value-chain, more so at the level of farmer, is being observed in rural markets. It is in this context that the New Institutional Economics, and more so the Transaction Cost Literature emerged, and with that, the analysis on middlemen took a different turn. By adopting frameworks to analyse the transaction costs, and market inefficiencies, the literature continues to contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon. For instance, Svensson & Drott (2010), discuss how traders with better access to information, when compared to the farmers' may result in sub-optimal exchanges for farmers. Fafchamps (2004) explores how middlemen can contribute to market failures, such as price instability. He argues that while middlemen help to mediate risk by buying and storing products during harvest times, their speculative behaviour can lead to artificial scarcities and price spikes, destabilising markets and harming consumers.

Bardhan (1980) argues that intermediaries despite exploitative, play an important role in imperfect markets to address gaps such as information asymmetry, high transaction or transportation costs, and limited access to credit. On the other hand, it is also suggested that Inadequate transport, communication networks, and infrastructure, coupled with limited access to market information, constrain farmers' market access and enable rent-seeking by informal buyers, but if farmers' access to transportation is combined with market information, the trade through informal networks can be positive(Negi, Birthal, Roy, & Khan, 2018).

Similarly, Jagwe (2011)'s Dissertation on Intermediaries in Perishable Commodities, studied the presence of intermediaries in banana markets in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda. It highlighted that it is necessary to study the role of intermediaries in perishable commodities in a way that is different from non-perishable staples like grains. The study suggests that the effects of transaction costs are more pronounced in perishables than in non-perishables. He emphasised that there is a need to focus on rural infrastructure improvements, enhancing information access, and supporting farmer groups, which can strengthen the bargaining position of farmers vis-à-vis the middlemen.

Emphasising the role that private sector interventions are needed in addressing the transaction costs, it has been argued that efforts to specifically reduce certain costs should not be managed by the public sector(P. Pingali et al., 2005). Instead, public sector initiatives should focus on providing public goods and implementing institutional reforms to address incomplete or missing markets. It is in this context that we may relook at the role of middlemen, in addressing information asymmetries. Barrett (2008) points out that the high transaction costs affect the farmers' market participation. Reducing these transaction costs and enhancing the institutional and physical infrastructure in terms of transport, storage and increased trader competition, may actually be more important.

In fact, many studies cited above adopting the framework of transaction cost economics, argue that there is presence of the intermediaries in markets characterised by high uncertainty. In such contexts, middlemen facilitate the transactions by using personal relationships and reputation-based enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.

Therefore, with the emergence of New Institutional Economics, and the emphasis on Transaction Costs, including issues of Information Asymmetry, Search Costs, and challenges of trust in uncertain markets, wherein quality challenges and variability of prices, coupled with infrastructural and logistic challenges exist, analysing middlemen's role in the process of sale of farm produce becomes important.

While these have envisaged the functionality of middlemen in agricultural markets, many other studies asserted that, despite their functionality, it is important to ensure that the balance of power is maintained. In fact, Ranjan (2017) suggests that, mechanisms such as cooperatives and greater access to information are to be encouraged. And the power over margins framework suggests that, it is necessary to ensure the bargaining power of farmers is enhanced(Xhoxhi, Pedersen, Lind, & Yazar, 2014). And some studies have highlighted how middlemen's power can be balanced in favour of the farmers. Jensen (2007) and Svensson & Yanagizawa (2009) have highlighted that with access to better price information through ICT and MIS, farmers can mitigate the bargaining power of the middlemen. Further, with limited avenues of storage and

the need to ensure immediate sales, crops like tapioca may rely on middlemen to commercialise the produce, and middlemen come to play a significant role in this aspect. Abebe, Bijman, & Royer (2016), despite using the social-networks framework to explain the reliance on middlemen, highlight that commercialisation is an additional phenomenon explaining the presence of middlemen. Svensson & Drott (2010) further suggest that access to price information can reduce market failures and increase the incomes of the farmers, when relying on middlemen.

Therefore, with the theoretical impetus of the Transaction cost literature, the study tried to understand the presence of middlemen in the Farmer-Processor network in Tapioca in Salem district of Tamil Nadu, and what may be the major factors dominating this reliance. Because tapioca, with its unique features of being a drought-tolerant industrial crop, is poised to be an important crop as climate change becomes a reality. Despite its multiple uses and presence of visible market, the area of cultivating this crop is on the decline which suggests that the issues pertaining to this crop need to be studied in depth(Prakash, Jaganathan, Immanuel, & Sivakumar, 2020). Therefore, with these insights in mind, the study envisaged a framework to study the relevant factors to explain the presence of middlemen.

Data and Methods:

Study Area

Salem district, along with Namakkal, Dharmapuri, and neighbouring areas of Western Tamil Nadu regions, continue to dominate the Tapioca production in India. While Tapioca is mainly produced here, its direct consumption as a vegetable is very limited. Further, it has led to the development of the Agro-industry of Sago, which is the processed form of Tapioca. But the uniqueness of this is that even Sago is scarcely consumed in Tamil Nadu, and its demand is mainly in North India. Hence, studying the role of middlemen in this crop becomes interesting and essential, given that with very limited demand for this crop directly by the local consumer, the role of middlemen in terms of their impact on farmers, and how these farmers, who cannot directly access the North Indian markets nor even the millers who process it, continue to rely on middlemen to market their produce. Further, it has been mentioned in literature that given the absence of direct procurement of the crop and the perishable nature of the commodity, the role of middlemen between the farmers and the millers is still very much prevalent, unlike most of the other perishable commodities, where either of these factors is generally taken care of, either through storage technologies, Farmer markets, or direct consumer markets (Linder et al., 2017).

The primary data for this study were gathered through structured surveys and interviews conducted with 181 tapioca farmers across Salem. The survey was conducted over three months between June, 2024 and August, 2024 to capture

responses affecting tapioca farming and marketing. Farmers were selected using purposive sampling to focus on tapioca farmers, with random selection applied within this group to ensure representation across farm sizes and villages in Salem district. To ensure accuracy and reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample of farmers, and necessary adjustments were made before the final survey. Questionnaire was framed in English and then translated into Tamil and executed to facilitate better communication.

The methodology for this study was designed to explore the factors influencing tapioca farmers' reliance on middlemen in Salem, Tamil Nadu, with an emphasis on the exploratory nature of the research. The pilot study indicated that most farmers relied on middlemen irrespective of socio-economic traits such as income or farm size. This uniformity suggested that socio-economic attributes may not be the primary drivers of their market behaviour. Therefore, the study adopted an exploratory approach to analyse the heterogeneity of factors influencing farmers' decisions. Given the homogeneity of the sample—characterized by small, irrigated farms averaging 3 acres—the Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) approach was selected as it is well-suited for clustering data based on rankings. By focusing on standalone variables such as input credit, labour access, perishability etc., the study aimed to capture the key drivers of reliance on middleman without introducing assumptions about individual-level variability. This methodology enabled the study to uncover distinct patterns in the reliance on middlemen, providing insights into the key factors shaping farmers' decisions and thus provides a foundational understanding of farmer reliance on middlemen.

The exploratory framework was further justified by the limited prior research and lack of any available literature on this specific topic and the inherent complexity of farmer decision-making.

With 90 unique villages in the dataset, the dataset is comprehensive in covering both the western and eastern regions of Salem, though the Sago and Starch industries are more concentrated in the Eastern part of Salem. In the sample, the average area of the farmers under tapioca cultivation was approximately 3.09 acres, with a range from 0.4 acres to 15 acres. Most farmers cultivate tapioca on 2 to 4 acres, suggesting that the crop is typically grown by marginal and small farmers. Further**, t**he total area cultivated by all farmers (including tapioca and other crops) has a mean of 3.59 acres, with a range from 0.4 acres to 15 acres. This indicates that many farmers have a diversified crop base, but tapioca is a significant crop for those involved in its cultivation. Also, it suggests that most of the farmers were small and marginal farmers. Given that literature also tends to suggest that these kinds of farmers rely more heavily on middlemen for commercialisation of their produce and to safeguard themselves from the vagaries of price fluctuations, it would be worthwhile to study how each of these farmers' rank the factors influencing their decisions to rely on middlemen.

In the data, it was revealed that 148 farmers had drip irrigation, 31 farmers relied on bore/well irrigation, and only 2 relied on canal irrigation. There were no rain-fed irrigated farmers. While Salem does have tapioca farmers who relied on rainfall for irrigation, it was just a coincidence that the sample didn't contain any farmers with rain-fed irrigation. But this adds insights into our analysis, given that it is conventionally assumed that farmers who can afford irrigation, and that too costlier forms like drip irrigation, are both more aware, as well as endowed, and would make informed decisions on whom to trade their produce with.

In the sample, 154 farmers relied on mono-cropping and 27 farmers relied on inter-cropping. Additionally, 75 farmer households were living in kutcha houses, 69 in semi-pucca houses, and 37 in pucca houses. In the sample studied, 60 farmers had been cultivating tapioca for less than 5 years, 21 farmers had been cultivating tapioca for 5–10 years, 75 farmers had been cultivating this crop for over 10 years but less than 20 years, and 24 farmers had been cultivating the crop for over 20 years, reflecting that majority of the farmers are experienced in Tapioca cultivation.

While all 181 farmers said that they had a bank account, only 149 farmers had access to smartphones, whereas 157 farmers were registered members of a cooperative society, which reflects that most of these farmers have avenues to access information.

With regards to middlemen, 78 farmers suggested that the middlemen they dealt with were from their own villages, whereas 103 farmers suggested that the middlemen were from outside their villages.

As it can be observed from the above summary, most of the farmers are marginal and small farmers, but are endowed with access to bank accounts as well as smartphones, and also using drip or bore/well irrigation, reflecting that they are more aware.

The above details are summarised in the table as below:

Table 1 Descriptive Summary of Tapioca Farmer Characteristics and Agricultural Practices in Salem

Category	Details
Villages Covered	90 unique villages covering both western and eastern Salem.
Sago Industry	Eastern part of Salem has a higher

Concentration	concentration of Sago and Starch industries.
Tapioca Cultivation Area	Mean: 3.09 acres; Range: 0 - 15 acres. Most farmers cultivate on 2-4 acres.
Total Cultivated Area	Mean: 3.59 acres; Range: 0.4 - 15 acres.
Irrigation Type	Drip: 148 farmers; Bore/Well: 31 farmers; Canal: 2 farmers;
Cropping Type	Mono-cropping: 154 farmers; Inter-cropping: 27 farmers.
Household Type	Kutcha: 75; Semi-pucca: 69; Pucca: 37.
Tapioca Cultivation Years	<5 years: 60 farmers; 5-10 years: 21 farmers; 10-20 years: 75 farmers; >20 years: 24 farmers.
Bank Account Access	All 181 farmers have a bank account.
Smartphone Access	149 farmers have access to smartphones.
Cooperative Society Membership	157 farmers are members of cooperative societies.
Middlemen Proximity	78 farmers: Middlemen from own village; 103 farmers: Middlemen from outside village.

Source: Based on the sample derived from the field study conducted by the Author.

With this brief data description regarding the collected data, let us delve into the methods adopted to analyse the reliance of farmers on middlemen for the sale of

tapioca. Given that the primary objective of this study is to explore and analyse the underlying reasons for farmers' reliance on middlemen in the tapioca trade in Salem, the study adopted advanced statistical techniques such as Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) and clustering to uncover distinct groups of farmers based on their perceptions of key factors influencing their decisions.

While Ordinal Logit Regression can be the model adopted for studies involving data such as Likert-based ranking reasons, but given that this may not be suitable for analysing complex, non-linear relationships, and more so when there are no assumptions regarding independent and dependent variables, NMDS as an alternative can be a suitable framework to understand the underlying factors influencing the reliance on middlemen. As the study is exploratory in nature and the rankings provided by farmers were ordinal, NMDS is particularly suited for analysing such data as it preserves the rank-order relationships of dissimilarities, rather than assuming equal intervals between ranks(Kruskal, 1964).

We adopted the following steps in undertaking the NMDS-based analysis:

Variables Description:

This study utilised a dataset comprising 181 tapioca farmers, each providing ordinal rankings for nine factors influencing their reliance on middlemen. The choice of the factors was driven by both the literature review and a pilot study conducted in the Salem region, through informal interactions with the farmers, processors, and middlemen. The variables included the conventional factors such as input credit, farm inputs, factors such as labour access and firm doesn't buy directly, which were incorporated mainly based on pilot study, and factors based on existing literature such as ease of selling (Abebe et al., 2016)**,** transportation support (Permadi & Winarti, 2018)**,** better return(Pokhrel & Thapa, 2007)**,** perishability (Ranjan, 2017)**,** and price variations (Linder et al., 2017)**.** All the statistical analysis were undertaken through various packages of R.

The variables are tabulated as follows with a brief description:

Table 2: Description of the variables

Variable	Description
Input Credit	Access to Informal Credit from the middlemen
Farm Inputs	Provision of Farm Inputs such as tractors, Fertilisers etc., by the

	middlemen
Labour Access[iii]	Providing Labour services for Harvesting the Tapioca Tubers which is highly labour intensive
Ease of Selling	The Farmers incur search costs in identifying the potential buyers which can be avoided if they continue to sell through middlemen
Transportation Support	Tapioca tubers are to be transported immediately after harvest and this factor becomes important given most of the farmers are small and marginal
Better Return	As the search costs, issues of trust and other transaction costs such as transportation are involved, some farmers rely on middlemen, as they assume they get fair price by selling to them rather than the processors
Firm Doesn't Buy Directly	Most of the farmers are small and cannot produce to the extent that the processing units require. Therefore, Processing units prefer to rely on middlemen playing the role of aggregators and the mutual trust and social relationship between them plays an important role in them buying the crops only through the middlemen

Perishability	Tapioca starch continues to deteriorate as soon as it is harvested, and must reach the processing unit within 24-48 hours, as the farmers' fetch the rates as per point-scale. The Perishability is integral to analyse any horticulture crop.
Price Variations	Vagaries of the price fluctuations of Tapioca, and any other crop, can be an important factor, for relying on middlemen, as they ensure stability.

Source: Based on the sources cited above and the pilot study undertaken in Salem, by the author.

Each factor represented a standalone reason, and farmers were asked to rank them in order of importance, with 1 indicating the most important factor and 9 indicating the least important. The data was cleaned and prepared by ensuring that all rankings were within the valid range (1 to 9). The sample size of 181 farmers ranking their reasons for reliance on middlemen on 9 variables is a fair-enough representation, given that the rule of thumb says that for each variable we require 5–10 samples. NMDS was employed to reduce the nine ranked variables into a two-dimensional space, enabling visual representation of the relative positioning of farmers based on their rankings. But before undertaking this exercise, Gower distance metric was used to calculate dissimilarities between farmers. The dissimilarity matrix was calculated for 181 observations, resulting in a 181 x 181 matrix. This metric is particularly suited for mixed or ordinal data, as it normalises the distances between rankings to ensure that each variable contributes equally to the overall distance. The NMDS analysis was conducted using the R software. The resulting stress value of 0.188 indicated a good fit of the two-dimensional representation, with minimal distortion in the data structure.

Further, the NMDS approach requires us to cluster the data into specific groups to understand the rankings framework better. To group farmers based on their reliance factors, both k-means clustering and hierarchical clustering were applied. Each method offered distinct advantages, ensuring a robust clustering solution. While K-Means clustering ensured that the farmers were grouped by minimising the within-cluster variance, ensuring that individuals within each cluster were as similar as possible based on their rankings, hierarchical clustering provided a complementary approach by identifying nested groupings in the data. The

agglomerative method was used, starting with individual farmers and merging them iteratively based on their similarities. The dendrogram generated through this method facilitated visualisation of the clustering process and helped validate the number of clusters. This was further validated by adopting the Elbow Method and Silhouette Analysis, which suggested a 3-cluster solution to analyse the data. While this was based on visualisation, statistical test Kruskal-Wallis Test also was conducted to validate the differences between clusters and identify significant variables. It revealed that all the variables across clusters were statistically significant. Finally, Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance was conducted using the R software. This method assesses whether the clustering significantly explains variability in the data(Anderson, 2001). However, given its limited use in economic studies, further applications are needed to evaluate its robustness in this context.

In summary, the clustering analysis demonstrated the heterogeneity in farmer priorities, with Market oriented challenges, logistical support and production-related considerations emerging as distinct themes across the three groups. These findings provide a nuanced understanding of farmer needs and offer a foundation for designing cluster-specific interventions to improve market access and overall agricultural outcomes.

Results

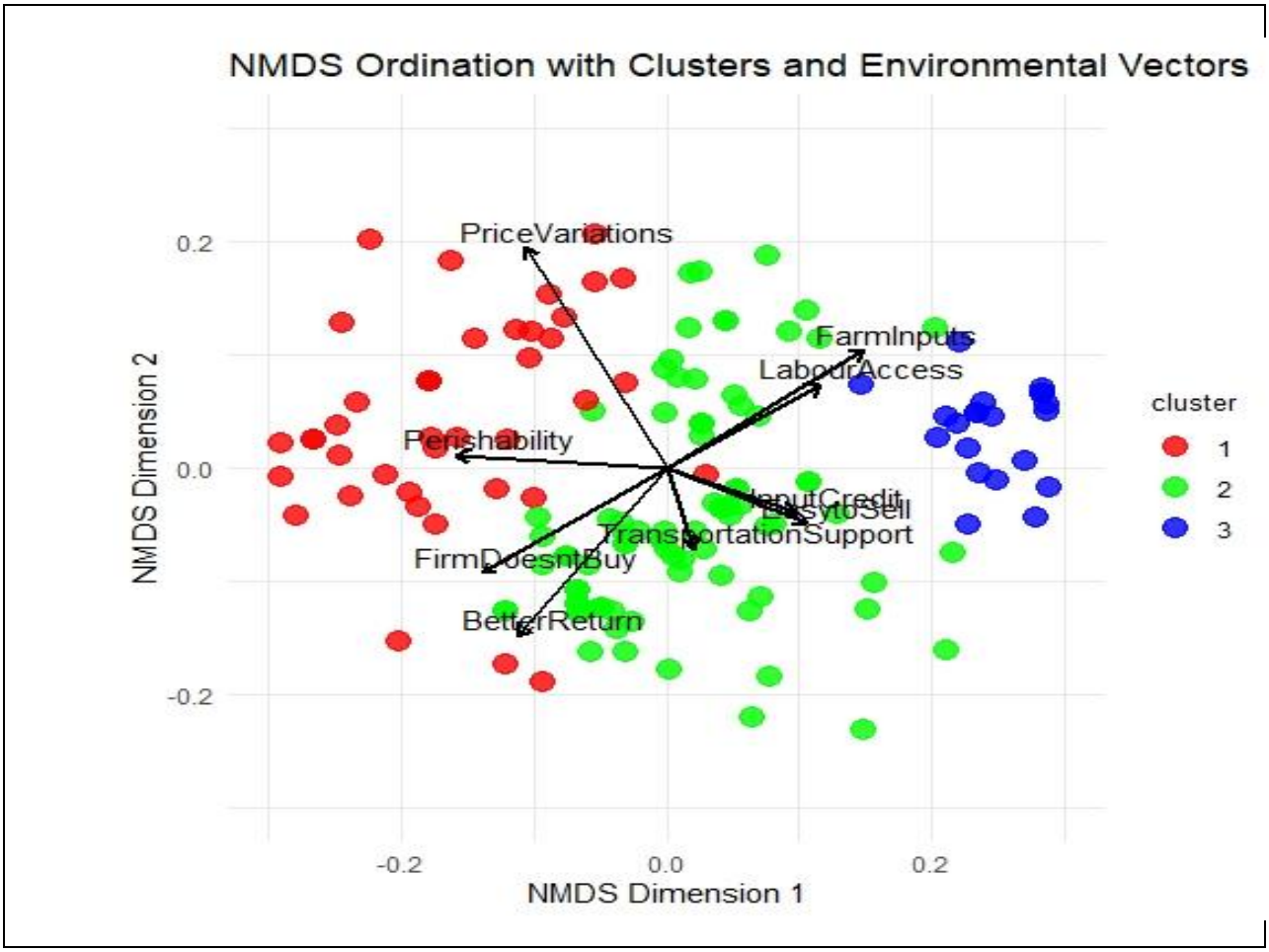
Several visualisation techniques were employed to aid interpretation and communication of results.

1. NMDS Analysis

The Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) analysis revealed distinct clusters of farmers based on their rankings of factors influencing reliance on middlemen. The analysis was performed using the Gower distance metric, ensuring an appropriate treatment of ordinal data. The two-dimensional NMDS solution achieved a stress value of 0.18, indicating a reliable fit for the dataset.

Three clusters were clearly identified, with environmental vectors highlighting the dominant factors influencing each group. It is graphically expressed as follows:

Figure 1 NMDS Ordination Plot with Clusters and Environmental Vectors Depicting Farmer Reliance on Middlemen



Source: Author's calculation from the field data

Cluster 1- Market-Oriented Reliance: Farmers in Cluster 1 exhibited a strong association with market-related factors such as PriceVariations, Perishability, and FirmDoesn'tBuy. These farmers rely heavily on middlemen to mitigate market risks. For instance, fluctuating prices can severely impact their income stability, and middlemen act as intermediaries by providing guaranteed pricing or market access. Similarly, perishability is a significant concern for these farmers, as tapioca is a highly perishable crop. Middlemen facilitate the timely transportation and sale of the produce, reducing potential losses. The issue of "FirmDoesn'tBuy" reflects a lack of direct procurement by the firms making these farmers to depend on middlemen to bridge the gap between their farms and processing units or buyers(Edison et al., 2006). The radar chart and NMDS plot confirm this cluster's reliance on middlemen to manage market uncertainties.

Cluster 2- Logistical and Financial Support: Farmers in Cluster 2 demonstrated a strong alignment with TransportationSupport, InputCredit, and EasytoSell, highlighting a logistical and financial dependency. Farmers in this cluster rely on the services provided by middlemen, particularly in accessing transportation and financial resources. Transportation is a critical factor, as the geographic spread of tapioca farms and the logistical challenges of transporting by themselves often makes it challenging for farmers to transport their produce to markets independently. Middlemen address this logistical gap by organising access to transportation systems. Additionally, input credit provided by middlemen allows farmers to procure essential resources, such as fertilizers and seeds, without the immediate burden of upfront payment. The factor EasytoSell underscores the convenience middlemen provide by streamlining the sale process, ensuring that farmers can commercialise their produce. This operational relationship makes middlemen and this cluster of farmers rely on each other.

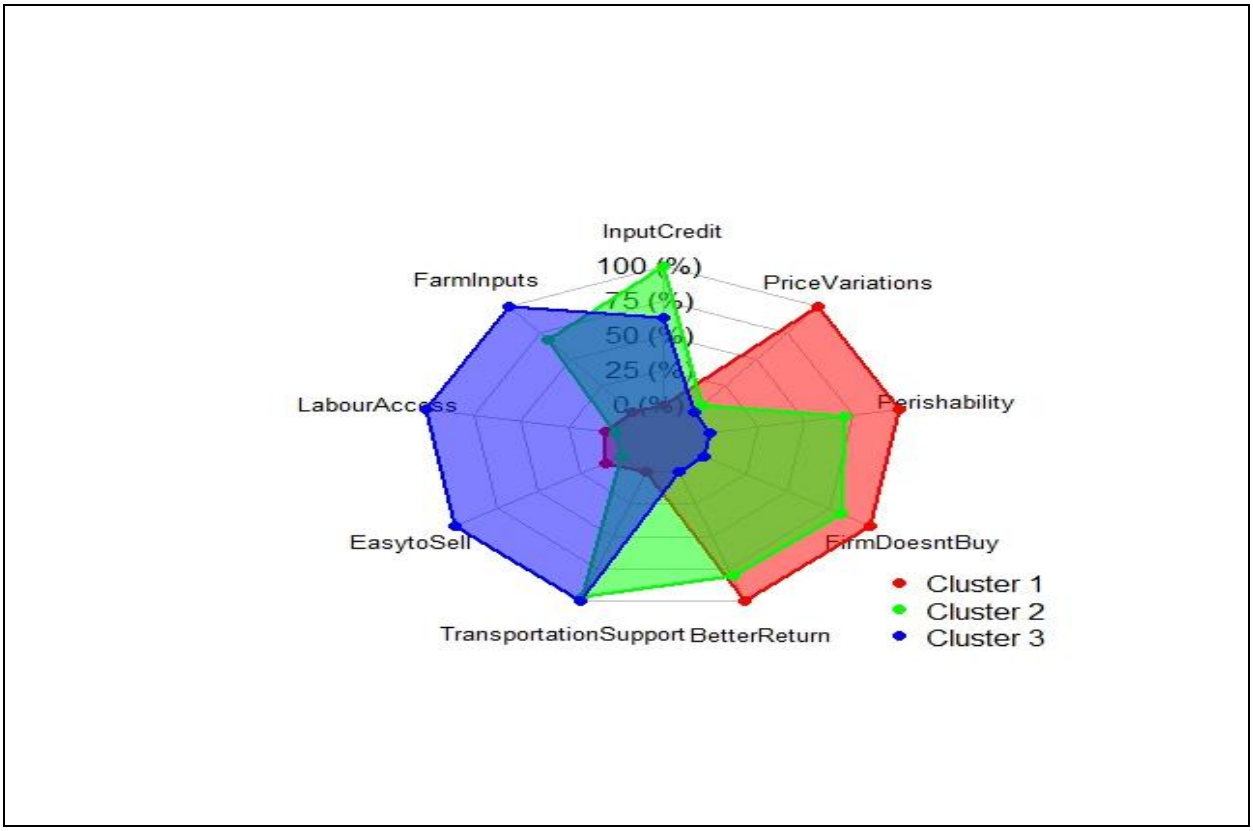
Cluster 3- Production-Oriented Reliance: Farmers in Cluster 3 rely on middlemen for production-oriented factors, such as FarmInputs and LabourAccess. Middlemen in this cluster play the role of ensuring the availability of critical inputs, including high-quality seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural necessities. These resources are often difficult for farmers to access independently, particularly in remote areas. Furthermore, labour shortages are a common challenge faced by these farmers, especially during peak farming periods such as planting and harvesting. Middlemen act as agencies providing farmers with reliable labour sources, thereby ensuring smooth farming operations. This reliance highlights the production-centric dependency of this cluster, where farmers rely on middlemen in production processes. The NMDS and radar chart analyses described below confirm the prominence of these production-oriented factors for Cluster 3, emphasising the role of middlemen in addressing these needs.

Therefore, the NMDS plot visually demonstrated the separation between clusters, with each cluster aligning closely with specific factors. The length and direction of the environmental vectors confirmed the strength of the relationships between the clusters and their dominant factors.

2. Radar Graph Analysis

Radar graphs were used to validate and complement the NMDS findings by visually representing the mean values of the nine factors for each cluster. These graphs provided a holistic comparison of the factors influencing reliance on middlemen across the three clusters.

Figure 2 Radar chart showing the relative importance of factors influencing farmers' reliance on middlemen across three clusters.



Source: Author's calculation from the field data

Cluster 1- Market-Oriented Reliance: Farmers in Cluster 1 exhibited pronounced peaks for PriceVariations, Perishability, and FirmDoesntBuy, confirming the market-oriented reliance identified in the NMDS analysis. The radar graph complements the NMDS results by quantifying the extent of dependency on these factors. Farmers in this cluster clearly prioritise stability in prices and the timely sale of their perishable produce. While NMDS provides a spatial representation of the cluster's alignment with market risks, the radar graph explicitly highlights the proportional importance of each factor, further reinforcing the cluster's characterisation.

Cluster 2- Logistical and Financial Support: Farmers in Cluster 2 displayed strong values for TransportationSupport, InputCredit consistent with their logistical and financial needs. The radar graph highlighted the operational convenience provided by middlemen to this group, visually emphasising the critical support mechanisms offered. While NMDS grouped these farmers spatially closer to logistical factors, the radar graph quantified their reliance on

these factors, showcasing their proportional significance within the cluster. This combined analysis provides a nuanced understanding of their dependency.

Cluster 3- Production-Oriented Reliance: Cluster 3 showed dominant peaks for FarmInputs and LabourAccess reinforcing their production-focused reliance on middlemen. The radar graph validated these farmers' dependency on middlemen for securing inputs and labour resources. The NMDS plot visually depicted their alignment with production-oriented factors, while the radar graph provided a precise representation of the relative weight of these factors. This dual perspective emphasises the role of middlemen in meeting the production needs of this cluster.

The radar graphs effectively quantified the proportional importance of each factor within clusters, offering a detailed perspective that complements the spatial relationships observed in the NMDS plot. The consistent alignment of dominant factors across both methods confirms the robustness of the clustering approach.

3. Integration of NMDS and Radar Graphs

The integration of NMDS and radar graph analyses provides a comprehensive understanding of the reliance patterns among tapioca farmers. NMDS visualised the spatial relationships between clusters and factors, while radar graphs quantified the importance of these factors within each cluster. Together, these methods confirmed:

Cluster 1 is predominantly driven by market-related challenges, emphasising price stability and perishability management.

Cluster 2 relies on logistical and financial support, highlighting the operational role of middlemen.

Cluster 3 depends on production-oriented support, underlining the importance of access to inputs and labour.

The complementary nature of these methods ensures the validity and reliability of the findings, providing actionable insights into the varying dependencies of farmers on middlemen. This integrated approach supports targeted interventions to address the unique needs of each cluster.

The above results clearly show how despite the seemingly homogenous nature of tapioca farmers' as evinced through the sample, the distinct reasons that could be traced for their reliance on middlemen, reflects that heterogeneous factors are at play in the agricultural markets. Therefore, when there are limited studies, and given the need for undertaking crop-specific and area specific studies, the adoption of NMDS, can serve as a foundational method, to explore the relevant factors that impact the agents involved.

Statistical Validation:

While the NMDS plot and radar chart provided valuable insights into the clustering structure and the relative importance of variables across clusters, Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance provided robust statistical validation for the clustering results, confirming the significance and utility of the identified farmer groups. This tool was adopted for our study because it handles multivariate data, non-normal distributions, and provides insights into the overall clustering structure. The analysis revealed that the clusters explained 43.10 percent of the variation in the NMDS data ($R^2 = 0.43103$, $p < 0.001$), capturing a substantial portion of the variability in factors influencing farmers' reliance on middlemen. Moreover, the clustering solution was found to be highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the identified groupings represent meaningful and distinct patterns in farmer behaviour. The pseudo-F statistic ($F = 67.423$) further supports the robustness of the grouping structure.

However, the analysis also highlighted a residual variation of 56.90 percent, suggesting that additional factors beyond the scope of this study may contribute to farmer decision-making. These unexplained influences likely include cultural and historical factors, such as long-standing practices or relationships with middlemen, information asymmetry challenges, and other transaction costs that aren't easily quantifiable, or issues of trust and socio-cultural relationships with the middlemen. This residual variation underscores the complexity of farmer reliance patterns and points to the need for future research to incorporate these additional dimensions.

The findings reinforce the effectiveness of the clustering approach in capturing key differences among farmer groups, while also emphasising the limitations of the current analysis. While the explained variation demonstrates the robustness of the results, the unexplained variation highlights opportunities to further refine the understanding of farmer-middleman dynamics through a broader inclusion of contextual and socio-economic variables in future studies.

Discussion:

The findings of this study align with prior research on farmer decision-making and market access. For instance, Abebe et al., (2016) highlight the role of middlemen in providing essential services while perpetuating inefficiencies in agricultural markets. Similarly, it has been emphasised that logistical and financial constraints often compel farmers to rely on intermediaries(Reddy, Raju, & Bose, 2020). The clustering analysis in this study extends these frameworks by identifying nuanced segments of farmers, enabling a more tailored approach to undertake further policy interventions. Additionally, P. L. Pingali (2012) underscores the importance of understanding smallholder farming systems to design interventions that contributes to sustainable resource management and

innovations. Esteso, Alemany, & Ortiz (2021) explore the role of perishability in shaping market dynamics. These studies validate the priorities identified in our clusters, particularly its focus on perishability management and financial benefits.

Using NMDS, k-means clustering, and robust statistical validations, the study explained 43.10 percent of the variation in the data, highlighting significant differences across clusters. The distinct characteristics of each cluster suggest that even similarly placed farmers have divergent factors for their reliance on middlemen. For farmers in Cluster 1, with their focus on addressing price variations and perishability management, would benefit from easy access to market prices to enjoy better bargaining power and protect against market volatility. Investments in research and development in developing storage technologies and further disseminating such information and encouraging diversifying into other value-added processing facilities from Tapioca could reduce losses due to perishability and price variations, while more information avenues, and access to alternative market channels could enhance bargaining power. For Cluster 2, which emphasises logistical support, targeted subsidies for transportation, such as shared vehicle services or farmer-owned logistics systems, may be recommended. Investments in rural infrastructure, including roads and custom hiring facilities, can further alleviate logistical constraints. Public-private partnerships could also help develop sustainable and scalable transportation networks. Cluster 3, who prioritise production-oriented challenges, labour-sharing schemes or cooperative harvesting initiatives can help reduce dependence on middlemen for labour. Additionally, digital platforms or farmer-producer organisations (FPOs) can facilitate direct market access (Shiferaw, Hellin, & Muricho, 2011), enabling farmers across these clusters to either bypass or strengthen their bargaining power vis-à-vis the intermediaries. Low incomes coupled with higher consumption needs force small farmers into high-interest debt trap. In their analysis on Farm distress in India, Reddy et al., (2020) suggest that there is a need to increase public investment in farm infrastructure, strengthen direct benefit transfer schemes for purchase of inputs, improve institutional credit delivery mechanisms and widen safety nets in rural areas. And further suggest that Farm policies related to encouraging Farmer Producer Organisations and contract farming could potentially increase small farmers bargaining power and scale economies to utilise market opportunities.

The paper tries to study the continued presence of middlemen in agricultural markets and why it may be worthwhile to look at the roles that the intermediaries are performing and make interventions that will make the farmers' bargaining power stronger vis-à-vis the middlemen from Transaction costs perspective. As earlier studies have already highlighted, it is essential to analyse the presence of middlemen and understand the dynamics at play (Ranjan, 2017; Ruben, van Tilburg, Trienekens, & van Boekel, 2007; Singha & Maezawa, 2019; Xhoxhi et al., 2014). It is important to realise the functions being performed and why even though the benefits of selling directly to the processors are greater, the

heterogeneity of factors implies that institutional efforts to make the information less asymmetric, interventions of road infrastructure, research and development to make crop shelf life increase, and efforts to make the space of raw-material procurement more competitive, along with encouraging the processors to directly procure by supporting them with information regarding quality and quantity of crops, and supporting the farmers' groups to form homogeneous organisations to make them more aware and enhance trust among themselves, may help them get better returns.

Finally, the statistical analysis, despite these insights, still leaves 56.90 percent of the variation unexplained, highlighting the complexity of farmer decision-making and the influence of factors beyond the study's scope. Socio-economic variables such as household income, landholding size, and access to credit are likely significant contributors. Cultural and historical influences, including long-standing practices and relationships with middlemen, may also shape farmers' perceptions and behaviours. Further, the bibliometric analysis suggests the elements of "trust" and benefits of transferring risks and costs may explain the continued reliance of farmers on middlemen(Salsa Bila, Fahmi, & Suprehatin, 2022). Future research should explore these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of farmer behaviour.

Conclusion:

With the continuing focus on encouraging transition of farmers from staple crops like paddy and wheat, to more perishable crops like fruits and vegetables, studying the presence of intermediaries becomes important. As the supply-chains become complex and difficult to manoeuvre, small and marginal farmers' will continue to face challenges for commercialisation of their produce. But with access to information and more tailor-specific interventions, to address their issues, farmers can leverage the benefits of rising phenomenon of value-addition based agriculture. But understanding that there will be distinct challenges even in homogenous circumstances is essential if specific policies are to be adopted. This study demonstrates that, even for established industrial crops, which may actually be enjoying integrated supply-chains and enterprising processing industries, there exist challenges for the farmers to reap full benefits. By adopting an exploratory framework, this paper tried to highlight how there are heterogeneity of factors among tapioca farmers in their reliance on middlemen and offers evidence-based recommendations to address their diverse needs. By tailoring interventions to the Market oriented challenges, logistical support and production-related considerations of distinct farmer clusters, stakeholders can improve market efficiency and empower farmers. Further, moving forward, integrating socio-economic and historical and cultural factors into similar studies can yield a more holistic understanding of farmer decision-making. Such research is essential to design sustainable and inclusive agricultural policies that balance the power of all

the players involved in the supply chain all the while fostering the long-term well-being of the farmers.

End Notes

[i] The term 'middlemen' is utilized as a functional descriptor to identify specific intermediary agents within the tapioca supply chain. This nomenclature aligns with standard terminology in agricultural economics and New Institutional Economics (NIE), as well as reflecting the colloquial usage identified during field observations.

[ii] **Sagoserve:** For a detailed understanding of the working of Sagoserve and how the bargaining power of Sago and Starch manufacturers increased, see Dastagiri (2010). This study highlights how cooperative societies like Sagoserve have helped integrate processors and helped in the growth of Sago as an Industrial crop in Salem.

[iii] **Labour Access and Its Role in Reliance on Middlemen:** Labour access was specifically included as a separate variable in this study because, during the pilot study, it was revealed that harvesting tapioca is labour-intensive. With increased migration and high rural wages, the availability of labour has become difficult. Therefore, farmers depend on middlemen, who have a specific set of labourers working for them throughout the year for different crops. The middlemen provide labour services along with transportation. In this arrangement, the middlemen assume the risk of transporting the crop from harvest time until it reaches the processor, for which they are generally compensated by processors through a commission.

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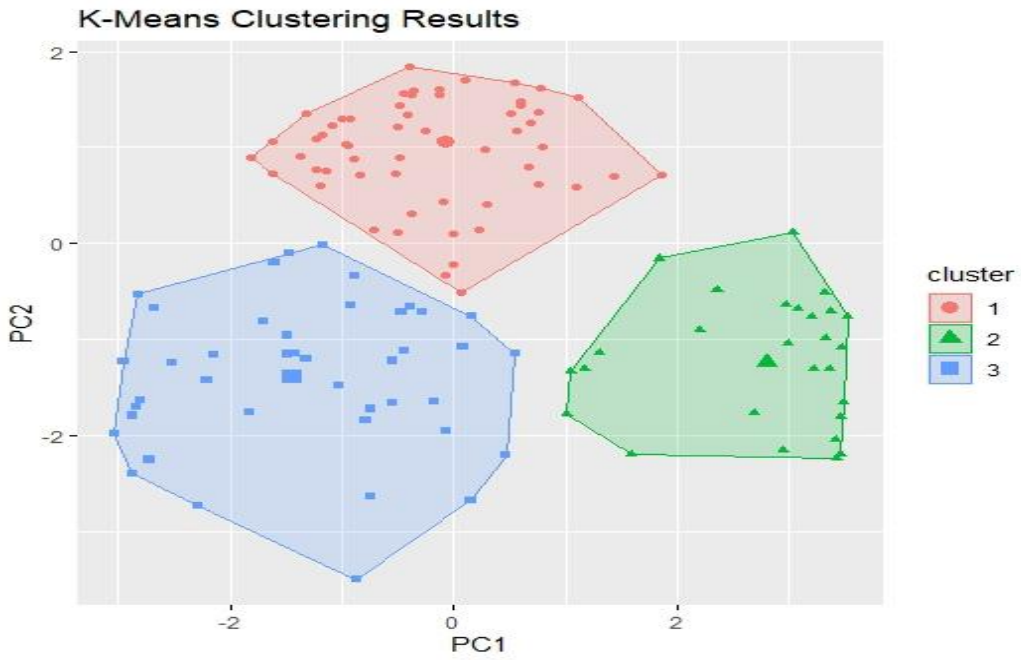
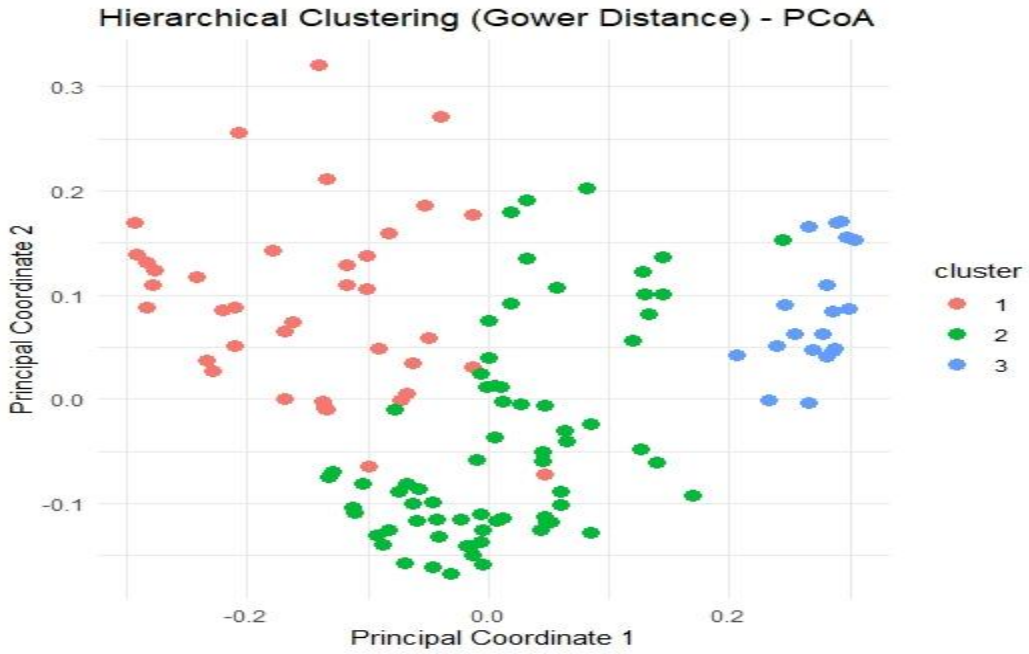
Annexures




Hierarchical Clustering (Gower Distance) - PCoA
Principal Coordinate 2
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0.1
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cluster
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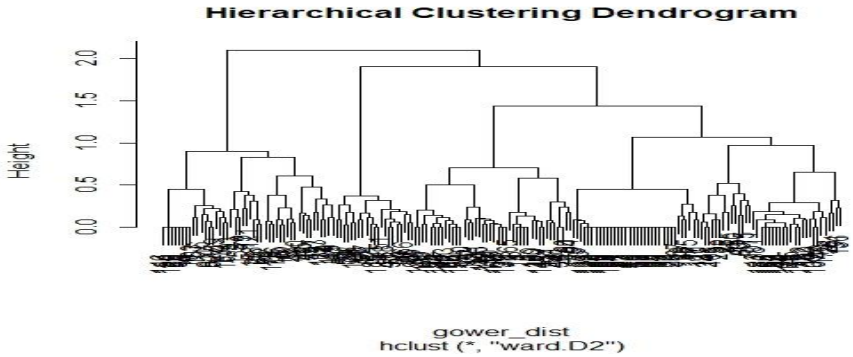
Hierarchical Clustering Dendrogram
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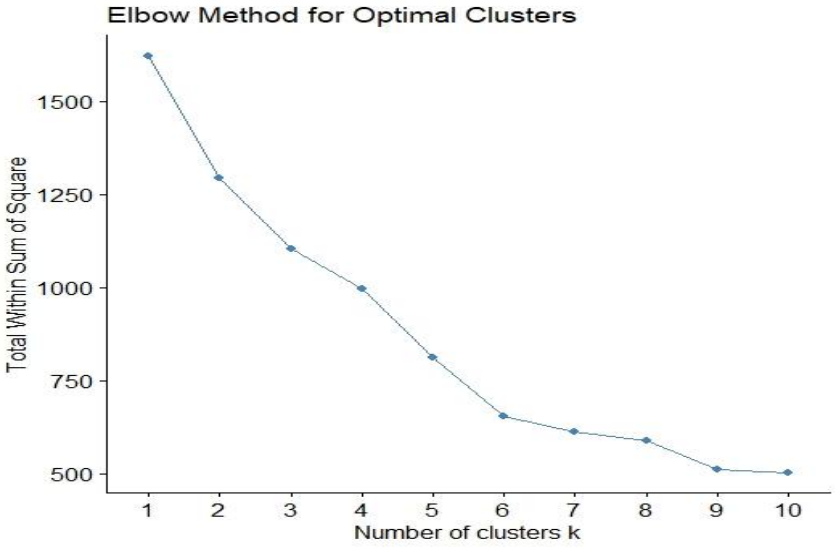
Elbow Method for Optimal Clusters
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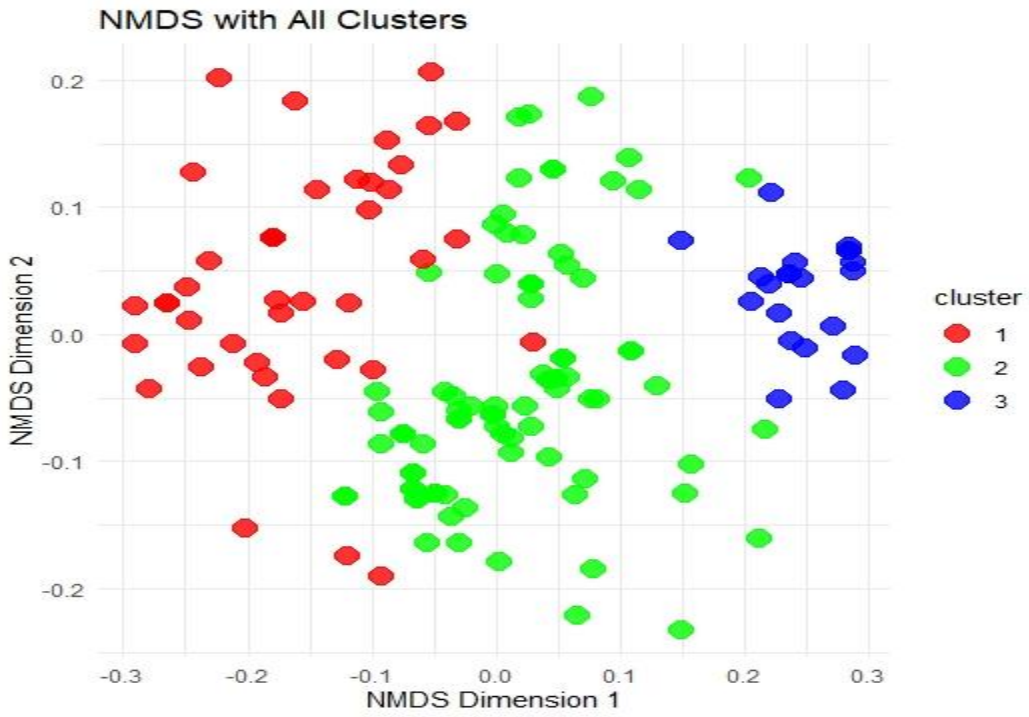
10
Number of clusters k



Summary of Kruskal–Wallis Results:

Factor	Chi-squared	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value	Interpretation
InputCredit	53.20	2	2.809e-12	Significant difference across clusters.
FarmInputs	45.03	2	1.667e-10	Significant difference across clusters.
LabourAccess	53.01	2	3.091e-12	Significant difference across clusters.
EasytoSell	47.92	2	3.932e-11	Significant difference across clusters.
TransportationSupport	28.27	2	7.265e-07	Significant difference across clusters.

BetterReturn	47.66	2	4.483e-11	Significant difference across clusters.
FirmDoesntBuy	63.98	2	1.28e-14	Significant difference across clusters.
Perishability	62.76	2	2.354e-14	Significant difference across clusters.
PriceVariations	91.17	2	< 2.2e-16	Significant difference across clusters.

Key Takeaways:

- **All factors** show a **p-value < 0.05**, indicating significant differences across the three clusters for every factor analysed.
- Factors like **PriceVariations** ($\chi 2=91.17\backslash chi^2 = 91.17\chi 2=91.17$), **FirmDoesntBuy** ($\chi 2=63.98\backslash chi^2 = 63.98\chi 2=63.98$), and **Perishability** ($\chi 2=62.76\backslash chi^2 = 62.76\chi 2=62.76$) show particularly strong evidence of differences between clusters.

Summary of PERMANOVA results:

Source	**Df**	**Sum of Squares**	**R^2**	**Pseudo-F**	**p-value**
Model	2	4.2725	0.43103	67.423	0.001 ***
Residual	178	5.6398	0.56897	—	—
Total	180	9.9123	1.00000	—	—

- The p-value column explicitly marks significance (*** indicates $p < 0.001$)

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this paper are strictly personal and do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the Government of India or the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Reflective Essay: Exploration of the Digital World through Virtual Sociology

Author: Sonali Wakharde

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Exploration of the Digital World through Virtual Sociology

--Sonali Wakharde

Abstract

Virtual world is an interactive, informative and global space. It provides an online platform for users to communicate, learn and explore. Students are actively engaged in the virtual world and using social media to gain knowledge and academic exposure. Nowadays a wide variety of specialized courses are available on various virtual platforms. Academicians and scholars are creating online content for such forums. These courses are designed with a multidisciplinary approach. Hence students from diverse disciplines are able to use various virtual modes of knowledge for learning. The course Digital Sociology or Virtual Sociology studies human interactions and relations on virtual platforms. This course provides an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of various social dimensions of the virtual world by applying different sociological perspectives, conceptual and theoretical frameworks. It also develops a critical thought on changing social structure, human interactions and online learning process through information and communication technologies.

Keywords *– Virtual Sociology, Social Media, Information and Communication Technology.*

Introduction

Students from rural areas and underprivileged sections of society often come to cities in the hope of accessing better education. Yet they continue to face significant difficulties that make their academic growth less significant as compared to the other students. It is observed that in the classroom students from backward regions are facing difficulties in academics due to lack of awareness of online learning tools. Access to digital tools and technology is a major challenge for these students. In addition to this, even when resources and opportunities are technically available, these students lack the training and guidance needed to use them efficiently. Many times students are unaware of these resources and opportunities being offered to them. For example, tools like online journals, online lecture series, podcasts, recorded videos or published materials could greatly support their learning but without digital literacy, proper mentorship and exposure, these benefits remain out of their reach. As a result, they fall behind their peers who have been familiar with all such resources for years. Poor financial conditions, language barriers, lack of technological advancement and limited social networks further widen the gap. It prevents these students from fully utilizing the educational advantages that cities offer. Hence access to digital tools needs to be paired with awareness, training and support systems to empower these students and build their confidence.

Virtual Sociology is a sub discipline of sociology that introduces students to the multiple virtual avenues of sociological discourse. The learners can develop expertise in using virtual media for academic engagements. It enriches learning and research with the use of various online platforms. Such platforms help students to gain new insights into the sociology. Students can perform better in academics with the use of online learning platforms. The New Education Policy (2020) emphasizes on online and digital education. It encourages institutions to adopt flipped classrooms and blended learning. Many universities are offering online learning courses. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are being offered on the SWAYAM platform. A course on 'Digital Sociology' is also available on the SWAYAM platform. The New Education Policy (2020) also introduced a new credit framework for UG and PG programs in Universities. This new framework integrates two credit courses in all post graduate programs. These two credit courses focus on an interdisciplinary approach. It provides an opportunity to all disciplines to offer a multidisciplinary subject. Such subjects are designed to be complementary to the major discipline and provide basic skills and foundational knowledge about a specific subject. It encourages students to broaden their understanding beyond their main subjects and involve them into interdisciplinary fields. The Department of Sociology at University of Mumbai has a two credit course on 'Virtual Sociology' under NEP (2020) syllabus. This course uses virtual media for sociological engagement. It studies various virtual platforms of sociology to understand changing society. It studies human behavior and communication in the digital world. This has enabled the students to gain knowledge from national and international domains of Sociology and provided them the exposure to prominent scholars' writings and lectures.

The knowledge of Sociology has a great value in understanding human life. There are various online platforms available from different parts of the world to enhance our understanding of Sociology. Virtual Sociology is a very relevant course to explore modern complex society. This paper aims to highlight the significance of Digital Sociology to enhance the learning ability of students from marginal locations. It also provides an analytical framework to make sense of social issues in the real and virtual world.

Virtual Sociology: A sub discipline of Sociology

Sociology is an interdisciplinary subject in nature. It is interconnected with various disciplines like Anthropology, History, Social Work, Political Science, Economic, Philosophy, Psychology etc. It cannot be studied in isolation as it always intersects with other fields and uses concepts, theories and methods from other disciplines. This interdisciplinary nature and approach of sociology allows its subfields to connect with other disciplines. Hence 'Virtual Sociology' as a sub discipline of sociology became relevant to students from all disciplines. Virtual Sociology studies human actions, relations and communications on virtual platforms. This subject gives an understanding of how digital technologies are changing human interactions and behavior. This is an attempt to develop an overall understanding of virtual reality. Virtual Sociology investigates how humans interact and behave in an online space. This discipline studies social phenomena within the online/ virtual world and digital

environment. This new field of study tries to explore how virtual communities are formed. Virtual Sociology gives an opportunity to study structure and function of the virtual world and its impact on human life. This new branch of sociology aims to assess online interactions on social media through digital tools and examine its impact on human life. Hence it is considered as a unique course which is introduced with an interdisciplinary approach in Social Sciences.

Virtual Society

Digital technologies have transformed the fundamental aspects of human social life. Human actions, relations and interactions are influenced by virtual space. Students need to examine how digital technologies impact our everyday life, how human interactions and social environments are influenced by the virtual world. Nowadays social reality is constructed through virtual media. Virtual interactions create a new virtual reality. This reality influences our political opinions, activism, religious sentiments, and sensitivity towards caste, class, gender and racial identities. Online space and social media is a new way of understanding the social world. Social media plays a very important role in shaping human relationships. Every aspect of human life, individual identities and socio-cultural dynamics are shaped by virtual reality. Humans are creating and maintaining virtual communities for communication through social media.

Steve Woolger explained five rules of virtuality in his book on 'Virtual Society? Technology, Cyberbole, Reality'. According to him the first rule is 'the uptake and use of the new technologies depends crucially on local social context.' Second rule states 'the fear and risks associated with new technologies are unevenly socially distributed.' Third rule is 'virtual technologies supplement rather than substitute for real activities.' Fourth rule states 'the more virtual the more real.' It means more use of new technologies can stimulate more real activities. And the fifth rule is 'the more global the more local.' It shows how the global identities and communications are depending on local settings. (Woolger, 2009, p. 13-19) People interact with each other through digital networks crossing geographical, physical and political boundaries. Even though the virtual world is a digital tool to form virtual communities it cannot be disconnected from the real world.

Virtual Platforms for exploring sociological knowledge

There are multiple social networking services and software platforms available for students to form virtual communities and learn online such as educational websites, emails and SMS services, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc. Students can use multiple modes of communication such as text messages, posts, audios, videos, sharing reels, memes, podcasts, photos, chats, news, interviews, live interaction, discussions, lectures, PPT presentation, Google drives, poetry, dance, drama, short films, movies, documents and archives, documentaries, stories, games, quiz and puzzles, competitions, shows, animations, live telecast etc.

There are many online platforms available for students to gain knowledge of Sociology such as webinars, online journals, sociological blogs, online lecture series, sociological podcast series. The International Sociological Association initiated a series 'Sociology in Podcast' on International Sociological Association's YouTube channel. This series is created to discuss sociological matters. There are various sociological blogs to explore people's personal insights and ideas. Anyone can record their personal experiences, opinions and thoughts and put it on the internet for other people to read. It is an open online source for people to share their everyday life, personal reflection and comments on personal and social issues. Such blogs are creating a new space for sociological imagination. It makes the knowledge of Sociology accessible to a larger audience. Another example is the 'Doing Sociology' blog which is an academic sociological e –resource started and managed by a team of researchers. It is an independent, non-funded, primarily women -led digital resource. It included archives on themes like Gender, Caste, Religion, Media, Education, Urban and Ethnography. The blog 'Doing Sociology' shares content related to sociological matters and interviews and lectures of eminent scholars. Similarly, 'The Everyday Sociology' blog also covers a wide range of sociological topics and social phenomena. This site provides information about the current events and gives sociological analysis of it.

Impact of Virtual World

Online platforms are widely used by students who have the access to upgraded tools and knowledge of these resources. Students are widely using the internet facilities, websites, computer multimedia, graphics, animation, games, apps, software, programming, text, sound, still photography, CD-ROMS, DVD etc. but are not aware about their impacts on the everyday lives of students. They are blindly relying on the existing free content available online and exploiting various online tools using AI like ChatGPT. Instead of using their skills, capabilities and creative ideas, they are replicating the online stuff and information provided by the internet. Students are experiencing their life with computerized, networked information and communication technologies but are unaware about the fact that the new media has created a new virtual reality for all. Human life is affected by the growth of new electronic information and communication technologies and is experiencing radical changes in socio-cultural, economic and political discourse. It influences various existing activities such as learning, training, education, working, shopping, banking, governance, medicine, marketing, business, global network etc. New technology is always associated with new opportunities and multiple challenges to the existing human life.

When people interact on digital platforms they form networks and share their interests, ideas, values and goals with their virtual communities. It shapes people's narratives on social events. Sometimes it creates hate traits and sometimes integration in the society. Humans are experiencing both conflict and unity in the virtual world. Nowadays digital tools are used for converting physical protests into a global movement. Social media activism became a new social phenomenon in human life. It is used for collective action and mobilization. It has become a very powerful tool of

communication to solve social problems and bring change in the society. Digital activism has the power to create pressure on the government and society to bring changes in any policies, social practices or conditions. Arab Spring (2011), Occupy Wall Street (2011), Black Lives Matters (2013), Ice Bucket Challenge (2014) are a few examples of media activism. Digital activism and Hash tag movements have increased on social media. The #MeToo movement has shown solidarity for women who experienced sexual harassment. It uplifted women's voices against sexual assaults by sharing experiences of sexual violence.

Manuel Castells work on 'The Network Society'

The rise of internet network has transformed human life, social relations, economy, work culture, education and governance. Today, people are organized according to the social media and internet network. Human social interactions are shaped by networks. The Network society connects technology to economy, state power and society. It emphasizes more on individuals than social institutions and agencies.

A Spanish Sociologist Manuel Castells studied the social, political and economic implications of networked technologies. He has written on the rise of network society in his book titled 'The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture '. He mentioned, "A technological revolution, centered around information technologies, began to reshape, at accelerated pace, the material basis of society. Economies throughout the world have become globally interdependent, introducing a new form of relationship between economy, state, and society, in a system of variable geometry." (Castells, 2010, p. 1) Network society is a social structure created with new technologies. "A network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (Castells, 2004, p. 3) The Network society has transformed culture, work and governance in modern times. Network societies experience socio-cultural, economic and political changes due to use of networked digital information and communication technologies. They show an economic shift from industrial production to a knowledge economy. The new economic system is known as informational capitalism. Globalization and networks are two important components of the informational economy.

Sociological analysis of virtual mode of knowledge production

Technology is material culture as it is a digital and web based platform for communication. Carrigan and Fatsis mentioned, "For many readers, the phrase 'sociology and its platforms' will immediately bring to mind images of blogs, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds through which sociologists engage with audiences beyond the traditional venues of conferences and scholarly journals. However, the thrust of our argument has been that we misunderstand such contemporary activity unless we consider it alongside the analogue platforms through which sociology has sought a relationship with a public." (Carrigan, M. & Fatsis, L.,2021, p.79). It highlights a 'position' from which sociologists are communicating. They further mentioned, "Sociology has always relied on platforms for sociologists to

communicate, even if these depend on a legacy infrastructure of scholarly publishing (monographs, edited books, journals and so on) so familiar as to fade into the background for most of us." (Carrigan, M. & Fatsis, L.,2021, p.80) Sociologists need to critically evaluate this materiality. Which group of scholars and sociologists are facilitated by such online platforms and infrastructures? Who delivers arguments, ideas and narrations by using new technological communication? What is transferred through the online published knowledge? The use of social media is constantly expanding but these questions need to be addressed. Earlier online platforms and real life could be separated but now digital form of interactions has covered every aspect of human social life. Hence it is very difficult to disintegrate online and offline interactions in everyday life.

Conclusion

Virtual Sociology is trying to understand the social shift from face to face interaction to technology based mediated communication. It raises important questions related to social equality and inclusivity. Are these online learning platforms and digital tools available, accessible and affordable to all students? If students are equipped with digital technologies, how responsibly are they using it in their life and studies? How are human relations, behaviours and communications influenced by virtual space? What are the impacts of digital technologies on human life, social environment and knowledge production? Academicians, scholars, students and learners have to look at the ethical implications of digital technologies in shaping human social life, knowledge domain, research field and political discourse. Sociological research consistently provides scientific explanations for social issues in real life and now it attempts to explore the digital world to understand the new emerging social phenomena in virtual space.

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Book Review: The Deras: Culture, Diversity and Politics

Author: Shrestha Bandopadhyay

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Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967-1975)

Mallarika Sinha Roy

--Shrestha Bandopadhyay

Reading Mallarika Sinha Roy's critical feminist analyses of the Naxalbari peasant uprising published by Routledge in 2010 in the aftermath of the widely publicized and discussed involvement of women in the recent anti-farm bill protests from August 2020 to December 2021 in India, provides a much-needed glimpse into the history of women's active political participation in social movements in this country. It is a refreshing take on history and rings a timely reminder to all to not fall into the trap of accepting what she terms "dominant narratives" just because they are often repeated.

Dr. Mallarika Sinha Roy is a well-acclaimed academician and author. She currently is a part of the Center for Women's Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Her areas of specialization include Social Movement Studies; Gender and Political Violence; History and Politics of South Asia; Oral History and Ethnography. In this book *"Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967-1975)*", published in 2010 by Routledge, she delves into the missing voices of women and their experience within the context of radical left peasant uprising that took place in Naxalbari and adjoining areas in West Bengal in 1967 and continued till 1975.

Roy at the outset spells out clearly how she came to discuss the unattended gender dimension. While trying to gather information about the movement from archival documents, academic history and myths perpetuated through 'adda' or conversations, she was bothered by the singular absence of women's voices. She questions "*were all activists men? .... where were women?*" (p 2). In this book she has used an amalgamation of varied sources like oral narratives, archival documents, autobiographies and creative literature and films. The area of her research is primarily located in the Duars-Terai region of North Bengal and the Birbhum district of South Bengal.

The book is arranged into seven neat chapters along with a brief preface and epilogue. The chapters follow a thematic organization, where she begins with a brief history and background to the overall movement and then moves on to the need to re-read through the looking glass of gender. While the initial and concluding chapters draw on the reasons to engage in such a quest and refer to the broader social environment around the uprising, the central chapters deal primarily with her own findings and the arguments she wishes to make in terms of a gender re-reading.

Even before delving into the introduction, she puts forth the rationale behind choosing the words 'magic moments' for her title. They are an English translation

of what one of her participants describe as "*Ashchorjyo somoy*" and refers to these 'magic moments' as the time when she felt like a living breathing human being. Roy writes magic which generally has an evasive element contradicts the predictability of history and hence becomes apt to describe the brief, complex, unexplored moments of emancipation weaved in with "*moments of nightmare*" or hellish violence and patriarchal domination, in the lives of women Naxalites.

Roy begins the book by talking about the gaps in existing literature around the movement and the urgent need to debunk the curious silence surrounding women's participation. She gives a brief, crisp historical outline of the movement and the international conditions that inspired it like the Chinese revolution and also internal movements like the Tebhaga Andolan etc. She briefly charts all the necessary and distinguishing features of Naxalbari like the violence associated, the ideological impulse and the later impacts of the movement. Before taking up each theme in greater detail in her following chapter, she carefully narrates her aspirations through this retelling, she brings the idea of intersectionality into the projects, and argues for the need of recognition not only between men and women in the movement but also different women, whose experiences have been shaped by the myriad caste, class, regional locations they come from. Instead of homogenization, the need to recognize and highlight differences is reiterated time and again throughout the book. The question of difference also permeates her critical distinction between the idealized 'bhadramohila' of the nationalist reformist ideology and the actual bodies and experiences of the 'real' women. The disjunction between the two and the subtle play of patriarchy through it all is called to attention.

Through her painstakingly detailed examination of existing literature around the uprising, Roy clearly demonstrates how the ideal typical figure of the Naxalite protagonist, or the 'comrade' has always tended to be male, and that this manliness has hardly ever been questioned or noticed. Alongside the 'new woman' she also emphasizes the need to look at the 'new patriarchy' that had emerged through the nationalist discourse and the subsequent blending of this '*bhadralok*' middle class ideology into the Naxalite vision of the 'new man', the ideal revolutionary.

In her analysis, she swiftly shifts from the dominant narrative to the unheard marginalized voices and adeptly brings out the discrepancies between the dominant, widely held view of women and sexuality and the actual, on ground, widely diverse experiences of women themselves. While discussing the different evaluations of women and men's work even within the movement, she highlights how despite being crucial to the continuation of the movement especially at the face of state sponsored terror, women were hardly ever recognized as equal participants, the class obsession of the communist leaders made them subsume gender so much within the struggle against class that they lost sight of even that which was plainly visible. Alongside class, the intermixing of caste and sexuality and the prevalent moral codes both of the times and of the party with the question

of gender and work provide a nuanced picture of the multiple lines of oppression and marginalization that were operating.

One of the most interesting and important contributions of the book is perhaps the cogent portrayal of the impact of location on one's identity, self-hood and consequently politics. By placing the dominant Calcutta narrative against the "*mofussil*", Roy brought out the intricacies of the influence of regional identity on the lives of the Naxalites and the dominant discourse that was subsequently formed and perpetuated.

Her deciphering of 'silences' perhaps shows this in the clearest way, where she argues for on one hand for those who have been silenced by history and on the other for those who have chosen silence itself as resistance, as rebellion against the rebellion.

As she mentions in the introduction itself, her task is neither to narrate a description of events, nor to portray men as the great enemy, she wants to portray the 'male other' without discrediting him and by situating him within the broader context. In her analysis of violence and its markers, while discussing the female body and the politics of violence associated with it, she also gives accounts of sexual violence inflicted on male bodies while also critically examining the negotiations the male morality went through in relation to this.

Through her extremely well researched and lucid prose, Mallarika Sinha Roy brings out the living breathing woman Naxalite while not reducing her to the stereotypical figure of the third world woman victim. She allows the silences present in history to speak up in multiple, often contradictory voices. Her supplementation of the narrative with pieces of transcript from interviews help preserve the lucidity and clarity of the text. Her clear spelling out of the methodology adopted and the reasons behind it along with the dilemmas she faced adds to her credibility and brings out her sensitive and empathetic approach to the research.

While the text with its initial long and detailed overview of past literature and methodology might deter an inexperienced reader from pursuing it any further, the arguments put forth by the author are definitely worth the effort. Roy's re-articulation of Naxalite politics helps not only situate women within it, but to situate multiple women in multiple spaces within the movement. By pointing to its links and impacts on broader international contexts, the book also invites further exploration along these lines. This book definitely remains an important read for all those interested in debunking the simplistic illusions of dominant narratives and engaging in complex and as Roy calls it, '*magical*' realities of lived experiences.

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Book Review: Sociology of Infrastructure

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Sociology of Infrastructure. Sandeep Gupta and Suraj Beri (eds). New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2026. pp. 224. ISBN: 978-81-316-1487-7. ₹1395.

--Reshma Samal

The edited volume under consideration is based on the idea of the social shaping of infrastructure, with a special focus on Northeast India. While emphasising issues of connectivity, digital technology, environmental crisis, healthcare infrastructure, and regional inequalities, the volume makes an important contribution to the sociological study of infrastructures in the region. The sociology of infrastructure is a relatively recent and emerging discipline in contemporary sociological research. It is important because it shifts attention from seeing infrastructure as merely a technical or physical entity to understanding it as a social phenomenon shaped by social, cultural and political aspects. This perspective helps us understand that infrastructure is not neutral but plays a crucial role in tailoring access to and use of resources, governance structures, and the power dynamics involved in its construction. In this context, infrastructural studies are particularly important in the northeastern regions, where access, distribution, and development remain uneven.

Three key arguments emerge from the book. First, it argues that infrastructures are not neutral technical entities but are deeply embedded in socio-cultural processes. Second, it shows how infrastructure produces and reproduces inequalities through its design and implementation. Third, the volume demonstrates how infrastructure has become a space for democratic negotiation and political contestation between the state and communities across Northeast India (p. 16). While these debates are not entirely new and have been discussed by several scholars in the context of emerging digital technologies and artificial intelligence (p. 18), this volume demonstrates how infrastructural politics and developmental issues shape the infrastructures across borderland regions. What distinguishes this volume from earlier works is its compilation of several empirical studies from across Northeast India with a particular focus on infrastructural development and its challenges. In doing so, it addresses different aspects of infrastructure that have received limited attention in the existing literature and highlights the different ways in which infrastructure is designed, experienced, and negotiated across regions and communities.

The book is divided into five broad sections comprising fifteen chapters. Each section contributes to the broader idea that infrastructure should be understood as a social phenomenon. The first section explores the concept of infrastructure and its socio-cultural dimensions. The second section examines the interplay among media, space, and digital infrastructure. The third section brings together studies on digital technologies and their roles in shaping the educational and payment systems. The fourth section addresses development projects and their political and environmental implications. The final section

focuses on health and social infrastructure, highlighting issues of accessibility, inequality, and everyday negotiations.

In the introductory chapter, Suraj Beri and Sandeep Gupta outline the conceptual framework of the sociology of infrastructure with particular reference to Northeast India. Infrastructure should not be perceived as a neutral entity but as a social phenomenon embedded in cultural, economic, and political processes is the main argument of the chapter. Drawing on empirical insights, the editors highlight how infrastructural projects can produce inequalities and intensify existing digital divides, while appearing differently across specific local contexts.

In the first section, Viliebeinuo Medom examines the socio-political dimensions of infrastructural development through an ethnographic study of roads in Nagaland. She argues that infrastructure is not merely a physical entity but a negotiated space shaped by interactions among political actors, contractors, and local communities (p.39). In the following chapter, Pamei explores how infrastructural designs among the Rongmei community in Manipur embody cultural meanings and reflect the community's social life (p.55). However, the discussion places greater emphasis on cultural symbolism while giving comparatively less attention to the social and mythological dimensions of house construction. Limasenla Jamir further highlights how indigenous architectural knowledge supports cultural identity and environmentally sustainable, climate-adaptive building practices, demonstrating the coexistence of modernisation and cultural continuity.

In the second section, a set of articles examines the increasing role of digital technologies in shaping political discourse and social movements in Northeast India. Priyanka Das critically analyses how digital media and OTT platforms such as Netflix and Amazon have become important sites for representing the socio-spatial realities of the region. Talikaba Ao and Arjun Das explore the role of digital media in social movements in Nagaland, showing how platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook help mobilise public opinion, raise awareness, and amplify marginalised voices. However, the discussion could have been strengthened by engaging more deeply with the existing literature on social movements in the Indian and Northeastern contexts.

In the third section, Nayanmoni Dewraja focuses on the importance of digital literacy in addressing the growing problem of cybercrime, particularly among vulnerable populations in Assam. Using the Chabukdhara region as a case study, the chapter shows how awareness of digital tools and online safety can help individuals navigate cyber fraud and the challenges associated with internet use. The following chapter by Wapangsungla Longkumer discusses the challenges and opportunities associated with the adoption of digital payment systems among street vendors in Kohima. Similarly, Vikhoto Richa and Athungo Ovung underscore the growing role of ICT in shaping educational practices in Nagaland. Drawing on Bronisław Malinowski's "Theory of Needs," the chapter shows that the adoption of ICT tools helps fulfil social and educational needs by improving access to information,

efficiency, and communication. Scholars working on ICT and Education would benefit from this piece of work.

In the fourth section, Annu Yudik examines the conflicts and resistance surrounding the Subansiri Hydroelectric Project in Assam, showing how large development projects generate environmental risks and provoke collective resistance from local communities, scientists, and civil society organisations. This also resonates with the critique of large infrastructural projects by Jane Jacobs, where such developments often disrupt the social lives of local communities. Nisha Kujur discusses how infrastructural conditions shape the living conditions and long-term socio-economic well-being of tea plantation workers in the Terai region of North Bengal (p.160).

There are a few interesting articles in the fifth section that focus on health and social infrastructure, examining the challenges of healthcare access among marginalised communities in Northeast India. In their paper, Zujanbeni M. Lotha and Suraj Beri critically analyse the condition of healthcare infrastructure in a rural Primary Health Centre in Longleng district through a case study of Buranamsang village. Due to inadequate infrastructure in public health centres, villagers often rely on a set of public PHCs, private practitioners, and traditional healers for treatment. Shivangi Rajkhowa seeks to draw our attention to the role of mobile “boat clinics” in delivering medical services to the char communities of Dhubri district, showing how infrastructural limitations and bureaucratic state interventions restrict access to essential healthcare and reinforce existing inequalities. Similarly, Judith Huidina and Srikanth Yamsani examine healthcare accessibility and utilisation among the Maram Naga community, a PVTG in Nagaland, showing how socio-cultural and spatial factors shape their health-seeking behaviour. Taken together, these chapters underscore the complex and multidimensional nature of infrastructure.

The volume has certain limitations. One persistent shortcoming is the limited engagement with theory across several chapters, which reduces the analytical strength of the work. Except for two or three chapters, many contributions do not engage sufficiently with theory to interpret the empirical data they have. Critical engagement with theoretical perspectives, such as those of Langdon Winner and Jane Jacobs, which highlight the political nature of infrastructure and critique of large infrastructural projects, would have further strengthened the analysis. In addition, some studies rely on small sample sizes or single-case studies, such as focusing on one village, one district, or a small number of respondents, which limits the broader applicability of their findings. A more comprehensive comparative analysis across regions could have further deepened the volume's analytical depth. Furthermore, a few chapters do not clearly explain their research methods, particularly the tools used for data collection and the methods of analysis. This lack of methodological clarity may make it difficult for readers and researchers to fully understand how the data was gathered and interpreted.

Despite these limitations, the edited volume makes important sociological contributions to contemporary debates on infrastructure in India and shapes new discourses by bringing together diverse empirical studies from Northeast India, a region that has often remained underrepresented in mainstream academic discourse. The chapters are largely based on fieldwork results, case studies, and analysis of existing literature, which provides detailed ground-level insights into the lives of marginalised communities in the region. By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, the volume deepens our understanding of the relationship between infrastructure, society, and governance. The book will be particularly useful for students, researchers, and scholars working on Northeast India, development studies, Socio-Spatial Studies, Science, Technology, and Society Studies, and Sociology, as well as for policymakers and practitioners interested in addressing infrastructure challenges in the region.

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Book Review: Decoding Ambedkar: Ideas of Nation and Nation Building by Vivek Kumar

Author: Ravi K. Bharmouri

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Decoding Ambedkar: Ideas of Nation and Nation Building by Vivek Kumar (Manohar Publications, 2024)

--Ravi Bharmouri

There is ample work on B. R. Ambedkar's ideas on caste, Buddhism, economics, constitutional law, and religious studies. Ambedkar emerged as one of the leading constitutional thinkers, a social reformer and advocate for equality. As the principal architect in the drafting of the modern Indian Constitution, along with several other contributions to the making of an egalitarian society. His writings and political interventions were foundational to the modern Indian republic and were also concerned with the very idea of nation and nationhood. The books can be situated within the larger scholarship on Ambedkar.

In contemporary Indian society and politics, the centrality of caste has become even more profound. From university campuses to the larger society, and across ideological spectrums from left to right, everyone, at least in the public sphere, seeks to embrace Ambedkar. As a result, different interpretations have emerged regarding Ambedkar's contribution to the making of modern India. With this greater acceptance and legitimacy in wider society, certain attempts have also been made to diminish or erase Ambedkar's stature. Importantly, such attempts operate through processes of reductionism, stigmatisation, and erasure. These processes can be observed in textbooks, in artistic and creative fields, and in the works of Arun Shourie, Eleanor Zelliot, Mulk Raj Anand, Bipin Chandra, Ghurye, Dumont, Arundhati Roy, Ayodhya Singh, and Attenborough.

Kumar employs the methodology of 'Perspective from Below,' rooted in the experiences of those at the lowest levels of the Indian social order, who are subjected to collective exclusion. While sociologists such as Nandu Ram and T. K. Oommen have engaged with similar perspectives, Kumar's attempt to theorise and popularise this framework is noteworthy. He develops this perspective through insights from C. Wright Mills, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Pierre Bourdieu, Thomas Kuhn, and Paulo Freire.

Kumar's Decoding Ambedkar offers a nuanced understanding of Ambedkar's role in shaping the idea of the nation and shows how his contributions have been systematically reduced or even erased. The core argument of the book is that Ambedkar's contributions in policymaking, governance, and law have been reduced merely to those of a 'Dalit leader' or the 'architect of the Indian Constitution'. Perhaps, this reductionism is not accidental but reflects deeper structural biases within Indian academia and public discourse.

In contrast, within Western academia, Ambedkar has been taken seriously as a political theorist, philosopher, and social reformer, whereas in India, his works and ideas have been relegated to the peripheries of academic discourse. This is

certainly thought-provoking—why is Ambedkar not considered an academician in the same breath as other foundational thinkers? In addition, Ambedkar is not considered one of the Founders of Indian Sociology, which proves the point of the politics of the founders in disciplines such as Sociology (see Kumar, 2016).

Furthermore, in the book, Kumar rightly critiques reductionist and exclusionary approaches to Ambedkar's ideas while shedding light on his intellectual contributions across sociology, economics, political philosophy, and religious studies.

As it appears that reductionism and erasure are central and new arguments in Kumar's work, going into detail about them would be appropriate here. This reductionism has multiple dimensions, including the academic circle's failure to engage with the diverse shades of his intellectual horizons. The peak moment of this reductionism can be seen in top journalist Arun Shourie's book on Ambedkar, where he calls Ambedkar merely a rapporteur and questions his contributions to the making of the constitution. Kumar refers to another example, that of celebrated literary personality Arundhati Roy, who could not see beyond the most valuable contribution, 'Annihilation of Caste'. Even sympathetic engagements with Ambedkar often fail to appreciate the breadth of his intellectual project. This is a broader process of reductionism that occurs intentionally and implicitly.

The question of 'erasure' of Ambedkar extends from literary to visual and artistic works. The cinema, considered the mirror of society, truly reflects social reality, but it falls short of achieving its goal of accurate historical representation. The author provides examples from Mulk Raj Anand's novel '*Untouchable'* (1935) and Richard Attenborough's Oscar-winning film '*Gandhi'* (1982). There is suspicion of deliberate attempts to erase or diminish Ambedkar in these films. On the other hand, Jabbar Patel's film '*Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar*' (2000) produced what Kumar calls 'selective representation'. This movie is ostensibly about Ambedkar but prominently features Gandhi, raising questions about whose narrative takes precedence, even in films meant to centre Ambedkar's life. These movies reflect the larger tendency of Indian society to either erase or reduce Ambedkar, or simultaneously do both at the same time. This politics of representation reveals how dominant narratives continue to marginalise alternative visions of Indian nationhood and social justice.

In the next chapter, Kumar presents Ambedkar's philosophical and theoretical insights into the Hindu social order. In the discussion, he comprehensively maps the genesis of caste, examining how it emerged not as a natural social formation but as a carefully constructed hierarchical system. Kumar engages with Ambedkar's analysis of social practices, such as endogamy, and notions of surplus men and surplus women, which are essential to the maintenance of the caste structure. In the end, Ambedkar's radical proposal for 'annihilation of caste' is analysed, not merely as a call for reform but as a complete dismantling of the structure of the caste system. His measures, such as promoting inter-caste

marriage, are not just social reforms but radical acts aimed at annihilating the very basis of the caste system.

In the third chapter, Kumar seeks to situate Ambedkar within the philosophical traditions of social justice, drawing on celebrated thinkers such as Plato and John Rawls. The focus is on the essential characteristics of social justice, and then discusses the tensions between formal equality (in terms of legal rights) and substantive equality (in terms of social and economic conditions). Ambedkar, of course, deals with both dimensions, recognising that legal equality without social and economic transformation remains hollow. In addition, the author reclaims Ambedkar as a pioneer of social justice by identifying five elements: individuals as free agents capable of autonomous choice, society rooted in Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity (not just liberty and equality), establishing true democracy that goes beyond electoral procedures, achieving democracy through constitutional mechanisms that protect minority rights, and breaking the monopoly of elites over political power.

In the subsequent chapter, Kumar focuses largely on the idea of nation and nationhood in Ambedkar's writings. An argument discussed in this chapter is that India is not a nation—instead, it is a nation in the making. For Ambedkar, nationhood requires not just political unity but social cohesion, which caste hierarchy fundamentally undermines.

Kumar takes up Ambedkar's contributions in understanding the "categories of the Individual, caste, Hindu social order, problems of Indian women and Indian minorities, etc." (p. 76). These categories have not been examined by mainstream academia and have been neglected, resulting in limited serious engagement with them. In this context, Ambedkar argues that caste is fundamentally a hurdle to the making of a nation, fostering separation and jealousy among castes. Without addressing caste inequality, Ambedkar argues, India cannot achieve the moral and social unity necessary for a democracy.

In the concluding chapter, Kumar synthesises the discussions across all the book's chapters, reiterating Ambedkar's vast contributions to social theory and nation-building. He emphasises the need to integrate Ambedkar's thoughts into contemporary discourse on social justice, equality, and nationhood. It challenges narrow interpretations of Ambedkar's ideas and calls for a reassessment of his legacy, urging scholars and policymakers to draw inspiration from him to make society more inclusive in the truest sense.

The contention that Ambedkar's intellectual scope in Indian academia is limited to being the maker of the Indian constitution raises fundamental questions about disciplinary gatekeeping. However, Western scholars have recognised his academic worth and engaged with his ideas as contributions to political theory, sociology, and philosophy.

In sociological writings, scholars have extensively studied caste from the very beginning, but, ironically, it is rare to find scholars who consider Ambedkar's work appropriate for understanding the complexities of caste, despite his lived experience and theoretical rigour. Likewise, Muhammed Haneefa, in his recent article on Ambedkar, critically examines the invisibilization of Ambedkar in the list of founders of Indian sociology despite his substantial contributions (Haneefa, 2025). He concludes that, unlike global sociology, which often recognises founders' contributions on the basis of intellectual merit, Indian sociology favours those with direct institutional connections to sociology departments and systematically excludes powerful sociological voices such as Ambedkar.

At the same time, it raises several pertinent questions, such as: why do sociologists hesitate to teach Ambedkar as a pioneer while willingly reading Karl Marx, who lacks a direct connection to sociology departments and is still considered a pioneer (Haneefa, 2025)? Why is Weber, who never held a sociology position, celebrated as a founding figure, while Ambedkar, who conducted rigorous sociological research, is invisibilized in academic discourse? These are uncomfortable but necessary questions in contemporary times that reveal how disciplinary boundaries are often drawn to exclude certain voices and perspectives.

The reluctance to engage with Ambedkar also reflects broader anxieties about confronting caste within the academia itself. Accepting Ambedkar as a foundational thinker would require acknowledging the centrality of caste in understanding Indian society, a stance many scholars remain uncomfortable with.

This scholarly effort has not only framed Ambedkar as a constitutional figure or the leader of marginalised communities, but firmly established him as a global intellectual whose insights on democracy, social justice, and nationhood have shaped discourse on these concepts. This book has been written in lucid language with the vision of enhancing reach beyond academic circles. Kumar's accessible style makes sophisticated theoretical arguments comprehensible to a broader audience, which is essential given that debates about Ambedkar's legacy are not merely academic but deeply political. This book should be read by scholars interested in understanding the diverse shades of Ambedkar and his intellectual depth, and it makes a compelling case for why Ambedkar must be central rather than peripheral to Indian intellectual discourse. For academics, this book makes a meaningful contribution by reinterpreting Ambedkar's writings and countering the narrow understanding of his contribution. This book can be read by anyone interested in understanding Ambedkar's broader contributions to the making of modern India. In addition, this can also be used by general readers and social scientists to go beyond the narrow sense of his thoughts and ideas. It is time to rethink Indian sociology, nationhood, and democracy through the lens of Ambedkar's ideas.

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Book Review: Media and Marginals in India: Medium, Message and Meaning

Author: Sushant Arora

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Manoj Kumar Jena (Ed.) (2025). *Media and Marginals in India: Medium, Message and Meaning*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors. 216 pages. ISBN: 978-93-6080-573-9, Rs 1295.

--Sushant Arora

This edited volume critically examines the media's role in shaping the lived realities of socially, politically, and economically marginalised groups from a sociological vantage point. This work brilliantly attempts a thorough revaluation of the culture of mediation, media identities, and media-constructed realities in terms of power dynamics in meaning-making processes, and the control of dominant groups over the medium and the message. It demystifies the mechanisms of power that determine which narratives are legitimised, amplified, or suppressed within the cultural and media landscape.

This book seeks to contribute to the field of the sociology of media, which reflects on power, control, and representation in mass and social media. Mills (1956) argues that the media are part of wider power structures that help sustain elite dominance. They shape perceptions, limit participation, and turn active publics into more passive masses. Chomsky (1988) takes this argument further by suggesting that mass media in capitalist democracies "manufacture consent" in the public. They do this by selectively filtering and framing information, shaping how we think and feel about issues in ways that serve elite interests. It largely aligns with the Frankfurt School's scholars, who consider media as a "culture industry" that transmits information to a docile audience that "hungrily consumes packaged media spectacles" (Ritzer, 2007, p. 2825). By foregrounding marginalised communities, this book assumes critical significance in situating representation within structures of power, thereby interrogating how media controlled by the "powerful" affects the portrayal and visibility of the "powerless." It elaborates how the marginals are affected by who owns and regulates media, who decides what information is produced and circulated, and whose interests it actually serves.

As evident in the subtitle of the book, it is deeply influenced by McLuhan's (1964) proclamation, "The Medium is the Message." It also expands its scope by linking it to Stuart Hall's argument, as discussed in the volume, that "Meaning is a social product associated with social practices, language and symbolisations are the certain means by which meaning is produced" (p. 9). It is within this framework that this book, with implicit and explicit references to media studies models, presents an analytical synthesis of the literature, combined with semiotic and textual analyses of movies, songs, theatre, and digital media.

The main objective of the book is to ascertain the alterations mediated phenomena bring about in the discourse on the marginalised in India. It puts the spotlight on the question of representation, production, and consumption of media concerning Dalits, women, persons with disabilities, labourers, and ethnic minorities.

This book comprises nine exemplary chapters from renowned sociologists and media studies scholars. Each chapter considers distinct marginal identities while maintaining a consistent frame of reference.

In the first chapter, titled "Gender, Sexuality and Cinema: Reinforcing the Stereotype", Renuka Singh provides an exceptional account of how cinema functions as a discursive site for the reproduction of gender and sexual norms. Engaging with Foucauldian frameworks, it examines how mass media helps legitimise hegemonic masculinity. It also shows how coercive romantic pursuits are normalised, with male persistence and dominance presented as desirable, while women are often portrayed as passive objects of desire. By historicizing gendered subjectivities, this essay situates cinematic representations within broader socio-political structures, highlighting their complicity in shaping legal and cultural perceptions of consent, desire, and power.

In the second chapter, titled "Hindi Cinema and Caste: Ideology and Reproduction of Dominance", Manoj Kumar Jena explores the representation of Dalits in Bollywood movies and how cinematic narration legitimises the dominance of the upper caste. Whether overtly or covertly, many films that address caste issues reinforce harmful stereotypes, perpetuate exploitative practices, and contribute to caste profiling. This occurs not only through storylines centred on upper caste protagonists but also through subtle cinematic techniques such as camera angles, lighting, and framing. Subsequently, such a "one-dimensional cinema," as a medium controlled by the upper echelons of society, produces and propagates a dominant ideological pattern that disregards marginal identities.

In the third chapter, titled "Realities of the Marginal Worker as Reflected in the Medium of Cinema", M. M. Rehman and Kanta Rehman present an interesting case study of six Bollywood storylines revolving around unprotected workers, including bonded labourers, migrant labourers, porters, coal mine workers, peasants, and women in precarious workspaces. It asserts that filmmakers have hesitated to accurately depict the process of exploitation, suffering, struggle, the development of their organisation, and, eventually, their emancipation from poverty. This is attributable to their being lured by profits or having their arms twisted by censorship, political structures, and people's expectations.

In the fourth chapter, titled "Disability in Cinema: A Case Study of Selected Hindi Films," Kurukhetra Dip problematises the predominant ableist-patriarchal culture, which tends to inflict a biased portrayal of persons with disabilities in the Hindi cinema and its normative approach of 'fixing' disability. Disability is often portrayed as a fate worse than death, with individuals being desexualised, reduced to mere objects of sympathy, or depicted as symbols of hopelessness. In this context, the author acknowledges a shift in cinema from the 2000s onwards towards an increasingly sensitive approach that creates awareness and contributes

to the gradual disintegration of the hegemonic discourse of ableism and the subsequent minimisation of its ideological implications.

In the fifth chapter, titled "Epistemic *Ashrāfiya*-Morality and Urdu Theatre Public Sphere in Nineteenth-Century Bihar: Muslim Internal-Decoloniality," Neshat Quaiser puts forth a historical account of the Urdu theatres acting as public spheres in 19th-century Bihar. The upper echelons among the Muslims opposed the theatres for their purported corrupting influence on society. The actual concern was that the Shudra Muslims and the "lowly" women crossed the boundaries of the status quoist moral order of the internal alliance between the British and the *Ashrāfiya* by participating as performers or audience of Urdu theatres. This posed a serious threat to the *Ashrāfiya* politico-religious oligarchic hegemony and the development of a counter-hegemonic subjectivity among the subalterns.

In the sixth chapter, titled "Mediations and the Body-Politic: The Problem of Representation Revisited," Ratheesh Kumar presents a remarkable disquisition that addresses methodological concerns regarding the understanding of representation, gender, and the body politics. It asserts transcendence beyond the textual analysis of the medium towards the analysis of the social practices that it implicates. It elucidates the issues of sexualisation, objectification, reinforcement of stereotypes, and the reconstruction of reality through the male gaze, which systematically oppresses women and thwarts their representation.

In the seventh chapter, titled "Consuming and Producing Feminism through Indian Media: Analysis of Empowerment, Commodification in Culture Industry," Biswajit Das and Ridhi Kakkar analyse the issue of commodification of "girl power" and expose the façade of ostensible empowerment. It argues that the profit-driven mediascape, instead of challenging the status quo, uses it to gain popularity, which further curtails women's agency. Using the example of Indian soap operas, they argue that the conflict between traditional values and modern feminism is often presented through the character of the mother-in-law, who is positioned in antagonism to the daughter-in-law's empowerment, thereby reinforcing stereotypes and excluding older women from discourses of empowerment. It scrutinises the concept of empowerment and contends for a more apt reconceptualisation.

In the eighth chapter, titled "Media, Minority Consciousness, Memory: Sikhs and 1984," Shruti Devgan delves into the distorted representation that was constructed and popularised by the mass media that implicated the inculcation of a 'minority consciousness' and the subsequent marginalisation of the Sikhs. Further, this chapter explores the contributions of digital media as a relatively 'safe' public sphere for the Sikhs to counter the dominant narratives of the state by sharing their first-hand experiences of the genocide of 1984 and its aftermath through memory work. Further, she argues that the horizontal production and consumption of information on new media have significantly enhanced its accessibility beyond

Punjab, raised awareness of ground realities, reflected on Sikh identity in the context of state repression, and addressed contemporary issues affecting the region.

In the ninth chapter, "Media, Social Media, and the Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling," Binu Sundas and Divya Pradhan present a chronological account of the social movement of the Gorkha community in the region of Darjeeling for greater autonomy and the corresponding variations in media coverage across time and platforms. This chapter asserts that the print media, which was allegedly controlled by the state government, had historically ignored and later spread counter-narratives against the said movement and thus shattered the people's expectations. The rise of new media, especially social media, provided a conducive environment for the non-state actors to truly realise the power of collective identity and challenge the tyrannical dominance of the state.

Therefore, this edited volume provides a multidimensional analysis of the ways in which media shape and influence the lives of marginalised communities. It offers meaningful insights into the role of media in challenging as well as reinforcing the status quo by highlighting the underlying ideologies that regulate the representation of such communities. This book analyses the portrayal of gender, caste, disability, labour, and minorities and unearths the underlying structures that regulate representation and the legitimisation of narratives.

Despite its intellectual rigour, the book has a few shortcomings, though they remain minor in comparison to its overall contribution. In the context of a rapidly digitalising society, the book could have provided a more nuanced analysis of the ways in which social media empowers or marginalises communities, as well as the role of platform affordances and algorithms in shaping social visibility in the Indian context. It also does not adequately account for the rise of OTT platforms, which have grown rapidly in recent years. For many audiences, these platforms have started to replace traditional television and cinema halls.

Overall, this book is a strong collection of essays that closely examines how the media shape norms and power structures. It calls for a more inclusive and critical engagement with media, one that challenges stereotypes and amplifies voices that have long been silenced. This book is an exceptional contribution to the Sociology of Media, specifically to the discourse on media and representation. It is highly recommended for students and scholars of sociology, media studies, political science, and subaltern studies.

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Conference Report: Intersections of the Social and the Historical in Sociological Research: A Report

Author: Tanweer Fazal, Lam Khan Piang, Rabi Prakash

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Intersections of the Social and the Historical in Sociological Research: A Report

--Tanweer Fazal, Lam Khan Piang, Rabi Prakash

Abstract:

Prior to the turn towards ahistoricism of the functionalist school, history, both as a methodological approach as much as an abundant reserve of information about the formations of the past, was central to what defined the sociological imagination of the classical sociologists. Historical sociology, drawing upon the historical and sociological approaches, seeks to understand the nature and functions of socio-political structures and institutions, and ideologies and their historical constitutions toward understanding their role in shaping contemporary societies. A workshop organised at the University of Hyderabad underscored the significance of history in sociological analysis. A report.

Keywords: *archives, history, historical sociology, social theory, workshop*

The Department of Sociology at the University of Hyderabad held a national workshop on the theme 'Past in the Present: Intersections of the Social and the Historical in Sociological Research' on January 30-31, 2025. History, as we are now aware, is as much a reflection of the present as it is a record of the past. The past–present continuum applied to the study of ideologies, institutions, social processes, mobilisations, state formation or electoral performances can potentially contribute more to social and political analysis than what ahistorical comprehensions offer. As an interdisciplinary sub-field of sociology and history, historical sociology has an increasingly significant role and mandate. The question of how we understand a rapidly changing social and political order has become a key question for social sciences in general. The problem of rapid changes in social, political, and cultural order in a society like India, with a colonial past and complex matrix of social and political institutions, becomes more challenging. The problem pertains to understanding how modern social and political institutions were constituted and how these institutions have behaved and are being made to function vis-à-vis unfolding cultural and ideological order.

Social science, since its inception, has been a historically grounded enterprise. The effort to come to grips with reality as it revealed itself in the present and the plausible form(s) it could take in the future perforce demanded historical enquiry. Marx's materialist conception of history, Weber's explorations into the history of world religions or Durkheim's insistence on methodological convergence between history and sociology stand testimony to the historical orientation of the discipline from its very start. Early sociologists turned towards history as they came to grapple with questions of prevailing social and

economic inequality, persisting political conflicts and an imminent collapse of the normative order of society.

While social anthropological approaches to understanding Indian society have become predominant in understanding and measuring social changes, the limitations of such approaches have also become increasingly apparent. There is a peculiar problem with social anthropology and sociology in South Asia, as most of the key conceptual categories are ahistorical constructions. While historians help us reconstruct the past, the historically constituted character of social and political institutions and ideological structures remain out of their purview. Thereby, there always remains a question of how to view contemporary social and political life as historically constituted. Towards this end, historical sociology, drawing upon the historical and sociological approaches, seeks to understand the nature and functions of socio-political structures and institutions and ideologies and their historical constitutions towards understanding their role in shaping contemporary societies. Given the complex, multi-layered historical narratives that continue to influence present-day social, political, and cultural dynamics, historical sociology has promising potential to understand some of the key issues and challenges vis-à-vis contemporary social and political lives. The workshop aimed to create a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue, bringing together historians, sociologists, social anthropologists, political theorists and philosophers of history.

The workshop invited scholars who primarily engage with historical-sociological questions, use archival and literary sources of the past, and, more importantly, have sought to expand the conventional disciplinary boundaries of sociological, historical, political, and literary studies. The gathering of such a group of scholars of sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and scholars of literary cultures – shared the key question of how the present and contemporary are constituted historically. Towards this, they brought different archival sources and questions to make a better and more nuanced understanding of the present and contemporary Indian society and polity. Spread over seven sessions, there were nineteen papers presented and discussed.

The inaugural presentation titled ‘Wounded Corpses’ by sociologist Radhika Chopra, formerly with DSE, Delhi University, foregrounded the questions of the contested character of archives and their uses by different stakeholders to different ends. The paper relied on the ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ pictures of ‘wounded corpses’ of political assassinations in post-independent India. It analysed the significance of photographs of three wounded corpses: Mohanlal Karamchand Gandhi, who stood for an emergent nation; Indira Gandhi, often referred to as the Mother of the Nation; and Shabeg Singh, the army general who supported the 'illicit' nation of Khalistan. The deliberately managed photographs of the three corpses, according to Chopra, are a lens to view historical formations of national sentiments. It is interesting to notice how the control over such visual archives and their regulated use are used to build a narrative of political legitimacy

Historian Farhat Hasan from the University of Delhi, in his presentation titled 'Apprehending South Asian Modernity': Social Communication and Translocal Identities in Colonial India ', examined the relationship between history and social theory, particularly their shared concern regarding the nature of modernity. Invoking the Habermasian conception of the 'public sphere' as a central tenet of Western modernity and the key constitutive element for social theory, the paper underlined the need for caution in our use of concepts in social theory derived from Western historical experience. We need to remain sensitive to their historical specificities, rooted in time and space. Suggesting the need for greater attention to details of the experience of modernity in South Asia, it emphasised the importance of the early modern period of South Asia for social and political theorisations. Hasan invoked the category of 'South Asian Modernity', as a heuristic device to rescue modernity from Western historical experience and colonial trappings. Following which, 'South Asian Modernity', when looked at with a historicist frame, does not only help go beyond colonial constructions of social identity based on the essentialist frame of caste and religion but also helps us make sense of breaking down local identities with translocal and interregional identities, he argued. As chair of the inaugural session, G. Nagaraju, professor and head of the department of sociology, University of Hyderabad, laid stress on the importance of history and context-specific reading of historical material in order to comprehend the past and the present in a continuum.

Sasheej Hegde, formerly of the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad, engaged with the contentious subject of decolonisation by critically examining the works of Gurminder Bhambra and John Holmwood. The paper underlined how their argument for decolonising social theory is one-dimensional and does not capture the complexities associated with the project. While for Western sociologists, the decolonising imperative draws its strength from contemporaneity as it seeks to highlight colonial effects historically, Hegde reflected upon the relationship between colonialism, modernity, and sociological theories. He raised the question of gaze, illustrating how Western scholars often overlook colonialism's role in their modernity and its role in shaping modern social theories, which in turn affects social theory's explanatory power. He made a case for a historical sociology of the present and global sociology.

Ravi Kumar of South Asian University, Delhi, began with a survey of how sociologists and social theorists have looked at history in different periods beginning from classical sociologists to the critical school in the inter-war phase. The paper observed how the 1990s saw a return to history. It pitched for a historical enquiry to comprehend the contemporary world better. The paper made a reflective and critical observation that a de-historicised worldview assists oppression, normalises violence, and paves the way for the pro-system disciplinary framework.

V Janardhan, from the University of Hyderabad, explored the intersections between industrial sociology and historical sociology. He problematised labour as a historical category and showed how its relations with capital have

been changing. This marked a departure from treating labour and capital as analytical categories. As historical categories they were subject to evolving historical conditions. If the capital has historically evolved in contemporary economic and industrial society, so have labour relations, he contended. The paper underlined the role of labour in changing the character of industry. The paper eventually made a case for industrial sociology to be located within historical sociology.

Historian Sujith Kumar Parayil of the University of Hyderabad offered an account of the contemporary experiences of the fisher communities of coastal Kerala through ethnographic narratives. The community narrative connected the contemporary identity, changing economic conditions for their livelihood, with their memory of the past. Methodologically, in this paper, he sought to understand the agency of fishermen through the mediation and interaction of history, memory, and contemporary life conditions. The central question that the paper posed was 'What makes a historical subject possible, and what enables him/her to act as a historical subject located in contemporaneity?' It sought to argue that ordinary people connect the past with the present and thus experience the contemporary period. The observation was critical to the central theme of the workshop, as it demonstrated that the social and cultural agency of a community or individual self is constituted with their sense of the past, which in turn is constituted of memory. It is this idea of history and memory that continues to define themselves in the present.

Building on Sujit Parayil's problematique of retrieving and drawing meanings from the historical agency of ordinary people, historian and literary scholar Ufaque Paiker from BITS Pilani Hyderabad examined vernacular sources in order to reconstruct the historical past. The paper perforce demanded an interrogation of the category 'vernacular'. It argued that 'vernacular' literary and archival sources, which have attained increasing popularity among the historians driven to write the history of erstwhile marginalised voices, need to be read beyond the binary of high/low, classic/vernacular, and big/little traditions. With an argument for locating vernacular sources beyond the binary structure, the paper suggested that vernacular sources/archives could be effectively employed to complicate hegemonic narratives and discourses shaped/set by powerful institutions and relations.

The first day ended with the final session on 'Literary Sources and Constructions of Historical Identities'. This session had two presentations: one by sociologist Irfanullah Farooqi, currently at IIM Kozhikode, and literary scholar Shilpa Anand, from BITS Pilani, Hyderabad. Farooqi's presentation titled *'Construction of a "Muslim" Poet: An Exploration of the Historical-Social Interface in Muhammad Iqbal's Distinctive Reception'* engaged with the biographical account of Iqbal and its reception among Indian Muslims. It sought to locate Iqbal's politics of identifying himself as a 'Muslim' poet in the larger context of the early decades of the 20th century. It was through contextualising Iqbal, his poetics and politics, that the paper tried to make sense of fundamental questions regarding identity and religion, community and culture, and poetry. Primarily looking at these categories from Iqbal's

letters to his friends, it laid stress on historically locating Iqbal's construction of the religio-cultural identity in the backdrop of colonial modernity, socio-religious reforms and political discourse among Muslim elites.

Shilpa Anand's paper titled 'Literary *Sources as Social Texts and the Case of Historicising Disability'* dwelt on how disability studies have established that there is nothing self-evident in impairment; instead, it is the social construction, and such an assertion has made disability a shared social and political identity. This had animated historical sociology in disability studies. While reflecting on this established view, the paper sought to bring out the importance of literary and cultural texts in constituting disability histories. It sought departure from current discourse on disability as an administrable category of social difference which identifies itself with other administrative categories of marginalised and discredited communities. Such a stance largely relied on a particular type of historiography that rested on the construction of a past that was hostile or indifferent to the disabled past or to the present discourse which insists on social inclusiveness. Through an innovative reading of literary sources, the paper urged a revisit to the conceptual history of disability and the disabled.

As a cognitive tool, history is pivotal to unravelling the predicaments of the present. The intricate subject of nationhood and belongingness, in this regard, was a subject of deliberation during the worksop. Two papers, Tanweer Fazal's reading of Ambedkar's thought in the present and Saib Bilaval's study of the newspapers as mediums for mobilisation of populist sentiments, particularly reflected on the ideas of nation and national identity through its historical construction. Fazal's paper attempted to enter into the current debates on nationalism and its fraught relationship with India's minorities through a re-reading of Dr Ambedkar's thoughts on the subject. Intrinsically, it amounted to a discussion on the nature of democracy and the problem of political unity in a deeply divided and hierarchised society. The paper, urging for an historically situated and interpretive understanding of Ambedkar's thought, sought resolutions to the challenges of the present. Bilaval's stimulating paper titled *'Saffron Propaganda during Partition: The Creation of Social Attitudes and Sentiments as Popular History'* assessed the impact of the newspaper propaganda by the RSS and its affiliate organisations during the early years of India's independence. Through a skilful sifting of archival material, the paper sought to foreground the mechanism of propaganda deployed by religious and ethnic organisations in pursuit of the ideals of majoritarian nationalism.

The following session brought together papers that examined the formation of social identities in contemporary times through a historical investigation. Rabi Prakash's paper titled *'Pursuits of Political Power as Pursuits of Caste Mobility: Claims of Kshatriya Identity among Lower Castes in Early Modern India'* was an endeavour to historicise the non-Brahmin caste movements in the longer historical span. Based on the reading of the vernacular literary sources of Hindi in the early modern period, it showed that the social mobility among the lower caste groups in pre-modern India was facilitated through

their pursuits of political power. Kshatriya identity was open for claims among the lower caste groups who invented their caste genealogies and mythological-historical accounts. The paper argued that the protracted history of Kshatriya aspirations among the lower castes in northern India could explain the nature of non-Brahmin movements in the 20th century, which sought social mobility under the Sanskritisation model. Ramesh Bairy from IIT Bombay proceeded to demonstrate how the invigorating politics of Mathas (Hindu monasteries) in contemporary Karnataka follow the models of Brahmin *mathas* and normative Hindu *mathas* which were dominant roughly between the 14th and 19th centuries. Historically, since the beginning of the 20th century, the non-Brahmin mathas too began to spring up in the religious landscape of Karnataka. The practice of *mathas* set up by non-Brahmin caste groups saw Lingayat maths as their model, as this model engendered the language and practice of liberation from caste humiliation and discrimination. The paper reasoned that the formation of non-Brahmin *mathas* also ought to be located in the larger context of the colonial remaking of the caste, the arrival of modern educational institutions, and the ensuing politics of making a new community identity. Asima Jena from the University of Hyderabad was the third presenter in this panel. Her paper, *Making and Unmaking of the Identity of Kalavanths*, situated the non-Brahmin artists' and performers' community called *'Kalavanths'* of Telugu and Tamil-speaking regions. She sought to problematise the identity of non-Brahmin musicians and performers who usually are relegated to historical omission and mischaracterisations despite their cultural labour. She alerted us that in the rapidly changing, market-centred economy, these artists were faced with new challenges as traditional arts and their spaces get increasingly commercialised and commodified.

The second session on 'Politics of Post-Colonial State, Society and Knowledge' also had three significant presentations. The paper by Iqbal Javed Wani, a political scientist from Ambedkar University, New Delhi, titled 'The *Making of a Postcolonial State: Face-Lifting Colonial Policing Institutions in Newly Independent India'*, examined the primary institution of Chaukidari in the period of transitions from colonial policing to post-colonial policing. The paper showed that the post-colonial administration in India exhibited limited creativity when it had to craft a new legal and political order, particularly when it came to legal and social order at the local level. He presented a series of policy events during the colonial and post-colonial states where the Chaukidari system was imagined, created, and re-imagined. Primarily a colonial creation and instrument of social regulation, Chaukidari continued in the post-colonial state without much revamp and reform, leading to the continuity of the colonial policing system in the post-colonial state.

L. Lam Khan Piang's presentation titled 'The *Construction of Colonial Manipur: Comprehending Violence Through the Lens of History'* engaged with the longer history of Manipur, beginning from the 18th century to the present. It discussed two historical events of purging in Manipur (originally Kangleipak); the first event was when Vaishnavism of the 18th century caused the otherisation of those who did not embrace this religious movement. It enjoyed state sanction. The second situation, according to Piang, was the

contemporary purging of Zo people who are being stigmatised as 'illegal immigrants'. Countering theories of Zo immigration, the paper demonstrated how the colonial state expanded the territorial region of Manipur by integrating Zo-inhabited areas. Thus, it is not immigration but integration of territories that has resulted in the Zo presence in Manipur.

Pramod Mandade, a researcher at IIT-Bombay, drew upon the historical accounts of the integration of the Hyderabad Princely State into the Indian Federation and its violence-ridden history. The paper titled 'An Obligation to Remember – National History, Collective Memory, and Afterlife of Integration of Hyderabad Princely State' explored the history of communal violence in the Marathwada region, then part of the Hyderabad state. The paper attempted to deconstruct the idea of Liberation Day, celebrated on 17th September as a commemorative practice, by foregrounding counter-narratives of violence that visited the Muslims in the Marathwada region.

The last session of the workshop had two presentations, one by Aniket Nandan of NLSU, Bangalore, and the other by Geetanjli Atri, formerly of Symbiosis, Hyderabad. Nandan's paper, 'Being Bhumihars in Bihar: Shifting Modalities of Caste-Self and Identity (Re)formulation', combined history and ethnography to traverse the long trajectory in the making of Bhumihar self. The paper sought to problematise the sociological category of dominant castes in India by reflecting on the shifting modalities of caste-self among the Bhumihars. Atri's paper, 'Decoding 'deras' through the lens of history', attempted to locate Deras in the larger plural religious culture of Punjab. Building upon the fact that there was no homogenous Sikh identity, Deras or guru-led organisations emerged in contemporary Punjab, arguably, to challenge the hegemony of Khalsa Sikhs. The paper tried to comprehend the socio-cultural context of *deras through* an ethnographic investigation of a Guru-led organisation in Punjab. It turned to the history of the Sikh faith to explore the etymology of the term 'dera'. Atri stressed that the key to comprehending the contemporary classification of *deras* as Sikh and non-Sikh lied in the history of Sikh faith itself.

The workshop concluded with a valedictory address by Susan Visvanathan, formerly professor of sociology at JNU, New Delhi. Visvanathan drew sociological interest in India's colonial past by probing the impact of British rule on the indigenous community. It particularly highlighted the hierarchical relationship between administrators, missionaries and planters in the process of exploitation. The planters were able to cash in on tremendous advantages by literally taking on the colonial impetus to take land away from indigenous communities. She emphasised how our understanding of the power politics of British colonialism helps us to negotiate the contemporary interlinkages between caste, class, race and tribe.

It is important to underline that social sciences are essentially historical disciplines, and hence the imperative to organise and analyse the historical material—official and non-official documents, travelogues, private diaries,

autobiographies, architectural maps, musical notes from the past, visual material, epitaphs on tombs and so on. Taking a cue from C. Wright Mills that 'all sociology worthy of its name is historical sociology', the workshop participants underscored the need for rescuing the discipline from ahistorical thinking to be able to write the history of the present and a sociology of the past.

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