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Editor
R.K. Verma

Indian Institute of Public Administration
Bihar Regional Branch, Patna

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R.K. Verma

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Bihar Regional Branch

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From the Desk of the Chief Editor

I am proud to say that the Bihar Regional Branch of Indian Institute of Public Administration has rendered a commendable service to the discipline of Public Administration and Policy Science by publishing, regularly for last 22 years, the Bihar Journal of Public Administration, a journal of national repute and indexed globally. It has been continuously maintaining its position in UGC-CARE List and has earned Impact Factor 6.129 by Cosmos indexing. In its 22nd year of publication, I have pleasure to present the Vol. XXII, No. 1, January-June, 2025 of the Journal before the readers. I must mention here that the Issue has been delayed due to technical problems. One can feel that the venture is not so easy to complete with limited financial and human resources, However, members of IIPA and the editorial team led by Professor Verma always put their hundred percent efforts for which I must appreciate their vigor and rigor in getting the contributions edited and reviewed to maintain standard.

Finally, I express my thanks to the learned contributors, the entire Editorial Team and the anonymous referees for carrying the venture of publication of Bihar Journal of Public Administration in regular frequency and that too by maintaining quality. I, in personal capacity as Vice Chancellor of Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya, commit myself to facilitate the regular publication of the Journal by involving institutions of higher education, falling in this part of the state. The editorial board intends to accommodate the new ideas and issues of our focus area of research. We also encourage those young scholars who contribute research papers of high order.

Prof. S.P. Shahi

Vice Chancellor, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya

Chief Editor

Editorial

In this era of PM Modi's Mission of Viksit Bharat@2047, the issues related to policy priorities, capacity building of civil servants, governance, use of technology, private players and people's efforts have acquired significance. These issues must be discussed on academic front with a view to accelerate the implementation of the Mission. In other words, the Mission cannot be achieved without efforts of karmyogis and people engaged in their respective professions. The present Issue of *Bihar Journal of Public Administration* (Vol. XXII, No. 1) covers a wide range of subjects like capacity building of public servants, career satisfaction of police officials, unique experiments of administration, use of technology in governance, citizen's engagement in governance; addressing poverty and environment, especially in North Eastern region of India, PM Adarsh Gram Yojana, health policy implementation; addressing urban issues like solid and electronic waste management; addressing the cause of people such as, citizen's charter, protection of consumer rights, satisfaction of public service delivery and addressing the cause of weaker sections of society like women led development, addressing the cause of dalits, etc. Besides, some interesting subjects like literature review on people's engagement in governance, causes and impact of political consultancy on performance of governance, technology in education, education and employability, growth of mindset and advantages of cultural capital in development process are included in the present Issue.

It is worth mentioning that the delay in publication of the present number was caused by technical problem i.e. the entire folder of edited version was crashed. As such it took time to recover the research papers. Nevertheless, It is a matter of immense pleasure that Bihar Journal of Public Administration has entered into the third decade of its regular publication. The IIPA Bihar Regional Branch and the Editorial team express thankfulness to external support from expert reviewers and the contributors. At last, though utmost care has been taken to maintain the quality, yet we shall feel obliged to have suggestions from readership for improvements in the Journal.

–Editor

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MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY IN NORTH EASTERN REGION OF INDIA: A STATE LEVEL ANALYSIS

T. Sadashivam,* Sandeep Inampudi and Shahla Tabassum*****

Abstract

Human development is an important benchmark for judging a country's development. All round development of human beings from economic, social to political is utmost necessary. This becomes more relevant to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by all countries including India by 2030. India is a very diverse and largest populated country, and its progress towards achieving the aforementioned goals is very significant. Although, all 17 SDGs are equally important, however, for a country like India achieving SDG-1 'No Poverty-End Poverty in all its forms everywhere' remains one of the greatest challenges. No doubt India has lifted millions out of poverty in the last decade, but the progress has been uneven across the country (Inter-State and Intra-State). Thus, the paper aims to study the National Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023, published by NITI Aayog which is more comprehensive to understand and analyse India's North East States which consist of Eight States progress towards achieving SDG-1, i.e. 'No Poverty'.

Keywords: Poverty, Multidimensional Poverty Index, Sustainable Development Goals, North Eastern Region, Deprivations, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Every country in this world wants to achieve development, so that it can lead to improving the standards of living of its citizens. The development as a concept not only talks about one sector, rather it is all-round development in the fields of economic, social, political, scientific, etc. However, the two most important fields,

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out of the aforementioned, which are very much necessary for providing the basic minimum standard of living to the people, are economic and social development. Although, both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from (2000 to 2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from (2015 to 2030) focus on (8) Eight and (17) Seventeen international development goals for the former and latter respectively. Among all the goals of both MDGs in the past and SDGs at present, there are a few common goals that are very important to improve the living standards of the people. They are 'Eradicate Poverty and Hunger'; 'Achieving Quality Education especially Primary Education'; 'Good Health and Well-Being'; and 'Clean Water and Sanitation'. Of course, all the goals are interrelated to each other, and play an important role in achieving a sustainable future for all the people living in different parts of the world. In this context, India being a very diverse and largest populated country, its progress towards achieving the aforementioned goals are very significant. Within India, the progress of different states particularly from the North Eastern Region (NER) is equally vital. Therefore, this paper focuses on the progress of states of NER in the National Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023, to understand and analyse their status towards achieving SDG-1 i.e., 'No Poverty'.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is different from the conventional method of counting the poor in India. The former measures poverty by analysing individual access to basic utilities and services under the three important dimensions: firstly, Health; secondly, Education and thirdly, Standard of Living. Further, each dimension aforementioned includes different indicators which are a total of (12) Twelve that are aligned with SDGs and considered for measuring poverty. Under the Health dimension, (3) Three indicators are Nutrition, Child & Adolescent Mortality, and Maternal Health. Education has (2) Two indicators: Years of Schooling and School Attendance. Lastly, the highest number of indicators comes under the Standard of Living which is (7) Seven: Cooking Fuel, Sanitation, Drinking Water, Electricity, Housing, Assets, and Bank Accounts. The MPI gives equal weightage to all three dimensions for measuring poverty and uses the data from the Fifth Round of the National Family and Health Survey (2019-21), Government of India. Apart from the aforementioned dimensions, the MPI also counts the intensity of poverty, by taking into account the extent or intensity of deprivations the poor people experienced in their daily lives (Jha, 2023).

The conventional approach to measure poverty was based on income below a particular threshold, which is called as 'Poverty Line'. So, poverty is measured in terms of the number of people living below this line and expressed as the 'Head Count Ratio' (Iqbal, 2020). In India, the last available poverty data based on the conventional approach has been for the year 2011-12. India started using MPI,

which was for the first time released by NITI Aayog (India’s Think Tank) in the year 2021, so the current National MPI Report 2023 was a second edition. Though, globally the MPI was published in the year 2010 by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They measure multidimensional poverty by using (10) Ten indicators under three dimensions: (I) Health dimension the indicators are Nutrition and Child Mortality; (II) Education dimension the indicators are Years of Schooling and School Attendance; (III) Living Standards dimension the indicators are Cooking Fuel, Sanitation, Drinking Water, Electricity, Housing, and Ownership of Assets (OPHI Website). Thus, India’s MPI has (2) Two extra indicators, i.e. (Maternal Health and Bank Accounts) in comparison with the global MPI, nonetheless, the methodology followed by the former aligns with the latter. The credit for devising global MPI goes to two researchers from Oxford University namely, Sabina Alkire and James Foster (PIB, 2023).

**MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX AND
NORTH EASTERN REGION STATES**

The NER consists of (8) Eight states namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Nagaland, and Tripura; together accounted for (3.78%) total India’s population according to the 2011 census (the latest available data). The National Multidimensional Poverty Index shows the progress of Indian states including NER towards achieving SDG No.1 i.e., ‘No Poverty’, more particularly Target 1.2, which talks about reducing ‘*At least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions*’(NITI Aayog, 2023, p. xiii).

Table 1: Percentage of Population who are Multidimensionally Poor in North Eastern States of India

<i>States</i>	<i>2015-16 (in %)</i>	<i>2019-21 (in %)</i>	<i>Changes over time from 2015-16 to 2019-21 (in %)</i>
Assam	32.65	19.35	13.30
Arunachal Pradesh	24.23	13.76	10.47
Meghalaya	32.54	27.79	4.75
Nagaland	25.16	15.43	9.73
Tripura	16.62	13.11	3.51
Manipur	16.96	8.10	8.86
Mizoram	9.78	5.30	4.48
Sikkim	3.82	2.60	1.22
India	24.85	14.96	9.89

Source: Author compilation using NITI Aayog, National Multidimensional Poverty Index-A Progress Review, Government of India, 2023, pp. xviii, xix, 37.

The State of Bihar has seen the highest decline of multidimensional poor amongst all the states/UTs in India with (18.13% points), decreased from (51.89%) in 2015-16 to (33.76%) in 2019-21. Between (2015-16 to 2019-21), the largest decline of multidimensional poor in the top (10) Ten states/UTs, there exist (2) Two NER States, i.e. Assam (13.30% points) decreased from (32.65%) to (19.35%) and Arunachal Pradesh (10.47% points) decreased from (24.23%) to (13.76%) respectively (NITI Aayog, 2023, p.324). Out of (13,54,61,035) people who exited the multidimensional poor category in India during the aforementioned period (57,07,932) are from the NER. In Assam, it was (46,87,541) followed by Manipur (2,81,803), Nagaland (2,14,354), Arunachal Pradesh (1,61,358), Meghalaya (1,56,738), Tripura (1,43,237), Mizoram (54,665) and Sikkim (8,236). The 22 out of 36 states/UTs, which are having less than (10%) of their overall total population multidimensional poor in 2019-21, include (3) Three States from NER i.e. Sikkim (2.60%), Mizoram (5.30%) and Manipur (8.10%). In India, the lowest number of multidimensional poor in 2019-21 was in the State of Kerala with just (0.55%), which decreased from (0.70%) in 2015-16. However, on the other hand, amongst the top (10) Ten states/UTs in India which have the highest number of multidimensional poor in 2019-21 are Bihar (33.76%) followed by Jharkhand (28.81%), Meghalaya (27.79%), Uttar Pradesh (22.93%), Madhya Pradesh (20.63%), Assam (19.35%), Chhattisgarh (16.37%), Odisha (15.68%), Nagaland (15.43%) and Rajasthan (15.31%). So, (3) Three NER States can be seen in the top (10)Ten(NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 37).

In India's rural areas, the number of multidimensional poor has decreased from (32.59%) to (19.28%), and in urban areas from (8.65%) to (5.27%) during the period from (2015-16 to 2019-21). In the NER, the states which have seen the largest decline in multidimensional poverty in rural areas from (2015-16 to 2019-21) are: Assam saw a decrease of (14.73%) from (36.14% to 21.41%); Arunachal Pradesh decrease of (14.06%) from (29.20% to 15.14%); Nagaland decrease of (12.85%) from (32.73% to 19.88%); Manipur decrease of (11.38%) from (22.33% to 10.95%) and Mizoram decrease of (9.68%) from (20.45% to 10.77%). However, states like Meghalaya, Assam, and Nagaland still have the highest number of multidimensionally poor people in rural areas in comparison with states like Sikkim, Mizoram, and Manipur which have (3.75%), (10.77%) and (10.95%) respectively in 2019-21. In urban areas, during 2019-21 the highest number of multidimensionally poor people were in the state of Meghalaya (8.14%) followed by Assam (6.88%), Nagaland (6.14%), Arunachal Pradesh (5.90%), etc. The lowest number of multidimensionally poor people are in the states of Sikkim (0.51%) and Mizoram (0.58%) respectively (NITI Aayog, 2023, pp. 325-326).

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY DEPRIVATIONS AND NORTH EASTERN REGION STATES

The MPI measures poverty by taking into account various kinds of deprivations (i.e., 12 indicators) experienced by the people in their lives. During the period from (2015-16 to 2019-21), all (12) Twelve indicators saw a decline in the deprivation rate in India (see Table 1.2 a & b). Amongst all the indicators, sanitation deprivation saw a significant (reduction of 21.75% points) from (51.88% to 30.13%) for the aforementioned periods. Second, comes cooking fuel deprivation (reduction of 14.57% points) from (58.47% to 43.90%), followed by electricity deprivation (reduction of 8.89% points) from (12.16% to 3.27%), nutrition deprivation (reduction of 6.02% points) from (37.60% to 31.52%), bank account deprivation (reduction of 5.97% points) from (9.66% to 3.69%), housing deprivation (reduction of 4.28% points) from (45.65% to 41.37%), assets deprivation (reduction of 3.81% points) from (13.97% to 10.16%), drinking water deprivation (reduction of 3.61% points) from (10.92% to 7.32%), maternal health deprivation (reduction of 3.41% points) from (22.58% to 19.17%), years of schooling deprivation (reduction of 2.46% points) from (13.86% to 11.40%), school attendance deprivation (reduction of 1.13% points) from (6.40% to 5.27%) and child & adolescent mortality (reduction of 0.63% points) from (2.69% to 2.06%) respectively (NITI Aayog, 2023, pp. xxii, 16).

In the NER, under the nutrition deprivation, the states of Meghalaya and Assam have the highest proportion of population deprived (34.72%) and (31.83%) for the former and latter respectively in 2019-21, which is above the national average of (31.52%). The state of Sikkim has the lowest number of population deprived not only among the NER but also, across India (10.36%). The child & adolescent mortality deprivation population in the state of Meghalaya is the highest (2.99%) in the NER, which is above the national average of (2.06%). Also, it is in the third position after Bihar (4.14%) and Uttar Pradesh (3.54%) amongst all the states/UTs in the country. The population with the lowest deprivation in the NER is seen in the state of Sikkim (0.26%), which is just behind the better-performed state of Kerala (0.20%) and Puducherry (0.23%). In terms of maternal health deprivation, there are (4) Four states from NER whose population is above the national average of (19.17%). In the state of Meghalaya, (31.39%) of its population is deprived of maternal health followed by Arunachal Pradesh (22.21%), Nagaland (22.15%), and Assam (21.40%). There are (2) Two states which saw an increase in maternal health deprivation during the period from (2015-16 to 2019-21), and they are Tripura (13.49% to 16.07%) and Sikkim (5.42% to 6.72%). Although, among all the states of NER, still the state of Sikkim has the lowest percentage of its population deprived of maternal health (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 327).

Table 2(a): Comparison of Percentage (%) of Population Deprived in the Indicators among the North Eastern States of India

	<i>Assam</i>		<i>Arunachal Pradesh</i>		<i>Meghalaya</i>		<i>Nagaland</i>		<i>India</i>	
Indicators	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21
Health Dimension										
Nutrition	39.67	31.83	21.05	17.10	37.05	34.72	24.49	20.61	37.60	31.52
Child & Adolescent Mortality	2.90	1.77	1.97	1.10	3.10	2.99	2.06	1.42	2.69	2.06
Maternal Health	25.44	21.40	28.34	22.21	31.70	31.39	33.05	22.15	22.58	19.17
Education Dimension										
Years of Schooling	16.18	12.35	17.75	14.22	19.71	16.70	13.61	10.49	13.86	11.40
School Attendance	6.54	4.31	8.15	5.19	6.15	7.41	4.81	4.45	6.40	5.27
Standard of Living										
Cooking Fuel	77.12	59.33	57.78	48.05	77.08	67.63	69.28	56.48	58.47	43.90
Sanitation	51.19	31.58	38.55	17.13	38.56	17.10	23.18	12.24	51.88	30.13
Drinking Water	17.43	14.91	14.81	6.62	31.77	23.10	19.26	10.47	10.92	7.32
Electricity	21.77	7.44	11.83	5.25	8.18	8.24	3.25	1.46	12.16	3.27
Housing	75.89	69.37	76.14	74.34	50.40	53.40	70.97	64.60	45.65	41.37
Assets	19.94	15.02	23.35	14.31	29.88	37.07	33.90	29.53	13.97	10.16
Bank Account	15.38	3.65	15.40	7.38	19.91	9.01	28.67	7.04	9.66	3.69

Source: Author compilation using NITI Aayog, National Multidimensional Poverty Index-A Progress Review, Government of India, 2023, pp.xxii, 38-49.

Table 2(b): Comparison of Percentage (%) of Population Deprived in the Indicators among the North Eastern States of India

	<i>Tripura</i>		<i>Manipur</i>		<i>Mizoram</i>		<i>Sikkim</i>		<i>India</i>	
Indicators	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21	2015-16	2019-21
Health Dimension										
Nutrition	28.02	26.13	23.57	17.87	21.38	15.63	13.32	10.36	37.60	31.52
Child & Adolescent Mortality	1.28	1.55	1.80	1.66	2.30	0.93	1	0.26	2.69	2.06
Maternal Health	13.49	16.07	17.66	12.26	16.11	11.32	5.42	6.72	22.58	19.17
Education Dimension										
Years of Schooling	10.79	10.47	5.35	4.59	7.92	6.79	8.20	8.59	13.86	11.40

School At- tendance	2.19	2.50	2.36	2.33	3.75	2.50	1.42	1.15	6.40	5.27
Standard of Living										
Cooking Fuel	65.84	54.75	58.92	28.75	32.17	17.06	42.20	24.50	58.47	43.90
Sanitation	36.36	26.56	47.54	35.23	15.81	4.66	10.36	12.71	51.88	30.13
Drinking Water	16.18	13.87	38.50	26.77	7.79	4.82	2.24	7.84	10.92	7.32
Electricity	7.18	1.75	7.31	1.94	4.08	1.92	0.65	0.77	12.16	3.27
Housing	74.66	66.83	81.49	75.50	24.18	30.70	26.71	24.15	45.65	41.37
Assets	18.76	14.83	13.92	12.63	13.94	12.35	9.52	14.42	13.97	10.16
Bank Ac- count	3.63	3.02	21.53	4.04	5.81	3.30	8.38	5.99	9.66	3.69

Source: Author compilation using NITI Aayog, National Multidimensional Poverty Index-A Progress Review, Government of India, 2023, pp.xxii, 38-49.

According to (Table 2a &b) the years of schooling deprivation is highest among the population of Meghalaya (16.70%) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (14.22%), Assam (12.35%), etc, and these (3) Three states are above the national average of (11.40%). Sikkim state saw a marginal increase in deprivation across the two time periods from (8.20% to 8.59%). The state of Manipur has the lowest number of deprived population (4.59%). School attendance deprivation was not only the highest among the population of Meghalaya (7.41%) but, also saw an increase in deprivation by (1.26% points) from (6.15% to 7.41%). Tripura also saw a marginal increase in deprivation by (0.31% points). The state of Sikkim has the lowest number of population deprived of years of schooling (1.15%). The cooking fuel deprivation population in the state of Meghalaya had the highest proportion (67.63%), and occupied second position after Jharkhand (69.12%) among all the states/Uts. The other states in NER, having the highest proportion of population deprived are Assam (59.33%), Nagaland (56.48%), Tripura (54.75%), Arunachal Pradesh (48.05%). All the aforementioned states are above the national average (43.90%). Mizoram state has the lowest number of population deprived of cooking fuel (17.06%)(NITI Aayog, 2023, pp. 327-328).

Sanitation deprivation is the highest among the population of Manipur (35.23%), followed by Assam (31.58%) and Tripura (26.56%). Except for the latter, the other (2) Two states are above the national average (30.13%) of the population deprived of sanitation. Sikkim saw an increase of (2.35% points) deprivation across the two time periods from (10.36% to 12.71%). The state of Mizoram has the lowest number of population deprived of sanitation (4.66%) and also, holds the third position behind Lakshadweep (0.20%) and Kerala (1.27%) among all the states/UTs in the country. Drinking water deprivation is highest among the population of Manipur (26.77%) followed by Meghalaya (23.10%), Assam (14.91%), Tripura (13.87%) and

Nagaland (10.47%). Out of the top (10) Ten states/UTs, having a high proportion of the population deprived of drinking water, the aforementioned (5) Five states hold (first, second, sixth, seventh, and ninth positions) respectively. Also, excluding the states of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, all other states in NER are above the national average (7.32%) of population deprived. Sikkim saw an increase of (5.6% points) in population deprived (2.24% in 2015-16 to 7.84% in 2019-21). Mizoram has the lowest number (4.82%) of the population deprived of drinking water (see Table 2a &b)(NITI Aayog, 2023, p.328).

In terms of electricity deprivation, there are (3) Three states from NER whose populations are above the national average (3.27%) in 2019-21. In the state of Meghalaya, (8.24%) of its population is deprived of electricity and holds the second position among all the states/UTs in the country. It was followed by Assam in third position (7.44%) and Arunachal Pradesh in fifth position (5.25%). Sikkim has the lowest percentage of its population (0.77%) deprived of electricity, although it saw an increase of (0.12% points) across the two time periods (0.65% to 0.77%). Housing deprivation is highest among the population of Manipur (75.50%) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (74.34%), Assam (69.37%), Tripura (66.83%), Nagaland (64.60%). Out of the top (10) Ten states/UTs, having a high proportion of the population deprived of housing, the aforementioned (5) Five states hold (first, second, third, fourth, and sixth positions) respectively. Also, excluding the states of Mizoram and Sikkim, all other states in NER are above the national average (41.37%) of population deprived. Both the states (Mizoram and Meghalaya) saw an increase of (6.52% points) for the former and (3% points) for the latter of population deprived across the two time periods. Sikkim has the lowest number of population deprived of housing (24.15%)(NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 329).

According to (Table 2a &b) the assets deprivation population in the state of Meghalaya is the highest (37.07%), which also saw an increase of (7.19% points) of its population deprived from (29.88% in 2015-16 to 37.07% in 2019-21). It was followed by Nagaland (29.53%), Assam (15.02%), Tripura (14.83%), Sikkim (14.42%), Arunachal Pradesh (14.31%). Out of the top (10) Ten states/UTs in India, having a high proportion of the population deprived of assets, the aforementioned (6) Six states hold (first, second, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth positions) respectively. All the states from NER are above the national average (10.16%) of population deprived of assets. Both the states of Meghalaya and Sikkim saw an increase of (7.19 % points) for the former and (4.9 % points) for the latter of population deprived from (2015-16 to 2019-21). Mizoram has the lowest number of population deprived of assets (12.35 %). Bank account deprivation is highest among the population of Meghalaya (9.01%) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (7.38%), Nagaland (7.04%), and Sikkim (5.99%). Out of the top (10) Ten states/UTs in India, having a high proportion of the population deprived of a bank account,

the aforementioned (4) Four states hold (first, second, third, and fifth positions) respectively. Tripura has the lowest number of population deprived of bank accounts (3.02%) (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 329). Overall, among the NER states, the people of Sikkim are less deprived in many indicators across the (3) Three dimensions i.e., health, education, and standard of living, whereas the people of Meghalaya are more deprived in (9) Nine out of (12) Twelve indicators, in comparison with other NER states.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX AND NORTH EASTERN REGION DISTRICTS

The National MPI 2023, not only provides poverty estimates for 36 states/UTs but also for the 707 Districts of India, out of which 104 districts constitute (14.71%) of the total districts are from NER. Amongst all the states of NER, the state of Assam has the highest number of districts (33), out of which the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in Dhubri district, a decrease of (25.04%) from (51.06% to 26.02%) followed by Goalpara district decrease of (21.81%) from (40.15% to 18.34%); Karbi Anglong district decrease of (21.39%) from (37.59% to 16.20%); Barpeta district decrease of (20.29%) from (39.41% to 19.12%); Tinsukia district decrease of (19.04%) from (36.70% to 17.66%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts having the highest number of multidimensional poor people were Hailakandi district (36.22%) followed by Karimganj district (32.93%), Cachar district (30.58%), South SalmaraMancachar district (28.24%), Dhubri district (26.02%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are Kamrup Metro (5.63%), Sivasagar (10.28%), Nalbari (11.24%), Jorhat (11.49%), Dibrugarh (12.26%), etc. (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 70).

In the state of Arunachal Pradesh, out of (20) Twenty districts, the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in KurungKumey district, a decrease of (28.41%) from (39.55% to 11.14%) followed by Tawang district, decrease of (22.79%) from (31.25% to 8.46%); East Kameng district decrease of (21.98%) from (44.03% to 22.05%); Lohit district decrease of (19.58%) from (31.97% to 12.39%); West Kameng district decrease of (17.7%) from (22.44% to 4.74%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts having the highest number of multidimensional poor people were Namsai district (22.11%) followed by East Kameng district (22.05%), Longding district (20.97%), Upper Subansiri district (19.71%), KraDaadi district (18.91%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are from West Kameng (4.74%), Lower Subansiri (6.39%), East Siang district (8.19%), Tawang district (8.46%), Upper Siang district (8.74%), etc. (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 62).

In the state of Meghalaya, out of (11) Eleven districts, the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in the East Garo Hills district, a decrease of (26.82%) from (41.78% to 14.96%) followed by West Garo Hills district decrease of (19.29%) from (27.29% to 8%); Ri Bhoi district decrease of (14.64%) from (46.31% to 31.67%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts having the highest number of multidimensional poor people is West Khasi Hills (52.48%), this is the only district that saw an increase in the percentage of multidimensional poor people in the state of Meghalaya. It was followed by West Jaintia Hills district (52.08%), East Jaintia Hills district (43.79%), South West Khasi Hills district (40.98%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are from West Garo Hills district (8%), South Garo Hills district (9.77%), North Garo Hills district (13.26%), etc. Among all the districts of NER, only (2) Two districts having more than (50%) of their population multidimensionally poor are from West Khasi Hills district and West Jaintia Hills district (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 172).

In the state of Nagaland, out of (11) Eleven districts, the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in Mon district, a decrease of (22.61%) from (45.56% to 22.95%). It was followed by the Dimapur district a decrease of (10.1%) from (17.33% to 7.23%); Phek district decrease of (9.97%) from (27.25% to 17.28%); Kiphire district decrease of (9.14%) from (37.33% to 28.19%); Tuensang district decrease of (9.12%) from (38.33% to 29.21%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts having the highest number of multidimensional poor people were from Tuensang district (29.21%) followed by Kiphire district (28.19%), Longleng district (26.90%), Mon district (22.95%), Zunheboto district (20.31%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are from Kohima district (6.50%), Mokokchung district (7.22%), Dimapur district (7.23%), etc. (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 188).

In the state of Tripura, out of (8) Eight districts, the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in the North Tripura district, with a decrease of (12.8%) from (30.65% to 17.85%) followed by South Tripura district decrease of (5.14%) from (17.03% to 11.89%); Dhalai district decrease of (4.34%) from (26.23% to 21.89%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts which are having the highest number of multidimensional poor people were Unakoti district (24.92%), followed by Dhalai district (21.89%), North Tripura district (17.85%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are West Tripura district (6%), Gomati district (9.06%), South Tripura district (11.89%), etc. (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 240).

In the state of Manipur, out of (9) Nine districts the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in Tamenglong district, with a decrease of (18.88%) from (37.38% to 18.50%) followed by Senapati

district decrease of (17.98%) from (33.58% to 15.60%); Chandel district decrease of (12.15%) from (26.89% to 14.74%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts having the highest number of multidimensional poor people were Tamenglong district (18.50%) followed by Ukhrul district (17.87%), Senapati district (15.60%), Churachandpur district (15.35%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are from Imphal West district (2.12%), Imphal East district (5.19%), Bishnupur district (6.91%), etc. (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 164).

In the state of Mizoram, out of (8) Eight districts, the largest decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) was seen in Mamit district, with a decrease of (16%) from (25.29% to 9.29%) followed by Lawngtlai district decrease of (8.82%) from (30.45% to 21.63%); Champhai district decrease of (8.58%) from (10.09% to 1.51%); Saiha district decrease of (5.79%) from (12.69% to 6.90%); Lunglei district decrease of (5.01%) from (10.16% to 5.15%), etc. In 2019-21, the districts having the highest number of multidimensional poor people are from Lawngtlai district (21.63%) followed by Mamit district (9.29%), Saiha district (6.90%), etc. The districts with the lowest number of multidimensional poor people are from Aizawl district (0.87%), Champhai district (1.51%), Serchhip district (3.30%), etc. (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 180).

In the state of Sikkim, there are (4) Four districts, and the decline in multidimensional poverty from (2015-16 to 2019-21) is seen only in (2) Two districts. The district of Gyalshing has reduced its multidimensional poverty by (1.89%) from (4.66% to 2.77%) followed by the Gangtok district, a decrease of (1.78%) from (3.90% to 2.12%), while the other (2) Two districts saw a negligible increase in the aforementioned periods. The district of Namchi saw an increase of (0.16%) from (2.74% to 2.90%), whereas the Mangan district increased by (0.7%) from (4.47% to 5.17%). The district of Gangtok has the lowest number of multidimensional poor people in 2019-21 (2.12%); while the highest number of multidimensional poor people is in the Mangan district (5.17%) (NITI Aayog, 2023, p. 220).

Also, interestingly, except for the (2) Two capital cities, the first state of Arunachal Pradesh, i.e. Itanagar which comes under Papum Pare District, and second, the state of Meghalaya, i.e. Shillong which comes under East Khasi Hills district; where the percentage of multidimensional poverty has marginally increased from (12.85%) to (13.76%) for the former district, and from (23.39%) to (24.10%) for latter district during the period (2015-16 to 2019-21). All other capital cities of the NER states, fall under their respective districts having the lowest number of multidimensional poverty, in comparison with other districts within their states. The Mizoram state capital is Aizawl which falls under the Aizawl district, and the percentage of multidimensional poverty in this district has decreased from (1.76%) in 2015-16 to (0.87%) in 2019-21. It was followed by Gangtok, the capital city of Sikkim under the

Gangtok district from (3.90%) to (2.12%) for the aforementioned period. Imphal, the capital city of Manipur under the Imphal West district from (7.27%) to (2.12%); Dispur, the capital city of Assam under the Kamrup Metro district from (10.93%) to (5.63%); Agartala, the capital city of Tripura under the West Tripura district from (8.97%) to (6%); Kohima, the capital city of Nagaland under the Kohima district from (11.03%) to (6.50%). Thus, the capital of the state of Mizoram i.e., Aizawl falls under Aizawl District, has the lowest number of multidimensionally poor people among all the districts of NER states; whereas the highest number of multidimensionally poor is in the East Khasi Hills district, where the capital city of Meghalaya i.e., Shillong located (NITI Aayog, 2023, pp. 62, 70, 164, 172, 180, 188, 220 & 240).

CONCLUSION

To have a sustainable future for the people living in the NER of India, there is a need to address the challenges faced by them, most importantly, the basic needs. So that, they may not be left behind in the development process of the country. The MPI report, no doubt, shows improvements towards achieving a few SDGs in NER, but there still exists scope to make further improvements especially in nutrition, maternal health, cooking fuel, drinking water, housing, assets, and bank accounts. Thus, MPI will help the governments (Central and States) in identifying and implementing the best possible targeted policy interventions and programme actions to achieve an inclusive society and development. In this regard, the best practices of one state in the NER can be replicated in another state, by making necessary changes according to its suitability.

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IMPACT OF AGE, PAY GRADE AND LOCATION ON CAREER SATISFACTION OF POLICE OFFICIALS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

This article aims to understand the significance of age, pay grade and location in determining the career satisfaction of Police officers in India. The present study is based on primary data collected through a survey method. The survey was conducted in a Police Research Organisation in Delhi and its outlying units in Bhopal, Ghaziabad and Chandigarh with a sample size of 171 police personnel. The study uses an ANOVA test to test the hypothesis and finds that individual's career satisfaction levels varies with variations in age, pay grade and location. It can be inferred that middle aged high ranking police officers who are posted in location of national capital or nearby are likely to have more career satisfaction.

Keywords: Career Satisfaction, Police Officers, Age, Pay-grade, Location, India.

INTRODUCTION

This article tries to understand how age, pay grade, and location affect career satisfaction among police officers. Law enforcement agencies maintain law and order in society, exposing the people employed in the sector to diverse challenges in their professional and personal lives. Career satisfaction is closely related to various domains of life, such as health, family, and work, and is closely linked to life satisfaction in general (Campbell et al., 1976). Career satisfaction is important for both employees and employers; it plays an essential role in an individual's overall

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happiness and well-being and can impact employees' productivity. A review of the various studies on career satisfaction among police officers shows that a research gap exists when understanding the predictors of career satisfaction, like age, pay grade and location. Age as a variable in career satisfaction seeks to understand the potential patterns or differences in the way officers at different stages of their profession and life experience and perceive their work.

Similarly, investigating the impact of pay grade aims to explain whether remuneration is related to higher levels of career satisfaction. Geographical location is another aspect, as the challenges and dynamics of policing can vary in different places. The present study tries to understand the role of pay grade, age and location on the overall career satisfaction of employees in the police sector. Understanding these factors can help employers provide a work environment that is supportive and considerate of the well-being of individuals, contributing not only to improving life satisfaction but also enhancing their commitment to work and organisation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Career satisfaction is a reaction to various career and work-related occurrences. It gauges the degree to which individuals feel their career advancements align with their personal goals, values, and preferences. This metric reflects the overall happiness of selecting a particular occupation (Jabeen & Isakovic, 2018). According to Burke (1989), career satisfaction is also positively related to life satisfaction and can be seen as a measure of one's entire quality of life. An individual's perception of their current employment can be used to gauge how satisfied they are with their current job (Burke, 1989). The contentment of employees is closely connected to their commitment, citizenship behaviour, turnover, absenteeism, devotion, and overall performance (Hossen et al., 2019). Campbell et al. (1976) state that individual satisfaction level or perceived satisfaction is based on various domains in life like family, work, health, etc. and is closely related to life satisfaction in general. Perceived career satisfaction is a crucial metric for understanding the individual whole career and life (Bozionelos, 1996; Burke, 2001). Gattiker and Larwood mentioned that demographics and success criteria are the best predictors of objective career success, mobility and career satisfaction (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988). Other significant predictors of Career Satisfaction include Career Commitment, goal orientation, diversity training, organisational learning and development feedback, and proactive personality (Pathardikar et al., 2015). However, Career satisfaction is evaluated as a measure of success determined by an individual's contentment with outcomes or accomplishments arising from their professional endeavours (Seibert et al., 1999).

Alternatively, career satisfaction is also related to the internal and external factors within an organisation (Judge et al., 1995). It is important to recognise that a person's career can progress through many stages and that an employee's opinion of their level of professional satisfaction can vary depending on their age, stage of employment, and a variety of internal and external circumstances (Dalton, Price 1997).

A person's emotional state brought about by their goals, passions, work, and skills is known as career satisfaction (Khalid & Khalid, 2015). The study of Joo and Park found that employee career satisfaction can be increased by creating a culture that is supportive and cognizant of individual variations. When motivated and valued, the workforce becomes more devoted, which may also help to lower the intention to leave (Joo & Park, 2010). Career satisfaction depends on the self-evaluation of employees while assessing their professions. Career satisfaction is linked to the pay package, and individuals carefully consider their salaries while assessing their careers. The pay package of an employee determines her career satisfaction. To support this, the research of Latif, K. and Sher, M highlighted that enhancing one's career satisfaction can be characterised as a sense of fulfilment derived from both intrinsic and extrinsic components of one's work. This offers an opportunity for growth, income, and advancement (Latif & Sher, 2012). Furthermore, the extrinsic factors associated with work success, such as promotion, income, and prestige, are more visible than intrinsic factors. Personal judgements of career success are used to evaluate intrinsic outcomes such as perceptions of accomplishment, mentoring, work satisfaction, and dedication (Poon, 2004).

Career satisfaction in police organisations is determined by the variance between the anticipated job aspects for a police officer and the actual experiences and achievements derived from their professional journey. Tjahjono, H.K., Palupi, M., & Dirgahayu, P. (2015) examined the career satisfaction of police personnel has a positive impact on effective commitment to the organisation. Employee commitment can be enhanced by taking their career aspirations into account during the hiring process (Weng et al., 2010). Mid-career job satisfaction and work experiences are closely related to each other (Burke, 1989); Burke studied this association and pointed out that police constables at the mid-career stage have greater stress and a negative work setting, which leads to work-family conflict and psychological burnout. The advanced career stage is also closely related to age and health issues. Burke found that there was a linear relationship between career stage and intentions to quit their job. Clark (2005) pointed out that working in the police sector results in negative Job satisfaction, and this leads to a mediocre work life (Clark, 2005).

The age and generation of police officers can also define career satisfaction. Literature shows that the older generation of police officers has a conflict with the newer generation of officers in the workplace due to age differences and the perception that generation X police officers are less committed to work and career and enjoy more free time and freedom (Perrot & Taylor, 1995). According to Perrot & Taylor (1995), police work involves direct contact with the public, and it leads to more negative experiences. The newer generation expects more freedom and independence and feels their pay does not justify their education level. The perception has led to a decrease in the number of new police applicants and resignations. Mineard (2006), in his study with Generation X police officers, found out that the differences between information and expectations before joining the police force and the reality are some of the key factors in career dissatisfaction and the attitude of this generation towards work. Pay scale as per the education was the second factor for satisfaction. The expectation of newer generations to be heard and their ideas implemented in the workplace is an essential factor affecting the work environment and satisfaction among these police officers (Mineard, 2006).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to examine the career satisfaction of police personnel on the basis of different age groups, different pay grades, and different places. The study also aims to analyse factors affecting higher career satisfaction of employees in the police sector.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The present study has been carried out by framing the following hypothesis:

H1: There are significant differences in career satisfaction across the different age groups.

H2: There are significant differences in career satisfaction across the different pay grades.

H3: There are significant differences in career satisfaction across the different places.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows a quantitative method. The study is primarily based on primary data, as the data was collected using the survey method. A questionnaire was designed to facilitate the survey. The survey was conducted in a Police Research Organisation Headquarters in Delhi and Police Research Training Centre (Outlying Units) in Bhopal, Ghaziabad, and Chandigarh. A sample size of 171 police personnel was collected from Group A, Group B and Group C from personnel of diverse

ranks, ranging from Constables to Deputy Superintendents of Police. Additionally, the Directors General (DGs) and Additional Directors General (ADGs) of the Police Research Training Centres were also surveyed in the study. The respondents collected from different places are shown in the following tables:

Table 1: Sample Collected from Police Research Organisation Headquarters

<i>Police Research Organisation Headquarters</i>			
<i>Pay grade</i>	<i>Group A</i>	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Group C</i>
No. of post filled	39	66	79
No. of sample collected	15	29	34

Table 2: Sample Collected from Police Research Training Centre, Bhopal

<i>Police Research Training Centre, Bhopal</i>			
<i>Pay grade</i>	<i>Group A</i>	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Group C</i>
No. of post filled	12	16	95
No. of sample collected	5	9	38

Table 3: Sample Collected from Police Research Training Centre, Ghaziabad

<i>Police Research Training Centre, Ghaziabad</i>			
<i>Pay grade</i>	<i>Group A</i>	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Group C</i>
No. of post filled	0	17	14
No. of sample collected	0	10	9

Table 4: Sample Collected from Police Research Training Centre, Chandigarh

<i>Police Research Training Centre, Chandigarh</i>			
<i>Pay grade</i>	<i>Group A</i>	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Group C</i>
No. of post filled	2	11	16
No. of sample collected	1	11	10

DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the age-wise distribution of sample respondents. Table 5 exhibits the age profile of the employees at Police Research Organisation Headquarters in Delhi and its outlying units in Bhopal, Ghaziabad and Chandigarh where 1 stands for employees in the age group 20-35 years, 2 stands for employees

in the age group 36-45 years, 3 stands for employees in the age group 46-55 years and 4 stands for employees above 55 years of age.

Table 5: The Age Profile of the Respondents in Years

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Valid	1	50	29.2
	2	54	31.6
	3	38	22.2
	4	29	17.0
Total		171	100.0

The data (Table 5) reveals that 29.2 per cent of the sample employees are in the age group of 20-35 years, 31.6 percent are in the age group 36-45 years, 22.2 percent are in the age group 46-55 years, and there are 17 percent employees who are in the age group of above 55 years. This distribution provides insight into the age demographics of the respondents in the study. The highest percentage in the age distribution data reveals that the largest proportion of the sample respondents falls within the age group of 36-45 years. This suggests that a significant portion of the employees in the study are in the mid to late stages of their careers.

Table 6 shows the pay grade-wise distribution of the respondents where 1 stands for employees in group 'A', 2 stands for employees in group 'B' and 3 stands for employees in group 'C'.

Table 6: Profile of the Pay Grade

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Valid	1	21	12.3
	2	57	33.3
	3	93	54.4
Total		171	100.0

The data from the Table 6 reveals that 12.3 percent of the respondents belong to group 'A', which typically represents higher-ranking officers. Meanwhile, a significant portion, comprising 33.3 per cent, falls into group 'B', which includes mid-level officers. The largest percentage, 54.4 per cent, of the respondents are group 'C' staff. As discussed below, several grade pay anomalies were found among the group 'C' employees at the Police Research Organisation and its outlying units.

Table 7 presents the profile of the sample respondents at the different places of posting personnel at the Police Research Organisation Headquarters and its

outlying units in Bhopal, Ghaziabad and Chandigarh. Table 7 shows the distribution of respondents across the various places of posting. In this table, 1 stands for Police Research Training Centre(Bhopal), 2 stands for Police Research Training Centre (Ghaziabad), 3 stands for Police Research Training Centre (Chandigarh) and 4 stands for Police Research Organisation Headquarters (Delhi). The size of the sample is 171, which was selected to make it representative of the population.

Table 7: Profile of Division and the Place of Posting of the Respondents

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Valid	1	52	30.4
	2	19	11.1
	3	22	12.9
	4	78	45.6
	Total	171	100.0

The data from Table 7 provides places of posting for the respondents. The majority of respondents, constituting 45.6%, fall under Police Research Organisation Headquarters (Delhi), followed by 30.4% in Police Research Training Centre (Bhopal), 12.9% in Police Research Training Centre (Chandigarh), and 11.1% in Police Research Training Centre (Ghaziabad). These percentages represent the proportion of respondents in their place of posting.

ANOVA has been used in this study to test the hypothesis.

H1: There are significant differences in career satisfaction across the different age groups.

Participants were divided into 4 groups (20- 35 years, 36- 45 years, 46-55 years, and 55 years and above).

The ANOVA results suggest that the groups' career satisfaction scores differ significantly ($F_{3, 146} = 4.020, p < .05$).

Since Levene's statistic is insignificant, the equal variance is assumed. To check for individual differences between groups post-hoc comparison was assessed using Tukey. The test indicated that the mean score for the age group (20-35 years) ($M = 3.117, SD = 0.8884$) was significantly different from the age group (36-45 years) ($M = 3.685, SD = 0.7208$). The age group (20- 35 years) ($M = 3.117, SD=0.8884$) differed significantly from the age group (46-55 years). The mean differences were significant at the 0.05 level. Table-8 summarises One-way ANOVA results:

Table 8: Career Satisfaction Across the Different Age Groups

<i>Test of Homogeneity and Variables</i>						
<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Levene's Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>F-Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
20-35 years	3.117	0.8884	2.139	0.098	4.02	0.009
36-45 years	3.685	0.7208				
46-55 years	3.63	0.8368				
55 years and above	3.56	0.9732				

Table 9: Group Difference (Age Group)

<i>Group Difference</i>				
<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval</i>	
			<i>LC</i>	<i>UC</i>
20-35 and 36-45years	-0.5677	0.009	-1.029	-0.107
20-35 and 46-55 years	-0.5129	0.045	-1.018	-0.007

H2: There are significant differences in career satisfaction across the different pay grades.

Participants were divided into 3 groups (Pay grade A, B, and C)

The ANOVA results suggest that the groups' career satisfaction scores differ significantly (Welch Statistics = 7.704, $p < 0.05$).

Since Levene's statistics is significant, the equal variance is not assumed. To check for individual differences between groups, post-hoc comparison was assessed using Games Howel. The test indicated that the mean score for pay grade A ($M = 3.997$, $SD = 0.7747$) was significantly different from the pay grade B ($M = 3.145$, $SD = 1.0041$). Pay grade B ($M = 3.145$, $SD = 1.0041$) differed significantly from pay grade C ($M = 3.583$, $SD = 0.6949$). The mean differences were significant at the 0.05 level. Table 10 summarises One-way ANOVA results:

Table 10: Career Satisfaction Across Pay Grade A, B, and C

<i>Test of Homogeneity and Variables</i>						
<i>Pay Grade</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Levene's Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Welch Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
A	3.997	0.7747	6.027	0.003	7.704	0.001
B	3.145	1.0041				
C	3.583	0.6949				

Table 11: Group Difference (Pay Grade)

<i>Group Difference</i>				
<i>Pay Grade</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval</i>	
			<i>LC</i>	<i>UC</i>
Group A and B	0.8521	0.001	0.31	1.394
Group B and C	-0.4377	0.014	-0.802	-0.074

H3: There are significant differences in career satisfaction across the different places. Participants were divided into 4 groups according to the location (Delhi, Ghaziabad, Chandigarh, and Bhopal)

The ANOVA results suggest that the groups' career satisfaction scores differ significantly according to the location (Welch Statistics = 28.955, $p < .01$).

Since Levene's statistic is significant, the equal variance is not assumed. To check for individual differences between groups, post-hoc comparison was assessed using Games Howel. The test indicated that the mean score for location Bhopal ($M = 4.023$, $SD = 0.3874$) was significantly different from the location Delhi ($M = 3.028$, $SD = 0.9175$). Location Bhopal ($M = 4.023$, $SD = 0.3874$) differed significantly from the location Chandigarh ($M = 3.336$, $SD = 0.8381$). The location Chandigarh ($M = 3.336$, $SD = 0.8381$) differed significantly from the location Ghaziabad ($M = 4.116$, $SD = 0.3790$). The location Ghaziabad ($M = 4.116$, $SD = 0.3790$) differed significantly from the location Delhi ($M = 3.028$, $SD = 0.9175$). The mean differences were significant at the 0.05 level. Table 12 summarises One-way ANOVA results:

Table 12: Career satisfaction across different location
(Bhopal, Ghaziabad, Chandigarh and Delhi)

<i>Test of Homogeneity and Variables</i>						
<i>Location</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Levene's Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Welch Statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Bhopal	4.023	0.3874	13.125	0.001	28.955	0.001
Ghaziabad	4.116	0.379				
Chandigarh	3.336	0.8381				
Delhi	3.028	0.9175				

Table 13: Group Difference (Location: Bhopal, Chandigarh, Ghaziabad, and Delhi)

<i>Group Difference</i>				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval</i>	
			<i>LC</i>	<i>UC</i>
Bhopal and Chandigarh	0.6867	0.006	0.173	1.2
Bhopal and Delhi	0.995	0.001	0.687	1.303
Ghaziabad and Chandigarh	0.7794	0.003	0.239	1.32
Ghaziabad and Delhi	1.0877	0.001	0.729	1.447

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The study’s main objective was to find whether career satisfaction is impacted by age, pay grade and location. The findings suggest that individual’s career satisfaction levels vary significantly based on their age; individual’s career satisfaction levels vary significantly based on their pay grade, and career satisfaction varies significantly based on their location. Our results reveal that middle aged high ranking police officers who are posted in location of national capital or nearby are likely to have more career satisfaction.

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ENSURING PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY IN INDIA: DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF CITIZEN'S CHARTERS

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Abstract

Transparency, accountability, and responsiveness are the keys to providing quality service to the public in any society. Governments worldwide have undertaken reformative initiatives to ensure public service quality, with the Citizen's Charter being a substantial initiative in this direction. This concept was introduced in the United Kingdom and was adopted by India in 1997. This paper analyses the development and application of the citizen's charter in India. It focuses on eight Charters selected from Five Ministries, analysed them based on the major components such as – vision and mission statement, service standards and timeline, grievance redress process, responsibility centre, list of clients and stakeholders, and the expectations from citizens/stakeholders. Additionally, the publication timeline of the citizen charter is also analysed. The study's finding suggests that the declaration of the citizen's charter must prioritise Accessibility, Availability, and Affordability (AAA) along with the other parameters of effective delivery of public service at any level.

Keywords: Citizen's Charter, Good Governance, Public Service Delivery, Grievance Reddressal, India.

INTRODUCTION

Public administration is the instrument for expressing values and articulating individual and societal preferences. The citizen-centric perspective of governance

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prioritises the accountability of public servants towards citizens, the way they respond and serve the public, and their role as the facilitators of the services. It involves listening to their choices, and catering to their needs and expectations while being motivated by commitment to the public service and common interest. At the same time, transparency, as the major element of good governance, ensures accountability, entails fixing responsibility at the appropriate levels, fosters public participation, and upholds public trust. Apart from the government and market, the citizens are the most important stakeholders in the process of the governance of any democratic governance and they must be informed and empowered. Another important aspect of good governance is the effective delivery of public service, which can only be ensured by offering choices to the people, providing adequate platforms to express their preferences, listening to their voices, responding to their expectations, ensuring the maximum level of public satisfaction and lastly, addressing their grievances. The citizens are no longer passive recipients of whatever government offers, nowadays they are more active and vocal, openly expressing their needs, priorities, and expectations. They demand fair and equitable treatment, protection of human rights, and excellence in service delivery – both in qualitative and quantitative terms; they expect a safe, clean, and healthy society; they need clean air, nutritious food, and safe drinking water; in fact, they expect the public administration to deliver better results. No government can ignore its voice, so it must try “to develop policies and design services that respond to individual’s needs and are relevant to their circumstances” (Holmes, 2011, p. 1). Globally governments have devised different tools to ensure quality services. One such tool is the citizen’s charter, first enunciated and executed in 1991 by the John Major’s Government in the UK, to enhance the quality of public services to align them with the citizen’s expectations.

In India, the first call regarding the Citizen’s Charter echoed in the ‘National Debate for Responsive Administration’ commenced in 1996 by the Government of India. The concept was officially adopted in May 1997, after receiving considerable support from the Chief Ministers’ Conference in 1997. As public service delivery is an important aspect of governance in any democratic government, analysing its practice in India is imperative. This paper analyses the development and application of the citizen’s charter in India using a rigorous literature review to trace its evolution and examine its practice. The findings highlight the significance of ensuring Accessibility, Availability, and Affordability (AAA) in public services, along with the other parameters of effective delivery of services at any level.

CONCEPT OF CITIZEN’S CHARTER

The motive force behind the declaration of the Citizens’ Charter is to make public services more citizen-centric by prioritising demand-driven services over supply-

driven ones. It is a tool to transform an organisation into a more transparent, accountable, and oriented toward citizens. A Citizens' Charter is a declaration by an organisation that delineates the citizens' entitlement to a particular service, service standards, the users' expectations, and the grievance redressal mechanism available to the latter in case standards are not met. In a broad context, it is a set of organisational commitments concerning the standard delivery of service.

After the introduction of the concept of the Citizen's Charter in 1991, the UK Government's White Paper (1991) titled 'The Citizen's Charter: Raising the Standard' elucidated that "the Citizen's Charter is the most comprehensive programme ever to raise quality, increase choice, secure better value and extended accountability. We believe that it will set a pattern, not only for Britain but for other countries of the world" (p. 4). The White Paper further describes that "every citizen is entitled to expect standards, openness, information, choices, non-discrimination, accessibility, and good explanation in case of not meeting the service standards" (p. 5). Further, in 1998, the Tony Blair's Government re-introduced this programme, which was renamed as *Services First*. The six defining principles of this Charter as mentioned in the White Paper were as follows:

- Quality: maintaining the public service quality
- Choice: access to competing service providers
- Standards: defining service standards and provisions available in case of poor performance
- Value: assurance of efficient use of citizen's money (taxpayers)
- Accountability: collective (organisational) as well as individual
- Transparency: in schemes/rules and procedure/grievance redressal

In India, the task of coordination, formulation, and execution of the Citizens' Charters is entrusted to the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG). In its publication, 'Citizen's Charters – A Handbook' it underscores the programme as a "response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out while dealing with the organisations providing public services." (p.3) The DARPG facilitates government departments/ organisations to declare effective charters by providing detailed guidelines. According to DARPG, a charter must contain the following components:

- Vision and Mission Statement
- Details of organisation's business
- Clients' detail
- Particulars of services rendered to the users
- Details of machinery for grievance redressal and its accessibility

- Expectations from the clients (the user is supposed to provide the required documents to avail a timely service)

Underscoring Citizen's Charters, DARPG pointed out that "these charters were to include first, standards of services as well as time limits that the public could reasonably expect for service delivery, avenues of grievance redress, and a provision for independent scrutiny through the involvement of citizens and consumer groups" (p. 5).

There is no updated compiled data available regarding the number of total published Citizen's Charters. According to DARPG, till March 2005, a total of 107 Charters have been declared by the Central Government entities (Ministries/ Departments/Organisations) and 629 Charters by the State & UT authorities. As per the information accessed from the website of the government of India, in November 2024, 98 and 25 Charters were published by the Union and State governments respectively. <https://goicharters.nic.in/public/website/home>.

In addition to the UK Citizen Charter model, the Indian model has introduced an important feature of expectations from the users, i.e., the responsibilities of the clients. Furthermore, to ensure that the Charters cater to their client's needs, the involvement of stakeholders such as citizen associations and consumer organisations, etc. is emphasised in the Citizens' Charter formulation and implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development and application of Citizen's Charters in India has been a subject of critical investigation, identifying challenges and offering strategies for ensuring public service quality.

The study by Haque (2005) scrutinizes the limitations of the citizen's charters in India and analyses the effects of social exclusion on the Charter's efficacy. He argued that the reach of charters is constrained by prevailing socio-economic inequalities in the country. Underprivileged people, because of their limited access to information and resources, often remain excluded from the benefits of such initiatives. The study concludes by underscoring the need for appropriate measures to address the social exclusion issue, as a prerequisite for the effective implementation of the Charters.

The paper by Paul (2008) analyses the growth and efficacy of the Citizen's Charter during the first decade of its implementation. The study argues that though this initiative was undertaken to ensure transparent, accountable, and user-friendly public services, it has failed to do so. The study highlights the relevance of the underlying model to the Indian context but holds that an absence of a comprehensive approach and the lack of proper implementation mechanisms at the different levels are responsible for its ineffectiveness.

A comprehensive study by the Public Affairs Centre (2007) entitled 'India's Citizen's Charters: A Decade of Experience' assessed the growth and effectiveness of citizen's charters in India during the past decade. The PAC appraised approximately 760 charters countrywide. The study incorporates valuable insights from 1,100 clients and more than 320 officials from various departments. In addition to the analysis of state and sector-wise distribution of Citizen's Charters, PAC also analysed charters based on their design and content, awareness and accessibility, implementation strategies, and impact on service delivery. While discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the Citizen's Charter, the study underscores the need for devising an effective implication mechanism.

The study by the Indian Institute of Public Administration – IIPA (2008) analytically reviewed the implementation of the Citizen's Charter in India. The study identified twenty-eight parameters to evaluate the programme and reviewed 47 Charters of various governments Ministries and Departments. This analytical study found the existence of many outdated Charters lacking precision on service standards, commitments, and mechanisms; and recommended an immediate action plan for ministries/departments to implement the programme effectively.

The case study by Nigussa (2014) critically examines the conceptual understanding and execution of the Citizens' Charter in India, UK, and South Africa and draws the lessons for Ethiopia. He also described the theoretical underpinnings of the charter approach, followed by the experience review. The study found conceptual ambiguity, poor record maintenance, casual approach towards reforms, inadequate consultation with stakeholders, and incapacity to implement, as the major obstacles hindering the efficient implementation of the citizen's charters.

The insights from the above-reviewed studies highlight the significance of social inclusivity, regular updates to the charters, and enhancing stakeholder engagement, to make Citizen's Charters an effective instrument for augmenting the quality of public service.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study analyses the application of Citizen's Charter in India. Eight Citizen's Charters are purposively selected from Five Ministries such as Ministries of Education, Health & Family Welfare, Women & Child Development, MSME and Housing & Urban Affairs for the purpose of this study. These ministries were selected for their extensive public interaction and their relevance to critical social sectors such as education, health, and urban development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of eight citizen charters including two from the MoE (Department of Higher Education (DHE) & Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)), three from MoHUA (Citizen's Charter (MoUD), Citizen's Charter (CPWD) and Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD) and one from each of the remaining selected Ministries, i.e. MoHFW, MWCD and MSME are examined. Table given below depicts a comparative analysis of these eight Charters. Each Charter is analysed in the light of the major components- vision and mission statement, service standards and timeline, grievance redress process, responsibility center, list of clients and stakeholders, and the expectations from citizens/stakeholders. Additionally, the publication timeline of the citizen charter is also analysed.

Publication Timeline

The publication timeline analysis indicates striking disparities in the updating of Citizen's Charters across the selected ministries. Only the MoHFW and the MWCD ensured regular revisions of the Charters to align with contemporary service delivery standards. In contrast, the MoE exhibits uneven updating, with the DHE revising its charter in September 2022, while the DoSEL last updated its version in April 2020. MoHUA shows alarming stagnation, with its charters last updated between 2011 and 2015, demonstrating a big failure to address the present-day requirements. Even the Ministry of Urban Development was merged with the Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation to form the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) on July 6, 2017.

Comparative Analysis of the Citizen's Charters of the Key Ministries of the Government of India

Components of Citizen's Charter		Ministry of Education (MoE)		Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)	Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME)	Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD)	Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)		
		Department of Higher Education (DHE)	Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL)				Citizen's /Client's Charter (MoUD)	Citizen's /Client's Charter (CPWD)	Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD)
Publication Date		September 2022	April 2020	December 2023	*	2023	December 2011	April 2014	April 2015
Vision and Mission Statement		✓	✓	✓	*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Services/Service Standards and Timeline		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grievance Redress Process	Grievance Lodging Process	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	✓	*	*
	Contact and Timeline	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓
	Expectations from the Citizens with regard to Public Grievance Redress	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*	✓	*
Responsibility centre		✓	*	✓	*	✓	✓	*	*
List of clients and Stakeholders		✓	*	✓	*	✓	✓	✓	*
Expectations from citizens/stakeholders		✓	*	✓	*	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Data compiled from various government websites.

Moreover, no publication date has been mentioned by the Ministry of MSME which questions its transparency and accountability. Such irregularities indicate serious pitfalls in governance practices. Moreover, outdated charters also undermine their significance as a tool for enhancing quality, transparency, and accountability in public service delivery.

Vision and Mission Statements

Data in the above Table indicates that most of the Citizen's Charters have mentioned their Vision and Mission statements except for the Ministry of MSME. Mission & vision statements are important for setting the strategic direction and aligning services with citizens' expectations and their absence may hinder organisations' ability to communicate its services and service standards and priorities to all stakeholders.

Services/Service Standards and Timeline

All evaluated citizen's charters include service standards and timelines, representing a common commitment to defining service expectations and delivery benchmarks. However, the detailed study of each Citizen Charter depicts that the charters declared by both the departments of the MoE and the Citizen's Charter (MoUD) of the MoHUA have provided the details like the service to be offered, the name and contact of the responsible person, the process to be followed, the documents required to avail the services, and the fee. Such a comprehensive approach ensures transparency and empowers citizens with adequate knowledge to access and use services effectively. Such comprehensive information provides all required information to the citizens/consumers. The success indicators have also been acknowledged by the MoHFW and the MoWCD. Contrary to this, the Citizen's Charter (CPWD) and Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD) declared by the MoHUA the service details are mostly descriptive and vague, lacking information regarding the name and contact of the responsible person, the process to be followed, documents required to avail the services, and fees, etc. The information related to the name and contact of the responsible person, the process to be followed, documents required to avail of the services, and fees, etc., is absent from the charter declared by the Ministry of MSME. The absence of key information from the documents reflects gaps in clarity and responsiveness, which hinders the main motive behind the declaration of the Citizen's Charter.

Grievance Redress Process

The grievance redress process is analysed under the three subheadings: grievance lodging process, contact and timeline, and expectations from the citizens about

public grievance redress. The analysis of the grievance redress process reveals that some ministries effectively address the public grievances system, while others exhibit notable shortcomings in the declaration of the grievance redress process-related information. It is noted that the charters declared by the MoE, the MoHFW, and the MoWCD have provided adequate information under all three subheadings, which indicates their assurance of a robust and transparent grievance redress mechanism. On the other hand, the information regarding how grievances can be lodged and what is expected from citizens in this regard is absent in the charter declared by the Ministry of MSME. It indicates a lack of clarity in its process.

As far as the MoHUA is concerned, it performed poorly in this regard, with the Citizen's Charter (CPWD) and Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD) lacking grievance lodging process details, and the latter also missing contact and timeline information. Moreover, the Citizen's Charter (MoUD) and Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD) of the MoHUA failed to outline the expectations from the citizens regarding the public grievance redress, hindering the organisation's engagement with the stakeholders. These gaps indicate clear inconsistencies in the objectives and implementations of the Citizen's Charter.

Responsibility Centre

The analysis found an absence of clearly defined responsibility centers in the charters declared by the DoSEL, the Ministry of MSME, the Citizen's Charter (CPWD), and the Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD) of the MoHUA.

List of Clients and Stakeholders

The data depicted in the Table shows the absence of the list of clients and stakeholders in the charters declared by the DoSEL, the Ministry of MSME, and the Citizen Maintenance Charter (CPWD) of the MoHUA. Such omission hinders the inclusivity and stakeholders' engagement, that is fundamental to effective public service delivery. Identification of the clients and stakeholders is important for instituting target beneficiaries and ensuring that the services are designed to cater to their specific needs. In the absence of a defined client and stakeholder framework, these charters lose their relevance and fail to cater to the diverse needs and demands of the intended beneficiaries, henceforth, limiting their effectiveness in ensuring citizen-centric governance.

Expectations from Citizens/Stakeholders

The analysis reveals that the majority of the Citizen's Charters reviewed in this study clearly outline expectations from citizens and stakeholders, reflecting a

proactive approach to fostering mutual accountability and engagement. However, the DoSEL and the Ministry of MSME stand out for their failure to include this critical component.

Clearly outlined expectations from clients/stakeholders are important for ensuring quality in public service delivery, as they confirm clarity, collaboration, and collective responsibility in accomplishing demarcated service standards. The absence of this key element in these charters points out a missed opportunity to initiate a constructive dialogue between the government as the service provider and the targeted recipients, considerably limiting the overall impact of public service delivery.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Adopting the idea of the Citizen's Charter is a good move toward the assurance of quality, transparency, and accountability in public service delivery. However, the study found that a mere declaration of the Citizen's Charter is not enough; their implementation must align with the initiative's envisioned objectives. Based on the findings, the following suggestions are proposed:

First, the Citizens' Charters must be revised and updated timely to make sure their relevance to the contemporary public service delivery standards. The ministries that have not updated their Citizen's Charter for more than 10 years should be identified and assisted on a priority basis to bring the Citizen's Charter up to date.

Second, a uniform format of the Citizen's Charters must be developed. Conformity to established design guidelines can be maintained by the internal and external level vetting process before the declaration of the Charters.

Third, service standards must be spelled out clearly to ensure the realization of the goals. Vague standards can mislead the actions and, henceforth the quality of the services.

Fourth, organisations must publicize their Charters through various awareness campaigns. These days, even social media can also be used as an effective means in this regard. Even higher education institutions can be used for the dissemination of the Information. At the grassroots level also such awareness programmes must be organised, it will help in ensuring accessibility to the end user.

Fifth, as civil society is a key stakeholder in the governance process, must be consulted during the formulation of the Charters and for information dissemination.

Citizen's Charters in India exhibit diverse levels of effective implementation in the various ministries and departments. While some ministries ensure consistent updates and explicit service standards, others exhibit outdated and incomplete

charters, defeating their purpose. Citizen's Charter declaration by an institute equips the clients/ stakeholders with the relevant information about the services and service standards (including documents required for the service, fee, if any, and timeline) to be ensured by the service provider. Such a declaration is very useful for the client to know the service availability, accessibility, and affordability. So, to fulfill their potential, Citizen's Charters must prioritize Availability, Accessibility, and Affordability (AAA) alongside transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

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USER SATISFACTION WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF COMMON SERVICE CENTRES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: A STUDY OF KHIDMAT CENTRES IN UDHAMPUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study examines user satisfaction with the performance of Khidmat Centres in Udhampur district, Jammu and Kashmir. These centres, part of the national Common Service Centres (CSCs) initiative, aim to deliver essential services to rural areas, yet face significant implementation challenges. Using a cross-sectional descriptive study design, data was collected from 200 respondents across four villages, revealing high satisfaction with service efficiency and responsiveness, particularly in speed, accuracy, accessibility, and cost-saving benefits. However, transparency and accountability emerged as areas needing improvement, with users reporting moderate satisfaction regarding communication, service charges, and data security. The findings highlight the importance of context-specific assessments to enhance CSC performance, recommending targeted improvements in service delivery and inclusivity to better serve Udhampur's diverse population. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on CSCs and provides actionable insights for policymakers and service providers to strengthen e-governance in the region.

Keywords: Common Service Centres, Jammu and Kashmir, Khidmat Centres, User Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology and the growing emphasis on digital governance have driven governments worldwide to adopt innovative approaches

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to delivering services to their citizens. In India, the National E-Governance Plan introduced Common Service Centres (CSCs) as a critical component of its strategy, aiming to provide integrated front-end delivery points for government, private, and social sector services to rural areas. These CSCs were envisioned as catalysts for transforming service delivery, bridging the digital divide, and empowering citizens with accessible, essential services (Impact-Assessment-Report-for-CSC-by-ITU-May-2013.Pdf, n.d.; and Raja et al., 2012). Despite their promise, the implementation of CSCs has faced significant challenges, making a thorough evaluation of their performance and user satisfaction essential (Javvaji & Reddy, n.d.; and Naqshbandi & Fazili, 2018).

In Jammu and Kashmir, CSCs operate under the banner of Khidmat Centres, playing a crucial role in delivering a broad spectrum of services. From digital literacy and government schemes to financial services, these centres are central to enhancing service accessibility in the region (Naqshbandi & Fazili, 2018; Ahmed and Zehra (2022); and Choudhary et al., 2021). Jammu and Kashmir has made notable progress in e-governance, providing 100% of their services through their identified Single Unified Service Delivery Portal, e-UNNAT (NeSDA_Jan_Feb_2024.Pdf, n.d.). The region offers the maximum number of e-services among States and Union Territories, achieving full-service delivery through this portal (Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, 2023; and NeSDA_August.Pdf, n.d.). Jammu and Kashmir has become the first Union Territory in India to completely switch to a digital method of administration, leading the way in the digital transformation of governance. All governmental and administrative services in Jammu and Kashmir are now offered digitally. The declaration was made during a meeting of the Committee of Secretaries.

Jammu and Kashmir have made significant strides from physical files to e-Office (Version 7. x). More than 500 offices, down to the tehsil level, are now onboarded. E-files are accessible to all officials, regardless of their location. This transition to paperless office management has resulted in a disposal rate of 96%, saved nearly two months of working time, and reduced costs by approximately Rs 400 crores annually (Contributor, 2023). Despite challenges such as geographical barriers, security concerns, and connectivity issues, the state has successfully rolled out a significant number of Khidmat Centres, facilitated by the Jammu and Kashmir Bank as the Service Centre Agency (Dar & Mehta, 2020; and Mehraj & Kaur, 2018). Previous studies in Jammu and Kashmir have highlighted the impact of Khidmat Centres, revealing both successes and challenges. For instance, research by Naqshbandi and Fazili (2018) emphasised the centres' role in providing essential services like electricity bill payments and passport applications while noting limitations in G2C services (Naqshbandi & Fazili, 2018). Ahmed and Zehra (2022) reported positive feedback from village-level entrepreneurs regarding Khidmat Centres' role in promoting good governance (Ahmed & Zehra, 2022).

The Udhampur district, characterized by its diverse demographic and geographical landscape (About District|District Udhampur, Government of Jammu and Kashmir|India, n.d.), offers a unique context to assess the effectiveness of the Khidmat Centres. Evaluating their performance and user satisfaction is vital to understanding their impact and identifying areas for improvement. This study focuses on user satisfaction with Khidmat Centres in Udhampur, examining various dimensions such as service quality, accessibility, and overall efficiency. By analyzing user feedback and performance metrics, this research aims to uncover both the strengths and weaknesses of these centres. The insights gained will help enhance service delivery and ensure that Khidmat Centres effectively serve the needs of Udhampur's residents. The findings will offer actionable recommendations to improve the performance of Common Service Centres (CSCs) and enhance the delivery of e-governance services to rural citizens in the region.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous studies have been conducted to assess the impact of CSCs in various regions across India, shedding light on their successes, shortcomings, and the factors influencing user satisfaction. Notably, studies conducted by Naqshbandi and Fazili (2018) in Jammu and Kashmir highlighted the significant impact of Khidmat centres on citizen services such as electricity bill payment, passport application, bank account opening, payment/recharge of cellular phone bills, and electoral services. However, the absence of government-to-citizen (G2C) services emerged as a significant challenge, leading these centres to evolve as more business-to-customer (B2C) entities (Naqshbandi & Fazili, 2018).

In contrast, Ahmed and Zehra (2022) reported a positive response from village-level entrepreneurs (VLEs) regarding the functioning of Khidmat centres in Jammu and Kashmir, showcasing the role of E-Governance in promoting good governance (Ahmed & Zehra, 2022). Regional variations in CSC performance were observed, as Uthaman and Vasanthagopal (2023) identified service quality and transparency as key success factors in Kerala (Uthaman & Vasanthagopal, 2023), while Bhuvana & Vasantha (2020) emphasized Trust, Usability, and Information Quality as major components influencing user satisfaction in Tamil Nadu's Tirupur district ("ASSESSMENT OF RURAL CITIZENS SATISFACTION ON THE SERVICE QUALITY OF COMMON SERVICE CENTERS (CSCS) OF E-GOVERNANCE," 2020). Warale & Diwakar (2015) found that all citizens are satisfied with service quality parameters i.e., Transparency, ease of use, timeliness, service cost, accuracy, promptness and cooperation except privacy (Warale, 2015).

However, not all regions experienced the same level of satisfaction. Tirupati & Nandakumar (2019) revealed user dissatisfaction in Tamil Nadu's Vellore district due to infrastructural challenges, particularly low power supply and poor

internet connectivity in rural areas (Thirupathi & Nandakumar, n.d.). In Andhra Pradesh's YSR district, Javvaji & Reddy (2019) found overall citizen satisfaction with Mee-seva service delivery, with responsiveness being the only area of concern (Javvaji & Reddy, n.d.). Ingavale (2019) found that implementing Maha e-seva Centres did not increase transparency or decrease corruption because citizens had to pay more money to obtain the necessary documents on time. VLEs also charge more fees to citizens because they cannot afford to provide the services at the government-prescribed rates and because citizens want their certificates at the earliest (R. Ingavale, 2019).

The diverse findings from these studies underscore the importance of context-specific assessments to understand the ground reality of CSC performance and user satisfaction. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting a study in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, evaluating the level of user satisfaction with CSC services and identifying the key factors influencing this satisfaction. By providing actionable recommendations based on user feedback and preferences, this study seeks to facilitate improvements in CSC performance and enhance the delivery of e-governance services to rural citizens in the region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study is to assess user satisfaction with Khidmat Centres in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on the dimensions of efficiency, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability. To achieve this, a cross-sectional descriptive study design was employed. A sample of 200 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling technique from four villages: Omara, Roun, Jakhani, and Mongri. The sample was proportionate to the population size of each village, with 33 respondents from Omara (population 1,384), 78 from Roun (population 3,303), 63 from Jakhani (population 2,675), and 26 from Mongri (population 1,081) (About District|District Udhampur, Government of Jammu and Kashmir|India, n.d.). Data collection involved administering a structured survey questionnaire, which included questions on demographic variables and aspects of user satisfaction concerning efficiency, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability. Additionally, secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and government reports were reviewed to support the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean, variance, and standard deviation, to provide insights into user satisfaction. Satisfaction levels were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Highly Dissatisfied (1) to Highly Satisfied (5). The analysis focused on determining the mean scores and variability for each attribute to draw inferences and develop actionable recommendations for improving the performance of Khidmat Centres.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Variables

Table 1 provides information on the distribution of respondents based on age, gender, caste, occupation, and education. The majority of respondents are between 18-30 years old (44%), indicating a younger user base for Khidmat Centres. This could suggest that younger individuals are more inclined to use digital services provided by Khidmat Centres. A significant portion (24.5%) is between 30-40 years old, which could imply that middle-aged users also rely on Khidmat Centres services. A higher percentage of male respondents (60%) compared to female respondents (40%). This gender disparity could indicate either a higher usage of Khidmat Centres by males or a greater willingness to participate in the study among males. The majority of users belong to the General category (80.5%), with smaller percentages from the SC (12%) and ST (7.5%) categories. This distribution could reflect the demographic makeup of the area or indicate different levels of access or usage among various caste groups. A large numbers of respondents are self-employed (54%) or students (30%). This suggests that Khidmat Centres are significantly utilized by individuals running their businesses and students, possibly for services like banking, bill payments, and educational purposes. Government employees (6.5%) and household respondents (5%) form smaller segments of the user base, indicating varied usage across different occupational groups. The majority of respondents have a secondary education (42.5%) or higher, including postgraduates (37.5%). This implies that literate and educated individuals are more likely to use Khidmat Centre services. There is a small percentage of illiterate users (4.5%) and those with primary education (2.5%), indicating that Khidmat Centres are also accessible to individuals with lower educational backgrounds, though to a lesser extent. These demographics suggest that Khidmat Centres should focus on providing educational services, online applications, and digital payments for younger users, while also encouraging female participation through women-centric programs. Ensuring inclusive service delivery for underrepresented SC and ST groups is important, as is offering business-related services and educational support for self-employed individuals and students. Advanced services should be available for educated users, with user-friendly options for those with lower educational backgrounds.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Age, Gender, Caste, Occupation and Education (N = 200)

<i>Demographic Variables</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Age (in years)	18-30	88	44
	30-40	49	24.5
	40-50	44	22
	50-60	19	9.5
Gender	Male	120	60
	Female	80	40
Caste	General	161	80.5
	SC	24	12
	ST	15	7.5
Occupation	Owner Cultivator	4	2
	Agricultural Labour	5	2.5
	Government Employee	13	6.5
	Self Employed	108	54
	Student	60	30
	Household	10	5
Education	Illiterate	9	4.5
	Primary	5	2.5
	Secondary	85	42.5
	Degree/Diploma	26	13
	Post Graduate/Above	75	37.5

Note: n = Frequency; % = Percentage; SC = Scheduled Caste; ST = Scheduled Tribe

Citizens’ Experiences with Khidmat Centres

Table 2 provides several key insights regarding citizens’ experiences with Khidmat Centres. Firstly, knowledge about Khidmat Centres primarily spreads through social networks, with 42% learning from relatives and 21% from friends, suggesting that citizens primarily rely on personal networks and government sources for awareness of Khidmat Centres, indicating the importance of interpersonal communication and official channels in promoting these centres. Government sources and media contribute less to awareness, at 16% and 10% respectively. Secondly, most respondents (55%) visit Khidmat Centres monthly, suggesting that while Khidmat Centres are a vital resource, they may not be a daily necessity for most users. The proximity of Khidmat Centres to residences is generally convenient, with 78.5% living within half a kilometre, which likely enhances accessibility and usability. Although a

significant number of respondents have Khidmat Centres near their residences, there is still room for improvement in terms of accessibility, especially for those living farther away. Utility services are the predominant reason for Khidmat Centre visits, with 84% of respondents availing of these services, highlighting the critical role Khidmat Centres play in providing essential services. There is a substantial demand for more Khidmat Centre services, as 73.5% express a desire for expansion, indicating a high level of satisfaction and reliance on Khidmat Centres. Despite the high usage, awareness of the citizen charter is low, with only 12% being informed, suggesting a gap in communication or outreach efforts. Perceptions of corruption reduction due to Khidmat Centres are mixed; while 47.5% believe corruption has moderately reduced, 21% see no change, and 5% feel it has increased. This mixed perception indicates that while Khidmat Centres are viewed positively, they are not universally seen as transformative in reducing corruption. Facilities at Khidmat Centres are generally rated positively, with 51% rating them as good and 19% as excellent. However, 15% believe that there is room for improvement, indicating that while basic amenities are satisfactory, enhancements could further improve user experience. Overall, the data suggests that Khidmat Centres are valued for their convenience and utility services, but there is a need for increased awareness, improved facilities, and potentially more comprehensive anti-corruption measures.

Table 2: Citizens’ Experiences with Khidmat Centres (N = 200)

<i>Citizen’s Experiences with Khidmat Centres</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Source of knowledge about Khidmat Centres	Friends	42	21
	Relatives	84	42
	Gov	32	16
	Paper/media/tv	20	10
	Others	22	11
Frequency of visiting Khidmat Centres	Daily	24	12
	Once in a week	30	15
	Once in 15 days	44	22
	Monthly	110	55
Distance between Khidmat Centres and their residence:	<Half KMs	157	78.5
	Half-one KMs	9	4.5
	One- Two KMs	14	7
	>Two KMs	20	10
Services availed at Khidmat Centres	Education	27	13.5
	Utility	168	84
	Revenue	4	2
	Agriculture	1	0.5

<i>Citizen's Experiences with Khidmat Centres</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Need more Khidmat Centre services	Yes	147	73.5
	No	53	26.5
Awareness regarding citizen charter	Yes	24	12
	No	176	88
Reduction in corruption after the introduction of Khidmat Centres	Completely Eliminated	9	4.5
	Greatly Reduced	44	22
	Moderately Reduced	95	47.5
	No Change	42	21
	Corruption increased	10	5
Facilities provided at Khidmat Centres like Chairs to sit, Fans, drinking water, ambience and environment.	Excellent	38	19
	Very good	11	5.5
	Good	102	51
	Poor	19	9.5
	Needs Improvement	30	15

Note: n = Frequency; % = Percentage

User Satisfaction Regarding Efficiency

Table 3 shows the distribution of beneficiary satisfaction levels with the efficiency of Khidmat Centres. The means for all the attributes of efficiency are above 3.7, indicating a high level of satisfaction across all measured attributes. For the attribute Quickness (speed) in Service Delivery, the satisfaction level is relatively high with a mean score of 3.745, though not the highest among the attributes. This suggests that while most users are satisfied with the speed of service delivery, there is room for improvement. The higher standard deviation for this attribute (1.0099) indicates a wide range of opinions, with some users potentially being very dissatisfied or very satisfied. Concerning the attribute Accuracy of Service Delivery, users are generally quite satisfied with the mean score of 3.94. The moderate standard deviation (0.7186) suggests that most users' opinions are closer to the mean, indicating consistent satisfaction levels. Accessibility of Receiving Services received one of the highest satisfaction scores (3.995), indicating that users find the services easily accessible. The relatively low standard deviation (0.5788) implies that users' opinions are closely clustered around the mean, showing general agreement. Users are highly satisfied with the attribute 'Khidmat Centres save Travel Cost' with a mean score of 4.015. The low standard deviation (0.5048) indicates strong

consensus among users regarding the cost-saving benefits. The attribute ‘Khidmat Centres save Time’ has the highest mean score of 4.06, suggesting that users are most satisfied with the time-saving benefits of the service centres. The low standard deviation (0.4432) indicates a high level of agreement among users about the time-saving benefits. With respect to the attribute ‘Khidmat Centres Services are Convenient’ users are highly satisfied with the mean score of 3.965. The moderate standard deviation (0.5948) suggests a general agreement among users, though with some variation in opinions. Overall, the user satisfaction ratings reflect positively on the services provided, with certain attributes standing out as particularly well-regarded. However, continuous efforts to enhance the quickness of service delivery could further improve overall satisfaction.

Table 3: User Satisfaction Regarding Efficiency (N = 200)

<i>Attributes of Ef- ficiency</i>	<i>%</i>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
	<i>H.D.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>C.S.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>H.S.</i>			
Quickness (speed) in service delivery	0	21.5	2.5	56	20	3.745	1.019975	1.0099
Accuracy of service delivery	0	8	5	72	15	3.94	0.5164	0.7186
Accessibility of receiving services	0	4.5	3.5	80	12	3.995	0.334975	0.5788
Khidmat Centres save travel cost	0	3.5	1.5	85	10	4.015	0.254775	0.5048
Khidmat Centres save time	0	2	1	86	11	4.06	0.1964	0.4432
Khidmat Centres are convenient	0	5	4.5	79.5	11	3.965	0.353775	0.5948

Note: % = Percentage, H.D. = Highly Dissatisfied, D. = Dissatisfied, C.S. = Can't Say, S. = Satisfied and H.S. = Highly Satisfied

User Satisfaction Regarding Responsiveness

Table 4 shows the distribution of beneficiary satisfaction levels with the responsiveness of Khidmat Centres. The means for all attributes are above 3.6, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction across all measured attributes. The mean of the attribute ‘VLE is cooperative and supportive’ is the highest among the attributes (4.01), indicating that users are highly satisfied. The standard deviation (0.6707) indicates a moderate range of opinions, with most users leaning towards satisfaction. The attribute ‘Promptness (timely response) in service delivery’ with mean (3.86) shows users are generally satisfied with the promptness of service delivery. The moderate standard deviation (0.6931) suggests a fair range of opinions, indicating some variability in user experiences. The mean of

the attribute ‘The patience of the VLE in giving the required information’ (3.76) indicates that users are fairly satisfied with the patience of the VLE, although there is room for improvement. Its higher standard deviation (0.7761) suggests a wider range of opinions, with some users potentially being less satisfied. In the attribute ‘The expertise of the VLE in giving the required information’ users appreciate the expertise of the VLE, but the satisfaction level is slightly lower compared to other attributes (3.815). The standard deviation (0.8067) indicates considerable variability in user satisfaction regarding VLE expertise. This attribute ‘Updating the latest information regarding Khidmat Centre services’ has the lowest mean score (3.63), suggesting that users feel there is significant room for improvement in how information is updated. The high standard deviation (0.8143) indicates a broad range of opinions, with some users possibly being quite dissatisfied. Overall, while users value the responsiveness of the services, particularly the supportive nature of VLEs, there are clear opportunities to enhance the timely updating of information and to ensure consistent expertise and patience from VLEs to further boost user satisfaction.

Table 4: User Satisfaction Regarding Responsiveness (N = 200)

<i>Attributes of Responsiveness</i>	<i>%</i>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
	<i>H.D</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>C.S.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>H.S.</i>			
VLE is cooperative and supportive.	0	5	7	70	8.0	4.01	0.4499	0.6707
Promptness (timely response) in service delivery	0	6	14	68	12	3.86	0.4804	0.6931
The patience of the VLE in giving the required information	0	10.5	13.5	65.5	10.5	3.76	0.6024	0.7761
The expertise of the VLE in giving the required information	0	9.5	15	60	15.5	3.815	0.6508	0.8067
Updating the latest information regarding CSC services	0	14	16.5	62	7.5	3.63	0.6631	0.8143

Note: % = Percentage, H.D. = Highly Dissatisfied, D. = Dissatisfied, C.S. = Can’t Say, S. = Satisfied and H.S. = Highly Satisfied

Source: Primary Study, 2024.

User Satisfaction Regarding Transparency

Table 5 shows insights into beneficiary satisfaction with the transparency of Khidmat Centres. For ‘Transparency in the processes and procedures’, the mean satisfaction score is (2.855), suggesting that while users are somewhat satisfied, there is room for improvement. The standard deviation (0.8924) indicates that users’ opinions are somewhat varied, with some having significantly different experiences. The

attribute ‘Transparency in the monetary charges or prices of services’ with a mean satisfaction score (2.875) is slightly higher than the previous attribute, indicating a better satisfaction level. The standard deviation (0.8320), reflects a moderate agreement among users. For ‘Transparency in the information dissemination’, the mean score is 2.84, showing that user satisfaction is slightly lower compared to the previous attribute but still within a similar range. The standard deviation (0.8610) indicates a moderate variation in user responses, similar to the first attribute. ‘Transparency in handling online complaints/grievances’ has the lowest mean score of 2.54, indicating that this area needs significant improvement. The standard deviation of 0.8834 suggests that users’ opinions are varied, with some possibly experiencing very different levels of service quality. Overall, the mean scores across all attributes of transparency are above 2.5, indicating a moderate level of satisfaction. The relatively low standard deviations suggest that most users have similar experiences, but there is still variability indicating areas for potential improvement, particularly in handling online complaints and grievances. Continuous efforts to enhance transparency in these areas could lead to higher overall satisfaction among users.

Table 5: User Satisfaction Regarding Transparency (N = 200)

<i>Attributes of Transparency</i>	<i>%</i>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
	<i>H.D</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>C.S.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>H.S.</i>			
Transparency in the processes and procedures	16	32	16.5	35.5	0	2.855	2.855	0.7963
Transparency in the monetary charges or prices of services	20	30	17.5	32.5	0	2.875	2.875	0.6922
Transparency in information dissemination	19	35	15	31	0	2.84	2.84	0.7409
Transparency in handling online complaints/grievances	15	38	25	22	0	2.54	2.54	0.7804

Note: % = Percentage, H.D. = Highly Dissatisfied, D. = Dissatisfied, C.S. = Can’t Say, S. = Satisfied and H.S. = Highly Satisfied. *Source:* Primary Study, 2024.

User Satisfaction Regarding Accountability

Table 6 provides insights into user satisfaction regarding various attributes of accountability in Khidmat Centres. For ‘Level of trust you have’ with the Khidmat Centres Services, the mean satisfaction score (2.16) suggests that users have a moderate level of trust in the services provided. The standard deviation (0.7899) indicates a significant variation in opinions, with some users having much higher or lower trust levels. The attribute ‘Reliability of the service provided’ with a mean

satisfaction score (2.1) indicates a moderate level of satisfaction. The standard deviation (0.7443) suggests that user opinions are relatively spread out, reflecting varying experiences with the reliability of services. For ‘Monitoring of service delivery’, the mean score (2.215) showed a slightly higher level of satisfaction compared to the previous attributes. The standard deviation of 0.7592 indicates a moderate variation in user responses. The ‘level of confidentiality of personal data possessed by Khidmat Centres’ indicates a slightly better satisfaction level regarding data confidentiality with a mean score of (2.29). The standard deviation (0.7758) shows a moderate spread in user opinions. The level of security of data (unauthorized manipulation of data) shows moderate satisfaction with data security with a mean score of (2.245). The standard deviation (0.7420) indicates a significant variation in user experiences. Overall, the mean scores across all attributes of accountability are slightly above 2, indicating moderate satisfaction. The standard deviations show that while there is general agreement among users, there are still varying experiences, particularly in trust and reliability. Continuous efforts to enhance accountability in these areas could lead to higher overall satisfaction among users.

Table 4: User Satisfaction Regarding Accountability (N = 200)

<i>Attributes of Account-ability</i>	<i>%</i>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Standard Devia-tion</i>
	<i>H.D</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>C.S.</i>	<i>S.</i>	<i>H.S.</i>			
Level of trust you have with the Khidmat Centres Services	18	57	16	9	0	2.16	0.6224	0.7899
Reliability of the service provided	20.5	54.5	20	5.5	0	2.1	0.5539	0.7443
Monitoring of service delivery	15.5	57	19	9.5	0	2.215	0.5766	0.7592
Level of confidentiality of personal data possessed by Khidmat Centres	11	61.5	15	12.5	0	2.29	0.6023	0.7758
Level of security of data (unauthorized manipula-tion of data)	13.5	59	17	10.5	0	2.245	0.5506	0.7420

Note: % = Percentage, H.D. = Highly Dissatisfied, D. = Dissatisfied, C.S. = Can't Say, S. = Satisfied and H.S. = Highly Satisfied

Source: Primary Study, 2024.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides a detailed assessment of user satisfaction with Khidmat Centres in Udhampur, Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting both their

strengths and areas needing improvement. Users generally expressed high levels of satisfaction with the efficiency of these centres, particularly appreciating the speed, accuracy, accessibility, and cost-saving benefits of the services provided. However, there remains potential for enhancing the speed of service delivery to further improve user experiences. The responsiveness of Khidmat Centres was also positively received, with users valuing the supportive nature of Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), although improvements in updating information and VLE expertise could enhance overall satisfaction. On the other hand, transparency and accountability emerged as areas requiring significant attention. Users reported moderate satisfaction with transparency in processes, service charges, and online complaint handling, suggesting that clearer communication and more robust procedures are needed. Similarly, accountability aspects such as trust, reliability, and data security showed variable user satisfaction, indicating the need for enhanced measures to build confidence and ensure the integrity of services. Addressing these challenges through targeted improvements can help Khidmat Centres better serve the diverse needs of the Udhampur population, fostering greater inclusivity and effectiveness in service delivery. The insights from this study offer actionable recommendations for policymakers and service providers to refine the operational aspects of Khidmat Centres and strengthen the overall e-governance framework in the region.

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES OF SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO OFFICIALS IN THE AHMEDABAD MUNICIPALITY, 1917-28

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Abstract

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel conceptualised and implemented a unique administrative policy during his association with the public administration of the Ahmedabad Municipality (1917-28) which aimed to tackle cases of corruption and professional incompetence amongst high-ranking municipal officials. Since the academic discourse on Patel has not focused on his administrative policy concerning municipal officials at Ahmedabad, the present paper attempts to address this gap in the literature and traces its relevance in present times. It can be found that in process of assessing the officials, he (Patel) relied on evidences and in inquiry process he meted out equal treatment to all officials irrespective of them being British or European or Indian officials. Further, he resorted to democratic method in taking action against errant officials, i.e. he always proposed a municipal resolution, put the matter to a vote, and accepted the decision of the Municipality Board as final.

Keywords: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Ahmedabad Municipality, Colonial Officials, Official Accountability, Corruption, Inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

The immediate context for Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's involvement with the public administration of the Ahmedabad Municipality was the short tenure of the Municipal Commissioner, John Armstrong Shillidy (Punjabi, 1964: 29). Appointed

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in 1915, John Shillidy had quickly proved himself to be an ineffective administrator by consistently refusing to be responsible to Ahmedabad's Municipal Councillors (two-thirds of whom were elected Indian officials). Instead, Shillidy had embarked on a destructive policy of violently disregarding Municipal Councillors, spending freely from the municipality budget without consulting the designated committee, absenting himself from work without leave, and ignoring the dire reports on his official conduct by the Municipality President, Rao Bahadur Ramanbhai Mahipal (Krishna, 2021: 33). Fed up with his incompetence but uncertain of how to proceed, Ramanbhai Mahipal and Dewan Bahadur Harilalbhai Desai, a Municipal Councillor, had decided to consult a lawyer for advice, and settled on Vallabhbhai Patel, an upcoming barrister in the city with a reputation for toughness (Gandhi, 1999: 38). Patel not only met with Mahipal and Desai but also planned to confront Shillidy as an elected Municipal Councillor.

Vallabhbhai Patel served as a Municipal Councillor from 1917-22; and was Municipality President from 1924-28 (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: XVIII). During his 11-year association with municipal governance, he garnered the reputation of being an efficient administrator, overseeing the implementation of major civic projects, including a new and revamped state-of-the-art drainage system for the city, laboratories to test for infectious disease, hospitals, maternity clinics and the inception of a transparent tax collection system. His successes did not come easy, as he also had to deal with a large number of unaccountable bureaucrats and employees who made official life difficult for him. Soon after taking up his post on the Municipal Board, he would have realised that Shillidy was but a part of a larger work culture of unaccountability amongst municipal officials. Undeterred, Patel began investigating errant officials from 1917 onwards, and continued to do so, until he left the municipality, in 1928.

This article examines the methods employed by Vallabhbhai Patel to investigate 6 high-ranking municipal officials for financial corruption and professional incompetence during his tenure at the municipality. The officials under consideration include Municipal Commissioners (John Shillidy and Alfred Master); the Chief Municipal Officer (I.R. Bhagat); the Water Works Engineer (R.C. Wadia); the Municipal Engineer (Verner Macassey) and an Honorary First-Class Magistrate (Bahadur Hussenkhan Dhanekhan). Patel came into contact with the 6 officials during his municipality tenure.

Patel's municipality career has been the subject of scholarly engagement, and in this context, we analysed the works of 5 historians [T.N. Chaturvedi (1977), Siddhartha Raychaudhuri (2001), S.L. Goel (2017), Himanshu Roy (2019) and Howard Spodek (2011, 2013)] and 5 biographers [Kewel L. Punjabi (1964), I.J. Patel (1985), Narhari D Parikh (1953), Balraj Krishna (2021) and Rajmohan Gandhi (1999)] who have studied this period of his life. The results of our analysis

of the literature are as follows: of the 5 historians, T.N. Chaturvedi, Siddhartha Raychaudhuri and S.L. Goel do not refer to any of the officials under consideration in this paper. Himanshu Roy refers to 3 officials; and Howard Spodek, the most well-known, and highly regarded of Patel scholars refers to 2 officials. Of the 5 biographers, Kewel L. Punjabi refers to 2 official, I.J. Patel to 2, while Narhari Parikh and Balraj Krishna each refer to 4 officials. Rajmohan Gandhi refers to 5 officials under consideration in this paper. Notably, all scholarly references to municipal officials have only appeared as brief, stand-alone biographical narratives.

Our analysis of the current literature concludes that scholars have not discussed Patel's administrative policies towards municipal officials, and the methods by which he held them accountable. The present paper on Patel's administrative policies is an attempt to address this gap in the literature. A standout feature of our study is that it makes extensive use of the unpublished manuscripts in Patel's private papers (henceforth, municipality papers) (Patel, 2018). We may add here that Patel's municipality papers have not been studied in the current literature.

The article is divided into four sections. Patel is placed within the historical context of the Ahmedabad Municipality in the first section. Each subsequent section discusses the methods by which he held errant officials accountable. The paper concludes with a discussion on his administrative policy towards municipal officials.

THE AHMEDABAD MUNICIPALITY AND THE SHUSKAR LAKE

The Ahmedabad Municipality was established in 1857 (Appendix O, 1919: 97). In the aftermath of the then Viceroy Lord George Ripon's liberal reforms in the late-19th century, the municipality began the slow transition to elected self-government, aided by the passage of the Bombay District Municipal Act of 1901, and reaching its culmination in 1918 on the grant of full-administrative autonomy by the Viceroy, Lord Frederic Chelmsford (Tinker, 1968: 43-105).

Lord Chelmsford's grant of autonomy had major implications for the burgeoning Indian independence movement, as leaders such as C.R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rajendra Prasad and Vithalbhai Patel (Vallabhbhai's elder brother) joined the municipalities as elected officials. Indians soon began commanding majorities in municipalities and openly expressed their views on a range of political subjects, from municipal governance to a vision for an independent India. Vallabhbhai Patel may well have been inspired by the political climate of the time. Much less sobering for Patel would have been the state of the Ahmedabad Municipality. The municipality had had a troubled past, having been suspended for nearly 5 years, from 1910-1915 (Raychaudhuri, 2001: 687-689). Even after 1915, the situation had not improved. In 1917, when Vallabhbhai joined

the municipality, the situation was so grim that Vithalbhai Patel, a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly officially demanded an explanation from F.G. Pratt, the most senior colonial official in Ahmedabad; and also requested that the Ahmedabad Municipality's annual reports of 1915-16 and 1916-17 be tabled in the Assembly.

Vithalbhai's queries in the Legislative Assembly could not be left unanswered. In a written testimony, F.G. Pratt confessed to the Assembly that the Ahmedabad Municipality had made 'practically no progress' since 1915 (Pratt, 1917: 741). He opined that the blame lay with (mostly Indian) Municipal Councillors who refused to work with the (mostly British) Municipal Commissioners, and instead hindered their work. His testimony ignored systemic failures and maladministration in the Ahmedabad Municipality. This information had been highlighted in the municipality's annual reports.

The Ahmedabad Municipality's annual reports showed that official duties were vaguely defined, and administrative procedure was, as the Municipality President Ramanbhai Mahipal put it, 'negligible'. The 1916-17 edition of the report revealed that the municipality suffered from poor infrastructure, with bad roads and insufficient water supply (Krishna, 2021: 33). The city was ravaged by frequent outbreaks of plague, and as the members of the Bombay Legislative Assembly opined in 1918, the dismal state of the infrastructure worsened the situation.

The Bombay Legislative Assembly's decision in 1914 to appoint I.C.S. officers as Municipal Commissioners of Ahmedabad only added to the municipality's systemic woes. I.C.S. officers demanded a hefty salary which was to be paid out of the municipality budget (Parikh, 1953: 26). In theory, Municipal Commissioners were accountable to elected Indian Municipal Councillors, but in practice, their high bureaucratic rank intimidated them (Spodek, 2011: 49). Further, two I.C.S. officers had left the post of Municipal Commissioner in quick succession even before Shillidy was appointed in 1915; and this context only added to the instability of an already volatile administration (Krishna, 2021: 32).

In 1915, the Ahmedabad Municipality was also beset with the problems posed by the Shuskar Lake, a 53000-yard property valued at 1 lakh rupees. The Shuskar Lake was a relatively new acquisition since it had only been handed over to the municipality by the colonial government in Bombay in September 1914 (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 6). The Municipal Board had been engulfed in bitter controversy ever since F.F. Munshi, a Municipal Councillor, had filed a judicial case claiming that he was the rightful owner of the property, and been over-ruled by the District Court (Parikh, 1953: 28-29).

The Shuskar Lake property hand-over by Bombay and consequent court ruling on Munshi had preceded Shillidy's appointment by several months. From

this perspective, it is possible that he may not have been aware of the full details concerning Shuskar Lake, and never bothered to enquire into the property in detail; an oversight that would cost him dear. Instead, Shillidy had developed an alliance with Munshi. For his part, Munshi had cemented his relationship with Shillidy by heavily investing in the colonial government's war-bonds (Krishna, 2021: 36). By 1916, he had even felt confident enough to file a new case regarding the Shuskar Lake in the Bombay High Court. The High Court however upheld the decision of the District Court and Munshi lost (Patel, 2018: 126).

Meanwhile, the Shuskar Lake had suffered from neglect, and the property became a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Alarmed, the Ahmedabad Municipality Board wrote to Shillidy in August 1916 for his suggestions to keep the lake clean and was promptly informed that the municipality did not own the property. Two months later, in October, the Municipality Board wrote back to Shillidy that the Shuskar Lake was a part of their property portfolio. When Shillidy did not respond favourably, the municipality referred the controversy to the colonial government at Bombay (*ibid.*). At this point, Shillidy also informed Bombay that the municipality had no requirement of the Shuskar Lake (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 6). The year ended on an unsatisfactory note as there was no resolution on the case.

In January 1917, F.G. Pratt weighed in on the matter and declared that the Shuskar Lake did in fact belong to the municipality (Krishna, 2021: 36). This was an unusual development since Pratt was no friend to the municipality. In October 1917, his report to the Bombay Legislative Assembly on the Ahmedabad Municipality had even opined that 'Shillidy had applied himself with great energy to the work of Municipal administration' but received no support from municipality staff (Pratt, 1917: 742).

Pratt's support for Shillidy in October 1917 however requires to be qualified in the light of information contained in the unpublished manuscripts of the municipality papers of a new councillor who joined eight months earlier: Vallabhbhai Patel.

INVESTIGATING MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONERS

Vallabhbhai Patel began investigating John Shillidy soon after joining the municipality in January 1917. Three months later, in March, he wrote directly to Shillidy, seeking information on the Shuskar Lake. Shillidy responded the very next month but did not provide satisfactory replies. Patel waited until May and then moved a resolution in the Municipality Board that Shillidy had not been forthcoming about details regarding the Shuskar Lake. He also reported that Shillidy had resorted to misbehaviour with Municipal Councillors, and even tampered with minutes of official documents in an attempt to quash further queries (Patel, 2018: 126-131). Patel's resolution however did not meet the minimum quorum as

two-thirds of the Municipal Councillors did not attend, and the meeting had to be adjourned.

Patel must have realised that Ahmedabad's Municipal Councillors did not want to pass a resolution against Shillidy. However, he was not going to stop his enquires. On 7 June 1917, he proposed a municipality resolution for Shillidy's resignation, citing his misconduct in matters concerning the Shuskar Lake, as well as his support of an incompetent Municipal Engineer, Verner Macassey. Patel also requested the Municipality President, Ramanbhai, to forward a copy to Bombay (Patel, 2018:128). Ramanbhai duly forwarded the proposed resolution to Bombay, but also included a note that since two-thirds of the Municipal Councillors had not appeared for the meeting, the proposed resolution could not be carried.

Ramanbhai's note has led to much confusion in the secondary literature about the fate of Patel's proposed resolution. However, Patel's municipality papers serve as an important point of clarification by shedding light on subsequent developments. We learn that on 10 June 1917, Patel proposed a municipality resolution on the steps that Shillidy had taken to improve the city's water supply. This municipality meeting did not have the necessary quorum either. On 13 June he introduced another proposed resolution for requisitioning data on Shillidy's financial transactions as Municipal Commissioner from 1915-1917 (Patel, 2018: 13). Unfortunately, once again, the necessary quorum was not achieved, and the meeting was adjourned. However, on 24 July 1917, the required quorum was finally achieved. Patel's resolutions were carried by a majority vote (*ibid.*). The full texts of the resolutions are also available in the municipality papers. We shall now consider them in some detail.

Patel proposed that Shillidy should furnish an inventory of his financial transactions, 'details regarding stores, materials and goods required for municipal purposes' for the financial years 1914-15, 1915-16 and 1916-1917, within 14 days to the Managing Committee (*ibid.*: 13-14). (The Managing Committee, we note, was tasked with ensuring financial compliance but Shillidy had not responded to their queries, earlier).

Patel's proposal also contained an important requirement in this regard; namely, that while submitting financial details, Shillidy was to accede to a particular format. First, each item was to be inventoried under the following headings: name, prices and quantity. In particular, certain details concerning the modalities of purchase were required to be furnished in full; whether, for instance, the item(s) had been procured via a contracted vendor or directly purchased from the market. Upon receipt of this information from Shillidy, the Managing Committee was to make a physical inspection of the item(s), and their documentation. Further, in case procurement of the item(s) had occurred via a contracted vendor, the details of

the rates charged were to be compared against the prevailing market rate for each financial year (*ibid.*).

Patel wasn't finished. He moved on to the next order of business, in a second proposal: an assessment of Shillidy's competence as a Municipal Commissioner. He argued that Shillidy's support for an incompetent Municipal Engineer (who oversaw the city's waterworks) had led to much chaos and suffering for the city's inhabitants. This proposed resolution had been initially introduced on 10 June 1917 but a decision on it had not been reached owing to the lack of quorum. It required Shillidy to submit a report within 14 days to the Sanitary Committee. Patel began by considering those areas in the city which did not receive water 'at sufficient pressure' between 6 AM and 9 PM. In this context, he enquired after Shillidy's policy towards water supply. 'What steps have the Municipal Commissioner taken since he assumed charge?', he first demanded; and then added, 'particularly since the appointment of the present Municipal Engineer to improve the water-supply in the areas about which there have been strong complaints.' The proposal then moved on to those areas in the city which faced a scarcity, and even an 'absence' of water-supply. 'What steps', he queried, does Shillidy propose, 'so that a sufficient water supply could be ensured' for these areas? In this context, he also requested details on the timeline for completion (*ibid.*: 14-16).

Patel's proposals regarding an inventory of Shillidy's municipal finances and queries regarding his policy towards the city's water supply did not find the approval of all Municipal Councillors. F.F. Munshi and Navalshankar Narsinhprasad left immediately after the second proposal was introduced (*ibid.*: 15). However, the minimum quorum required for the resolutions to be carried was unaffected and Municipal Councillors voted in Patel's favour. A copy of this municipal resolution was then forwarded to Bombay. What happened next has been recounted by Patel himself. 'The Municipal Commissioner Mr. J.A. Shillidy was called back by the government in August 1917 and hence further correspondence in this matter also stopped', he recorded in a handwritten note in his municipality papers (*ibid.*: 16).

Patel's investigation had yielded the desired results. Shillidy never returned to the municipality after August 1917. In October, when F.G. Pratt (1917: 742) would report to the Legislative Assembly that Shillidy had worked hard for the Ahmedabad municipality but received no support from the municipality staff for his efforts, he was neatly sidestepping the important evidence which had been gathered through the investigative efforts of Vallabhbbhai Patel.

After Shillidy's departure, Bombay appointed a new Municipal Commissioner: Alfred Master, I.C.S. Master promptly took up his post but soon began demanding additional allowances to his salary, and directed his enquiries to the Municipality Board (Parikh, 1953: 30). Patel took up the case. He first investigated whether the

municipality exchequer could support Master's financial demands. His investigation revealed that the municipality could not bear Master's additional expenses. Second, he considered whether Master's official work as Municipal Commissioner could justify additional allowances to his salary, and concluded that this was not the case. He then prepared a report and gave his assessment at a Municipality Board meeting: 'The government appointed Mr. Master after fixing his salary and allowances,' he noted, 'and if he was not satisfied with those terms, he is at liberty to go' (*ibid.*).

Alfred Master resigned as Municipal Commissioner in 1917 after his demands for additional allowances were rejected. He was however impressed with Patel's work ethic and did not hold any grudges against him. Commenting on his work as Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, he later recalled, 'I remember Mr. Vallabhbhai J. Patel as a most efficient Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, who stood aloof from the domestic and political intrigues in which some of his fellow councilors indulged' (Krishna, 2021: 45). This was high praise indeed, for Patel was Chairman of this Committee for nearly 5 years, from 1917-22. The next section will show how British and Indian municipal officials were held accountable for incompetence by Patel in his role as Chairman of the Sanitary Committee.

HOLDING ENGINEERS ACCOUNTABLE

As Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, Patel was concerned with Ahmedabad's drainage and water-supply. In his view, underground drainage was one of the 'vital needs' of the city. He was aghast that barely 50% of the city was drained, and opined, 'No city in the world can put up with such a condition' (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 33). In 1917, his resolution against Shillidy had noted the presence of an incompetent Municipal Engineer, Verner Macassey (Patel, 2018:14). Verner may have been a mediocre professional, but he was a man with connections, as we shall soon see.

Vallabhbhai Patel would not however have been impressed by Verner Macassey's lineage or socio-cultural background. He began preparing reports of the pitiful state of the municipal water supply, and in 1918 he presented some harrowing evidence against Macassey. He predicted that the municipality was on the cusp of a major public health crisis since the drains had begun to overflow into the city streets owing to Macassey's neglect. His report focused on two main points: first, that the manholes in the city had choked with silt and Macassey had done nothing to improve this dangerous state of affairs; and second, when engineering parts for the city's water pumps required replacement, Macassey had ordered that the older parts be re-used rather than newer ones procured (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 28). When confronted with the evidence of his neglect, Macassey resigned and never applied to work in the Ahmedabad Municipality again.

Pratt's allegations stung Patel but even more worryingly, the municipality had to find a solution for a brewing city-wide water supply problem. He took on the responsibility for making sure that Ahmedabad was invested with a sound underground drainage system. He was aided in this respect by a consulting Mechanical Engineer, G.G.H. Thistleton-Dyer, who had been employed to advise the municipality. After carefully collecting information and receiving feedback from sanitation experts, he moved to act. From November 1918, he moved three resolutions in the Sanitation Committee requisitioning information from the Municipal Commissioner within 14 days (Patel, 2018: 111). First, he was particularly concerned about the fluctuating water supply in municipality wells and urgently requested discussion on constructing a bund on the Sabarmati River (which bordered the municipality) to divert water supply to the wells. He warned that the situation had reached critical levels, and that, 'it may not be possible to maintain an adequate supply of water throughout the year, particularly in summer'. Second, he also requested the Municipality President to seek clarity on whether water supply to the city would be adequate for the summer. Third, he urgently called for additional staff who would work towards conserving all available potable water through pipes and stand posts. The three resolutions carried by a majority vote in the Municipality Board. However, Patel was forced to halt further efforts in view of a new development that demanded his complete attention.

On 29 November 1918, a major fire broke out in the city's municipal water works due to a malfunctioning engine. The Water Works Engineer, R.C. Wadia, was subsequently questioned on his professional conduct. Patel's municipality papers show that the investigation took place from January-May 1919. He first enquired into Wadia's work history in the municipality and sought the assistance of the Municipality President in this regard. In January, he found that Wadia often absented himself from work without leave, did not take cognizance of his superiors, and shared a relationship of discord with the Municipal Engineer (appointed after Macassey had resigned). He also discovered that the engine had caught fire due to water-supply mismanagement (*ibid.*: 114-120). In February and March, he prepared a competency report for Wadia, but the results were inconclusive since Wadia was not co-operating with his investigation. In May, Patel proposed a municipality resolution for Wadia's suspension (*ibid.*: 113). The resolution was carried by a majority vote.

The fire had temporarily derailed Patel's plans for an improved water supply for the city. But he was soon back on track. From January-June 1920, Patel passed important resolutions in monthly meetings of the Sanitation Committee on the issue of the city's water supply. In February, the Committee resolved to modernize the water purification system and introduce a new filtration system. In March, the Committee requested to be consulted when new engines for the municipality

pumps were bought. In this regard, Patel noted that Shillidy and Macassey's indent for the purchase of a new engine had been a waste of financial resources, as the supply had not improved (*ibid.*: 79). The March resolution also contained new technical specifications for improving water-supply (for instance, the Municipal Engineer was directed to replace the older balancing tank in the jack well of the water supply with a grit chamber) (*ibid.*: 80). On 3 June, the Committee resolved that in order to protect the city's water supply from diseases, the Municipality Board should sanction the appointment of an analyst to collect samples during the monsoon season and demanded that a laboratory be built for the purpose in Ahmedabad (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 35). Patel then tabled these resolutions in the Municipality Board for discussion and resolutions.

On 10 June 1920, Patel tabled a report to the Municipality Board on the state of sanitation in the city. His report provided a case history of how the Bombay Presidency's Public Works Department and the Collector of Ahmedabad had mishandled the city's sanitation, from 1892-1914. Having discussed the past, Patel now presented his plans for the future. He recommended a complete over-haul of the present system of drainage, 'a bold and dangerous scheme'. The scheme had not yet been finalized. However, he recommended that sanitation experts from the Peterson Engineering Company (P.E.C.) Bombay who had visited the municipality on his request could be involved henceforth as advisors. The Municipality Board approved P.E.C.'s involvement and agreed that a laboratory should be constructed to test for diseases that could endanger public health. By this time, the Municipality Board had also recommended to the Municipal Commissioner that Wadia ought to be terminated from his post (Patel, 2018: 81-87).

Wadia may have been an Indian official, but his incompetence was judged by Patel using the same investigative methods as the rest. Indeed, Indian officials received no special treatment as far as Patel was concerned, as the next section will highlight in more detail.

TACKLING CORRUPTION AMONGST INDIAN OFFICIALS

The Ahmedabad Municipality witnessed greater Indian official involvement throughout the early-20th century in a spate of high-level appointments: Municipal Commissioners, Chief Officers, Municipal Councillors and Municipality Presidents. These changes had an impact on the constitution of the Municipality Board, and on everyday administration. Some, like Bahadur Hussenkhan Dhanekhan, even assumed that their association with the administration had rendered them immune to accountability. An Honorary First-Class Magistrate from 1907-14, Dhanekhan had a dubious record in filing taxes. In December 1918, Patel wrote to the Municipality President on the matter, but even after issuing notices, received

only partial payment (Patel, 2018: 124-125). In 1924, he decided to publish Dhanekhan's name in a long list of tax defaulters in the municipality (Narhari, 1953: 33). Embarrassed by the publicity, Dhanekhan quickly paid the arrears in full.

However, Patel was not always successful in tackling corruption. In this context we consider the case of I.R. Bhagat who had been appointed Municipal Secretary early on in Patel's tenure (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 26). As with most official posts during this period, Bhagat was placed on a year's probation. He came to Patel's attention upon securing a promotion while still on probation. Consequently, an irate Patel submitted a written complaint to the Municipality President on 'the illegality of the decision' to promote Bhagat to the post of Personal Assistant (P.A.) to the Municipal Commissioner, D.K. Bhawe. Unfortunately, Patel was over-ruled, and Bhagat continued in his new post. Soon, serious differences of opinion arose between Bhagat and Bhawe. The problem became so severe that Bhagat had to be restrained from issuing any official communication. Bhawe also requested that the post of P.A. be discontinued, prompting Bhagat to file a complaint in protest (Krishna, 2021: 44). Alarmed at this state of affairs, the Municipality Board requested Patel to intervene.

Patel duly began his investigation and discussed his findings in detail on 4 May 1919 when he proposed a municipality resolution that Bhagat's current post ought to be discontinued for it was not practically useful, but only burdened the municipal exchequer. Further, he opined that as Municipal Commissioner, Bhawe was legally entitled to recommend the discontinuation of the post (Patel, 1918-25, 2015: 26). He held Bhagat guilty of 'a lamentable lack of discipline' and assessed his complaints as unreliable and 'twisted'. Bhagat was subsequently demoted to his original post. He was however an influential official and eventually secured a promotion to the post of Acting Chief Officer.

In 1924, Patel (now Municipality President) provided evidence to the Municipality Board that Bhagat was guilty of misdemeanors since he had issued monetary cheques in the name of the municipality but without permission (Krishna, 2021: 44). The Municipality Board however chose to overlook the evidence. Perhaps embarrassed by the frequent complaints against him, Bhagat decided to develop the reputation of a whistle-blower instead. In 1925, he complained against the (British) Municipal Engineer, Y.N. Gore for incompetence (Gandhi, 1999: 141). An enquiry was conducted by Patel and Ramanbhai Mahipal, but their findings only revealed that Gore was competent, efficient and honest.

Patel now turned his investigation towards Bhagat. He began with Bhagat's employment records by consulting the municipal archives. To his chagrin, the records were missing. Amongst the missing documents would have been an adverse report on his professional conduct by the Collector of Ahmedabad. Since Bhagat

was in-charge of the municipal archives, Patel figured that he was responsible. He tabled his findings in a Municipality Board meeting, and recommended Bhagat's demotion to the post of P.A. to the Chief Officer. The resolution carried with a majority vote. However, Bhagat was able to gather enough support from the Municipal Councillors to be successfully appointed to the post of Chief Officer the next year, in 1926 (Gandhi, 1999: 141-142). Upon hearing of Bhagat's promotion, Patel submitted his resignation as Municipality President. The Municipality Board however prevailed upon him to stay on. Bhagat was demoted from the post of Chief Officer. However, within a year he became Chief Officer again, with the support of Ambalal Sarabhai, an influential industrialist and confidante of Mohandas Gandhi (Spodek, 2011: 85). Patel resigned soon afterwards, and this time he had had enough (Patel, 1926-29, 2015: 155). As he wrote to the Municipality Board in 1927, 'I am convinced that I am not able to command that confidence of the Board which is essential for the good and efficient administration of the city, I feel bound to tender my resignation as President' (Gandhi, 1999: 142).

The Municipality Board accepted Patel's resignation 'with great regret' on 18 April 1928. A municipality resolution assured Patel that he 'commands the confidence of this Board'. The Board then placed on record, 'its sense of appreciation of the great services rendered by him to this municipality during his term of office' (Patel, 2018: 46-47). Some important data pertaining to this resolution is relevant here. The resolution was proposed by Ambalal Sarabhai, and 41 Municipal Councillors voted in its favour, out of the 51 who attended. This data is sourced from Patel's municipality papers (*ibid.*: 73-76).

Vallabhbhai Patel would have known even as he was leaving the Ahmedabad municipality in April 1928, that he had won the admiration of his detractors. Soon afterwards, he took on an important role in the Bardoli Satyagraha, becoming so well-respected a leader that a new title was coined for him: 'Sardar'.

CONCLUSION

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was associated with the public administration of the Ahmedabad Municipality for 11 years from 1917-28. In 1926-27, his 'able guidance' of municipal administration was also commended by Bombay in its annual report of the Presidency (Bombay Presidency, 1928: 8). In the passage of time, scholars have consolidated Bombay's assessment by carefully identifying Patel's manifold contributions to municipal governance. However, while Patel is widely perceived to have been an unqualified success as a municipal administrator in the current literature, the methods by which he was able to bring unaccountable officials to task have been ignored.

This article has focussed on Patel's administrative policy towards errant officials. We have discovered that Patel developed a particular approach while investigating municipal officials for corruption and incompetence. In cases of corruption, he conducted an investigation, focussing on three parameters: a) an inventory of all official financial transactions; b) a complete employment history of the official under investigation; and, c) due cognisance of annual reviews by superior officers. He also authored competency reports and calculated whether the municipality budget could sustain the official's current salary. The results of all investigations were declared in a Municipality Board meeting, along with a report.

Patel's methods were based on parameters he was officially entitled to seek information on as a Municipal Councillor. All officials, whether British, European or Indian, were assessed by the same approach. His methods' consistency has led us to conclude that he followed an administrative policy, particularly regarding municipal officials. Based on the evidence from his published official correspondence and unpublished manuscripts in his private papers, we can also unequivocally state that he was the sole author of this policy.

Patel pursued his investigations with tenacity and focus. He did not require additional resources and did not delegate investigative duties to others. However, when it came to deciding on what official decisions were to be taken about an errant official, he always proposed a municipal resolution, put the matter to a vote, and accepted the decision of the Municipality Board as final. He remained, throughout his municipality tenure, a committed and ardent believer in the democratic process of local self-government.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

We declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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MOBILE WASTE MANAGEMENT: PERCEPTIONS AND POLICIES

Ashalekshmi B.S.*

Abstract

Over the past twenty years the production of electronic devices has been increased due to industrial revolution 4.0. This has created a problem of accumulation of electronic waste that harms the environment silently. Improper waste management will eventually render human existence on Earth impossible. The topic of waste management is often under wider discussion. One of the most dangerous waste products is electronic waste. Because of the difficulties in treating it, e-waste is growing to be a serious problem. Addressing electronic waste (e-waste) in an eco-friendly method has become a pressing necessity today. In many developing societies, the prevailing approach to e-waste management is informal and lacks a scientific foundation. As such the present paper seeks to explore the existing policies, practices, and perceptions of electronic waste management, with a particular emphasis on the management of discarded mobile phones.

Keywords: e-Waste Management, Rrecycling, Mobiles, Eenvironment, Economy, Inhibitors.

INTRODUCTION

In this twenty first century electronic devices have become integral to human life. The forces of globalisation and liberalisation have accelerated the growth of technology over past two decades. Due to the increase in the production of electronic devices, accumulation of electronic wastes has become a serious environmental

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issue. The unchecked proliferation of electronic products poses a grave challenge to the sustainability of human life on Earth. The question of waste management has become a topic of intense debate, with electronic waste standing out as one of the most challenging types of waste to handle. The intricacies involved in treating electronic waste make it a formidable environmental hazard in the 21st century, occupying a significant position among solid wastes that contribute to pollution. This paper focuses on the policies and practices in the e-waste management in developing societies, with a special emphasis on the perspectives related to the management of mobile wastes.

The study is empirical and analytical. In order to understand the perceptions on mobile waste management a survey has been conducted by administering questionnaires among sixty respondents. The study tries to analyse the e-waste disposal perceptions and behavior of people with the help of Valence Theory. The secondary data comprises of journals, books and websites. The data on policies and mechanisms of e-waste management in the international and national scenario have been collected through secondary sources.

E-waste is defined by the UN as “any discarded product with a battery or plug that contains hazardous and toxic substances like mercury that can pose a serious risk to human and environmental health” (Geneva Environment Network, 2021). “E-waste contains several toxic additives or hazardous substances, such as mercury, brominated flame retardants (BFR), and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), or hydro chlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). The increasing levels of e-waste, low collection rates, and non-environmentally sound disposal and treatment of this waste stream pose significant risks to the environment and to human health” (Vanessa Forti et al., 2020). In September 2015, the UN Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure prosperity and eradicate poverty, a total of 169 targets and 17 goals have been included. The environment is a component of all goals, and e-waste is particularly included in a number of those targets. Sustainable e-waste management has become essential.

Social, economic, and environmental issues are being brought on by electronic waste worldwide. Air pollution happens when more hydrocarbons are released into the environment when electronic waste is incinerated. If electronic parts get into water sources without being properly treated, water contamination may result. The lives of several species that reside in these water bodies could be put in peril if electronic garbage is dumped in rivers and oceans. Soil pollution results when electronic garbage is disposed of via landfill methods. To understand e-waste management, two techniques need to be identified. The traditional “take, make, use, and dispose” linear paradigm is incomplete because it only addresses how e-waste is used and disposed of. Here, the only activities related to managing

e-waste are the usage and disposal of electronic equipment. Nonetheless, e-waste is being considered as a resource for measures to improve income and quality of life in the circular economy concept. Effective management of e-waste may support livelihoods, create jobs, facilitate technological growth, transfer of skills and knowledge, and offer funds for the production of repurposed items and material recovery” (Lepawsky, 2015). Because of its potential to create jobs, the International Labour Organisation strongly favours this strategy. “The ‘circular economy’ includes activities such as recycling, repair, rental and remanufacture. It replaces the traditional linear model of “extract, make, use and dispose”. Embracing the circular economy reduces material extraction and waste generation. It can also be a source of job creation and re-creation and can result in net job gains: it has been estimated that embracing a circular economy would create 6 million new employment opportunities across the world” (ILO, 2018).

GLOBAL STATISTICS OF E-WASTE GENERATION

According to the statistics of the Global E-Waste Monitor, 2020, altogether 53.6 Mt or 7.3 kg per person e-wastes were produced globally in 2019. Since 2014, the Global waste production has been increased by 9.2 million tons and by 2030, it is expected to reach 74.7 million tons. Asia produced the highest quantity of e-waste in 2019 (24.9Mt), followed by America (13.1Mt) and Europe (12 Mt). The least amount was produced by Africa and Oceanica (2.9 Mt and 0.7 Mt respectively (Vanessa Forti, et al., 2020)). According to the Global E-waste Monitor, 2020, “Proper e-waste management can help mitigate global warming.

Following are some international initiatives to limit the production and transport of e-wastes:

- (a) The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) prohibits dumping any waste into the sea if not it is authorised by the Annex.V. E-waste is produced during regular ship operations and needs to be disposed of regularly or sometimes according to MARPOL (United Nations, 2021).
- (b) The Conference of Plenipotentiaries agreed to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal on March 22, 1989 in Basel, Switzerland, in response to the public controversy surrounding the export of toxic wastes to Africa and other developing countries in the 1980s. Annex VIII to the Convention (Decision IV/9) incorporating e-waste was adopted in 1998 during the Conference of the Parties’ fourth meeting (United Nations, 2021).
- (c) The Montreal Protocol on Ozone is an international agreement enacted in 1989 that aims to preserve the ozone layer by restricting the production and use of

ODS. The Montreal Protocol can also be used to control e-waste because ODS are a part of the e-waste that comes from refrigerators and air conditioners.

- (d) The ILO Convention (No. 170), which was adopted in 1990, places a strong emphasis on employees' rights to information about the chemicals they use at work and holds suppliers and employers accountable for supplying this information and training (United Nations, 2021). The ILO convention is applicable to e-waste management since disassembling and recycling electronic trash exposes workers to a variety of harmful substances and chemicals.
- (e) Decision of the Council of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Agreement (1992) on waste aimed to restrict the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, which are wastes exported only for the purpose of material recovery. Whereas, UNFCCC (1994) aimed to increase waste pickers' resilience to poverty by giving them access to green jobs that protect them from exposure to toxins and heavy metals (United Nations, 2021).
- (f) The Rotterdam Convention (1998) promotes responsibility-sharing in cross-border trade involving hazardous materials. In order to have safe management of toxic materials, the Convention places a strong emphasis on communicating information on the hazardous nature of items as well as providing guidelines on safe handling and adequate labelling. Any known limitations or prohibitions ought to be disclosed to customers (United Nations, 2021).
- (g) The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) was to ensure that the environment and human health would not be endangered by persistent chemicals. Due to the fact that e-waste is listed as containing certain persistent organic pollutants, parties to the Stockholm Convention are obliged to take appropriate measures to prevent the release of these pollutants from wastes and stockpiles (United Nations, 2021).
- (h) Resolutions from the World Health Organization were passed between 2006 and 2016 to protect the environment and human life from exposure to hazardous items, such as e-waste. These resolutions emphasized that, in order to preserve human life, efficient waste management must be implemented globally.
- (i) The primary objective of the 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury is to protect the environment and human health from the detrimental effects of Mercury exposure. It is one of the prominent hazardous substances in e-wastes.
- (j) Through the enactment of the Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT development, ITU member states have committed to advancing towards an internet powered information society wherein ICT and telecommunications facilitate and expedite sustainable development and growth for all. One of the Connect 2020 Agenda's primary goals is sustainability (United Nations, 2021).

Although the formal recycling process has shown promise, yet there are financial obstacles when attempting to implement these methods in developing nations (Sthiannopkao and Wong, 2013). As such, developing societies are mostly using informal recycling methods. The valuable components are manually removed without using necessary safety precautions in the informal e-waste business. The removal and dismantling of the valuable metals from e-waste is how those involved in these operations make a living. A small fraction of these are crudely removed, and the remainder is either burned, buried, or dumped into water sources. The two most popular primitive techniques are open-pit burning and open acid baths for the removal of metal from electrical components. Another environmental risk is created when used acid from acid treatment processes is thrown into the environment. This acid is often contaminated with heavy metals and other hazardous substances (Park, et al., 2017).

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

According to the E-waste Management Rules, 2016, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) calculated the amount of e-waste generated nationally using data from producers on nationwide sales as well as the average lifespan of notified electrical and electronic equipment (EEE). According to the data from the CPCB, the following lists the amount of e-waste produced in the nation from the twenty one forms of EEE that have been notified under the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016 since the Financial Year 2017–18:

E-waste Generation in India

<i>Year (FY)</i>	<i>Generation of e-waste in Tonnes</i>
2017-18	7,08,445.00
2018-19	7,71,215.00
2019-20	10,14,961.21
2020-21	13,46,496.31
2021-22	16,01,155.36

Source: Central Pollution Control Board, 2022.

Above table shows how significant the surge in e-waste is in India. Lion share of the e-waste in India is managed by the informal sector. Many individuals in impoverished areas consider it as a source of income. Many of these peoples work in urban e-waste management. The way these people handle dismantling and recycling of electronic equipment highlights the need for India to embrace more advanced approaches in this sector. They do so without taking appropriate precautions.

People that were involved in waste management are now involved in e-waste management as well. Chaturvedi et.al observes that the actors who have historically involved in waste management and recycling have expanded their efforts to e-waste management also (Chaturvedi, et al., 2007). Informality can often prevail not because entrepreneurs are unwilling to abide by laws and regulations, but because they lack the resources to do so (ILO, 2014).

SOME POLICY INTERVENTIONS

In 2008, the Ministry of Environment and Forests' Central Pollution Control Board took a significant step by issuing the first set of voluntary recommendations for managing e-waste. This laid the foundation for addressing the growing environmental and health concerns associated with electronic wastes. Subsequently, in 2011, the E-Waste (Management & Handling) Rules Act was introduced. This formal measure came into effect in 2012, marked a decisive shift towards formalising the management of e-waste within the country. It aimed to regulate the growth of e-waste through structured mechanisms and outlined responsibilities for various stakeholders in the electronic goods supply chain. In 2012 itself, the National Telecom Policy (NTP), was launched by the Department of Telecommunications under the Ministry of Communication. Highlighting the need for regular disposal of e-waste, the policy emphasized the environmental and health challenges within the telecom sector. The policy had a focus on the adoption of renewable and sustainable energy sources through eco-friendly policies in telecommunication. The effort towards environmental sustainability was further reinforced in subsequent iterations of the National Telecom Policy, particularly in 2018, stressing the significance of using energy-efficient equipments and promoting the adoption of renewable energy sources to ensure healthy and sustainable environment.

Recognising the gravity of issues related to e-waste management, the government wanted to update e-waste regulations including contemporary challenges. Furthermore, there were provisions on revised Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) with updated collection targets to include new producers entering the market, thereby ensuring accountability across the the supply chain of electronic goods. On March 22, 2018, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change introduced amendments to the E-waste Management Rules of 2016, in order to fill the gaps in prior regulations and to decide long-term environmental objectives. These amendment rules directed towards imposing penalties on stakeholders that are violating environmental regulations. Besides, there were regulations to govern the collection, storage, transportation, segregation, refurbishment, dismantling, recycling and disposal of e-waste, to minimise the environmental impact.

All these efforts got culminated into the materialization of the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022 by the Ministry in November, 2022. The rules which

came into effect on April 1, 2023 marked a significant milestone in the effort for environmentally responsible e-waste management. These rules comprise of an enhanced Extended producer Responsibility (EPR) framework mandating registration on the CPCB-developed portal for all manufactures, producers, refurbishers and recyclers involved in the electronic goods sector. Furthermore, provisions for environmental compensation, verification and audit uphold accountability and sustainability in e-waste management practices.

MOBILE WASTE MANAGEMENT

A significant amount of e-waste is produced by mobile phones as a result of their increasing use and the rapid rate of technological advancements in their design. This has a detrimental effect on the ecosystem. Because cutting-edge functionality and beautiful design are always evolving, consumers are purchasing new phones more regularly. As greater numbers of electronic equipment become obsolete and no longer provide value to their owners, consumers must make decisions concerning how or even whether to dispose of such devices (Dhir et al., 2021). Consumer perceptions must be considered when developing regulations for the management of mobile wastes because many people will be looking for an affordable and convenient method of disposal. In this context, the author looks at different theories to comprehend consumer behaviour in relation to mobile waste management. To further understand the approaches in mobile waste management, an online survey with 60 respondents was undertaken.

According to Westaby (2005) and Sahu et al. (2020), Behavioural Reasoning Theory (BRT) is a framework that allows academics and industry professionals to examine the relative influence of both “reasons for” and “reasons against” intentions for every invention. The acceptability frameworks, in contrast to BRT, exclusively consider the ‘reasons for’ engaging in any innovation (Sahu et al., 2020). The “reasons for” opposing any innovation have not always been the same as the “reasons for” adopting it, according to academics (Claudy et al., 2015; Kleijnen et al., 2009; Sahu et al., 2020). Recycling e-waste, for instance, has health advantages that could be cited as “reasons for” doing so. People may be reluctant to recycle their electronic garbage due to the high cost and inconvenience. As such, a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour requires a consideration of the “reasons for” as well as the “reasons against.”

Peter and Tarpey (1975) first suggested the Valence Theory (VT), which has roots in both psychology and economics. It investigates the significance of valence in determining customers’ propensity to engage in a certain good, service, or behaviour and makes the argument that consumers should weigh all of the risks and rewards involved in order to arrive at a net valence.

According to VT, when consumers are making a choice, this perceived net valence is what matters most. VT distinguishes itself from other behavioural theories by taking into account both perceived gain and perceived danger, which allows it to more accurately assess a person's intents to engage in a behaviour (Peter and Tarpey, 1975). According to VT, perceived benefit is made up of two main elements: utility and convenience (Ozturk et al., 2017).

Convenience is described as the consumer's perception of the time and effort required to perform a behavior, while the utilitarian value refers to their assessment of the functional attributes of the action (Han et al., 2017). Therefore, because recycling e-waste is simple, quick, and beneficial to the environment and human health, consumers might be more open to doing so. Conversely, perceived risk is defined as the consumers' perception of the uncertainty and negative effects of engaging in a behavior (Ozturk et al., 2017), which include the high cost of recycling, the threat of private information being stolen from mobile phones and laptops, and the misuse of disposed electronic devices. Many of the previous studies have concentrated on the motivations or facilitators that lead people to recycle their electronic wastes, but the equally significant inhibitors or barriers that increase people's resistance to recycling their electronic waste are rarely investigated. According to Claudy et al. (2015) and Sahu et al. (2020), researchers should concentrate on comprehending both sets of elements, namely the ones that facilitate (acceptance) and impede (resistance) any innovation, action, or behaviour.

This is because acceptance and resistance have different quantitative effects and so have different effects on how consumers make decisions. According to Zhong and Huang (2016), the consumer's resistance to recycling e-waste is a significant issue that needs immediate scientific study.

Here is the empirical results regarding the practices of mobile waste management and tries to find out the reasons of resistance in the recycling.

The analysis is as follows:

Age
60 responses

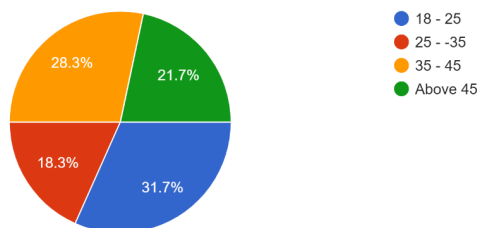


Fig. 1: Age

Education
60 responses

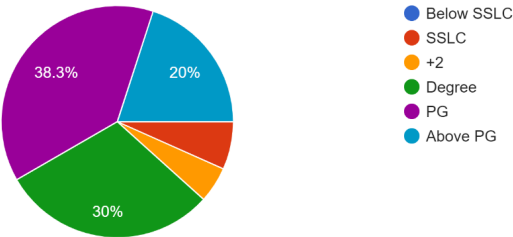


Fig. 2: Education

Monthly Income
52 responses

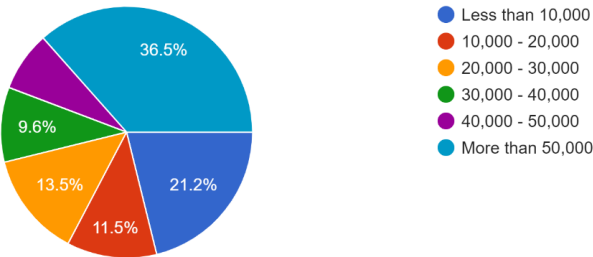


Fig. 3: Monthly Income

Major chunk of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18-25 (31.7%) followed by the age group of 35-40 years (28.3 %) of the respondents. Altogether 38.3 per cent of the respondents had post graduation degree and thirty per cent had graduation amounting to the majority of graduates. In addition, 48.3 per cent of the respondents were employed and majority of the respondents had a monthly income more than Rs. 50,000/-. Hundred per cent of the respondents were mobile phone users. A sizeable chunk of the respondents were employed (48.3%) and 38.5% had a monthly income more than Rs. 50,000/-. This data shows that the respondents had sufficient income to purchase mobile phones. For replacing the mobile phone they did not have the economic barrier.

Employment Status
60 responses

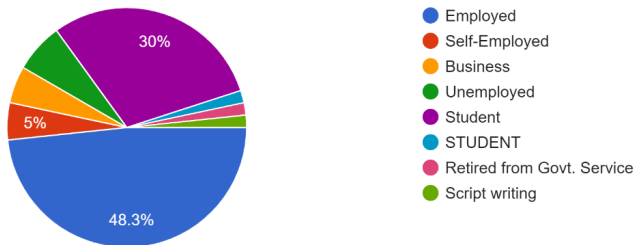


Fig. 4: Employment Status

If so, how many mobile phones do you have?
60 responses

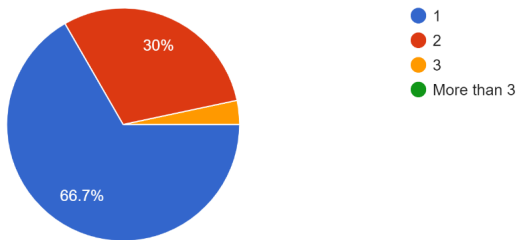


Fig. 5: Number of mobile phones

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of mobile phones they were using. Altogether 66.7% of the respondents opined that they were using only one mobile phone. But thirty per cent of the respondents had two mobile phones each. But 65 per cent highlighted that they had old mobile phone which was not in use with them. If they are not using that gadget it can be considered as a mobile waste. Hence this data clearly shows that majority had electronic wastes (mobile waste) with them. A considerable majority (62.2%) conveyed that they had only one old and unusable mobile phone with them. However 28.9 per cent had two old mobile phones with them. A small section of the respondents had more than three old and unusable mobile phones with them. From this data it is clear that people have some inhibition in disposing their mobile phones. There are inhibitors in the e-waste recycling behaviour of people.

How frequently you change the Phone ?
60 responses

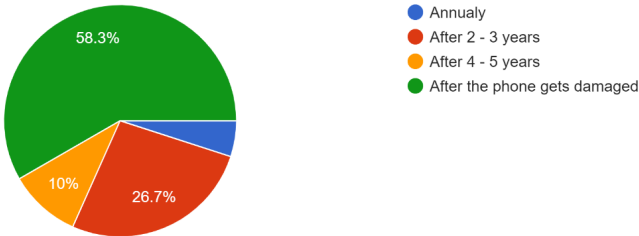


Fig. 6: Frequency of changing the mobile phones

It is interesting to note that 58.3 per cent of the respondents highlighted that they would change the phone after it gets damaged. But the next majority informed that after two to three years they would change the phone in order to purchase a new one with more features and better technology.

What do you do with your old mobile phones ?
60 responses

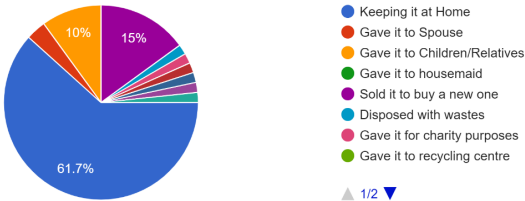


Fig. 7: Mode of keeping the old mobile phones

It was quite interesting to note that 61.7 per cent of the people who had old mobile phones with them were keeping the phones at home itself. Only 15 per cent of the respondents sold the phones to buy a new one. This needs to be analysed in connection with their awareness on mobile phone recycling. Majority (51.7%) opined that they were unawareness on mobile recycling. But at the same time 71.7% informed that they had awareness on electronic waste management. It shows that even though people have some general understanding of dangers of e-waste, they were reluctant to proper e-waste management. 95 per cent of the respondents opined that none of the official visited their home to assess the e-waste.

Our survey result depicts that there were two reasons behind changing the mobile phone – malfunctioning and need of better configuration. Majority (52

per cent) fall in the former category and rest in the later. Another major thing needs to be highlighted is that the significant majority (61.7%) is keeping the old mobile phones at their home itself. Only 15% sold the phone to buy a new one. Even though the phone is damaged that has not been given for recycling. Majority (51.7%) did not have awareness on mobile phone recycling. This shows the lack of awareness on proper e-waste management even among the educated sections in the society. Altogether 78.7 per cent opined that the people should be given proper orientation on mobile waste management in order to tackle the issues of e-waste in a significant manner. A significant majority (90%) informed that they did not have any mobile phone waste management facility in their locality.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study reveals that the people have very limited knowledge on mobile waste management. This shows the necessity of awareness campaigns on the proper disposal of e-wastes including the mobile wastes.

There are inhibitors in the e-waste recycling behaviour of people. These include the fear of losing personal data, lack of awareness on e-wastes and absence of satisfactory and convenient facilities. This means that there are behavioural and material factors behind the resistance.

Mobile waste management awareness campaigns are not being imparted through the Local Self Government Institutions.

Following are the major suggestions :

The awareness on handling mobile waste and the effects of electronic trash on the environment can be only brought through public consciousness and collaborative efforts. Public Private Partnership can do a lot in mobile waste recycling and management.

- Mobile phone waste collection centres need to be set up in every panchayat. The Local Self Government institutions should take the responsibility of managing mobile wastes in a systematic way.
- A key component of mobile waste management is the establishment of collection and recycling facilities specifically for electronic waste.

CONCLUSION

Utility and convenience are the two primary components of perceived advantage as defined by Valence Theory. Utility value refers to the consumer's evaluation of the action's functional qualities, whereas convenience is defined as their estimate of the time and effort needed to complete an activity. If recycling e-waste is simple, quick, and beneficial to the environment and human health, more consumers will

be inclined to do so. In contrast, consumers' perception of the unpredictability and detrimental consequences of a behavior—such as the high cost of recycling, the possibility of personal data being stolen from laptops and mobile phones, and the improper use of disposed electronic devices—is known as perceived risk. This is proved in the study and the respondents were not ready for disposing the mobile waste because of the fear of losing personal data. This is one of the factors that impede the timely disposal of mobile wastes. Another factor of resistance is the lack of facility. One is a behavioural factor and the other is a material factor. We can conclude that both material and behavioural factors are there in the consumers' choices on recycling of electronic wastes.

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CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN INDIAN GOVERNANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Vibhooti Narayan*

Abstract

The involvement of citizens is indispensable for good governance as it ensures accountability, responsiveness, and transparency. Today, the concept of citizen engagement has once again been gaining huge traction owing to the proliferation and adoption of digital technology. Citizens get engaged with the government in multiple forms ranging from being informed to decide their destiny. The present study aims to investigate the state of citizen engagement in the context of India through a literature review of conceptual and empirical studies published in SCOPUS, Science-Direct, and JSTOR databases since 2010. A total of 169 research paper were intensively reviewed based on certain inclusion and exclusion criteria to analyse publication trends, regional patterns, research methods, research approaches, prominent areas, and major themes of citizen's engagement in research in India. The findings of the study show increasing trends, prominent areas, and an expanding realm of 'citizen engagement research' in contemporary India. A couple of valuable suggestions were also made regarding potential areas for future research.

Keywords: Citizen-engagement, Local-governance, Digital-technology, Governance, Literature Review, India

INTRODUCTION

Citizen engagement is the fulcrum of a sound democratic system of governance as governments wield their authority and mandate to rule from their citizens. Citizen

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engagement is simply understood as the involvement of citizens in the process of governance that mould their lives (Johar, 2017). This involvement can take place in multiple forms, ranging from being informed of action, providing feedback to advise on programmes to monitoring or influencing the implementation of the programmes (Murray et al., 2010). Citizen engagement plays a vital role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the system of governance. By actively participating in decision-making processes, citizens can contribute to the formulation and implementation of policies that reflect their needs and aspirations (Zafarullah, & Siddiquee, 2021; Agrawal & Nair, 2018).

Effective citizen engagement is imperative for a high level of community development and attainment of outcomes of public policy. Fostering of greater citizen engagement can strengthen the system of governance as well as social coherence in a country (Richards & Dalbey, 2006). Over the course of time, the terminology concerning citizen involvement has also changed from citizen involvement to citizen participation to citizen engagement.

The concept of citizen engagement is not new and unique as it has been as old as human civilization. The *Sabha* & *Samiti* in ancient India, and kinship-based societies across the world, which used to rule by consensus and persuasion rather than by dictate, are instances of the antiquity of citizen engagement. However, as far as the theoretical underpinning of the concept is concerned, it can be traced back to democratic theory. The participation of citizens in the political process is indispensable for the protection of personal liberties and the development of civic virtues (Mill, 2010). Alexis de Tocqueville was of the firm opinion that civic associations are vital for fighting against the tyranny of the majority and promoting democratic values. He stressed that citizen participation in local governance and community activities enhances social capital and democratic resilience. Similarly, Mill also advocated that active citizen involvement fosters a sense of ownership and sound decision-making by the incorporation of varied viewpoints.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN INDIA

India has a rich and vibrant history of citizen engagement rooted in its socio-political practices from ancient to modern times. In ancient India, 'Gram Sabha' or village assembly was a prominent institution of local governance in which villagers used to actively engage in discussions and decision-making that affected their life. Kautilya, in his celebrated treatise on statecraft 'Arthashastra' stated that local governance was highly developed with well-demarcated roles and responsibilities (Rangarajan, 1992). Even during the medieval period, the tradition of citizen participation continued in different forms. In South India, instances of citizen engagement could be found in the governance model of the 'Chola' dynasty, which

was well known for its well-organised system of local administration responsible for the administration of local affairs and community development (Stein, 1980).

The vibrant tradition of citizen participation continued in India even after independence. India adopted a democratic political system based on the basic principles of citizen participation and local self-governance. Later attempt was made to rejuvenate citizen engagement in 1993-94 by granting constitutional status to local government under the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts. These reforms were undertaken to strengthen citizen engagement by devolving greater roles and responsibilities along with some finances so that the community itself could decide its destiny.

Today, citizen engagement in India is usually manifested in various forms, like electoral participation, public consultation, social audit, participatory institutions, advocacy & activism, and digital engagement. To the citizen, electoral participation at the national, state, and local levels remains the paramount form of engagement to decide about their political choice that will affect their life. Social audits, public consultations, and participatory governance have presently emerged as effective tools for facilitating greater citizen participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy, and socio-economic developmental programmes. Although advocacy and activism are not formal means of engagement, however, sometimes they are effective in influencing the process of decision-making and public policy.

In the era of e-governance, digital engagement has been gaining currency in India with greater expansion and adoption of digital technologies. Digital technology has rapidly been transforming the landscape of citizen engagement. The utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) in governance and high penetration of social media have opened new avenues for citizens to engage with government by accessing information, providing viewpoints and feedback, and participating in policy discussion while sitting at home or in an office which was hitherto never dreamt of. In line with global trends in the domain of e-governance and digital citizen engagement models of the USA (digital.gov), UK (parliament.uk), and Australia (my.gov.au), the Government of India launched MyGov in 2014, an online citizen engagement platform to encourage citizens to share their ideas and feedback about various government policies and programmes, which will lead to a more inclusive and participatory governance process (Singh & Kaushik, 2020).

Undoubtedly, Indian landscape of citizen engagement has been witnessing a transformation in the age of digital revolution; however, challenges to active and effective citizen engagement still exist. Illiteracy, lack of awareness, awakened citizenry, corruption, administrative inefficiency, along with socio-economic disparities are still major stumbling blocks in the path of meaningful and effective

participation of citizens in governance (Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2017; Jayal, 2007). We need to employ multi-prong approaches to deal with those challenges. Spreading political awareness, awakening citizens about their rights and duties, enhancing the capacity of local governance, bridging of digital divide, inclusion of marginalised communities, and so on are promising measures that can be adopted to address the challenges of effective community engagement.

The present study carries out with an overall objective to assess and analyse the state of existing research on citizen engagement in India using a systematic literature review governed by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Literature Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) method. In light of the objective of study, this review paper intends to find out answers to three research questions-

RQ1: What are the trends and patterns of citizen engagement research over the past years in India?

RQ2: Which areas/domains of citizen engagement were most studied in India?

RQ3: What have been the major themes of citizen engagement research in India?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a systematic literature review using PRISMA (Figure1) method was used to analyse the landscape of citizen engagement research in India. To conduct a systematic literature review, a comprehensive relevant scientific literature containing both theoretical and empirical research papers published from 2010 to 2024 was searched in journals indexed in SCOPUS, JSTOR, and Science-Direct databases. The search was carried out in August 2024. The synthesis of the findings of present and previous studies will help in developing a broader and detailed understanding of the current state of citizen engagement research in India.

IDENTIFICATION OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive literature on citizen engagement in India was identified through an extensive search of three major electronic databases namely SCOPUS, Science-Direct, and JSTOR. All three were selected owing to greater coverage of academic writing on the topic. All three databases were searched using the 'advanced search' feature, in which the topic was searched in the title, abstract, or author-specified keywords of all articles. The search was conducted with keywords- "Citizen Engagement in India", "Public Participation in India", "Community Participation in India", "Civic Participation in India", "Citizen Participation in India", "Public Engagement in India", "Citizen Participation" AND "India", "Public Participation" AND "India", "Community Participation" AND "India", "Citizen Engagement" AND "India", "Public Engagement" AND "India", "Community Engagement" AND

“India”, and “Civic Participation” AND “India”. Databases were searched without being restricted to any specific academic journal and particular academic domain. The search was also filtered by year, and languages. Only those research articles that were published in the English language during 2010-2024 were included in the study, whereas conference papers, chapters, and books were excluded from review. A total of 2593 research articles were found. All research articles were transported in BibTex/RIS format to the reference management software package Zotero. On Zotero, 582 research articles were found to be duplicates, which were scrapped. Finally, a dataset of 2011 research articles was identified.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF LITERATURE

Inclusion and exclusion protocols were also followed to assess the eligibility of papers to be included for review. The title, abstract, and full text (if necessary) of all identified papers were screened on the basis of certain inclusion and exclusion parameters. Only those papers were included in study which focussed on citizen engagement or participation in the Indian context. However, research papers published on topic in the domains of Engineering, Chemistry, Medicine & Health, Biotechnology, Communication Science, and Computer Science were excluded from the study. Lastly, a total of 169 research articles were shortlisted for study following inclusion and exclusion criteria using the PRISMA method.

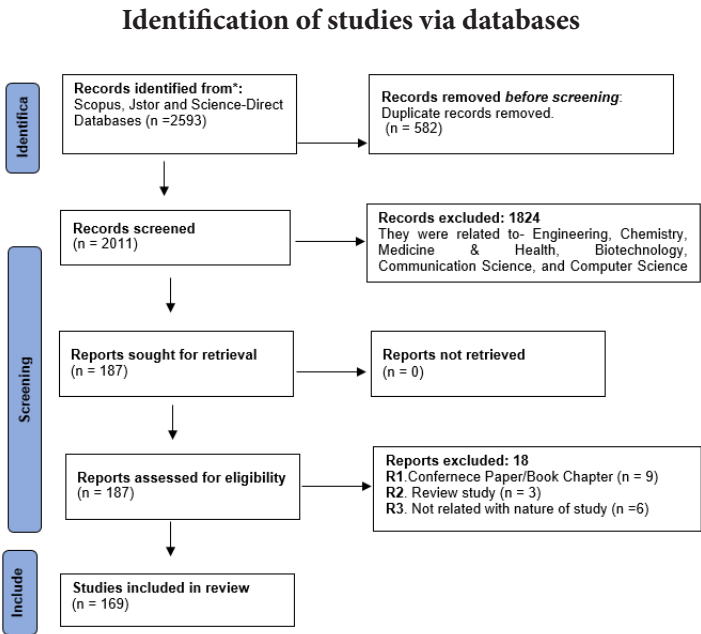


Figure 1: PRISMA based process for selecting articles for systematic literature review of citizen engagement in India

RESULTS

The selected articles were analysed qualitatively using content analysis and thematic analysis.

The very first research question related to trends and patterns in citizen engagement research in India was examined by the descriptive analysis of the volume of publications and growth of publications over the 15 years from 2010 to 2024. Figure 2 clearly shows that the number of publications on citizen engagement has been showing increasing trends, particularly since 2017. This increasing trend has been continuing except in 2024 as the author has selected articles published till first week of August 2024 only.

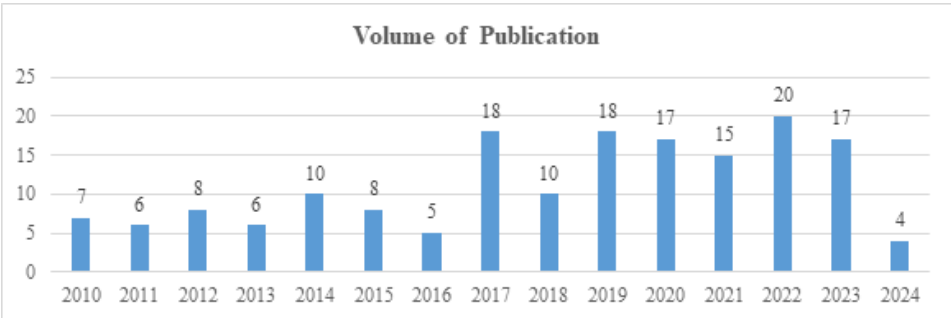


Figure 2: Number of Publication on citizen engagement in India per year

This trend may reflect that more research studies are being carried out on citizen engagement in India. The same can also be witnessed in Figure 3 which depicts the growth trajectory of the volume of publication over the years.

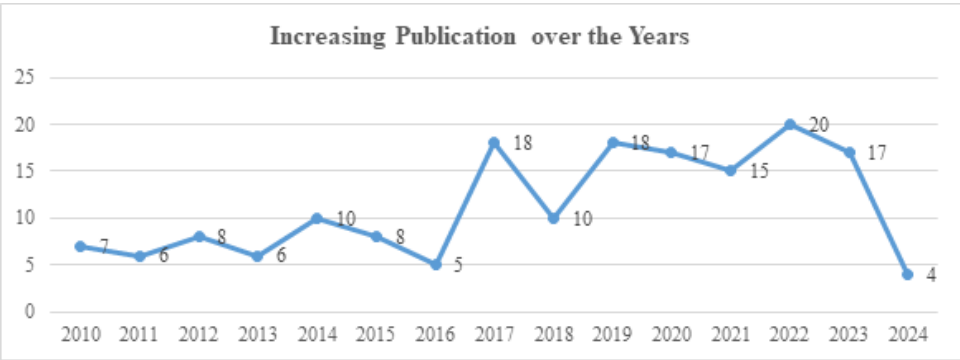


Figure 3: Trajectory of increasing publication on citizen engagement in India per year

Research trends were also examined by studying the geographical spread of research carried out in India on citizen engagement. To analyse that, author classified different states of India into six zones, namely northern zone, western

zone, eastern zone, central zone, southern zone, north-eastern zone based on the Ministry of Home Affairs' zonal classification as follows:

Table 1: Zonal classification

<i>States</i>	<i>Zone</i>
Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal	Eastern Zone
Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Western Zone
Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh	Central Zone
Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, New Delhi	Northern Zone
Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar and Puducherry	Southern Zone
Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya Nagaland, and Sikkim	North-eastern Zone

In addition, Pan India and India with International Comparison context were also used to understand the trend. It may be categorically inferred from Table 2 that the majority of studies on citizen engagement were conducted on a pan India level (39.64%) followed by southern zone (15.98%), and northern zone (12.43%). Very few studies were conducted in central zone, north-eastern zone, and eastern zone.

Table 2: Geographical context of researches on citizen engagement in India

<i>Region (zone)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Central Zone	4	2.37%
Eastern Zone	13	7.69%
Pan India Perspective	67	39.64%
International Perspective	15	8.88%
Northern Zone	21	12.43%
North-Eastern Zone	4	2.37%
Southern zone	27	15.98%
Western Zone	18	10.65%

Research methods and research approaches employed in selected articles were also analysed to capture trends and patterns. Figure 4 reflects that conceptual, survey, combined primary and secondary, case study, comparative, secondary research, and systematic literature review methods were major methods used by researchers to study citizen engagement in India. In addition, among these, the most preferred research method was conceptual (43.20%), followed by survey method (23.08%), combined primary & secondary method (16.57%), and case

study (8.88%). Comparative method was mainly used in international comparisons with India. The secondary research method was the least preferred method used by researchers to study citizen engagement in India.

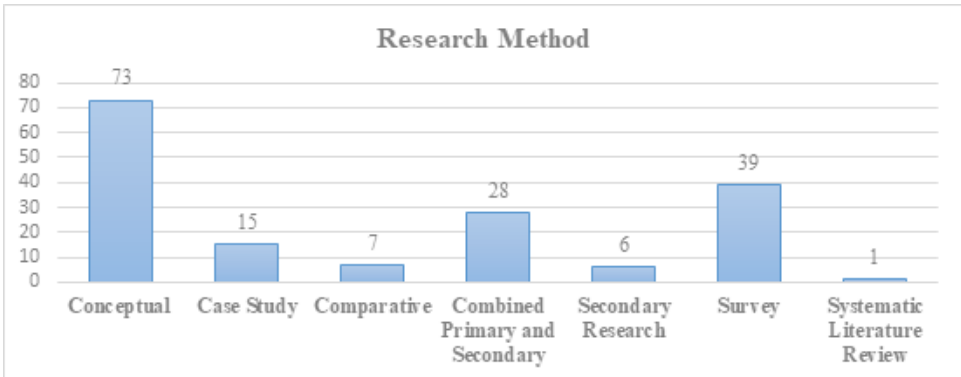


Figure 4: Research method employed in citizen engagement research in India

In terms of research approach, Figure 5 presents that qualitative research approach (58.58%) was the most used research approach, followed by quantitative approach (21.12%). Both quantitative approach and mixed approach were almost equally preferred by researchers in citizen engagement research.

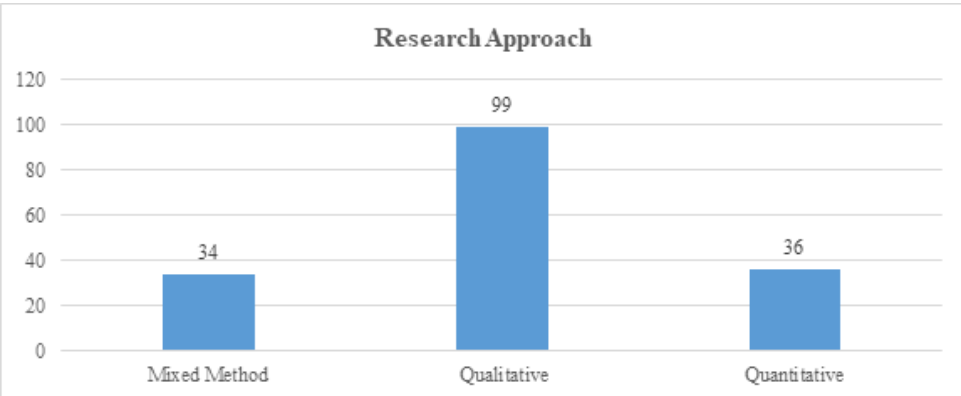


Figure 5: Research Approach

Second research question of this study was related to which aspect of citizen engagement was most studied in India. The purpose of this question was to find out the prominent areas/domains of research on citizen engagement in India. Figure 6 clearly indicates that broader areas of citizen engagement research in India were-disaster management, education, e-governance, environment, finance, governance reform, local governance, policy/project/schemes, state and democracy, and water management. Among these areas, the most dominant was local governance

(30.18%), followed by e-governance (15.98%), state and democracy (14.20%), and environment (13.02%).

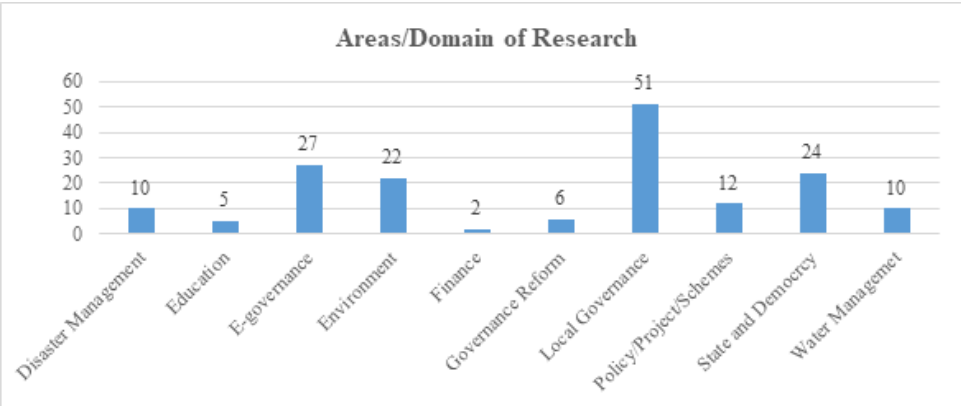


Figure 6: Areas of research on citizen engagement in India during 2010-2024

The financial aspect (1.18%), followed by education (2.96%) and governance reforms (3.55%) were less researched areas. The same conclusion may also be inferred from Table 3, which indicates number of publications in particular areas per year.

Table 3: Areas of citizen engagement research in India per year

Year	Disaster	Education	E-Governance	Environ-ment	Finance	Governance reform	Local Governance	Policy/Project/ Schemes	State and Democracy	Water Management	Total
2010				2			1		3	1	7
2011			1				4		1		6
2012			2	1		1	4				8
2013			1			1	3	1			6
2014		1	2	2	1		1	1	1	1	10
2015	1	1	1	2		1	2				8
2016				3			2				5
2017	1		3			1	9	1	2	1	18
2018				1		1		3	3	2	10
2019			2	2	1		6	1	4	2	18
2020		1	1	3			5		6	1	17
2021	2		4	1		1	3	1	3		15
2022	4		4	5			5	1		1	20
2023	1	1	5				6	2	1	1	17

<i>Year</i>	<i>Disaster</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>E-Governance</i>	<i>Environ-ment</i>	<i>Finance</i>	<i>Governance reform</i>	<i>Local Governance</i>	<i>Policy/Project/ Schemes</i>	<i>State and Democracy</i>	<i>Water Management</i>	<i>Total</i>
2024	1	1	1					1			4
Grand Total	10	5	27	22	2	6	51	12	24	10	169

The last research question was analysed by finding the top terms. The top terms are the terms/words that are having a higher frequency in terms of no. of words in a corpus of text. The top terms assist in identifying major themes that emerge from a corpus of a text. In this study, top terms were shown through visualisation called word clouds. The size of a term, which indicates its prominence in word clouds, is determined by its frequency in a corpus of text. Table 4 exhibits the top ten terms with their frequencies from a corpus of selected articles on this study, for instance, ‘Participation’, ‘Community’, ‘Social’, ‘Citizens’, ‘Public’, ‘Engagement’, ‘Local’, ‘Governance’, ‘Government’, and ‘Political’. This clearly indicates that the term ‘participation’ was the most used term than ‘engagement’ as it has been employed recently. The term ‘community’ was also preferred over the words ‘citizen’, ‘public’, and ‘people’ while referring to citizen engagement. Similarly, the higher frequency of the word ‘Local’ indicates that citizen engagement in India has by and large been studied in the context of local governance. The same can also be inferred from Figure 6.

Table 3: Top terms with their frequency

<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Participation	371	Management	72
Community	318	Media	68
Social	169	Water	66
Citizens	152	Analysis	63
Public	144	Civic	63
Engagement	127	Health	57
Local	123	Rights	56
Governance	110	Factors	55
Government	105	People	55
Political	95	Women	55
Development	87	Planning	53
State	81	Society	49
Urban	74	Policy	47

research approach was found to be the most used, followed by quantitative approach. However, mixed method approach has also been gaining currency recently.

Regarding prominent areas/domains of research on citizen engagement in India, it was inferred that local governance was the most researched domain under citizen engagement. E-governance has been the emerging domain of citizen engagement research. A Good amount of citizen engagement research was also undertaken in the areas of environment and disaster management. Finance and education, along with governance reform, were not prominent domains under citizen engagement research in India as a very limited number of studies were undertaken.

Lastly, the major themes of citizen engagement research in India were identified with the help of top terms. The top ten terms that emerged from the study were 'Participation', 'Community', 'Social', 'Citizens', 'Public', 'Engagement', 'Local', 'Governance', 'Government', and 'Political'. The term 'participation' was the most used term, while 'engagement' was comparatively used in few studies. This indicates that the use of the term 'engagement' in place of participation is a recent phenomenon. It was also found that the majority of studies employ the term 'community' rather than the words 'citizen', 'public', and 'people' to refer to citizen participation. The high frequency of the word 'local' indicates that citizen engagement in India has by and large been studied in the context of local governance.

Moreover, this study, after a detailed review of the state of citizen engagement research, also identified that 'governance reform', and 'policy/project/schemes' are the potential areas under citizen engagement for future research endeavours. Greater application of the survey method based on primary data guided by quantitative and mixed research approach, is also a vital area for future to test the theories and propositions developed in conceptual or theoretical studies.

CONCLUSION

Citizen engagement is the base of successful democratic polity in any country. It plays quite a significant role in ascertaining accountability, openness, and responsiveness in the process of governing. Despite its greater significance, no direct research on this topic was conducted from an overall perspective in India. This study basically aims to address that problem and enrich research in the domain of citizen engagement, particularly in the Indian scenario by reviewing in depth the available literature from the last 15 years. In this study, a total of 169 research articles on citizen engagement were systematically reviewed to find out publication trends, regional patterns, research methods, research approaches, prominent areas, and major themes. However, this study has some limitations as the literature was selected only from the journals indexed in SCOPUS, Science-Direct,

and JSTOR databases. Research articles published in local journals not indexed in that database were not included in study. The findings and implications of the study were discussed. The author also made some valuable suggestions regarding potential areas for future research in citizen engagement. This study being the first of its kind in the domain of citizen engagement research will help to broaden our horizons and understanding about the state of academic research in the domain of citizen engagement in India.

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THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF POLITICAL CONSULTANCY IN INDIA: ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN POLITICS

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Abstract

The rise of political consultancy in India marks a transformation in the dynamics of electoral politics, driven by evolving campaign strategies, digital outreach, and data analytics. This study examines the operational frameworks, influence, and challenges posed by political consultants within India's political landscape, focusing on the implications for party cohesion, grassroots mobilization, and internal democratic structures. By focusing on the methodologies of prominent firms like the Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC), the research explores how consultants influence key campaign decisions, including candidate selection and strategic messaging, often based on extensive data analytics. However, this involvement raises issues of information confidentiality, potential bias, and loyalty shifts within party structures, which can compromise both internal dynamics and the transparency of political campaigns. The findings underscore a paradox: while consultancies enhance campaign effectiveness, they also present risks of external influence and ethical dilemmas.

Keywords: Political Consultancy, Political Parties, Indian Politics, Campaign Strategies and IPAC.

INTRODUCTION

The Andhra Pradesh general election of 2024 has brought political consultancy into sharp focus with recent developments surrounding Prashanth Kishore, a prominent consultant and founder of the Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC). Kishore's meeting with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) National President,

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N. Chandrababu Naidu, has ignited significant public and media debate in Andhra Pradesh, sparking questions about the dynamics and implications of political consultancy in the state (Pushkar Banakar, 2023). This controversy is magnified by Kishore's well-established reputation, as he and IPAC were instrumental in the Yuvajana Shramika Rythu Congress Party's (YSRCP) landslide victory in the 2019 state assembly elections. His association with YSRCP and its leader, Jagan Mohan Reddy, continues to be a point of political contention, particularly with the recent speculation regarding his involvement with the rival TDP as elections approach. This evolving situation has introduced a layer of intrigue, highlighting the role of political consultants as influential, and sometimes polarizing, actors in the electoral process.

The incident illustrates the strategic role of consultants in modern Indian elections, where they are tasked with not only creating targeted voter outreach plans but also shaping the overall electoral landscape. Kishore's engagement with both YSRCP and now potentially TDP showcases the complex affiliations and influence wielded by consultancy firms like IPAC, especially as they navigate multiple party interests in a competitive political environment. This scenario underscores the dual nature of political consultancy in India: while it has introduced a level of professionalization and strategic sophistication to election campaigns, it has also raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest, ideological alignment, and the ethical responsibilities of consultants (Sajjanhar A, 2021). This paper examines the role and impact of political consultancies, analysing how firms like IPAC mediate electoral strategies and influence inter-party dynamics. It further investigates how consultants' involvement can affect party cohesion, voter engagement, and campaign integrity, revealing the critical yet contentious position of consultancies in contemporary Indian politics. In doing so, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with the rising influence of political consultancy in shaping democratic processes and political outcomes in India.

WHY AND HOW DO POLITICAL CONSULTANTS BECOME SO IMPORTANT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES?

The surge of political consultancy in politics can be attributed to a confluence of factors that have reshaped the political landscape. Firstly, the dynamic evolution of communication media and innovative methods of reaching voters has created an opening for tech-savvy consultants within political parties and campaign management (Kolodny & Logan, 1998). This shift reflects the adaptation to a digital era where strategic communication plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion. Secondly, the decline in traditional party loyalties has compelled political parties to closely monitor and respond to shifting voter preferences (O'Shaughnessy, 1990).

The use of surveys and analytics has become integral to staying attuned to the pulse of the electorate, contributing to a more adaptive and responsive political environment. In the 21st century, political consultants come armed with an array of service tools that address the multifaceted needs of political parties (Johnson, 2012). These services encompass feedback-based candidate selection, data-driven policy design, the promotion of propaganda, systematic management of cadre, and policy consulting. The infusion of technological solutions has revolutionized traditional aspects of politics, such as booth management and voter profiling (Grossmann, 2009). The choice of political consultancy is also influenced significantly by the reputation of the consultant. The hiring of influential figures like Prashanth Kishore and well-established consultancies like the Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC) has become a strategic move, serving as a booster in the competitive political arena. While these factors have undeniably opened doors for political consultancy in Indian politics, the unprecedented strategies and subsequent political success of Prashanth Kishore and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 general election laid the robust foundation for the ascendance of political consultancy in Indian politics (Aswini Varna, 2019). This watershed moment prompted major political parties to recognize the importance of technical and campaign expertise in election battles, leading to the recruitment of consultants, many of whom hail from prestigious institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIM). As these “politically agnostic” consultants serve diverse purposes for political parties and leaders, their deepening engagement with the political parties introduces new challenges into the Indian political setup.

MODUS OPERANDI OF POLITICAL CONSULTANTS

Political consultants play a crucial role in modern Indian elections, providing data-driven insights and strategies that shape the trajectory of political campaigns. Their modus operandi typically follows a multi-stage approach, blending traditional campaign methods with cutting-edge digital and analytical tools to maximize electoral success. Table 1 gives a detailed explanation of the modus operandi of political consultants.

Table 1:

<i>Function</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Key Functions</i>	<i>Tools Used</i>
1. Data Analytics and Voter Profiling	Gathering and analysing data to identify voter demographics and preferences.	Voter segmentation, issue identification, custom messaging	Surveys, data analytics tools, social media sentiment tracking

<i>Function</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Key Functions</i>	<i>Tools Used</i>
2. Campaign Management	Planning and overseeing the execution of all campaign activities.	Resource allocation, event coordination, monitoring media outreach	Event management, resource planning tools
3. Digital and Social Media Strategy	Creating and managing online presence through social media platforms.	Social media campaigns, digital content creation, online engagement	Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
4. Public Relations and Image Building	Shaping the public perception of the candidate through media engagement.	Press conferences, media appearances, managing public narratives	Press releases, media briefings, spokesperson management
5. Grassroots Mobilization	Engaging voters at the local level through direct outreach and rallies.	Door-to-door canvassing, volunteer activation, rally organization	Volunteer management systems, community outreach programs
6. Electoral Strategy Development	Crafting poll promises and developing a strategy that addresses voter needs.	Policy design, agenda creation, message targeting	Polling, focus groups, strategic planning tools
7. Campaign Execution and Feedback	Carrying out the planned strategies and fine-tuning them based on real-time feedback.	Fieldwork management, data analysis, real-time polling	Feedback analytics, real time polling data

Source: Reports of various consultancies and interviews of consultants

The operational strategies of political consultants in India have become an integral part of the modern electoral process, blending traditional campaigning methods with advanced technological innovations. Central to their approach is the collection and analysis of vast amounts of voter data. Political consultants begin by gathering extensive voter information, including demographics, preferences, and behavioral patterns. This data allows consultants to craft messages that resonate with specific voter segments. A senior level consultant from a prominent political consultancy firm explained, “Our job is to provide precision in messaging. By analyzing voter data, we ensure that each campaign issue addresses the needs of distinct voter blocs—whether it’s youth unemployment, farmers’ issues, or urban infrastructure”. Once the data is analyzed, consultants move to campaign management, overseeing the execution of all activities. This phase involves organizing resources, planning events, and coordinating media outreach. A party official commented on the importance of consultants in this stage: “Political consultants bring the technical expertise and experience that we, as party members, may not always have. They help us streamline our efforts, making sure every rally, meeting, or press conference happens without any hitches”. Consultants track media coverage and public response, adjusting strategies in real-time based on how the candidate is being

perceived. This logistical expertise ensures that campaigns remain well-organized and efficient.

In the digital age, managing a candidate's online presence has become one of the most critical tasks for political consultants. They develop social media strategies to engage with voters across platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. "A strong social media presence is non-negotiable in today's political landscape," said a digital strategy expert. "Through online engagement, we can directly target voter groups, respond to criticism, and create content that influences public perception". Consultants employ data-driven online advertising and tailored messaging to connect with specific demographics at the right time, ensuring that the campaign's message is widely and effectively disseminated. Public relations and image management play an equally important role. Consultants carefully manage the candidate's interactions with the media, ensuring a consistent and positive public image. A party leader who worked with a political consultancy noted, "We trust consultants to handle media engagements because they know how to navigate the risks. They craft the right narrative and keep the campaign on message." The consultants' ability to handle crises, manage public perceptions, and maintain the candidate's image has become essential, particularly when facing unexpected controversies or negative media coverage.

Grassroots mobilization is another cornerstone of the political consultants' approach, especially in a diverse electorate like India's. Consultants design and execute localized outreach efforts, such as door-to-door canvassing, volunteer activation, and community rallies. One consultant shared, "Grassroots engagement is still one of the most effective ways to win votes. While digital strategies reach a broad audience, personal interaction builds trust and loyalty among voters." This is especially true in rural areas where voters value face-to-face contact over online engagement. Party leaders also emphasized the role consultants play in organizing local volunteers and coordinating efforts at every level of the campaign. "They ensure that the message is consistent from top to bottom, which helps us connect better with local voters," remarked a local campaign manager. Another critical aspect of the consultants' work is the development of an electoral strategy. Consultants collaborate closely with party leaders to craft the candidate's poll promises and develop an agenda that reflects the concerns of the electorate. Through focus groups and internal insights, they fine-tune the campaign's message to ensure it is aligned with voter sentiment. "Consultants bring objectivity to the process," a senior party strategist noted. "Sometimes as party leaders, we're too close to the issues. Consultants help us see things from the voters' perspective and design policies that resonate with them." This strategic thinking enables parties to offer promises and policy agendas that strike a chord with the electorate, increasing the chances of success. Throughout the campaign, feedback mechanisms are continuously

employed to assess and adjust strategies. Consultants utilize real-time polling and voter feedback to track the campaign's progress. As a consultant explained, "The feedback loop is crucial. It allows us to pivot quickly if something isn't working. We can shift resources, modify our messaging, or even change our approach in certain areas based on how the electorate responds." By using data analytics and feedback, consultants ensure that campaigns remain agile and responsive to new developments, whether they are changes in voter behavior, media narratives, or actions taken by opposition parties.

In overall, Political consultants play a vital role in shaping election campaigns through their methodical approach, combining data analysis, grassroots mobilization, and digital strategies. Their work not only maximizes the efficiency of campaigns but also ensures that the party's message aligns with voter sentiment. As more parties rely on consultants to guide their electoral strategies, the expertise and insights offered by these professionals have become indispensable. Party members and consultants alike acknowledge that this symbiotic relationship is essential for modern political campaigns. As one consultant concluded, "At the end of the day, our success is tied to the party's success. We are here to help them win, and that requires us to be adaptable, strategic, and data-driven in everything we do."

RISE OF POLITICAL CONSULTANCY: CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

While the motivations behind political parties hiring political consultants are multifaceted, it's crucial to acknowledge that consultants are fundamentally driven by financial considerations. The contractual agreement between the consultant and the party or politician is primarily centered on the monetary compensation for the services rendered (Phadnis & Khandelwal, 2022). Although both parties share the overarching objective of electoral success, the extent and duration of consultancy services are predominantly contingent on the financial investment made. In the United States, where political consultancy has been a longstanding practice for over a century, the engagement between consultants and parties is characterized by distinct perspectives. The Allied view emphasizes the alignment of consultants' beliefs with party ideology and policy preferences. Conversely, in the adversarial view, a party may prioritize factors other than the consultant's political inclinations when making hiring decisions (Kolodny & Logan, 1998). In India, such discerning practices are yet to fully materialize, as parties often prioritize consultants based on reputation and financial influence rather than ideological compatibility. Given that reputation and financial clout play pivotal roles in the party-consultancy association, the duration and nature of these engagements are prone to frequent changes. Notably, the Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC), the largest political consultancy in India, has collaborated with political parties that have been

arch rivals for decades. In a recent example, Prashanth Kishore and IPAC worked with the Trinamul Congress (TMC) and against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the West Bengal state assembly elections. The fluidity in consultancy engagements raises concerns about information sharing between consultants and rival parties.

One of the key concerns lies in the possibility of consultants sharing confidential information about internal party matters and identifying dissatisfied leaders with rival parties. This sharing of sensitive details could lead to defections and alterations in the party's campaign agenda. Given the deep involvement of consultants in party programs and leader assessments, the information they possess becomes a valuable asset. However, when consultancy associations change rapidly, there is an increased risk of this valuable information being misused by rival parties. The intricate knowledge about party strategies, internal workings, and potential areas of discontent can be exploited to the advantage of political opponents, thereby altering the political landscape. Despite agreements on the confidentiality of information, the clandestine nature of party consultancy associations in politics often leads to violations of these legal barriers. Apart from damage to political parties, this penetration of consultancies into parties can damage the complex nature of political parties in India. A significant concern in the realm of political consultancy is the potential for consultants to share confidential information regarding internal party dynamics and identify dissatisfied leaders with rival parties. This leakage of sensitive data can lead to defections and shifts in a party's campaign strategy. Given the deep involvement of consultants in party programs and leadership assessments, the information they possess becomes a valuable asset. However, when consultancy affiliations change frequently, the risk of this information being misused by competing parties increases. Insights into party strategies, internal workings, and areas of discontent can be exploited by political opponents, reshaping the political landscape. Despite contractual agreements ensuring the confidentiality of information, the covert nature of political consultancy often leads to breaches of these legal safeguards. Beyond harming political parties, the penetration of consultancies into party structures has the potential to compromise the already complex nature of political organizations in India.

A senior political leader from a national party, when asked about these threats consultancies pose, stated, "The relationship between political consultancies and parties is not without its limitations. While we do share critical information with consultants, we ensure that no sensitive data goes beyond the party office. We only provide what is necessary, keeping sensitive leadership and organizational details to ourselves." Additionally, an academic expert on political consultancy noted that the risk of consultancy jeopardizing parties has long been acknowledged. In American politics, the consolidation of the consultancy industry has, to some extent, been shaped by concerns over consultants' loyalty. It is rare for consultants to switch to

rival parties or candidates. While financial arrangements define these relationships, prior associations and ideological alignments are also carefully considered before entering new engagements. A similar pattern is slowly emerging in India. Parties are increasingly seeking long-term, ideologically aligned consultants, and in some cases, are even funding and establishing in-house consultancies to meet their own needs. While this trend may not immediately resolve all the associated challenges, it represents a step toward addressing them effectively.

Recent instances in general elections 2024 have also highlight the accusatory tone adopted by some leaders who publicly claim that consultancies provided negative feedback about them to benefit other factions within the party. Such allegations have, in some cases, resulted in leaders defecting to other parties, underscoring the influence and impact of consultancy dynamics on intra-party relationships. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, Mr. M.S. Babu, the sitting Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Puthalapattu constituency, expressed his discontent after being denied a party ticket for re-election. He claimed that the decision was based on a “bad survey report” prepared by the political consultancy firm I-PAC (Indian Political Action Committee). According to Mr. Babu, “It is unfortunate and unjust to deny me a ticket on the pretext of a bad survey report from I-PAC. The political consultancy firm gives favourable reports if it is paid,” implying a potential bias in the consultancy’s recommendations (The Hindu, 2024). This statement underscores the perceived power of consultancy reports in determining electoral candidacies, as well as the possibility of financial influence skewing their findings. In another case, a similar scenario unfolded within the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal during the 2024 elections. The party selected Partha Bhowmick as its candidate for the Barrackpore Lok Sabha constituency, despite strong indications that Arjun Singh, the sitting Member of Parliament (MP) and a prominent contender for the ticket, would defect to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) if overlooked. Reports suggest that the decision to deny Singh the ticket was influenced by negative feedback from the political consultancy firm I-PAC (Indian Political Action Committee), which had conducted internal assessments that cast doubt on Singh’s candidacy. Despite Singh’s efforts to secure his position by meeting with senior party leaders, I-PAC’s recommendations played a decisive role in the party’s choice. Subsequently, Arjun Singh officially joined the BJP and contested the Barrackpore seat against his former colleague, Bhowmick. A senior executive from I-PAC revealed that “the I-PAC’s suggestions, based on their surveys, are hardly ever turned down by the top TMC leadership” (Sagrika Kissu & Shreyashi Dey, 2024).

Factionalism and defection politics have been a prominent feature of Indian political culture. However, the increasing and pervasive role of consultancy firms has introduced new dynamics that are reshaping internal party structures and loyalties. The growing reliance on external consultants for critical decisions, such as

candidate selection and campaign strategies, has significant implications for party cohesion and the nature of defection politics—an issue that the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was designed to address (Anti-Defection Law in India, 2022). However, the influence of consultants may be driving this phenomenon in a new direction. One key concern is the “outsider influence” that consultancy firms represent. As external actors, these consultants may lack the intimate knowledge of local dynamics, party history, and grassroots cadres, which are vital to the internal functioning of political organizations. Their feedback, often derived from surveys and data-driven analysis, while valuable, can create tensions between local party workers and top leadership. Local cadres may feel sidelined or alienated when decisions are made based on the recommendations of consultants who do not have a direct stake in the party’s long-term goals. This can erode the loyalty of grassroots members and disrupt the delicate balance between local and central leadership, ultimately weakening the party’s organizational structure.

Furthermore, there is the potential for consultancy feedback to be influenced by financial incentives. As seen in some of the aforementioned cases, allegations of biased or manipulated reports have surfaced, where consultants are accused of favouring certain factions or individuals who are willing to pay for positive feedback. If consultancy firms become susceptible to monetary influence, their recommendations could distort the internal dynamics of political parties. This trend not only undermines the transparency and accountability of political parties but also makes their organizational strength vulnerable to external manipulation. The increasing dependence on consultants shifts the locus of decision-making from within the party to external actors, potentially weakening the party’s ability to control its internal processes. Moreover, such trends may foster an environment where defection becomes a more frequent and tactical move, as leaders or factions dissatisfied with consultancy-driven decisions could increasingly seek alternative political platforms, further destabilizing party unity.

Another increasingly concerning aspect of the political consultancy sector is the potential threat posed by consultants sharing sensitive information about political parties and public policy data with external entities such as corporations, non-state actors, and even international players. Political consultants are deeply embedded in the strategic decision-making processes of political parties, granting them access to highly confidential information, including internal party dynamics, electoral strategies, policy drafts, and voter databases. The risk lies in the potential misuse or sale of this sensitive information to third parties, either during or after election cycles. This issue becomes even more alarming as consultants expand their roles beyond elections to influence post-election governance and policy formulation. A striking example comes from Andhra Pradesh, where concerns have been raised over the use of sensitive voter data. “The complete information of the

people of Andhra Pradesh, which is confidential, is now in the hands of I-PAC. This information is being misused by I-PAC, which is working for the ruling YSRCP,” said Telugu Desam Party spokesperson Neelayapalem Vijay Kumar in a public interview (SNV Sudhir, 2023). He further claimed, “Collecting the personal details of any individual is totally illegal and unlawful. Under the directions of I-PAC, the names of the voters of other parties are being deleted by the volunteers. The data being collected by ward and village volunteers is ultimately going into the offices of I-PAC.” Such incidents highlight the potential dangers of consultants holding vast amounts of sensitive voter information. Furthermore, consultants often continue working with political parties even after an election victory, giving them sustained access to government data and policy discussions. This creates a gray area where the distinction between political consultancy and direct policy influence blurs. Relationships between consultants and external stakeholders, such as corporations or international entities, increase the risk that confidential information could be used for purposes that conflict with the public interest. For instance, corporations or foreign actors might gain access to sensitive details about upcoming policy changes, enabling them to influence markets, investments, or geopolitical strategies to their advantage. In such cases, public policy risks being shaped by private or foreign interests rather than serving the public good.

The financial dealings between political parties and consultancy firms are often opaque, with large sums of money exchanged for consultancy services. While official figures are rarely disclosed in full, these transactions raise significant questions about the influence of money in the political process and the possibility of financial malfeasance. For example, it was alleged that the Yuvajana Shramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) paid a staggering ₹274 crore to the Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC) through shell companies for its services during the 2019 Andhra Pradesh elections (Srikanth Aluri, 2023). Although the YSRCP officially acknowledged paying ₹37 crore to IPAC for its consultancy services (Nitin, 2019), the discrepancy between these figures raises serious questions about the actual flow of funds between political parties and consultancies. The scale of financial transactions between consultancies and political parties also raises concerns about the broader impact of money in politics. When consultants are paid exorbitant fees, there is a risk that their primary loyalty may shift from the political party they are serving to the financial interests that support their operations. This could lead to scenarios where consultants prioritize the agendas of powerful external entities—such as business conglomerates or international organizations—over the needs and goals of the political party or, worse, the welfare of the public. This possibility has sparked growing alarm among political observers, with some arguing that the increasing commercialization of political consultancy could lead to undue corporate or foreign influence on domestic elections and policy-making.

The potential for consultants to act as intermediaries for these external interests is further compounded by the limited regulatory oversight in India's political consultancy sector. While other democracies like the United States have instituted stricter regulations governing lobbying and political consulting to prevent conflicts of interest, India's framework remains lax.

Another intriguing aspect is the role of consultancies and parties in deploying consultants to observe and monitor the activities of rival political entities. For example, the YSRCP engaged IPAC consultants were reportedly caught recording details of a recent 'Yuvagalam' march organized by Lokesh, the general secretary of the TDP. There is a growing belief among political experts that political consultants are increasingly being utilized to amplify negative publicity against rivals rather than enhancing their own image. This shift in focus towards negative campaigning raises ethical concerns about the impact on public perceptions and the overall health of democratic discourse.

THE GROWING BUSINESS OF POLITICAL CONSULTANCY : FUTURE PROSPECTS

Currently, a substantial business worth 3000-5000 crore is thriving in the political consultancy sector, engaging around 30,000 employees across various levels and diverse working conditions. Despite the historical reluctance of politicians to openly acknowledge their association with political consultants and attribute success to their services, the progress of consultancy expansion is becoming more pronounced. Evolving practices suggest that consultancies are poised not only to enhance the scale of their services but also to broaden the scope of their offerings. While the question of whether consultants can unequivocally guarantee the success of a political party or leader in an election remains a matter of debate, their palpable impact on the dynamic landscape of Indian politics is undeniable.

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ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ENSURING RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN INDIA: BENEFITS AND BARRIERS

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Abstract

The purpose of the present research is to investigate the double-edged role of technology in enabling the right to education, and it comprehensively studies the challenges and opportunities posed by it. Whereas digital tools are an enormous contribution to the education sector due to the great extension of access to education worldwide, hence, their full applicability is still constrained by factors like unequal access to digital literacy, and infrastructure. The present paper scrutinizes these concerns and also suggests strategic answers in order to build up a project of educational technology maximum benefit while minimizing its disadvantages.

Keywords: Right to Education, Technology, OER, Digital-Divide, Community, India.

INTRODUCTION

The Right to Education is a fundamental human right that ensures free education for every child aged between 6 to 14 without any discrimination. It emphasizes on quality learning that promotes societal and personal development, provides free and compulsory primary education for all and provides equal access to secondary and higher education for all. Its main focus is on the inclusion of girl child, marginalized groups and disabled students. This right is supported by international frameworks like Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) and Universal Declaration of Human

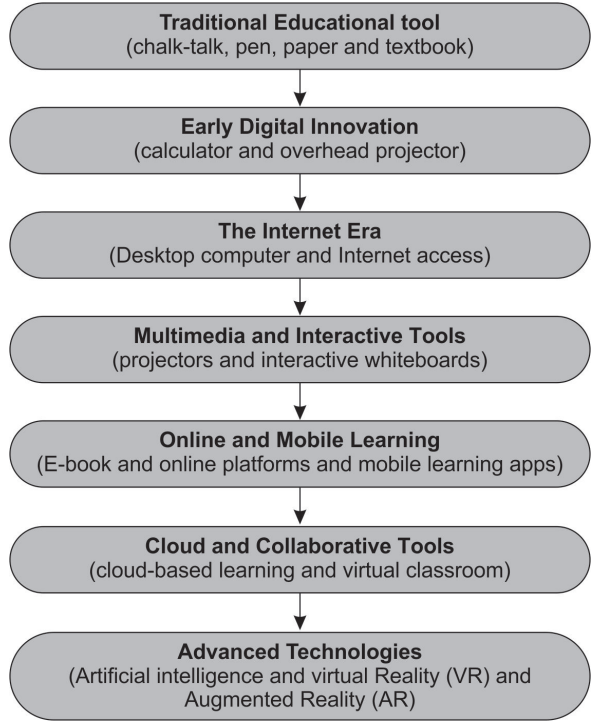
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Rights (1948). But in this paper researchers only talk about the challenges and opportunities of using technology to support right to education. Therefore, it is imperative to underline the changes from traditional educational tools like ‘chalk talk’ method into multimedia and interactive tools like projectors and smartboard and further to advanced technological tools like artificial intelligence (Miller: 2020). The following flow chart depicts the changes.

The unrestricted entry to education is looked upon like a key human right, essential for the formation of individuals and societies. Technology, during our times, has envisaged to be a game changer in the field of education, thus opening doors of space and time that have never been seen as possible before. Hence, technological integration in education systems leads to a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure equitable access, and quality outcomes. The present paper looks into the relationship between technology and education, emphasizing the problems and the solutions that it entails, so people can understand it better. It deals with the digital divide, infrastructure limitations, and pedagogical challenges, but at the same time, it remarks the possibilities of technology to create a more democratic education, to individualize learning

Flow-chart: Advancement of Traditional Tools and Technological Tools in Education



THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

Studies have shown that the development in science and technology can improve access to education by using online platforms, digital libraries, and interactive learning tools. A good example would be the case of the MOOCs, Digital Libraries, OER and UNESCO's initiatives through digital education in underprivileged areas, which can be the best way of making sure that technology helps to diminish the existing knowledge gaps in the society. Some roles of technologies are given below:

Bridging Geographical Gaps

Online Platforms: These platforms bring schools closer to the children without taking into consideration physical space. A student that lives in a remote community or is unskilled to attend a traditional school for various reasons (inability to move, disabilities, economic problems, etc.) can have access to both courses and materials online.

Examples: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) such as Coursera, edX, and Khan Academy are so diverse that they are given free of charge or at a relatively low price, and therefore are available to everyone in the world at a good cost.

Overcoming Economic Hardship

Availability of Digital Libraries: These are the linkway through which one can reach a big library of books, and the research papers and many other materials are provided without being printed in papers. Such services are now particularly useful in poor areas where it is required to close the digital divide.

Open Educational Resources (OER): These are freely available teaching and learning materials that anyone can use and adapt as per need.

Catering to Diverse Learning Needs

Interactive Learning Tools: These tools, i.e., simulations, educational games, and multimedia resources, introduce a different learning style making it more engaging and conducive to more different ways of learning. As a result, students can identify and understand complex concepts more easily and have personalized learning experiences.

Assistive Technologies: That is, screen readers, text-to-speech software, and adaptive keyboards are used by students with disabilities so that they can access and participate in education more effectively.

UNESCO'S ROLE IN PROMOTING DIGITAL EDUCATION

UNESCO's Initiatives: In fact, UNESCO has been making the use of technology a success in education especially in the poor areas (UNESCO: 2020) with the following modes

1. The teaching digital literacy skills to both teachers and students
2. Enabling access to digital devices and internet connectivity
3. Producing and selecting digital educational content which is of quality for education purposes
4. Backing the national policymakers in designing and implementing digital learning programmes

These efforts have been seen as the means for the elimination of educational disparities through making education accessible to the under-privileged, its operation at large scale by leveraging technology and delivery of education throughout life. Technology is a vital tool for education to be made accessible to a larger group of people, through the elimination of the limitation set by appropriations, accounting and physical punishment. Organizations playing a major part in the development of digital literacy also constitute, for instance, UNESCO which works to advance and promote science and technology in the interest of sustainable human development. (Smith & Brown: 2020). This is how the technology would be used to spread the benefits of technology used by the least fortunate people who would otherwise be left out of the global education system.

CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

Digital Divide

The digital divide, that is the disparity in internet connection and technology access among the people, is one of the evident hitches. A study done by ITU claims that more than 2.7 billion people globally are still without the internet and this disproportionately impacts the students in low-income and rural areas. It results in the educational process becoming imperceptible in these regions (Parasar & Naaz,: 2022). Thus, a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities is created. Government authorities and international institutions are making an attempt to resolve the challenge by means of broadband access development and the provision of low-cost devices to the needful, but the speed of change is not constant (National Education Association: 2019).

Infrastructure and Resource Constraints

Quite a few parts of the world lack the infrastructure that is needed, for example, stable electricity and internet connectivity, which is essential for digital learning to

be carried out. In the countryside, schools, as a rule, do not use essential facilities which means that it is extremely difficult to introduce and maintain educational technology, let alone to operate computers. Moreover, old equipment and the absence of technical support aggravate the situation. Say, the teachers in the schools that lack funds may experience a certain difficulty with the use of the devices that are not compatible with the current software or their constant maintenance is required. These limitations can be overcome only through a considerable amount of money invested in both physical and digital infrastructure and sustainable maintenance strategies that are also developed (Parasar: 2021)

Lack of Digital Literacy

For Students and Educators digital literacy has proved to be detrimental to students and educators alike. Many educators do not have sufficient skills to use digital tools effectively. The result is that there is little benefit gained by both students and teachers in terms of enhanced education. In actuality, most teachers have realized the glaring gaps in their digital literacy skills during the sudden surge of the movement towards online learning brought by the pandemic. Professional development programmes helping teachers to integrate the technology into the classes are necessary as well. So do the students, who need guidance on online resource navigation, information evaluation, and privacy in digital environments. The solution is multi-faceted, including curriculum transformation, community outreach, and public-private partnerships toward large-scale training.

Pedagogically Oriented Problems

There are too many changes on the curriculums and the application of teaching methods to integrate technology into the curriculum. For example, some models of traditional pedagogy are teacher-centered; however, the new models of education technology deliver a learning environment in which students can learn interactively. Of course, this would be pretty scary for those instructors without much training or easy experience in digital teaching because, besides that, educational technology lacks certain standards to clarify how this is applied so that all that occurs is different practices, which yield different results. An effective integration would call for extensive planning, which develops clear policies, features continuous support for teachers, and engages stakeholders in decision-making processes. Whenever technology does not align with learning objectives, students would, in turn, suffer the negative influence of this mismatch.

OPPORTUNITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

Access and Inclusivity

Access to education in the remotest and neglected parts of the country is feasible through platforms like MOOCs and e-learning. Universities are implementing a computer-based platform for the purpose of mass production of class materials. This platform has been designed to make sure that the students who live in the resource-constrained environments of the world get the same education as those who do not. For example, the MOOCs provided by these international providers are attracting the interest of learners from various parts of the world and breaking through all geographical and political barriers (Bibhu: 2017). They provide learning content that avoids connectivity issues, and better yet, even when no internet is available. Besides having the capability of watching them without an internet connection, one will also have the option of localized content for the places with limited connectivity. UNICEF's (the United Nations Children's Fund) Learning Passport is a special study program adapted for displaced and refugee children of using technology that is an otherwise scarce resource or non-existing at all in some parts of the world.

Personalized Learning

Technology facilitates individualized education delivery that caters to the specific needs and pace of students. Because of AI, one-to-one mentoring is now possible. For instance, AI-based platforms such as Dream Box Learning and Smart Sparrow employ real-time data analytics (the use of the latest information technology to gather and process data at the time the data is available and yield almost instant results) in order to determine whether or not the child is fully grasping the basics. Learning for every individual needs to be personalized also translates into the use of assistive technologies. For instance, special software solutions for those with vision problems are some of the assistive technologies.

Collaboration and Global Connectivity

Technology is beyond helpful in linking students with peers from far-off locations via, for example, virtual classrooms and forums. Online collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom are used by students to carry out the live exchanges of ideas and experiences that enable people from various locations and cultures to speak collectively. eTwinning a program by European Union, is an action that promotes cross-border educational exchanges, mutual understanding, and skill development.

Enhanced Teaching Tools

Other than the traditional approach, this is a more immersive and engaging type of learning. Interactive simulations, virtual labs, and augmented reality (AR), is a type of technology that can provide experiences (for people) that are hard to tell apart from reality while learning, that can help students learn better. For example, virtual science lab platforms like Labster allow students to conduct experiments safely and with minimal costs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Identified

Persistent Digital Divide

In most instances, technology access is unequal; thus, those less fortunate and from the countryside continue to suffer. Digital illiteracy arises mainly as a result of insufficient connectivity and scarce technical support in unrepresentative areas. Educational access to digital tools therefore depends on the student's source, and students not adequately connected to the information system miss out on all such opportunities. The answer must lie in a concentrated push of increasing broadband coverage and ensuring cost subsidies for devices in conjunction with policies.

Insufficient Infrastructure

In developing countries, many schools lack infrastructures in technology support. These infrastructures involve undependable electricity, very old hardware, and also very limited technical support. The good example is in sub-Saharan Africa, where only few schools have access to the reliable power and internet connection. This is a massive limitation to the potential digital learning. Governments and organizations at the international level have to invest in building up to sustaining infrastructures required in education.

Training Gaps

Most instructors say they received inadequate preparation in digital pedagogies and hence become unprepared for incorporating digital tools in teaching. Many professional development programmes that teachers receive usually overlook specific teacher's needs but offer general training to teachers. Overall, quality, sustained professional training aimed at building both technical capabilities and creative strategies in teaching helps educators better exploit the benefits of digital tools.

Opportunities Realized

Scalable Solutions

Examples of scalable solutions include Khan Academy and Internet Saathi of Google: Both represent scalable models of digital education, reaching millions of learners and the underprivileged and remoteness. Examples include: the free online adaptive resources on Khan Academy and, from Google, Internet Saathi as rural Indian women are made digital literates to help train their fellow community members in the usage of computers and digital means.

Innovative Tools

Technologically advanced learning environments with augmented reality and virtual reality are now coming into place, enhancing learner engagement and understanding. An example is Google Lens application, through which students may engage with intricate concepts visually; meanwhile, a VR platform called Oculus Education offers virtual field trips and simulations that give lessons an experiential feeling. There is enormous potential in transforming traditional educational models through such technology.

Community Engagement

Grassroots initiatives have used the resources of the local setting to enhance digital literacy and infrastructure. For example, in Kenya and Bangladesh, community-based programmes have utilized solar-powered devices and content developed locally to promote education in off-grid areas. It goes to show that involvement of local stakeholders in designing and implementing technology-driven solutions for education is vital (Rao: 2019).

Despite these, scaling such initiatives poses challenges. Deploying technology in low-resource settings is still costly because most schools and communities cannot afford the devices, software, or reliable internet needed. The reluctance of educators and communities to change their practices can also slow the adoption of digital tools. Cultural and language barriers make implementation difficult, because content needs to be tailored to local contexts to be effective. (Banerjee & Gupta: 2022). These challenges must be addressed by targeted funding, stakeholder engagement, and capacity building to build acceptance and guarantee sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- 1. Investment in Infrastructure:** Governments and private sectors should invest in expanding internet access and digital infrastructure in underprivileged

areas. This includes building reliable electricity networks, deploying affordable broadband solutions, and providing schools with up-to-date equipment and maintenance support.

2. **Promoting Digital Literacy:** There should be comprehensive training programmes for the educators and students to reap the maximum benefits of technology. It should be specific to certain needs, such as technical skills, cybersecurity awareness, and how to integrate digital tools into their teaching practices.
3. **Ensuring Inclusive Policies:** Promote Inclusive Policies Policymaking should focus on ensuring access by all to technology, especially addressing marginalization. The cost will be reduced, the effects of systemic barriers will be done away with, and access through educational technology will be granted equitably to all students with no regard to class orientation.
4. **Leveraging Public-Private Partnership:** Public-Private Partnerships Collaboration between the government, non-profits, and the private sector can provide funds for and implement scalable solutions for educational technology. Such partnerships are, for example, partnerships providing low-cost devices, subsidized internet services, and local content relevant to the education context.
5. **Focus on Local Context:** Tailor solutions to local contexts Solutions should be adapted to the particular needs and conditions of local communities. For example, content should be developed in local languages, and technology tools should be designed to operate in low-resource settings, such as offline functionality or solar-powered devices.
6. **Low cost:** Solutions to be adopted are low-cost technologies such as solar-powered devices and offline digital content. Solutions that ensure such areas which have unreliable power and internet can also partake of the technological opportunities in education. Lightweight durable devices with preloaded education software also enhance accessibility further.
7. **Community Engagement:** Community involvement can make sure that technological solutions are relevant and acceptable. Involving the community will result in initiatives like digital ambassadors trained from local volunteers, or community learning centers, thus building trust and engagement. Communities involved create a feedback loop, so solutions are adjusted according to the particular needs and challenges of the respective communities.
8. **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments of digital education initiatives can point out the lacunas and areas of improvement. Measurable goals and benchmarks make sure accountability and monitor performance. Mechanisms of giving feedback, such as surveys and focus groups with educators and students, can give rich insights into the effectiveness of tools and strategies and prompt timely adjustments to maximize the impact.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion reveals that technology has the potential of ensuring the right to education and provides innovative solutions towards long-standing barriers. Such facilities as digital platforms, online learning resources, and interactive tools make it easy for students to receive quality education despite geographical location. For example, initiatives like MOOCs and virtual classrooms enable learners in far-flung areas to enjoy engagement with world-class lecturers. However, this will only be possible if stakeholders deal with the different issues that include the digital divide, infrastructure gaps, and digital literacy. This requires a more holistic approach. It is suggestible that governments should increase investment in creating digital infrastructure, particularly in developing regions. Educational institutions need to ensure that technology is integrated with the traditional teaching methods. Further, such programmes are to be designed to narrow digital literacies gaps between educators and learners to optimize technology utilization within learning environments. However, it requires an adaptive culture coupled with continuous improvement. With these persistent efforts by the stakeholders, the right to education, thus, will surely be realised worldwide, empowering and driving forward human society.

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IMPACT OF URBAN GOVERNANCE ON DEVELOPMENT OF MIZORAM: A STUDY OF AIZAWL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

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Abstract

Majority of the population of Mizoram resides in urban areas and the pace of urbanisation in the state has been marked high in last few decades. It can easily be inferred that urban governance has substantial impact on development process in the state. Thus, it becomes urgent imperative to address the issues – factors responsible for fast pace of urbanisation in the state, potentiality of employment in urban areas and quality of life of urban population. With this concern in mind, the present paper intends to trace the factors of fast pace of urbanisation, examine the role of urban local governance in development, occupational factors and pin out the challenges being faced in the process. The study takes Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) as a case study. Based on secondary sources of data, the study finds that urban governance has played crucial role in the development process of the state evident from growth rate of SGDP but it faces challenges like frequent landslide, environmentally hostile creation of infrastructure and waste management etc.

Keywords: Ramrajya, Urban Governance, Aizawl Municipal Corporation, Urbanisation, Mizo-society, Development.

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of the 'welfare state', Municipal Corporation were established and configured by the British Raj in India, primarily to serve the objectives of colonisation. Fundamentally influenced by their own agendas in effect, with

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restricted financial resources, the municipalities govern the urban centres and towns, providing essential services like sanitation, water supply, development of local infrastructure, etc. The approach in terms of strengthening the urban local government bodies was slow moving during the era of British rule. With a very little change in its basic operational framework persisted since the British days, the urban local administration in India, majorly influenced by the ‘Lord Ripon Revolution’ of 1882 and ‘Government of India Act’ of 1935, has been minimally altered since independence. The modern Municipal Corporations were established in the post-independence, today existing across the urban India, differing in structure and dimensions, based on the state laws and also urban local needs. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 dealing with the Article 243-W, gave constitutional status to municipalities, making it a constitutional obligation for the states to adopt the system of municipality. The expansion and demand for services provided by municipal corporations are driven by urbanisation as the later increases population density, need for infrastructure development, urban planning, provision of civic amenities, and revenue generation for urban development. Urbanisation tends to offer economic opportunities in various sectors and drives infrastructure development leading to improved standard of living. It is considered as the ratio of urban population at a given point of time, and it is a process by which man transforms his agriculture based rural habitat in to an essentially non-agricultural urban functions and places.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK IN MIZORAM

Today, the state has only municipal corporation, Aizawl Municipal Corporation, governing the capital city of Aizawl; and several town committees governing smaller towns in Mizoram like Lunglei, Champhai, and others. The Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) was formed in 2008 and was upgraded from a council to a corporation on October 19, 2020 granting the local governing body a more significant level of authority and autonomy to manage urban development and administration in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram. Later elevated to the Aizawl Municipal Corporation in 2010, the urban local civic body continues to oversee various urban services in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. Divided into 19 wards, AMC is the body responsible for administering and governing the city of Aizawl. AMC asserted the implementation of the 74th CAA aligning with the reform agendas of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). JNNURM played a significant role in urban development across India, leading to the formation of municipal corporations in many cities, including Aizawl. JNNURM, with a strong focus on urban reforms launched in the year 2005 for a period of seven years encouraged the establishment of the AMC in 2010.

Aizawl Municipal Corporation as urban governance was new to the Mizo society. It was challenging for native people who were not familiar with the revolutionary involvement of new urban local governance reforms. Accustomed for protectionist laws, the local people were not used to the new way of urban local governance, such as paying taxes. The Mizos wanted the adaptation of the new reforms that would govern their capital city to be local centric. AMC faced resistance from the long standing state departments and state-run entities that have a firmly established organisational ethos and systems of rule-making. Regardless facing a robust friction, AMC has attained an accord with the residents of Aizawl and customary authorities. AMC by the aid of the state government went through several negotiations and with the passage of time the reforms were found to be reputable by the residents and traditional organisations. Though sporadically, there is a lack of regard for the urban local body especially from the customary and cultural administrative units when it comes to power sharing power parity. The first and only municipal corporation in the state today exist as complementary tier of governance between the State and LCs, where the LCs receiving treatment as the lowest tier of government. Over the course of time, the urban local governance in Mizoram, incorporating that of AMC, has undergone noteworthy changes in its organisational and regulatory structure.

INPUT OF URBANIZATION IN MIZORAM

As per India State of the Forest Report (2021), Mizoram has the largest forest in India cover is 84.53 per cent of the total geographical area. At the moment the state with 51.1 per cent of urban population residing in 23 notified urban towns is the second most urbanised in India after Goa (Census, 2011). The state has no Census or Statutory Town as of now. Mizoram with a bare 3.54 per cent urban population in 1951 census has experienced an exceptional growth in urbanisation level past ten decades. Presently, with a reduction in the forest area by 4 per cent after 2015 (ISFR, 2015), urbanisation in Mizoram in its entirety is growing at a much faster rate that too without a qualified infrastructure to endure it. The loss of forest area is attributed highly to the developmental activities and infrastructure development led due to urbanisation such as, roads, schools, parks, hospitals, residential area and such. Another ground offered concerning the topic of forest depletion is traditional agriculture practice named as shifting cultivation that is slash and burn of forest for growing crops on nutrient rich soil. Due to the fact that urbanisation is highly linked with economic growth and the shifting cultivation is directly related to the economy of the state, urban transformation often in case is frequently correlated with jhum cultivation at a large. Oddly for that matter, the past literature reveals that there is a paucity of infrastructural facilities and that the state is going through a rampant urbanisation without any aligned development in structural provisions to handle it.

The surge of urbanisation in the state can be attributed to many reasons. Essentially there has been an amplification of areas under town. New towns have been added as urban settlements in the state. As per 1991 census, numerous minor towns originated accounting for 18.2 per cent of urban population in the applicable census. As a result, number of towns in Mizoram has increased to 23 in 2011 census versus 6 in 1981 census. Another justification for rising urbanisation in the state could be the natural growth of population; i.e. birth rate is higher than death rate in urban areas of Mizoram. During the year 2023, the number of registered births in both urban and rural part of the state registered under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 was summarised to be higher than the registered deaths. The urban area registered 21.04 per cent of birth rate in 2023 surpassing the death rate (7.69 per cent). A similar pattern of registered higher birth rate than death rate was registered in rural area of the state, where the birth rate was reported to be 16.46 per cent over a death rate of 4.69 per cent in the respective year. The positive population growth in the state is reflected more in the urban zone as compared to the rural.

The Mizo society highly values their rich customary practices, notwithstanding that, changes have been observed in terms of the utilization trend and pattern. Also the influence of traditional institutions is waning gradually, especially among the youth who are steered by modern ideals and lifestyles. Propelled by a well off and comfortable living standard, people of Mizoram essentially migrated to urban areas of the state. Migration of people from rural areas to urban areas in search of livelihood is one of the factors responsible for the growth of urban population. Most of the urban growth is taking place in the state capital Aizawl and other major towns is taking place in the state capital Aizawl and other towns like Lunglei, Champhai, Kolasib, Mamit, Saiha, Serchhip etc. The trend of urbanization in Mizoram shows a huge gap in the level of urbanization between Aizawl and the rest 23 notified towns. As per 2011 census, with a percentage growth of population found to be 22.9 per cent, Aizawl with an urban population of 5,71,771 is the most urbanised districts of the state, standing as the most populated district of Mizoram. An important characteristic of urbanisation is the shift of focus from agrarian form of economic activities towards non-agricultural industries. This pattern is well observed in district of Aizawl, Lawngtai and Saiha, where almost 75 per cent of male population is working in non-agricultural sectors. Regardless of migration for livelihood opportunities, the occupational characteristics of other urban centres in Mizoram shows tendency towards agriculture. This variety of tendency towards agriculture sector, exhibits the fact that urbanisation in Mizoram displays quantifiable expansion over enhanced progress.

Fascinatingly, according to the Mizoram Economic Survey for the financial year 2023-24, the GSDP of Mizoram amounted to a growth of 22 per cent over

FY 2023-24, where the revenue surplus is estimated to be 0.7 per cent of GSDP. Additionally, due to the revenue deficit grants from the centre, the revenue surplus for FY 2024-25 is estimated to be 1.2 per cent of the GSDP. With the second highest literacy rate in India at 91.33 per cent (Census, 2011), Mizoram has the highest Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in North-East during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012). The GSDP of the state for FY 2023-24 at 11 per cent as per the Mizoram Budget Analysis (FY 2023-24) has outdone the national average of 7.9 per cent and the target of 9.8 per cent. This surpassing achievement by the state promotes optimism among its citizens and lifts the state's spirit in striving for progress, just not limited to urbanisation. Though so far in 2024, there is no metropolitan city in Mizoram.

A key issue concerning the state is the pressing concern regarding unemployment where the youth are unable to find promising career prospects. Mizoram's unemployment rate was 11.9 per cent in June 2023, above the national average of 8.9 per cent. The employment rate in Mizoram amounts to 37 per cent (48 per cent males and 36 per cent females) of total population (the Economic Survey, 2023). The latest available Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLSF) Reports, covering the period July 2023 to June 2024, reflects a trend indicating a gradual if not minimal recovery in urban employment dynamics across the country, though state focused details of Mizoram weren't distinctly emphasized in the summary reports. Though urban unemployment rate have indicated a fall from 5.4 per cent in previous year to 5.1 per cent in 2023-24, urban youth unemployment remains crucial signifying persisting challenges in occupational expansion in India. Alluding to the unemployment rate in India, CM Lalduhoma on June 11, 2024 recommended the youth of Mizoram to seek job overseas, including those which are poorly paid. Based on Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pt. Ltd, it is evident that the unemployment rate in India has been fluctuating throughout the year 2024, with 8 per cent in February decreasing to 7.6 per cent in March, against 8.5 per cent in August, scaling to 10.05 per cent in October. The central government of India requires reviewing the fluctuations in unemployment rate intending at a regulated labour market. It also should set sight on generating non-agricultural jobs annually to engage growing workforce of the country, as per reflected in the Economic Survey of India, 2024. Also, in an encompassing view, it is essential to consider the hopefulness spawned in the survey culminated in terms of progress in employment domain primarily in the manufacturing sector in the country and the consumption pattern does reflect the potential of advancement in paid jobs.

A further ground for a surge in urbanisation in the state could be linked to low-tier globalisation, pertaining to which is the migrant concerns. Rapid urban population growth in Mizoram within limits could be linked to the issues surrounding those fleeing from unstable situations in their place of birth, seeking

refuge in the state. With an international border of 722 km, Mizoram has become a refuge to many relocated individuals especially from Myanmar and Bangladesh. The influx of refugees in search for economic well-being and quality of life may have led to an increase of urban population in the state. The state's demography has been diverse ever since the progression of the state with around 87.16 per cent of Christian, 8 per cent of Buddhist, 3.5 per cent of Hindus, and Muslims constituting 1.1 per cent of the total population. There are a handful of Judaic people too. Critics of immigration and refugees asserts on the fact that political refugees are bothersome and unmanageable as they having a bound state (refugees) in absence of any crucial documents are often exempted from paying taxes on the same grounds. This can be daunting on an already burdened fiscal system. The on-going tragic episode of ethnic conflict unfolded in Manipur and the Myanmar civil war, have led the present state government headed by Mr. Lalduhoma, Chief Minister of Mizoram ensuring the protection and support of the Kuki-Zo and Chin people coming to the state from Manipur and Myanmar. The Centre however cannot endow refugee status to those relocated from Myanmar to India as India is not ratified to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The Ministry of Home Affairs has made it obvious that the immigrants are fiscal strain and as the authority states, "India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereon". Independently the state, still waiting for financial support from the central government, has been tending the transited migrants. Pursuing better prospects, a considerable amount of refugee transportation has been in urban areas of the state. Mizoram presently needs financial strength for the sustenance of the incoming population in terms of proving jobs, healthcare, housing and other amenities. At the juncture of time, when the state is seeking better prospects in catering to the needs of its rising population, Mizoram government records claims sheltering about 12,000 Kuki-Zo people dodging an ethnic discord happening in Manipur and near 31,000 Chin people fledging the Civil war in Myanmar.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF URBANISATION IN AIZAWL

Aizawl is the oldest and the largest supervisory centre in Mizoram which has been functioning as an urban centre since 1951. With a population more than 2.93 lakhs, the city occupies only 0.6 per cent of the state's terrain and is a resident of approx. 27 per cent of the total population of state. The town alone accommodates 56.26 per cent of the total state urban population. The city attained the status of class I city in 1991 when the proportion of its urban population was recorded to be 48.83 per cent of the total state's population. The engagement of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) with the Aizawl Municipal Corporation provoked and accelerated urban infrastructure development and smart governance in the

capital city of Mizoram. The assistance for urbanisation to the ULB by the centre and the state through several missions and reforms has remained aligned with the nation's blueprint for urbanisation. After Aizawl was selected as a Smart City, there have been significant policy changes related to urban development at the urban local governance level. The vast development of the Aizawl has transpired an interregional disparity within urban areas in Mizoram, as the administrative capital has the preponderance of public bodies and institutions, consisting of the Legislative Assembly, National Institute of Technology (NIT, Aizawl), State Secretariat, central university (Mizoram University) and more. With the opening up of many retail chains, supermarkets, franchise food chains, the city has gradually become a global chain market. A prompt online delivery services from several e-commerce platforms displays the gradual optimisation of affluent standard of living in the city. All of this enticed people to migrate from different part of Mizoram to the government capital. The availability of supplies and services, encompassing convenient access to healthcare, education and other amenities, has led to people migrating from different part of Mizoram to the administrative capital city of Aizawl. Clearly, the city as compared to the rest part of the state has a promising standard of living with a consolidation of assets and availability of utilities.

With each passing day, Aizawl is becoming densely populated. As with any other growing towns in India, the state capital Aizawl along with other major towns in Mizoram is now having civic problems. These problems are in the nature of civic inconveniences, accommodation difficulties, sanitation, and congestion in traffic movements. Urbanisation when rapid or unplanned can create a range of issues, leading to a strain on its infrastructure and triggering environmental degradation. Multiple immoral activities like crime, disease transmission, environmental degradation, substance abuse, trafficking of illicit liquor, illegal act, violation of laws, etc., has resulted from the city locale being clogged by overpopulation. Many young adults are resorting to ethical misconducts for financial survival and livelihood. This unfolding challenging urban setting in the city is affecting community life. A major problem arising due to growing population in Aizawl is housing shortage. Not to mention the rising housing rents raised due to residential crisis is overwhelming on one's budget. In Aizawl, those having their own house amount for only 50 per cent. The remaining 50 per cent lives in tenanted homes.

A significant issue faced the whole Mizoram in the area of human settlement is the lack of water where large proportion of urban dwellers are faced with a serious problem of water supply. Urban water supply is dealt by state Public Health Engineering Department. The location of major cities like Aizawl and other major town's very large proportion of the urban dwellers of the urban dwellers are faced with a serious problem of water supply. The location of major cities like Aizawl, Lunglei, Kolasib etc on hill tops has further aggravated the problem. The availability

of pure and safe water on ridge tops and adjacent slopes is very limited in this terrain. Hence it imposes severe strain on households of fetching water from sources in the valley bottom from springs along the hill slopes. The majority of households in both urban and rural areas have adopted the rain water harvesting technology. All major towns in Mizoram face deficiency in water supply. Mizoram has urban house deficiency as most of the towns are characterised by high concentration of population.

The state of Mizoram has undulating topography with steep slopes and porous soil. The alarming rate of urbanisation of Aizawl city is inviting developmental activities such as building construction, road extension, etc. This is leading to clearing of forest at a large scale. The deforestation and land degradation is further leading to the loosening of soil. This has magnified the probability of frequent landslides, especially during rain, as hill slope is quite steep. A distressing occurrence on May 28, 2024 was cited by the Mizoram State Disaster Management Authority (MSDMA) where 14 people, including two minors were reported dead and eight people went missing as heavy rain accompanied by strong wind struck the state. Every now and then, multiple landslides caused by heavy rainfall in the uplands of Mizoram have created havoc in the state. Mizoram is prone to heavy rainfall and water accumulation can destabilise slopes. Therefore proper drainage system is crucial in mitigating landslide risk as it helps preventing water build-up. As most of the towns are characterised by high concentration of population, there is a high demand for more houses for accommodation. This urges people to construct buildings along the slide prone dangerous slopes. As per a personal interview conducted with a resident of the city pertaining to the subject, most of the dwellings are designed in lack of qualified experts. Unplanned building construction in slopes of the hill paves the way for destruction, especially during rainy season.

The growth activities attributed to urbanisation has caused an ecological imbalance. The rapid urbanisation has resulted in population explosion and huge amount of solid waste is generated. Solid waste and garbage disposal is a major issue. Currently, collection and disposal of garbage is dealt by the L.A.D. The present quantum of solid waste generated in Aizawl city alone is more than 125 tons per day whereas only 35 tons are disposed of directly to the dumping sites or on the roadsides in un-hygienic manner. The above ground dumping of solid waste and lack of recycling techniques are creating environmental nuisance.

DISCUSSION, RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The GSDP boost in Mizoram as compared to other states in India can be honourably admitted to the endeavours of the state government along with the Aizawl Municipal Corporation. The ULB (Urban Local Body) has played a crucial

role in executing national schemes like AMRUT and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan accelerating the process of urban expansion. This has positively landed a hand to an efficient economic output of the state in FY 2023-24, where growth in sectors such as manufacturing (21.6 per cent) and services (12 per cent) has been witnessed. With a moderate growth of 1.7 per cent, agriculture continues to be the leading force in employment, engaging 60 per cent of the work force of Mizoram. There has been no large scale industrial growth except for industries related to forest based products and handicraft. A primary consideration in urbanisation is the transition of agrarian economy to an urban one. Through careful inspection of the specifics, it can be inferred that urbanisation in Mizoram stems mainly from surge in urban population. According to the Mizoram Economic Survey (FY 2023-24), the state government has decided to allocate less expenditure in the sector of urban development for the year 2024-25 (reduced from revised estimate of FY 2023-24). The focus of the state comparatively is inclining towards the rural development more than the urban for FY 2024-25. Lack of funds is unfavourable for urban growth endeavour in the state. The revenue generated by Aizawl Municipal Corporation is significantly lower as compared to the state. The state gathers income to nearly 80 per cent, GST being the largest source of revenue generation in Mizoram. The state along with the centre must allocate funds for the urban development in Mizoram, as it is critical for a sustainable economic growth of the state.

Limited coverage of urban areas has been the reality of the entire region of North East, not solely a particular state. The development programmes related to urban local governance need to be implemented effectively in the tribal homeland, recognizing the sensitivity of cultivating trust and security among the native tribal population leading up to the installation of any developmental blueprint at the urban level in the region.

Considering risk management and safety protocol for frequent landslides in the state, AMC and other local governing bodies in the state must adhere to instituting housing regulations and mandate with stricter architectural standards. The crumbling constructions have compromised with the quality structural and integrity of the setups throughout the state, particularly the capital city. It's advisable for AMC to tackle with discipline the zoning laws, construction codes and permits in the city. Additionally, there should be an encouragement to increase areas under municipality. Likewise, utilising on the earthly magnificence of the hilly slopes, the state along with the local governing bodies promoted tourism. Tourists can be a significant source of revenue for the state and local governments. The ULBs in the state along with AMC can maximise its tax collection in form of local taxes on hotels, hospitality services, and tours can maintain its budget. Sustainable tourism can also support local business and create employment opportunities. Without overwhelming local resources and exploitation of environment, AMC should involve the local communities in decision-making about tourism to ensure the

sustainability of tourism infrastructure. Mizoram welcomed over 2 lakh tourists in FY 2022-23, an increase of 1.3 of lakh tourist traffic from FY 2021-22.

Since, urbanisation leads to development activities which adversely affect environment of the region, the Aizawl Municipal Corporation should primarily implement only those statutes which can shape both developmental and ecological progression. Developmental activities in terms of road construction activities which had taken a toll on environment leading to deforestation land degradation to a high pace. The aforementioned developmental activities has caused high risk of landslides, as the city of Aizawl is characterised by steep slopes and the removal of soil blinder plants have resulted in loosening of the soil. Therefore, community administration in the state must uphold if not cling to the idea of 'sustainable development'. One hand developmental activities are beneficial with regards to improvement of living state of the people, and on other hand there are several environmental implications leading to ecological nuisance.

Solid waste disposal and management is a great challenge, as there is population explosion due to urbanisation followed by traffic problem. Thus, it is suggested that the AMC should preferably address environmental issues before and after implementation of any developmental activities to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Moreover, AMC needs to implement scientific way for disposal and management of solid waste generated. Overall, addressing challenges brought by urbanisation in Aizawl requires a multifaceted approach, including investment in infrastructure, better urban planning, and the integration of smart technologies. The highest degree of impact of urbanisation is unfolding on environment. Land degradation caused due to deforestation and developmental activities maximises the chances of frequent landslides leading to dire consequences in the state.

Furthermore, AMC is preferred to give an indispensable and sustained focus should be towards the scientific management of solid as well, where an installation of a proper recycling unit may facilitate scientific disposal of solid waste and re-use of e-waste. We wish to wrap up via encouraging news which displaying the positive attitude of the city's inhabitants. For all that, an area where the city of Aizawl is outperforming is the cleanliness of the air. In light of appropriate vehicle restriction and traffic measures initiated by the state government, with relief Aizawl is often reported to have less AQI and excellent air quality. The city with its flawless traffic civility have amazed the whole nation as the people maintaining protocol even during prime commute times shows the civility of the residents of Aizawl maintaining the serenity even in traffic hours.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT 2019: A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF CONSUMERS

Nishi Kant Bibhu* and Bishnanand Dubey**

Abstract

In this globalized commercial world, the protection of consumers is one of the major concerns of the law enforcement agencies. With the enactment of the new consumer Act the protection of consumers takes central stage. The creation of central consumer protection authority under the consumer protection act, 2019 is a major milestone in consumer protection. But without the active participation of consumers, it is difficult for consumer protection act to protect consumer rights. This article will actively try to find out the role and responsibility of the Consumer in improving the consumer. The Act promotes a culture of consumer activism by enticing customers to be more watchful and knowledgeable. The Act looks to empower consumers by requiring increased accountability and openness in the marketplace. This will provide consumers with the essential information and resources to make well-informed decisions, ultimately strengthening their bargaining power. As such, the present paper examines the law in the context of empowering consumers and advancement in more equitable and transparent market. It also discusses the challenges that still need to be addressed, like making consumers aware of their rights and making sure state governments successfully execute these laws.

Keywords: Consumers' Rights, Act-2019, Unfair-practices, Consumers' Participation, Market

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer rights is one of the most important rights of individual in today's commercialized era. In today's highly commercialised society, consumer rights rank among the most important and fundamental rights for individuals. Customers are dealing with more complicated goods, services, and transactions as marketplaces and industries expand and change. Because of this, it is crucial to defend their rights to guarantee them justice, security, and access to correct information. Consumer rights enable people to hold companies responsible, seek compensation for unfair actions, and make well-informed decisions. In the contemporary global economy, where consumers frequently engage with multinational firms and digital platforms, the protection of fundamental rights is vital for preserving confidence, fostering equitable competition, and guaranteeing that the interests of individuals are not eclipsed by the quest of profit. A culture where customers' welfare and dignity are valued more highly is one in which consumer rights are acknowledged and upheld.

In India, the Vedas served as the main source of law. Several texts are regarded as authoritative, including the Manu Smriti (800–600 B.C.), Kautilya's Arthashastra (400–300 B.C.), Yajnavalkya Smriti (300–100 B.C.), Narada Smriti (100–200 A.D.), Brihaspati Smriti (200–400 A.D.), and Katyayana Smriti (300–600 A.D.). The boundaries between civil and criminal law are clearly outlined in the Narada Smriti. It is said that the Yajnavalkya Smriti is a notable source on Hindu law, vyavahara (behaviour), and men's personal rights. It also seems to be more methodical than the Manu Smriti. India acquired a legal system from Britain that was largely concerned with defending the rights of the British and their companies. Although some of the earliest laws pertaining to consumer transactions were passed, such as the Indian Contract Act of 1872 and the Sale of Goods Act of 1930, they fell short in addressing the modern concept of consumer rights.

The old Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was made concerning the socio-economic conditions of that time, but with advancement of more trade and commerce advancement of consumer Protection Act was needed. The consumer protection Act, 2019 includes the consumer rights, Definition of seller, Mediation as procedure to resolve consumer disputes etc.

THE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2019: AN OVERVIEW

The Consumer protection act, 2019 brings many positive changes in the modern consumer jurisprudence by adding important provisions related to:

- a. Including Direct Selling and E-Commerce: The Act acknowledges the revolutionary significance that e-commerce and direct selling play in the contemporary economy. The Act seeks to create parity in consumer rights across all channels of purchase by guaranteeing that online buyers receive the

same protections and protections as those who buy from traditional businesses. This proposal aims to offer a strong legal framework to promote the growth of e-commerce, which is growing exponentially due to changes in consumer behavior and technological advancements. The Act's provisions are intended to address the particular difficulties presented by the online marketplace, such as transaction transparency, seller responsibility, and customer complaint resolution. The Act guarantees that the ease of online buying does not come at the price of consumer protection, encourages fair trade practices, and builds customer trust by establishing clear norms and complaint procedures. This all-encompassing strategy fortifies the regulatory framework and opens the door for long-term expansion and innovation in the digital economy.

- b. **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) establishment:** The Act created the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), a specialized regulatory agency whose main goals are to protect consumer rights, stop unfair business activities, and guarantee product safety in the marketplace. The CCPA's creation demonstrates the government's resolve to improve consumer protection by taking a proactive and organized approach. As a watchdog for the interests of consumers, the authority has the authority to look into complaints from customers and any infractions. The CCPA has the authority to punish organizations found guilty of breaking consumer protection rules in addition to conducting investigations. These fines act as deterrence to prospective criminals as well as a market accountability mechanism. Additionally, the CCPA has the authority to start *Suo motu* proceedings, which gives it the freedom to act on its own initiative and take proactive steps even when there aren't any official complaints. This capability guarantees that the interests of consumers are protected against new dangers including deceptive advertising, fake goods, and dishonest business practices. The CCPA strengthens the enforcement of consumer rights and encourages an accountable business culture by tackling problems with both punitive and preventive measures. Additionally, it is essential for advancing fair trade policies, fostering customer confidence, and guaranteeing that goods and services adhere to safety regulations. All things considered, the CCPA is a pillar of the framework for consumer protection, evolving to meet the changing demands of a developing and more digitalized economy.
- c. **Strict Guidelines for Deceptive Advertising:** The Act demonstrates a strong commitment to shielding consumers from deceptive and fraudulent acts by introducing strict laws to discourage deceptive advertising. It expressly forbids the distribution of inflated or misleading claims for goods or services that can deceive consumers or affect their choice to buy. According to the Act, it is illegal to make unsupported claims about a product's effectiveness, overstate its

advantages, or purposefully mislead customers about its performance, quality, or place of origin. The power given to the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to hold influencers and celebrities responsible for endorsing false goods or services is a key component of the Act. Customers want these public people, who are frequently seen as reliable sources, to perform their research before recommending any goods. They may be subject to fines or limitations on their ability to endorse products for a predetermined amount of time if they are found guilty of making false representations. These metric highlights how all parties involved have a shared obligation to ensure truthful advertising. Manufacturers and advertisers are likewise subject to the Act's requirements, which include that claims made in ads must be supported by reliable data and correspond with the true features and advantages of the good or service being promoted. The Act aims to safeguard consumer interests, promote openness in marketing techniques, and deter unethical activity in the advertising sector by implementing these rules. When taken as a whole, these actions help to increase consumer trust, encourage fair competition, and guarantee that customers can make educated decisions without worrying about being duped.

- d. **Strict Product Liability Standards:** The Act establishes clear guidelines for product responsibility, making retailers, manufacturers, and service providers liable for any damage, injury, or loss brought on by subpar goods or services. This clause, which makes sure that everyone in the supply chain is accountable for the quality and safety of the goods and services they provide, is a big step in improving consumer rights. It upholds the idea that customers shouldn't be held responsible for harm brought on by flaws that may have been avoided with proper care. The Act increases culpability beyond bodily harm to include financial loss or property damage brought on by a defective product. If a product is discovered to be defective because of manufacturing errors, design flaws, or insufficient instructions or warnings, the manufacturer is strictly accountable. For any shortcomings or breaches in the caliber of services provided, service providers bear equal responsibility. If sellers intentionally offer faulty goods or withhold important information from customers, they may also be held accountable. The consumer's right to seek damages compensation is a fundamental aspect of this clause. In the event of a serious injury, this also covers pain and suffering compensation in addition to reimbursement for medical bills and replacement or repair costs. The Act intends to discourage carelessness, promote stricter quality control procedures, and increase consumer trust in the marketplace by enacting these strict liability rules.

All things considered, these product liability clauses provide customers with an essential safety net, guaranteeing that their health and safety come first while encouraging responsibility and moral behavior in all sectors of the economy.

- e. Increased simplicity in resolving disputes by including mediation process: In order to expedite and simplify the process of resolving consumer complaints, the Act establishes a specific mediation technique. This novel strategy aims to provide a quicker, friendlier, and more economical means of resolving conflicts, which will benefit companies and customers alike while lessening the strain on already overworked consumer courts. Mediation creates an atmosphere where disagreements can be settled without the combative character of conventional legal procedures by emphasizing cooperation and mutual understanding. When the complainant and the opposing party decide to settle their disagreement this way, the mediation process begins. A neutral forum for negotiations led by qualified mediators is offered by mediation centers, which were created under the Act and are connected to consumer commissioners at different levels. By encouraging candid communication between the parties, these mediators assist them in coming to a just and agreeable conclusion without resorting to drawn-out legal proceedings. This method is especially helpful when disagreements are small or include miscommunications because it saves both parties time and money on legal fees. Additionally, mediation promotes a collaborative rather than combative attitude, which frequently maintains or even strengthens business-consumer ties. Customers gain from prompt and effective resolution of their problems, while businesses have the chance to promptly handle complaints and preserve their reputation. The Act's inclusion of mediation in the consumer protection framework not only promotes speedier justice but also aligns with global best practices that aim to increase access to justice and free up courts. This approach shows a forward-thinking commitment to creating a balanced and customer-friendly ecology.
- f. Unfair Contract: Unfair contracts are those that materially benefit the seller or service provider at the expense of the rights and interests of the customer, and the Act expressly defines and forbids them. These contracts frequently include unnecessarily biased provisions that unbalance the parties' rights and responsibilities. The Act seeks to prevent consumers from being taken advantage of by terms that they might not fully comprehend or have the ability to bargain by focusing on such practices. Unfair contracts may contain clauses that disproportionately restrict the consumer's legal rights, impose disproportionate fines or fees, or impose irrational duties that disfavor the consumer. Contracts that, for instance, tie customers to unfavorable conditions without sufficient explanation, cause them to forfeit their ability to pursue legal action, or impose excessive fines for minor infractions are all considered unfair under the Act. These provisions frequently take advantage of the consumer's less powerful negotiating position, particularly in pre-written or standardized contracts. By guaranteeing that agreements are fair and open, the ban on unfair contracts empowers customers. Contracts must now be fair, reasonable, and compliant

with consumer rights for both sellers and service providers. In the event that consumers are exposed to unfair terms, this clause also gives them a legal way to contest such contracts and seek compensation. By tackling the problem of unequal contracts, the Act fosters trust in commercial dealings while also upholding the values of justice and fairness. It strongly conveys to companies the value of moral behavior, creating a more equitable and customer-friendly marketplace.

- g. **Unfair Trade Practice:** The Act includes a variety of exploitative behaviors that compromise consumer rights and trust, greatly expanding the definition of unfair commercial practices. The Act provides a thorough framework to shield customers from unfair treatment in the marketplace by addressing practices like refusing to accept returns of defective goods, failing to withdraw or correct subpar services, making false or misleading guarantees, and failing to provide appropriate bills or receipts. Businesses are held responsible for their post-sale obligations under this enlarged definition, which includes upholding return policies for defective goods or fixing services that fall short of predetermined criteria. This guarantees that customers will have options if they encounter subpar or faulty products and services. Furthermore, it is now expressly forbidden to make false guarantees, which protect customers from being duped when making judgments about what to buy. False guarantees are promises concerning a product or service that are either unsupported or completely misleading. Another crucial component is the requirement that companies provide legitimate invoices or receipts for each transaction. In addition to increasing transparency, this clause gives customers the ability to provide evidence of purchase, which is necessary for requesting returns, warranties, or legal recourse in the event of a disagreement. Additionally, it deters companies from evading taxes, encouraging responsibility and fair trade policies. By tackling these exploitative activities, the Act promotes moral business conduct in addition to offering a strong foundation for consumer protection. The broadened definition of unfair trade practices ensures that customers are treated fairly and that their rights are respected in every transaction, reflecting a proactive commitment to addressing changing market conditions.
- h. **Rights of Consumers:** The Consumer Protection Act of 1986 took a more implicit approach to consumer rights, as seen by the notable absence of the word “right” from its wording. The revised Consumer Protection Act, on the other hand, clearly uses the word “rights” about twenty-eight times, indicating a dramatic change in emphasis. This inclusion highlights a fundamental shift in how consumer protection is conceived and implemented, rather than just being a matter of frequency. Through the use of the word “rights,” the new Act highlights the importance of empowering consumers to be active participants in the economy. By presenting these as fundamental rights rather than tacit

advantages, it acknowledges their right to justice, safety, information, choice, and remedy. This language development strengthens the notion that consumer welfare is a fundamental component of economic justice by bringing the Indian framework into line with international best practices. By encouraging more accountability from companies and service providers and raising customer understanding and confidence, the purposeful usage of “rights” enhances the conversation surrounding consumer protection.

ENHANCED ROLE OF CONSUMERS

a. Active Participation in the Market

The consumer’s role in today’s dynamic marketplace goes well beyond just making purchases of products and services. It is imperative that consumers actively participate in the market and uphold the adage “Caveat Emptor: Let the buyer beware.” This idea has traditionally put the burden of proof on consumers to make sure they are making educated selections and to accept the consequences if they are not. But this idea has changed in the contemporary consumer age, and it should now be interpreted as “Be-Aware.” This change places more emphasis on how crucial it is for customers to be informed and actively involved in every step of the purchasing process.

Being aware of anything is a crucial first step before purchasing or eating something. Customers with more knowledge are better able to negotiate the market’s intricacies and make decisions that best suit their requirements and tastes. Thorough investigation of the market and the goods or services under consideration is necessary for this. Before making a choice, buyers should consider the product’s quality, pricing, reviews, and buying conditions. In this sense, customers actively shape their own shopping experiences rather than being passive participants in the market.

Active engagement extends beyond the moment of purchase and entails continuing the conversation regarding the goods and services used. This involves offering feedback, which has a significant impact on the market, through surveys, reviews, or direct conversation with the vendor. Customers contribute to the transparent environment by sharing their experiences so that others can gain from their insights. By empowering other consumers and assisting them in making educated selections, this collective knowledge sharing across firms promotes an accountability culture.

b. Filing complaints electronically:

Has grown to be a crucial component of contemporary consumer rights and active market engagement. With the growth of e-commerce and the rising digitisation of services, customers can now easily and effectively file complaints via a variety of electronic channels. This procedure has many advantages, including making it simpler for customers to file complaints and hold companies responsible for any unfair business practices.

Electronic complaint submission offers unmatched convenience, enabling customers to air their issues from the comfort of their homes or while on the road, eliminating the need for in-person trips to customer forums or offices. Those with hectic schedules or those who live in remote places can especially benefit from this. Since most electronic filing systems are always open, customers can file complaints whenever it is convenient for them.

Users may easily go through the submission process with the help of user-friendly electronic complaint solutions that walk them through each stage. These platforms frequently have forms that ask users for all the information they need, making sure the complaint is accurate and comprehensive. This streamlines the customer experience and makes it easier for companies and government agencies to handle concerns.

Real-time complaint status tracking is one of the main benefits of reporting complaints electronically. Customers can track the status of their case through online dashboards, email or SMS updates, and acknowledgement of their submission. This openness informs customers about the measures being done on their behalf and helps to build trust in the complaint resolution process.

Electronic complaint systems facilitate speedier communication and complaint processing by being directly connected to businesses, consumer protection authorities, and dispute resolution bodies. Timelier replies and resolutions are made possible by the decreased dependence on paper documents and the instantaneous information sharing. Electronic filings frequently result in quicker action from the authorities, protecting the consumer from additional injury or loss.

IN FY 2020-21, THE GRIEVANCES REGISTERED BY VARIOUS MODES WERE:

S.No.	Modes	No. of Dockets	%
1.	By Phone	335914	49.8
2.	By Web	191090	28.3
3.	NCHAPP	80566	11.9
4.	CONSUMER APP/IOS	26947	4.0
5.	UMANG	18592	2.8

S.No.	Modes	No. of Dockets	%
6.	SMS	16396	2.4
7.	CPGRAM	4326	0.6
8	Email and letters from DOCA/ Other Dept.s'	989	0.1
	Total	674820	100

Source: National Consumer Helpline, "Annual Report" 10 (2020-21)

Customers can readily report problems to a larger number of organisations, such as regulatory bodies, industry watchdogs, and consumer rights organisations, thanks to the ability to register complaints electronically. This broader scope makes it more likely that the problem will be resolved and that unfair practice patterns will be found and dealt with more skilfully (NCH: 2020-21). The latest report available on the national helpline is of 2020-21. The Fig.1 gives the details of number of Complaints filed by different means in which by phone and other digital means more than 99% of total complaint filed.

c. Consumer Education and Awareness

Consumer awareness plays a critical role in enabling people to assert and defend their rights in the marketplace. Knowledgeable consumers are more likely to act when their rights are violated. Governments all over the world have launched numerous programs aimed at enlightening and involving consumers. These programs frequently make use of a variety of media platforms, such as print, digital, and social media influencers, to reach a wide audience.

The Government of India launched "Jago Grahak Jago," which translates to "Wake Up, Consumer, Wake Up." Since then, the campaign has become synonymous with consumer rights in India. "Jago Grahak Jago" has received extensive media coverage, appearing in television commercials, radio jingles, posters, and online content. It has also successfully conveyed important information about consumer rights, responsibilities, and the channels through which grievances can be resolved.

Apart from the initiative "Jago Grahak Jago," the government is persistently investigating and utilising novel technologies and channels to augment consumer consciousness. Social media has grown in importance as a means of connecting with younger, tech-savvy customers. Working together with social media influencers who can effectively convey consumer rights messages to their audiences has given classic awareness campaigns a contemporary twist.

All things considered, the government's multipronged approach to consumer awareness highlights its dedication to safeguarding consumer interests and

promoting a fairer marketplace. These initiatives help to create more informed and watchful citizens by making sure that customers are aware of their rights and how to enforce them. This, in turn, creates a more transparent and responsible market environment.

d. Role of consumer organizations and NGOs:

To promote consumer rights and guarantee that customers are educated and protected, consumer organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are essential. These organisations serve as go-betweens for customers, companies, and the government, resolving complaints and promoting customer interests. Their efforts are numerous and varied, ranging from raising awareness to engaging in legal advocacy. They play a crucial role in promoting a fair and just marketplace.

- **Policy Advocacy:** To strengthen consumer protection legislation and regulations, consumer organizations and non-governmental organizations frequently engage in policy advocacy. To make sure that consumer concerns are considered during the legislative process, they collaborate closely with government agencies.
- **Legal Representation:** These groups offer consumers who might lack the means or expertise to challenge unfair practices legal support. In court cases, they stand in for customers, guiding them through intricate legal procedures and ensuring that they receive justice.

IMPACT OF THE ACT ON CONSUMER RIGHTS

a. Increased Accountability and Transparency

With the passage of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, India has made great strides in bolstering consumer rights and improving the accountability of retailers, producers, and service providers. A more comprehensive and strong structure is introduced by this legislation to handle the changing issues that consumers encounter in the modern marketplace. The Act's broad and precise definitions of unfair trade practices, which seek to shield consumers from a variety of unfair, misleading, and exploitative acts, are among its most important characteristics.

A more comprehensive and extensive description of what is considered an unfair trading conduct can be found in the Consumer Protection Act of 2019. This includes deceptive marketing tactics that could hurt consumers, such as false statements, misleading advertisements, and deceptive advertising. Since the Act lays out these practices in detail, there is less opportunity for confusion and consumers are better shielded from commercial lies and manipulation.

The Act intends to tackle the problem of making untrue or overstated promises on the effectiveness, cost, or quality of a product or service. It facilitates consumer action against sellers and manufacturers that engage in such deceptive practices. In a time when social media and digital marketing greatly influence customer choices, this clause is very important.

b. Responsibilities of manufacturers and service providers

A comprehensive set of regulations pertaining to product responsibility was adopted by the Consumer Protection Act of 2019, which holds manufacturers, sellers, and service providers responsible for any harm caused to consumers because of subpar goods or services. Product liability, as defined by this Act, is these parties' obligation to reimburse customers for any harm, loss, or damage brought on by using their goods or services. When a product is discovered to be dangerous, flawed, or to be missing sufficient instructions or warnings, responsibility results. It is the manufacturers' primary duty to guarantee that their products are free from flaws and adhere to safety regulations.

Nonetheless, if they intentionally sell defective goods or neglect to give customers enough information about how to use a product, they may also be held accountable. The Act attempts to safeguard consumer rights by imposing severe accountability and giving customers a legal avenue to pursue restitution for harms brought on by defective goods or services.

Challenges and Future Prospects

The consumer protection Act, 2019 implementation will be a herculean task as the number of disputes due to e-filing which already increased in numbers. Government must upgrade the system to meet these challenges. The other challenges which will be a big challenge to the government is the awareness among the consumers, as it will be beneficial to the government in one hand and in another it can increase the number of matters also. The enforcement of orders by consumer commission will face difficulty on different levels. The challenges are numerous but it will also give chance to the consumer authority to enhance, it will also support the evolution of Consumer laws in India.

CONCLUSION

With the goal of greatly enhancing the consumer experience in India and tackling the issues brought about by a dynamic market, the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was passed into law. It has brought about several novel measures to guarantee that consumers are empowered, protected, and have efficient channels for seeking

remedies. A salient characteristic of the 2019 Act is its comprehensive structure concerning product responsibility. For the first time, a precise legal framework that holds sellers, manufacturers, and service providers responsible for any harm done to customers because of subpar goods or inadequate services has been established. This covers harm to one's body, damage to property, and monetary loss. Since the Act enables customers to seek damages for losses incurred, companies are becoming more watchful and accountable for the calibre and security of their goods and services. The Act also covers companies who offer goods directly to customers without having a physical shopfront, as part of the growing direct selling trend. To control this industry and guarantee that direct sellers behave morally and honestly, the law establishes criteria. It requires direct selling businesses to uphold fair trade standards, keep accurate records, and give consumers precise information about their products to safeguard them against deceit and exploitation.

The 2019 Act recognises the ability of the media to influence consumer decisions and takes a strict position against deceptive ads. Manufacturers, advertisers, and even famous people that promote deceptive products face harsh punishments. The Act aims to stop the dissemination of misleading information that can influence customers to make poor or ignorant decisions about what to buy by making these parties answerable. The objective of this technique is to enhance consumer confidence in advertising by providing truthful and precise information.

The Act expands the definition of unfair trade practices to include deceptive warranty claims, false representations, and hidden fees. By giving customers, the legal means to oppose and seek compensation for these kinds of actions, it fosters a more equitable market. In a time when consumers frequently deal with complex transactions, especially in industries like finance, insurance, and online shopping, this growth is essential.

The Act establishes mediation as an alternative to drawn-out court procedures in recognition of the need for speedier, more cooperative dispute resolution procedures. The new law introduced Consumer Mediation Cells, which provide a forum for mutually agreeable conflict resolution in a more relaxed atmosphere. This expedites the settlement process, lessens the load on the legal system, and promotes a collaborative approach to conflict resolution.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, is important step regarding consumer protection as new laws included many important points in relation to consumer-centric approach.

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SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA AND VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT: INSIGHTS FROM SHITABDIARA VILLAGE, BIHAR

Kumar Ambikesh*, Satya Raj and R.B.P. Singh*****

Abstract

The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), launched by the Government of India in 2014, aims to promote holistic rural development by transforming selected villages into model communities. This study examines the implementation and impact of SAGY in Shitabdiara Village, Saran District, Bihar. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines field surveys, village-level interviews, and secondary data analysis, the research assesses improvements in infrastructure, education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and social welfare schemes. The findings indicate that while basic facilities, such as schools, health centres, and banking services, were largely pre-existing, SAGY has facilitated targeted interventions, including housing under PMGAY, women's empowerment through Self-Help Groups, and employment under MGNREGA. However, gaps remain in digital literacy, Common Service Centres, veterinary care, and youth engagement. The present study highlights that the participatory approach promoted under SAGY is crucial for ensuring that development reflects community needs and fosters social cohesion. The case of Shitabdiara illustrates both the potential and limitations of model village initiatives, offering insights for refining policy and developing replicable rural development strategies across India.

Keywords: Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, rural development, Shitabdiara village, Bihar, MGNREGA, PMGAY, Self-Help Groups, participatory development

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INTRODUCTION

Rural development has long been a central focus of India's national development strategy. More than 65% of India's population still resides in rural areas, and the well-being of these communities plays a decisive role in shaping the country's socio-economic trajectory (World Bank, 2023). Since independence, numerous rural development programs have been launched to address challenges such as poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and limited access to health and education (Choudhary, 2015). While flagship initiatives such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) have made significant contributions (Singh, 2017), the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to village-level transformation has remained pressing.

It is in this context that the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) was launched on 11 October 2014, on the birth anniversary of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan (Government of India, 2014). This flagship program sought to transform villages into model settlements by leveraging the leadership and influence of Members of Parliament (MPs). Each MP was tasked with identifying one village to develop as a model village by 2016, and two more by 2019, through the convergence of existing schemes and the mobilisation of local resources. Unlike earlier schemes that primarily focused on financial allocations, SAGY emphasised participatory development, holistic planning, and community ownership, ensuring that local aspirations were central to the transformation process (Kumar & Raghunandan, 2019).

The idea of a “model village” is not new. Globally, various countries have adopted localised village transformation strategies—such as China's rural modernisation campaigns (Zhang, 2018), Bangladesh's rural cooperative initiatives (Rahman, 2016), and South Korea's Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement) (Kim, 2017). In India, the Gandhian vision of self-sufficient villages and the subsequent community development programs of the 1950s laid the groundwork for rural development planning (Gandhi, 1958/2009; Mathur, 2013). SAGY draws inspiration from these traditions but stands out for its strong emphasis on leadership by elected representatives and the convergence of multiple government and non-governmental resources (NITI Aayog, 2018).

While SAGY was conceptualised as a transformative initiative, existing evaluations have raised concerns about uneven implementation, lack of dedicated funding, and limited awareness among local populations (Kumar & Raghunandan, 2019; NITI Aayog, 2018). Many villages selected under SAGY remain underdeveloped, with partial or symbolic implementation of schemes. At the same time, successful cases demonstrate that effective leadership and community

participation can generate significant improvements (Singh, 2017). However, there is limited micro-level research focusing on individual villages, especially in flood-prone and socio-economically disadvantaged regions, such as northern Bihar (Mishra & Sinha, 2020). By undertaking a case study of Shitabdiara village, this research aims to bridge this gap. It seeks to evaluate not only the infrastructural and economic outcomes but also the social and governance dimensions of SAGY implementation. The findings will help assess whether the program has moved beyond symbolism to deliver measurable changes in quality of life.

The present study focuses on Shitabdiara Gram Panchayat, a unique village located in the Saran district of Bihar. This village holds historical, geographical, and socio-political significance. Geographically, it is situated at the confluence of the Ganga and Ghaghara rivers, lying at the tri-junction of Bihar (Saran, Arrah) and Uttar Pradesh (Ballia). The physiographic setting exposes the region to recurrent floods and erosion, which severely disrupt agricultural productivity, infrastructure, and livelihoods (Mishra & Sinha, 2020). Socially and historically, the village is celebrated as the birthplace of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan, one of India's most prominent freedom fighters and political leaders (Yadav, 2014). Politically, the selection of this village under SAGY was symbolic, as it aligns with Jayaprakash Narayan's ideals of rural empowerment and participatory democracy (Rudra, 2016).

Despite its symbolic status and natural fertility, Shitabdiara faces persistent developmental challenges. These include poor infrastructure, low literacy rates (especially among women), limited employment opportunities, recurring flood damage, and gaps in basic amenities such as healthcare and sanitation (Jha, 2019). Given this paradox of high symbolic value but low developmental outcomes, it presents a compelling case study for evaluating whether SAGY has translated into tangible benefits for rural communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

In view of the above discussion certain questions attract our attention – what has been the impact of SAGY on the infrastructure, socio-economic development and governance? How do the villagers perceive the Yojana and face challenges in accruing benefit from? How do the unique geographical cultural features of an area like Sitabdiara (reverine landscape) influence the implementation of the Yojana? With these questions in mind the following objectives have been addressed:

- To assess the planning and implementation process of SAGY in Shitabdiara.
- To assess the socio-economic, infrastructural, and institutional outcomes of the programme.

- To ascertain the opinion of the villagers on changes brought by SAGY.
- To identify challenges faced in execution and suggest measures

BRIEF PROFILE OF STUDIED AREA

The present study was conducted in Shitabdiara Gram Panchayat, situated in Rivilganj Tehsil of Saran District, Bihar, near the confluence of the Ganga and Ghaghara rivers. The settlement lies at the boundary of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, touching three districts: Saran, Arrah, and Ballia. Geographically, it is situated in the fertile North Gangetic Plain (25°45'N, 84°37'E) with an average elevation of 36 m above mean sea level (National Atlas & Thematic Mapping Organisation [NATMO], 2016).

The physiography is dominated by alluvial plains and diara lands shaped by seasonal flooding, which enriches the soil but also causes recurrent damage to crops and settlements (Sinha, 2008). The climate is characterised as humid subtropical, marked by hot summers, cool winters, and a monsoon season (June–September), which accounts for nearly 80% of the annual rainfall (782–1,600 mm) (India Meteorological Department [IMD], 2021).

Shitabdiara Gram Panchayat consists of 10 hamlets, including Gariba Tola, Alekh Tola, Lala Tola, and Ramnagar Tola. LalaTola holds historical importance as the birthplace of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan, a noted freedom fighter. According to the Census 2011, the Gram Panchayat hosts about 11,800 people in 1,677 households. Literacy is 60.52%, with a marked gender gap disadvantaging women (Census of India, 2011). The economy is predominantly agrarian, based on rice, wheat, maize, and pulses, with livestock rearing as a supplement. However, frequent floods continue to pose a major challenge to livelihoods (Mishra & Sinha, 2020).

Culturally, the village is significant for its association with Jayaprakash Narayan, attracting visitors and political figures annually (Rudra, 2016). Its unique location, recurring flood vulnerability, and socio-historical importance make it a crucial site for evaluating the outcomes of rural development initiatives, such as the SaansadAdarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) (NITI Aayog, 2018).

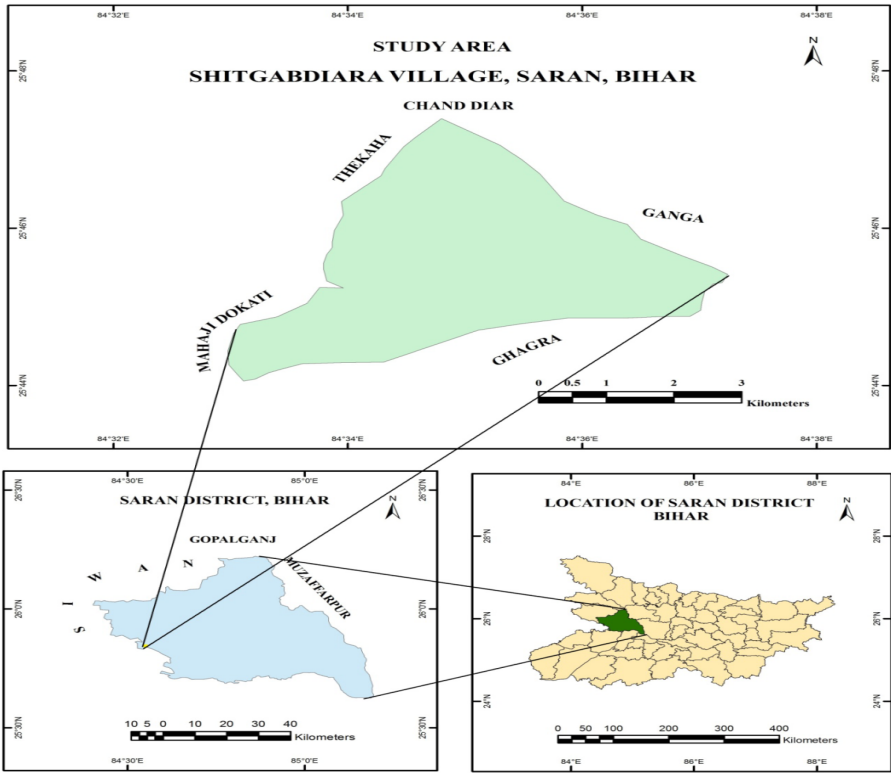


Fig. 1.1: Illustrates the location of Shitabdiara village, highlighting its position within the state of Bihar.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is mainly based on survey method by visiting field and with the help of Questionnaire as well as Schedule. However, secondary sources of data has also been used. Primary Data was collected through a) Field surveys and structured questionnaires were administered to households, SHG members, school authorities, and village leaders to obtain data on infrastructure, education, health, employment, and social welfare and b) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held with the Gram Panchayat members, school teachers, health workers, and representatives of implementing agencies to gather insights on planning, execution, and monitoring of SAGY interventions. Secondary sources include reports of government agencies as well as books, journals, periodicals etc.

Primary household survey was conducted in 2024, covering 127 respondents selected through **simple random sampling** across the seven tolas of the village.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data on demographics, education, health, housing, income, land ownership, agriculture, and energy use. Secondary data sources such as the *Census of India (2011)* and government reports were also used for comparative analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed, with descriptive statistics and tabular representation forming the basis of analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Shitabdiara Village, most basic infrastructure existed prior to its adoption under the SaansadAdarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), except a Common Service Centre (CSC) and a Veterinary Care Centre. Primary and secondary schools were already established, although no new institutions have been added since then. While government schools dominate, many families are increasingly opting for private schools for early education, citing poor infrastructure and unqualified teachers. For secondary and senior secondary classes (10th and 12th grades), only one government school is available, limiting the options for students.

Digital literacy remains a pressing need, making the establishment of a CSC crucial. Flood vulnerability also highlights the necessity of a veterinary care centre, as livestock remains at risk and informal animal doctors are the only providers of treatment. Connectivity is weak—transport services operate only until evening, constraining mobility. The Jaiprakash Narayan Trust contributes by running two buses daily and maintaining a village library.

Healthcare services include two main health centers, while Allahabad Bank offers essential financial access, encouraging savings and capital formation. Beneficiary data further shows effective implementation of welfare schemes: 1,250 MGNREGA workers completed 100 days of employment, and 694 out of 702 BPL families benefited under the PMGAY housing scheme. However, gaps still exist in digital inclusion, youth engagement, and veterinary care.

The present survey of **Shitabdiara village** aimed to examine its demographic profile, livelihood patterns, infrastructure, and the challenges it faces. Dimensions covered included population composition, literacy, healthcare, economic activities, the Public Distribution System (PDS), housing, and agriculture. The findings reflect both opportunities and persistent challenges in the socio-economic landscape of the village.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF SHITABDIARA VILLAGE

Out of 127 respondents selected through random sampling across seven tolas, the majority belonged to the General category (51.18%), followed by OBCs (29.92%) and SCs (18.9%).

The caste composition reveals a diverse social fabric, with Rajputs and Brahmins predominating among the General castes, while Yadavs, Gonds, Dhobis, and Kurmis are represented among the OBCs, and SC groups are also represented. The Muslim minority (250–300 people) lives in clustered settlements on the periphery.

While communal harmony generally prevails, caste identity remains central in Panchayat-level politics and development demands. Occasional disputes, such as the 2022 graveyard controversy, highlight how social divisions can still influence village dynamics.

This pattern is typical of rural Bihar, where caste-based identities strongly shape political mobilisation and access to resources. However, the co-existence of multiple groups underlines resilience and a degree of social cohesion despite structural divides.

Housing Structure

Housing in Shitabdiara reflects both economic status and environmental vulnerability. Among the 127 surveyed households, 67 lived in mixed houses, 28 in pucca houses, 20 in kutchha houses, and 12 in temporary huts.

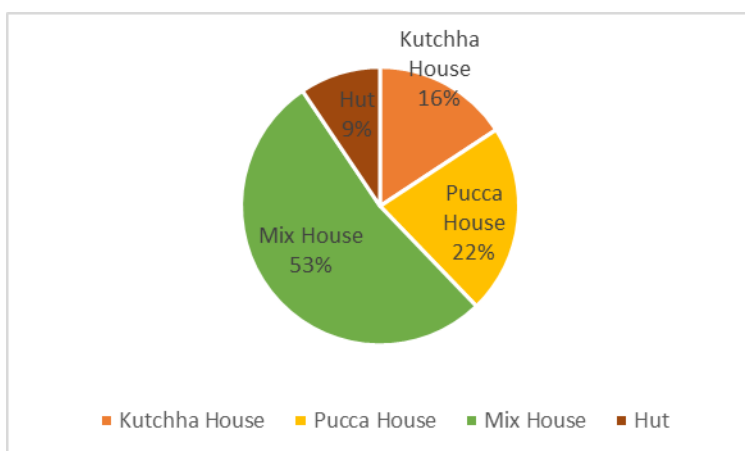


Fig. 1.2: Percentage of Different Types of Houses (*Source: Primary Survey*)

Flood-prone conditions discourage investment in durable housing. Even pucca houses often develop cracks or tilt under flood pressure, while huts and kutchha houses are frequently washed away. Muslim and lower-caste families were found to be the most vulnerable, residing in fragile structures near river banks.

The paradox is that floods affect both pucca and kutchha houses, albeit in different ways. This highlights how environmental hazards interact with poverty. People invest minimally in housing due to uncertainty, thereby reinforcing cycles of vulnerability.

Age-Sex Composition

Most respondents were adults in the 45–60 age group, followed by those aged 30–45, 15–30, and 60–75. Women were under-represented in the survey (only 12 out of 127 respondents).

Approximately 80% of the population falls within the working-age group, while 20% belong to dependent categories (those under 15 and over 60 years old).

Table 1.1: Age-Sex Composition of Respondents

Age- Group	Male	Female
15-30	16	0
30-45	33	5
45-60	54	7
60-75	12	0

A large working-age population suggests favourable labour availability. However, the under-representation of women reflects gendered barriers in participation, decision-making, and even in survey accessibility.

Literacy

According to the 2011 Census, the average literacy rate in the village is 60.52%, with male literacy at 59.36% and female literacy at 40.64%—a gender gap of 18.72%. Younger cohorts (15–30 years old) show higher literacy rates and more graduates, whereas older groups display lower educational levels and higher illiteracy rates.

Table 1.2: Literacy in Different Age Groups of Respondents of Shitabdiara Village

Age-Group	Never Attend School	Below Class 6	Class 6 - 8th	Class 8th -10th	Class 10th-12th	Graduation	P.G
15 - 30	0	0	0	3	5	6	2
30 - 45	2	5	4	7	13	4	3
45 - 60	9	12	13	16	7	3	1
> than 60	2	1	3	4	2	0	0

Table 1.2 highlights literacy variations across age groups, with education levels declining among older cohorts, and no graduates or postgraduates reported. Female illiteracy was widespread, often linked to never attending school, while some discontinued studies after failing matriculation and turned to agricultural work. Poverty and poor government school conditions limited re-enrolment, pushing parents towards private schools. The 15–30 group showed the highest educational

attainment, while older groups mainly had studied only up to Classes 8–10. A lack of college education further restricts access to higher education, particularly for girls. The village has Anganwadi centres, primary, middle, one secondary, and one higher secondary school.

Education was severely disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with schools closed and colleges repurposed as quarantine centers, and online classes hindered by poor digital infrastructure. Many students dropped out after Class 12 due to financial hardship. Respondents also noted unfair promotions based on internal marks, disadvantaging bright students.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

The PDS is a critical lifeline for food security in Shitabdiara. Survey findings revealed irregularities: households often received less than their entitled quota, and vote-bank politics influenced distribution. Still, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the system became crucial, with some distributors even delivering food grains door-to-door.

Despite inefficiencies and corruption, the PDS plays a vital stabilising role in times of crisis. Its effectiveness in the pandemic highlights the importance of strengthening monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

Health Conditions

The village has one hospital and one health centre, but doctors are often absent. Floods exacerbate health challenges, leading to outbreaks of diarrhea, skin infections, and other health issues. As per the primary survey, gastric ailments, likely linked to arsenic-contaminated water, were the most reported illness (26 cases), followed by skin diseases (19), diabetes (9), and hypertension (8) (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Number of Persons Affected by Various Diseases

<i>Name of Diseases</i>	<i>No. of Persons</i>
Diabetes	9
Skin Diseases	19
High Blood Pressure	8
Piles	5
Asthma	7
Thyroid	3
Gastric	26
No Disease	50

Poor health infrastructure, combined with environmental risks, leaves villagers highly vulnerable. Arsenic contamination poses a chronic health hazard, necessitating urgent state intervention in the provision of safe drinking water.

Economic Conditions

Agriculture dominates livelihoods, although only one effective cropping season is possible due to disruptions from floods and droughts. Most households fall into the lower-income bracket: 51.18% earn ₹5,000–15,000/month, and only 3.94% earn above ₹45,000 (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Monthly Income of Respondents

<i>Monthly Income</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>
< 5000	13
5000 - 15000	65
15000 -30000	31
30000 - 45000	13
> 45000	5

Sources of income include agriculture (40.95%), private employment (22.83%), government employment (13.38%), and wage labor (12.6%). Many private jobholders have migrated to Delhi and Gujarat.

The heavy reliance on agriculture and migration indicates limited diversification of livelihoods. While migration provides remittances, it also reflects the absence of robust local employment opportunities.

Landholding Size

Land erosion by floods has drastically reduced holdings, with over 400 bighas lost annually. Many Muslims and landless households rely on the lagan (fixed-rent) or adhiya (sharecropping) systems for cultivation.

Most households own small plots: 28 households have less than 2bighas, and 23 own 2–5 bighas, while only 13 own more than 20 bighas (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5: Land Holding Size in the Village

<i>Land (In Bigha)</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>
No Land	19
0 - 2	28
2 - 5	23
5 - 10	24

<i>Land (In Bigha)</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>
10 - 15	11
15 - 20	9
> 20	13

Small and fragmented holdings restrict agricultural productivity, pushing households into tenancy systems. This perpetuates poverty, as land insecurity limits investment and long-term planning.

Energy Use for Cooking

46.46% of respondents use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as well as firewood, 30.71% depend solely on LPG, and 22.83% rely on firewood and cow dung. Traditional fuels remain widespread, especially for normal cooking, with LPG reserved for emergencies or when entertaining guests.

Continued dependence on firewood and cow dung reflects both economic constraints and cultural preferences. However, this reliance exacerbates deforestation, indoor air pollution, and women’s drudgery. Expanding LPG access under government schemes could mitigate these issues.

Agriculture in the Village

Agriculture is largely subsistence-oriented, with wheat, mustard, pea, barley, and maize as the main crops. Frequent floods erode land and destroy crops, with major crop failures reported in 2016 and 2022. Farmers combine organic manure with limited fertilizers, and yields remain modest.

The dominance of Rabi cropping and recurring crop losses highlights the **fragility of agriculture in flood-prone areas**. Without irrigation facilities, soil conservation, and diversification, farming remains a precarious livelihood.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana is a visionary initiative designed to promote holistic rural development, social inclusion, and community empowerment. In Shitabdiara, the program has achieved notable successes in employment generation, housing provision, social welfare, and child nutrition. Quantitative indicators such as 100% MGNREGA completion, near-universal housing coverage, and high enrollment rates highlight tangible progress. However, the indicators of social development—such as education quality, digital literacy, livelihood diversification, health infrastructure, and active community participation—need more attention. Much of the village’s infrastructure existed before SAGY was adopted, highlighting

the challenge of achieving transformative change rather than just incremental improvement.

Finally, Shitabdiara's experience offers both encouragement and lessons: it demonstrates that holistic rural development is achievable, but it requires sustained political will, community involvement, and adaptive strategies tailored to the unique challenges of each village. When scaled appropriately, SAGY can make a substantial contribution to India's goal of achieving an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable rural transformation.

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IMPACT OF ENROLMENT OF GIRLS ON THEIR EMPLOYABILITY: A STUDY OF RURAL BIHAR

Sangita Kumari*

Abstract

Enrollment of girls in schools has only started increasing since 2005 in Bihar. The trend of attending schools by young girls of 15-19 age group cutting across caste and class validate that the spread of education in rural areas in Bihar, has kept rising. As such it becomes imperative to assess whether this trend has impact on the employability and quality of jobs among female gender in Bihar? With this question in mind the present article attempts to trace the correlation between the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of girls and their Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). On the basis of empirical enquiry, it was found that the number of female workers in farm sector on account of rising participation in schools has been falling but their preference for work in Rural Non-Farm Economy (RNFE) has been on rise. This reveals that the scope of employability after attaining education is encouraging. However, the better marriage prospects can also be marked.

Keywords: Education, Employability, Girls, LFPR, GER, RNFE, Rural, Bihar.

INTRODUCTION

The reasons for work outside one's home may be different for women across the class. For one-third of the female workforce in rural Bihar, it is the income for sustenance that compels them to work in rural Bihar. Income is an important criterion for work prospects for individuals. Households with more income create benefits to its members in terms of better education, better nutrition, clothing, shelter, opportunity for study and more options for career building. All these variables proportionately vary with the size of income. Out of these, the most

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important benefit is to attain education without a gap to one's fullest potential. So, the level of education one achieves is mostly the outcome of a family's income and personal ability to learn.

Benefits of Education as per the Capability Approach (Sen, 1992) are numerous. These are access to education and promoting the learning outcomes in terms of life skills like learning to know (understanding); to be (in acting as an agency and work on related to self-esteem and confidence); to together (association and affiliation with the community and interact as social being); to do (practical application of knowledge). Education is a public good, an investment for the future in facilitating and ensuring female's economic participation and hence their autonomy (Sen, 1999). According to Amartya Sen, four things determine female's autonomy: education level, ownership of assets, freedom to work outside the home and independent source of income.

The drastic decline in WPR of women in a developing country like India may be because of increasing female participation in education. Moreover, when it is about girl's education, one more factor becomes essential is the mindset of a family to girl's education irrespective of class, particularly in rural areas of Bihar. Few girls shift out from a low level of education to intermediate level and make themselves busy and withdraw from the labour force. The trend of the falling workforce in a steep manner since 2005 in rural Bihar is believed to be due to increase in the school attendance of girls (15-19 age group), they have started attending school instead of going on the farm with their mothers. The present chapter attempts to enquire the cause of falling WPR in the light of schemes and programs launched by the Government to encourage the girls to enrol and attend schools in rural Bihar. Various government schemes and interventions are taken up by the Government of Bihar for making secondary education more accessible and inclusive for the rural girls cutting across the class and caste. Also, the following schemes are a move towards gender equality in rural Bihar.

IX and X studying in the government school. The scheme Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana provides bicycles free of cost to all rural young girls by the State Government, once they get admission in Class IX. The scheme facilitates a cash transfer of Rs 2,500 to each young girl for buying a bicycle within a stipulated frame of time.

As education is a subject in the concurrent list (through an amendment in 1976), which confers Central Government too to legislate in the manner, it suits them. So, both state and central Government can frame laws in the matter. As women start attaining education, their presence in the labour force is reflected, but their participation in agriculture as a paid worker begins to diminish. In rural Bihar, amongst all states, the WPR of women is the lowest (4 per cent), based on the usual status (ps + ss) as per PLFS, 2017-18. The abysmally low rate of WPR is a

cause of concern, particularly in a situation when a girl's enrolment in school and their further perusal has increased remarkably.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The present attempts to understand the role of female education in getting employment in both farm and non-farm jobs and the pattern of level of education and quality of job or quality of life. With this objective in mind, the present research examines the ground level reality by conducting survey in rural areas of Patna and Arwal districts in view of the contrast educational and development features of these two districts. Besides, secondary data especially government reports like NSSO, PLFS etc. and books and journals have also been used.

Conceptual Consideration: The widespread long-term relationship between female labour force participation and economic development exhibits a U-shaped feminisation curve. Initially, when economy development proceeds and level of education improves and consequently its impact is worldwide recognised on women labour force participation. The pattern of change perpetuates women to the trade-off between work and study due to some economic development taking place in the region explains the basis of the making of U-shape feminisation hypotheses.

Claudia Goldin first propounds the concept behind U-hypothesis in 1995. Claudia Goldin (1995) in her empirical study in the cross-section analysis of more than a hundred countries validated that throughout the process of economic development, the women's labour force participation rate is U-shaped. She argues that when GDP per capita is at a low level, females are primarily engaged in agriculture activity as an unpaid female worker of their own farm. Because of the introduction of new technology and emerging market as a result of the rising income in major part of societies, women's labour force participation rates decline due to strong income effect. The falling portion of the curve shows this.

Over a while, as female's education improves, development starts taking place, other sectors like manufacturing, service also grows correspondingly. New employment opportunities open up, and they also attain higher education to match the demand.

Further, the income effect starts weakening, and substitution effect strengthens and as the value of women's time in the labour market increases, they move back into the paid labour force, as reflected in the upward movement along the rising portion of U-shaped curve. Once they attain secondary education, they pick up a white-collar job in the service sector in which no social stigma exists. The process of development advocates that initially strong income effect starts dwindling and substitution effect for work strengthens. And the powerful substitution effect

outweighs the income effect that encourages women to join the labour force as a highly paid worker.

EDUCATION THE POTENTIAL CAUSE FOR DECLINE IN WOMEN'S LFR

The probable elucidations for downfall in countryside female LFPR may underlie that females in the countryside are continuing higher education and hence not present to participate in the labour force. State governments across the country have been encouraging girls by providing them with bicycles to commute to secondary schools in rural areas. With the considerable increase in the bulk of good rural roads, the bicycle option has opened up new opportunities never available hitherto for girls across India (Mehrotra and Sinha, 2017). The literature reveals that the rise in educational presence is the reason for the slowdown. Due to income effect, educated women with more household income, motivating them to spend more time on leisure or household work. Therefore, educational attainment is the sole factor that accounts for the decline in women LFPRs. Attainment of education is the valid explanation for the apparent withdrawal of rural young girls in the age group of 15-19 years from the labour force as the quality of education, and the subsequent employability is the most crucial concern.

Government reports reflect that female participation in education, particularly in secondary education, has increased spectacularly in rural areas, particularly since 2007. Even in the latest survey, the education level of rural India is such that, 41.8 per cent, 17.7 per cent and 17.8 per cent females are illiterate, literate up to primary and middle, respectively. 22.7 per cent female is secondary and above in rural India. The centrally sponsored programme (National Scheme of Incentive to Girls) to promote Secondary Education along with other schemes run by state government such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan have worked as a catalyst in enrolment and attendance in schools. Following figures reflect the reality.

GIRLS OF 14-19 PREFERRING GOING TO SCHOOL

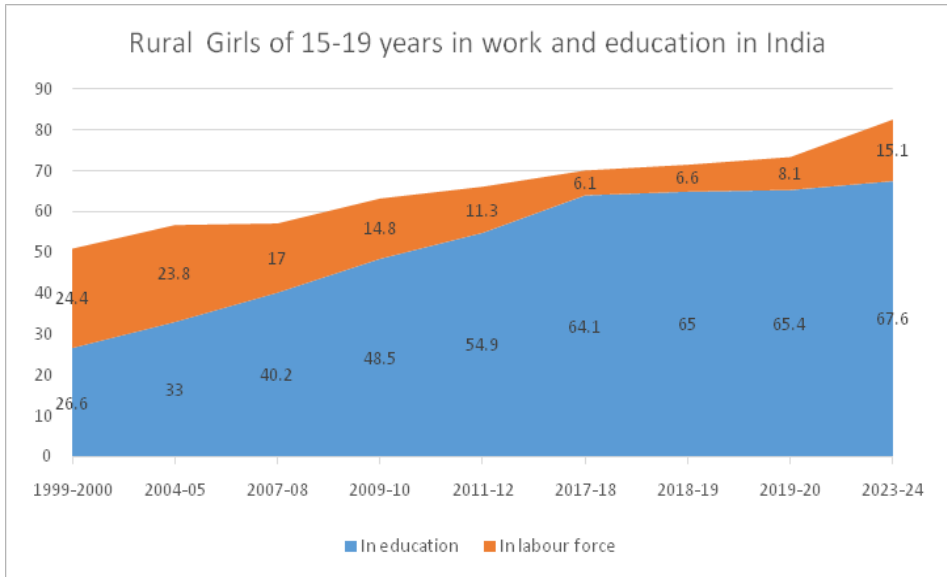
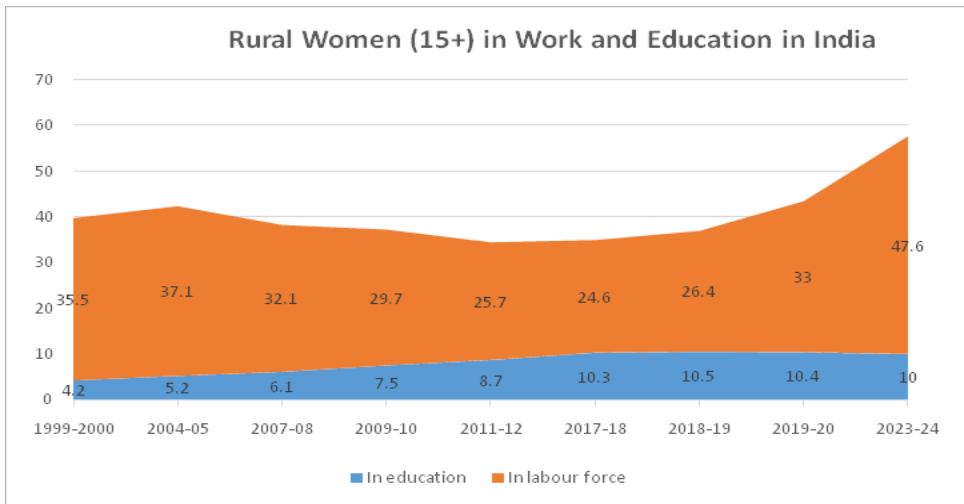


Figure 1



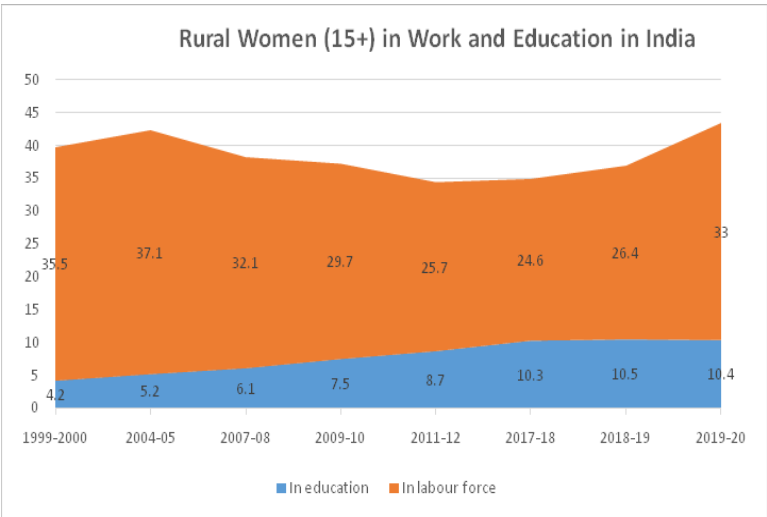
Amongst the rural girls, it shows the proportion of girls of the corresponding age group attending school kept increasing and in labour force kept declining since 1999-2000. The growth in their education participation is so robust that the proportionate decline in their share as the labour force has been carefully taken over by the tremendous and continuous growth in the former over the last 20 years. Girl's preference for education is quite evident and a welcoming factor in bringing

the change in the demography of female in rural India. Thus, the data validates that girls prefer to go to school, not to farm. The indication is unequivocal.

A GAP IN THE % OF WOMEN IN WORK AND EDUCATION GETTING NARROWER SINCE 2005

In rural India, as the proportion of females (15+) in education has been increasing and correspondingly, their share in work has been falling for the period 1999-00 and 2023-24. The percentage change in the share of women in the labour force first increased during 2000-05, but afterwards, it started declining and kept falling off the rolls until the last survey report in 2024. But the point is whether the decline in labour force proportion is calibrated in increasing the proportion of women attending education. It seems convincing that a declining share of 0.9 percent can be adjusted in the increasing share of 1.6 percent during the year 2023-24.

Figure 2



Source: Reports from various NSS Survey.

The percentage change in the share of women in education had been increasing slowly and smoothly hovering around 1 percent since 2000. 2012 onwards, the change was slightly more of 1.6 percent till 2018. Their share of participation as labour force kept declining since 2004-05 from 37.1 percent to 24.6 percent during 2017-18. Further, it kept increasing to 33 percent in 2019-20.

Thus, the trend for women in categories of girls of 15-19 age group and women of 15 plus validate that the spread of education in rural India is rising smoothly. However, the proportion of rural girls of 15-19 age group and 15 plus reflect that

their participation in education has been increasing, but their share in the labour force has declined during 2018-19.

In a country like India, which has vast and diverse variations, so it may not be apt to come to a conclusion based on rural India perspective. There is a significant difference across the states. For example, if we compare female WPR of states, we see on the one hand, amongst states, the WPR in rural Bihar is lowest at 4.2 percent during PLFS, 2018-19. On the other hand, in rural Himachal Pradesh, it is 54.2 percent. Therefore, the study of rural Bihar, in isolation is required.

EDUCATION AS AN AGENT OF SHIFT

With the change of political regime in Bihar in the year 2005, freed Bihar from lawlessness and swaggering goon and ushered in good governance, safety and peace. The NDA government build the foundation for economic and social changes that started taking place after 2005. Apart from the boom in small units in the service sector and construction, the most important social change was enabling wings for girls who were the part of gender stereotype role, less resilient to change under the weight of age-old patriarchy. For decreasing the gender inequality and making rural women empowered, the following schemes are being executed in rural areas of Bihar.

Due to exceptionally high level of poverty (33.8%) in rural Bihar, particularly among the poorer and backward classes, one witnesses spectacular improvement in terms of enrolment of girls in secondary and higher secondary level with law and order situation coupled with increased communication and mobility all resulted in enhancing the potential for empowerment.

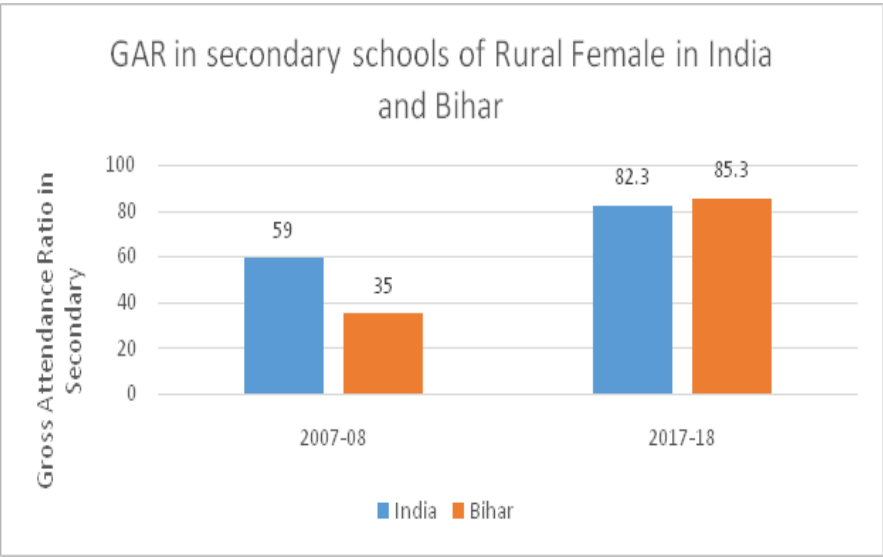
It was the year 2005 since then the WPR of rural female stated fall off the roll from 13.8 per cent to 6.6 per cent in 2009-10. It was because of the declining absolute number of casual female workers since 2005 sharply. 2005-06 was the year when the new Government came in power. After the 15 years of a slump (1990 to 2005), the trend from 2004-05 to 2014-15, Bihar emerged as the fastest-growing state, and the average annual growth rate was hovering around 10.

FEMALE'S EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES ON DIFFERENT PARAMETERS:

Female's performance in their educational level can be evaluated on the basis of Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) in the secondary and senior secondary; Age Specific Attendance Ratio of girls in rural Bihar between the period 2007-08 and 2017-18. Secondary schools are stepping stones for the youth who looks for employment on the basis of education. In a sense, it is the gateway for the world of work in a recognised formal sector. It not only creates employability in young girls; instead,

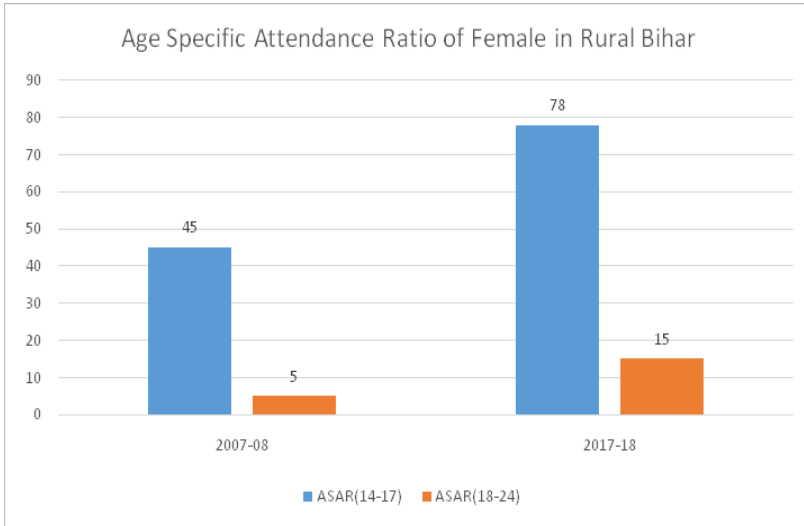
it prepares the foundation for the students to take entry in the senior secondary level. This is a crucial stage in the education hierarchy. Being not the participant of the education system is the immense deprivation in leading life with dignity. Being a part of the education system is the most prominent way of empowerment for females in rural areas.

Figure 3



Source: NSSO report, “Key Indicators of Social Consumption in India: Education” 64th round 2007-08 And NSS 75th round, 2017-18.

The figure reveals that the spectacular growth in the Gross Attendance Ratio of females in rural Bihar is quite evident that it was only 35 percent which is much lower than the corresponding figure of 59 per cent in rural India in the year 2007-08. Over the period, it increased to 85.3 percent for girls in rural Bihar, and the nation’s figure was 82.3 per cent little low to the former. Therefore, the tremendous impact of Bicycle scheme is explicit through the big jump of data of GAR of girls in rural Bihar.

Figure 4

Source: NSSO report, “Key Indicators of Social Consumption in India: Education” 64th round 2007-08 and NSS 75th round, 2017-18.

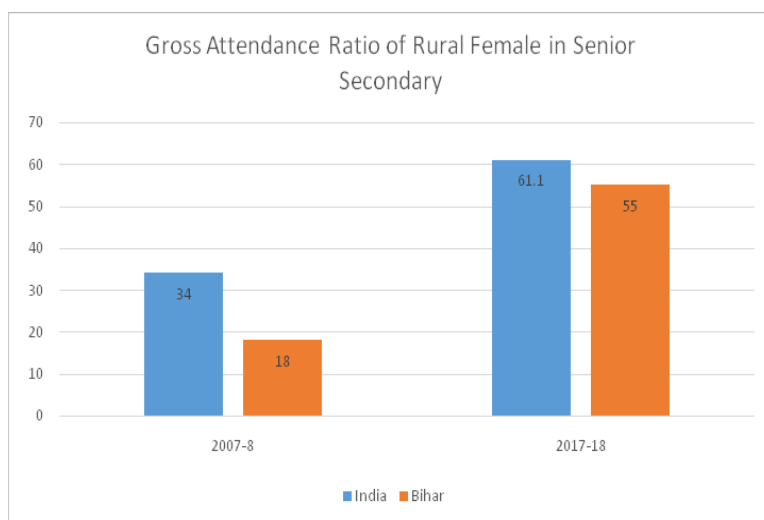
Moreover, the data on Age-Specific Attendance Ratio of females is another better tool to confirm the claim that girls of the 14-17 age group were busy in attending schools. In figure 4, the NSS report exhibits that in 2007-08, girls of this age group were only 45 per cent, and in 2017-18, it went up to 78 percent. On the other hand, the age group 18-24 seems dormant that there was not much improvement over the period till 2017-18. Study on my primary data confirms the same behaviour about the females of 18-24 aged in villages of Bihar taken for the study. Females of this age group were seen working on the farm. The growth of ASAR for this age group was not satisfactory, as it increased to 15 percent only from 5 percent in 2007-08 in rural Bihar.

A Government of India report, “Household Social Consumption: Education”, published by the ‘Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation’, in its report (75th round, 2017-18) released recently has reflected that “model” Gujarat has failed to make progress required in relation to other states in ensuring that girls continue to remain enrolled after they leave primary schools. The recent report reveals that, in the age bracket of 14-17, Bihar’s 78.2 girls are enrolled at the secondary and higher secondary level, which is better than the major states and all India’s 74.4 per cent for which data have been made available.

Based on NSS survey between January and June 2014, the data show that in Bihar 69 per cent rural girls attend schools in the age group 14-17, in comparison to the national average of 72 per cent. The fundamental difference between the

GAR and ASAR is that on the one hand the former relates to the number of pupils attending the class IX and X irrespective of age and the latter relates to the number of pupils of specific age attending the institution. Thus, both the criteria are being taken into account, so that no point is missed out before coming to the conclusion. Both the parameters of enrolment like GAR (students in class IX and X) and ASAR (pupils of the specific age group of 14-17) validates that the girl's representation. Hence, class-specific and age-specific both the approaches support that rural girls are getting benefitted by the scheme and busy in learning.

Figure 5



Source: NSSO report, “Key Indicators of Social Consumption in India: Education” 64th round 2007-08 and NSS 75th round, 2017-18.

Figure above reflects that the GAR of girls in senior secondary schools increased to 37 percent. In contrast, the corresponding ratio in secondary school rose by 50.3 percent change over the last ten years in the rural Bihar. In rural India, the percentage change in GAR of girls in senior secondary rose by 27.1 percent that was again less than the corresponding figure of rural Bihar. Moreover, one thing is quite explicit that Bihar witnessed the reduction in the dropout rates from schools over the last few years.

INFERENCES DRAWN

School Going Girls and Missing Cohort on Farm.

The impact of the bicycle scheme was so powerful that no girls of 15-19 age group were seen on the field. They don't go on-farm during their school days, but they

go otherwise to help their mother who works on the farm as agriculture labour. Most of the school-going girls replied in this manner. They generally paddle 3 to 5 kilometres every day to pursue their dream of becoming a teacher, doctor etc. The correlation between labour force participation rates (in agriculture) and the gross enrollment ratio is strong and negative.

One of the landmark policy interventions of the Bihar Government, which is widely believed to have had a tremendous impact on high school enrolment, is the Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana. Under this scheme, Rs 3000 cash is provided to children of grades nine and above for the purchase of bicycles. Originally it was only for girls, but now the scheme has been expanded to cover boys as well. A second scheme, the Mukhyamantri Balika Poshak Yojana, provides money for uniforms for girls attending middle school. These innovative programmes for girls have been quite effective. The Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana, seemed to have impact on growing interest among girls for attending schools. The programme has been successful as a wheel of change in arresting gender discrimination within the house and society to a large extent on three fronts.

Firstly, in checking the increasing dropouts amongst the girls who passed till middle. The drop- out rate was very high. After XIII class the girls usually prefer not to go to school because of the distance of the school from their home and the lack of a convenient mode of transport.

Secondly, this mode of connectivity revolutionised the whole traditional social setup in which they were unproductively being used as a mere helping hand at home either in looking after their small siblings or undertaking household chores.

Thirdly, giving them a sense of confidence, the gusto while pedalling and sense of urgency that was never before for the learning. The scheme is able to release pent up a thirst for attending the school can open a door of opportunities for them. The programme, particularly in rural areas, where most of the girls got married at an early age and left them without any opportunity to contribute to the economy, were found now able to decide about themselves. This signature programme has not only changed the face of female education in Bihar but also changed the composition of the workforce in rural Bihar. The most robust pattern that was found among the school attending girls was that out of 10 girls taken for the primary study from each caste group, no one irrespective of the category were found to be either at home or working on the farm. Thus, it was presumed that across all the social groups none of the girls was working on the farm.

More Girls Present in the Class

Impacts of government-sponsored Cycle programme in enrolling the young girls in secondary schools is that it created thrive for willingness drive to attend the school

regularly is a significant development. On the visit, it was found that the number of girls present in the class was visibly more than the boys. Though, enrolment of both (boys and girls) was almost the same. It was like; they don't want to miss the opportunity to go out to use this quality time.

Most of the girls shared the mere fact that if left at home, they have to work on household chores, and while coming out of the house makes them happy and learning at school seems fulfilling. They meet with friends, and learning becomes fun. They were from a poor economic background. The parents especially fathers of most of the girls were agriculture labour, brick mason, driver, construction worker, milk seller, electrician, quilt maker etc. Few of them were marginal farmer, small contractor, marquee maker etc. Most of them worked in private shops.

MORE JOBS OF SALARIED TYPE IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH SECTOR

There are some opening in education and health sectors pertaining mainly to the job of teachers, health workers as Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Anganwadi workers, Midday meal workers. These new openings are also responsible for making the economy smooth, sound through monetization. The practice of tuition classes and opening of many private schools are playing a dominant role in increasing salaried jobs in the rural Bihar. Regular jobs in as sales girl garment shops and security guard are breaking the barrier from the slavery of education and health sectors even in villages. Though running the tailor and parlour shops has become the old thing. There is all around ease in social restrictions and the strength to aspire.

Type of Work and Payment Monthly and Daily Basis

The following table is based on the interview of women in the village (Bhanubigha) were busy in work because of their education or skill.

Table 1: Profile of Work based on Education

Type of work	Payment on a monthly/daily basis (in Rs)	
	Female	Male
AnganwadiSewika	5660	NA
AnganwadiSahaayika	2850	NA
Mid-Day Meal Workers	1500	NA
ASHA Workers	3,500	NA
Tailoring	150-200/day	400/day
Security Guard	8,000	7,000
School Teacher (Private tuition)	2,000-12,000	6,000-20,000

Source: Primary survey

Table 1 depicts the other options of work available in the village, which requires either some education or some skill/both, where females were busy in economic activity. AnganwadiSahaayika and Sevika are the types of job that need educated females who are 8th and 10th pass. The activity like tailoring (stitching, fall, Pico etc.) and tutoring other children by charging money at home in the village are a quite common practice amongst females of middle and upper castes. Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) as an interface between the village community and public health system needs to be educated and preferably till 10th.

MARRIAGE IS THE BETTER RETURN TO EDUCATION IN THE ABSENCE OF QUALITY JOBS

For most rural families, the bare minimum education for the girls is the way of their daughters getting married without much trouble. In Bihar, the marriage of a girl is an arduous work for father. Therefore, for most, more than the employability, education is a way of easy preparation of the complicated menu. So, they end up by getting married and get busy in domestic duties only. However, the project 'Nanhi Kali' which is compiled by Nandi Foundation on Teenage Girl found that in rural areas, 73 percent of girls aspire to marry only after they are 21 years old so that by that time, they would expect some earning. Moreover, 74 percent wish to work after their studies and have a specific career in mind.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Major concern is that it should translate into recognised employment. Otherwise, the graduates and postgraduates will either join the army of educated unemployed or will end up marrying a suitable and earning person of their choice. Not all the jobs in rural areas can be of regular nature. The state is primarily service-oriented economy and the further spurt in services in terms of banking and insurance, more ATMs, more private schools, colleges and hospitals may bring some drastic change. Rural networks and communication have become the arteries of economic activities. As rural electrification and other infrastructure are already developed. With all these, the encouragement to MSMEs and spread of services to the remote areas of rural Bihar may diversify the whole rural economy.

CHALLENGES

Other problems hinder women in joining or retaining the workforce even with suitable qualification and if she gets the job of her choice. Due to the continued presence of patriarchal norms, the stereotype role of the female is less resilient to change over the years in rural as well as in urban Bihar. Before and after marriage, it is the gender that plays a very vital role in exercising and enjoying the rights of

equality in women life. All these have consequences on women role in recognised or unrecognised employment. Despite capable of getting a decent job because of her skill and knowledge but not contributing to the economy is a waste of time, money and talent.

The consent of the family member is a necessary procedure to sanction it finally. There are very few jobs which qualify the sanctity of all young and old members of the family. Even after more than seven decades of Independence, the gendered formula of unpaid work is being followed. Only Women have to undertake multiple unrecognised works on household chores. It is perceived for years that all these responsibilities come under women domain. Gender chore gap is a big concern for women to participate in the labour market of their choice and best fitted.

Any kind of new and different work except the few government jobs stigmatise women to opt. Women are guided by the old notion of work while opting. They just pick up tailoring, beauty parlour shop as their best option if they are matriculated. They become a teacher if they are graduate in the wake of an increasing number of private schools. They can operate the tractor, open saloon for male, become driver, security guard, technicians in mobile repair shops, delivery girls. However, the number of a job as a salesgirl at apparel shops, jewellery shops and restaurants, particularly of the foreign chain has increased remarkably.

CONCLUSION

The gradually increasing number of young educated females start joining the reserve army better understood who are not in the labour force but educated and trained. Bihar is found better in this regard than that of India for the corresponding periods. The bicycle scheme for their continuous presence in class is not only an innovative start but of course on the basis of this, they can become the breadwinner of their family and so finally win in the race of inclusion and recognition. Employment generation in the non-farm sector and of good quality jobs in terms of all social security benefits of formal nature is required to arrest the fluctuating nature of female employment and to ease the pressure on agriculture sector in rural Bihar. While framing policies, it should centre the need for female's biological and maternity for promoting female employment. Again, the Government can invest in those economic sectors which are attractive in terms of employment for young rural girls in Bihar. Last but not least, the importance of women's work should be communicated to other members of the family like husband and in-laws for better decision-making outcomes related to participation in the labour market.

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PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY AND SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA: A STUDY OF VILLAGES IN VARANASI DISTRICT (UP)

Govind Kumar Inakhiya*, Sanjay Kumar and Suneha Kundan*****

Abstract

Public Service Delivery is a critical aspect of local governance, and its effectiveness has a direct impact on the quality of life of its citizens. The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (hereafter SAGY) scheme was launched in 2014 with its aim to create model villages across India and focus on improving the quality of life in rural areas through holistic development and develop selected villages into Adarsh Grams. Under SAGY, Members of Parliament (MP) adopted specific villages within their constituencies and take the responsibility for the development of those villages. Here, it becomes an urgent imperative to assess the success of such schemes. The present paper is based on a comparative research design in which Saansad Adarsh Gram and Non-Saansad Adarsh Gram of Varanasi District in Uttar Pradesh are compared in terms of their public service delivery and holistic development by adopting micro-level inquiry. The data was collected through a primary survey of 100 respondents from Saansad Adarsh Gram and non-Saansad Adarsh Gram of Varanasi district in Uttar Pradesh. The key findings of the study included that Saansad Adarsh Gram showed significant improvements in public service delivery and infrastructural development as compared to non-Saansad Adarsh Gram but still there are various challenges faced by local authorities and the citizens in both categories of villages, namely, funding constraints, bureaucratic delays, lack of awareness/information, grievance redressal mechanism and lack of livelihood opportunities. The study suggests that emphasis should be put on non-SAGY also.

Keywords: SAGY, Rural Development, Public Service Delivery, Adarsh Gram, Varanasi.

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INTRODUCTION

As we know that the economy of any country depends on the quality of essential goods and services delivered to the doorsteps of citizens through various government departments such as hospitals, educational institutions and other non-governmental organizations. Jones and Murdock stated that a decision model for public service delivery consists of three main sub-systems: Consumers, who pay for the services; Elected Officials, who allocate public revenues; and Public Agencies and Bureaucracies, which deliver services and receive public revenues (Jones and Murdock, 1978, p-955). Generally, we refer the term 'service' as an act or performance provided to meet a specific need or want. It includes services like transportation, utilities or media; and differs from goods or products, though they are often linked together. Public services refer to activities and services provided by the government for the welfare of the public. These include essential services like policing, defense, healthcare, education, and more (Shittu, 2020, p-1). For instance, obtaining a Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) or other services like building permissions, caste certificates, and water connections are some examples of public services provided by the Government of India. Citizens have the right to access these services within a specified timeframe, with penalties for officials in case of delays.

The public service delivery and good governance are critical elements of a strong public administrative system which directly influence the well-being of citizens by ensuring access to essential services, promoting transparency, and fostering a sense of trust between the citizens and the government. According to a Report by National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), public service delivery refers to the provision of essential services by the government such as healthcare, education, water supply, infrastructure, and social welfare, which are vital for improving the quality of life (NIRDPR, Government of India, 2018, p-2). The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC hereafter) highlighted that a good governance ensures efficient and citizen-friendly service delivery. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It fosters democratic processes, promotes equity, and prioritizes the well-being of all, particularly marginalized communities. Good governance seeks to create an environment where all citizens, regardless of class, caste, or gender, can reach their full potential. Additionally, it focuses on delivering public services effectively, efficiently, and equitably to all citizens (The 2nd ARC, 2009, p-8). It is only through good governance that governments prioritize the needs of citizens, allocate resources effectively, and establish accountability mechanisms which enables the delivery of quality services like healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social welfare programs. If the governance is good and accountable, the quality services

are delivered to the citizens in a timely and efficient manner. On the other hand, when public services are not delivered timely and effectively, it shows that there are problems in the governance system, such as unethical practices, inefficiency, or lack of accountability. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has introduced the Code of Governance which aims to enhance service delivery, support weaker sections and backward areas, improve technology and system improvement, ensure financial management, promote accountability and transparency, boost public service morale, combat corruption and incentivizing reforms (Eleventh Plan, 2008, p-224). As Joshi stated that the most important aspects of good governance such as transparency and accountability initiatives improve public service delivery and advance Millennium Development Goals by reducing corruption, enhancing responsiveness, improving service access and quality, and leading to better development outcomes.

Public service delivery at the local level refers to the provision of essential services by local government bodies, such as municipal corporations, panchayats, and village councils. These services include healthcare, education, sanitation, water supply, public transportation, infrastructure development, and social welfare programs. Local governments as being closest to the people play a vital role in providing these essential services and improving the quality of life. As Jones and Gessaman stated that a desirable delivery system should provide services that meet consumer needs in terms of cost, time, place, and form (Jones and Gessaman, 1974, p-937).

RIGHT TO PUBLIC SERVICES ACT IN INDIA

As inspired by the UK's Citizens' Charter, India introduced a similar framework in 1994 to enhance public service delivery. This led to the Public Services Guarantee Act and a Charter for Health Service Providers (DARPG, GOI). In 2011, the Government of India enacted the Right to Public Services Act to ensure timely, transparent and accountable public service delivery. The Act allows citizens to demand services within specified time limits and in a transparent manner, holds public officials accountable, seek compensation for delay or deficiencies. Madhya Pradesh became the first state to enact its Lok Sewaon Ke Pradhan Ki Guarantee Adhiniyam-2010 on 18 August 2010 followed by Bihar on 25 July 2011. Other states including Delhi, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Assam, Gujarat, West Bengal and Goa have introduced similar laws to ensure citizens' right to time bound and efficient public services (Shrivastava, 2008 p: 1). At the local level, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1992 empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) to deliver public services and involve citizens in decision-making processes.

SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA (SAGY)

Among the other government initiatives at the local level, SAGY is one of the rural development initiatives launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 11, 2014 and implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The scheme aims to transform and develop selected villages into 'Adarsh Grams'. SAGY has developed three Adarsh Grams by March 2019, with one of them to be achieved by 2016. Additionally, five more Adarsh Grams have selected and developed by 2024, at a rate of one per year. Under SAGY, each Member of Parliament (MP hereafter) adopts one village in his/her constituency and develop it into an Saansad Adarsh Gram to promote holistic development, focusing on improved basic amenities, productivity, human development, and better livelihood opportunities. SAGY aims to reduce disparities, ensure access to rights, foster social mobilization and build social capital for sustainable and inclusive growth. It also creates models of local development and effective governance to inspire neighboring Gram Panchayats promote grassroots development (Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, NIC, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, 2018).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The present study attempts to assess the effectiveness level of SAGY in comparison to non-SAGY villages in terms of development and public service delivery by micro-level inquiry in Varanasi District of UP. In order to achieve the major objective, it goes to assesses the impact of government welfare schemes on employment, agriculture and livelihood of citizens, analyze the perceptions of citizens' participation, accountability and satisfaction with public service delivery and identify key challenges and limitations faced by both functionaries and the citizens

The present study is descriptive as well as comparative in nature which compares the public service delivery in two distinct villages-Saansad Adarsh Gram namely Nagepur which is part of SAGY, and Non-Saansad Adarsh Gram namely Ganeshpur, a comparable village in Arajilines block of Varanasi District in Uttar Pradesh. The study has used both primary and secondary sources for data collection. Primary data has been collected from rural people in the selected villages.. 100 households (50 from each village) for the study were sampled using purposive sampling method. The respondents from these two villages include key stakeholders such as common villagers, Gram Sabha members and officials engaged in public service delivery under SAGY. The following Table highlights indicators for comparing public service delivery in Saansad Adarsh Gram and non-Saansad Adarsh Gram in Varanasi district.

PROFILE OF STUDY AREA

Uttar Pradesh is big state with an area of about 243,290 square kilometers and a population of 200 million people. It has 75 districts of which Varanasi district, known as the “Spiritual Capital of India”, located in eastern part of the state on the bank of holy river Ganga was selected for study with a view that PM Modi has adopted eight villages from three CD Blocks of the district for holistic rural development, focusing on infrastructure, education, health, sanitation and governance. These villages are Jayapur, Nagepur and Parampur in Arajilines block, Kakarahiya and Kuruhua in Kashi Vidyapeeth block, Pure Bariyar, Pure and Domari in Sewapuri block.

Both Nagepur and Ganeshpur villages are located in the Arajilines block of Varanasi district. According to the Census of India 2011, Nagepur village covers a geographical area of 133.32 hectares with 419 house holds and having a total population of 2,796 people with 1,492 males and 1,304 females. There are 512 children in the age group of 0-6 years with 276 males and 236 females, 317 individuals belonging to Schedule Caste (SC) category, with 175 males and 142 females and 4 individuals belonging to Schedule Tribe (ST) category, with 1 male and 3 females. The literacy rate in Nagepur is 60.64% with 70.07% among males and 49.91 among females. On the other hand, Ganeshpur village covers a geographical area of 46.97 hectares with 289 houses and having a total population of 2,068 people with 1,092 males and 976 females. There are 385 children in the age group of 0-6 years with 187 males and 198 females, 77 individuals belonging to Schedule Caste (SC) category, with 35 males and 42 females and there are no individuals belonging to Schedule Tribe (ST) category. The literacy rate in Ganeshpur is 55.42% with 64.84% among males and 44.88% among females (Indian Village Directory, 2024).

Table 1: CD Blocks and Adopted Saansad Adarsh Grams in Varanasi District:

State	District	CD Blocks	Adoption of Saansad Adarsh Grams in these Blocks	SAGY Adarsh Grams	Year of Adoption
Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi	Arajilines (AG)	Arajilines	Jayapur	2016-2017
		Baragaon (BG)		Nagepur	2017-2018
		Chiraigaon (CG)		Parampur	2020-2021
		Cholapur (CP)	Kashi Vidyapeeth	Kakarahiya	2018-2019
		Harhua (HH)		Kuruhua	2023-2024
		Kashi Vidyapeeth (KV)	Sewapuri	Pure	2022-2023
		Pindra (PN)		Pure Bariyar	2021-2022
		Sewapuri (SP)		Domari	2019-2020

Source: Vikas Bhawan, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of rural Development, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, 2024

The availability of infrastructure and fund allocation in Nagepur Saansad Adarsh Gram have been described below. Out of 29 listed facilities, the availability of infrastructural facilities is significantly higher in Nagepur, with 96.55% of facilities available as compared to Ganeshpur where only 44.83% of facilities are available. It shows that Nagepur lacks only a Gram Panchayat Bhawan, whereas Ganeshpur is lacking key amenities like a community park, CDC by Avada Foundation, advanced schools, a public library, SHG building, Krishi Prashikshan Kendra, a public water tank, bus service, affordable housing under PMAY, and other specialized facilities. Both villages share basic infrastructure like Anganwadi Centers, Gram Sachivalaya, primary schools, Wi-Fi, CCTV, public toilets, cement concrete roads, and waste management systems. This developmental gap between Saansad Adarsh Gram and non-Saansad Adarsh Gram shows that SAGY is playing an important role in holistic development and enhancing infrastructure at local level.

Table 2: Fund Allocation in Nagepur Saansad Adarsh Gram of Arajilines Block in Varanasi District

	Year	Fund Allocated	Total Works	Amount	Ongoing Works	Amount	Completed Works	Amount
2016-2017	Nagepur	85,90,636	51	90,80,000	15	14,20,000	0	0
	Ganeshpur	32,67,543	29	36,96,837	10	7,30,000	0	0
2017-2018	Nagepur	96,55,000	61	96,65,000	21	15,55,000	0	0
	Ganeshpur	95,61,800	76	1,01,37,800	18	14,76,000	5	3,35,000
2018-2019	Ganeshpur	1,72,12,000	111	1,74,12,000	24	30,27,000	0	0
2019-2020	Nagepur	74,60,000	152	1,48,60,000	23	18,30,000	0	0
	Ganeshpur	1,58,20,000	132	1,66,45,160	21	31,05,000	0	0
2020-2021	Nagepur	1,30,07,704	129	1,33,10,000	32	21,02,000	0	0
	Ganeshpur	1,25,14,049	68	1,46,28,674	18	21,20,000	0	0
2021-2022	Nagepur	2,24,20,404	68	2,23,85,829	25	54,85,000	0	0
	Ganeshpur	5,71,80,660	163	13,77,59,694	32	1,27,83,297	0	0
2022-2023	Nagepur	20,53,525	82	1,13,40,288	27	26,91,760	0	0
	Ganeshpur	45,51,901	124	1,52,83,355	36	41,31,844	0	0
2023-2024	Nagepur	77,54,650	113	84,13,525	11	15,20,400	0	0
	Ganeshpur	52,86,879	102	65,03,320	7	14,67,820	0	0
2024-2025	Nagepur	47,64,356	88	52,65,019	3	6,10,000	0	0
	Ganeshpur	84,00,666	139	1,13,89,068	9	17,10,000	0	0

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

Table 2 shows the fund allocations and project implementation status (ongoing and completed) in Nagepur and Ganeshpur villages of Arajilines Block from 2016-17 to 2024-25. It outlines the funds allocated by Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India each year, the number of total projects planned, the associated costs for

both ongoing and completed works, and the specific amount designated for each status category.

In Nagepur, the highest fund allocation was peaked at 22.4 million INR in 2021-22, with up to 152 projects planned in 2019-20. Despite this, no projects were fully completed during this period. Although some projects reached the “ongoing” stage, such as 32 in 2020-21 and 27 in 2022-23, but the lack of completed projects suggests inefficiencies in their implementation and resource utilization. This highlights a gap between funding and actual community benefits, which points to the need for better planning, monitoring and implementation to ensure funds are effectively used.

In Ganeshpur, the highest allocation occurred in 2021-22, with 5.7 million INR for 163 planned projects. Similar to Nagepur, no projects were completed that year, and while there were occasional completions, such as five projects in 2017-18, most years showed no completed projects despite significant funding and numerous planned works. Many projects remained in the “ongoing” stage, with a peak of 36 ongoing projects in 2022-23. This highlights that there are challenges in completing projects and utilizing resources effectively which indicates the need for better strategies and better coordination to ensure that allocated resources benefit the community.

COMPARISON OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN SELECTED VILLAGES

In order to understand the infrastructure development and public service delivery in both Adarsh and non-Adarsh Grams in Varanasi District, it is important to focus on some key areas like education, healthcare, sanitation, and other basic facilities. These areas play an important role in improving the quality of life and holistic development in rural areas. These are shown in the following Figures:

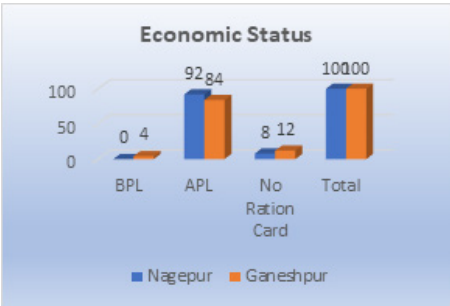


Figure No. 1

Source: Field Survey, 2024

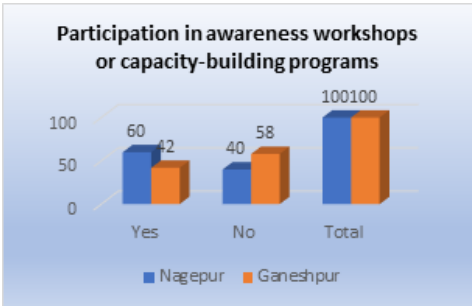


Figure No. 2

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 1 shows that a significant majority (92%) of households in Nagepur are classified as Above Poverty Line (APL). Only 8% don’t have any ration card. In

Ganeshpur, 84% of households under APL category, but there is a slightly higher percentage (12%) who don't have any ration card. Additionally, 4% are categorized as Below Poverty Line (BPL). In both the villages, there are poor families but the main problem is that the poor families are also included under APL category. They are not included under BPL category.

Figure No. 2 shows the participation of residents in awareness workshops or capacity-building programs in Nagepur and Ganeshpur. In Nagepur, 60% of respondents attended awareness workshops or capacity-building programs, while 42% attended awareness workshops or capacity-building programs in Ganeshpur. It reveals that Nagepur has a significantly higher participation rate as compared to Ganeshpur.

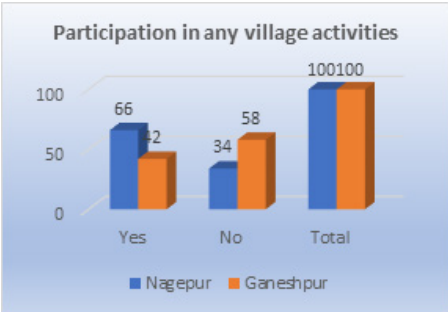


Figure No. 3

Source: Field Survey, 2024

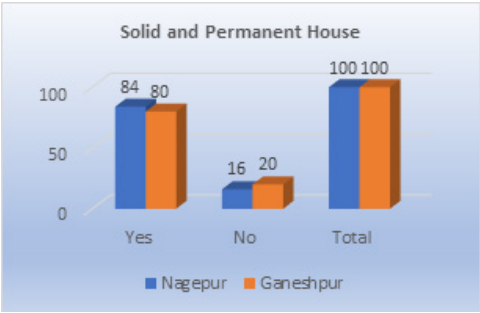


Figure No. 4

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 3 shows that in Nagepur 66% of respondents participated in village activities such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Tree Plantation, or Awareness Camps as compared to only 42% in Ganeshpur. This suggests that Nagepur residents may be more actively involved in community-driven events which reflects a higher level of community engagement or local leadership.

Figure No.4 shows that in Nagepur, 84% of households have solid and permanent housing, while in Ganeshpur, the percentage is slightly lower at 80%. However, a small number of households in both villages still lack solid housing, with 16% in Nagepur and 20% in Ganeshpur. Overall, both villages are showing the similar data, but Nagepur has a marginally higher rate of better housing infrastructure.

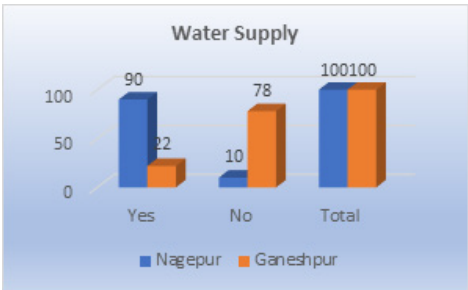


Figure No. 5

Source: Field Survey, 2024

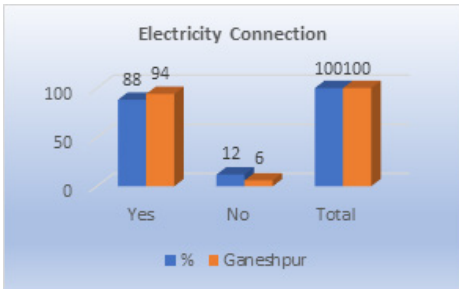


Figure No. 6

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 5 shows that in Nagepur, 90% of households have access to piped water supply while in Ganeshpur, only 22% have water supply. This shows that Nagepur has much better water supply facilities than Ganeshpur. In Ganeshpur, there is not proper facility for Jal Nigam which can supply water to each and every household timely.

Figure No. 6 shows that in Nagepur, 88% of households have access to electricity, while 94% of households in Ganeshpur have electricity. This indicates both villages have relatively good access to electricity.

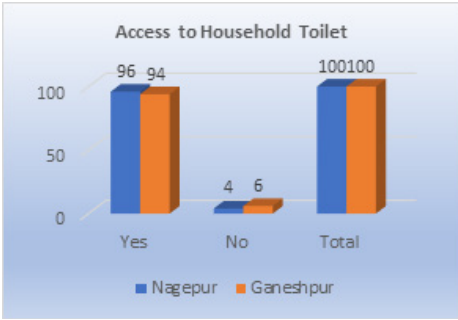


Figure No. 7

Source: Field Survey, 2024

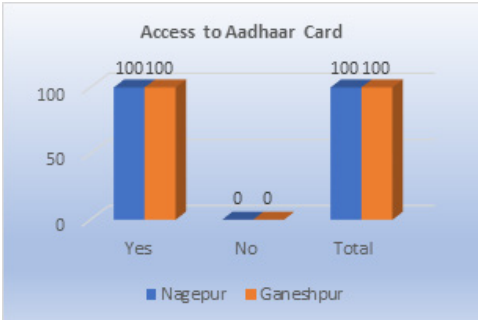


Figure No. 8

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 7 shows that in Nagepur, 96% of households have toilets, with only 4% lacking them. Similarly, in Ganeshpur, 94% of households have toilets, and 6% do not. This shows that both villages have good sanitation facilities, with very few households lacking access to a toilet facility. In Nagepur Saansad Adarsh Gram, majority of toilets are provided by government but in Ganeshpur, people have constructed their own private toilets at their homes.

Figure No. 8 shows that both Nagepur and Ganeshpur have 100% access to Aadhaar cards, meaning that every household in both villages has successfully

enrolled in the Aadhaar system. This indicates that the Aadhaar enrollment drive is fully successful in both villages.

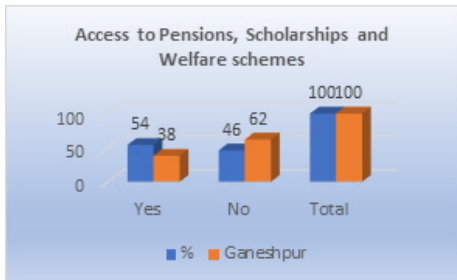


Figure No. 9

Source: Field Survey, 2024

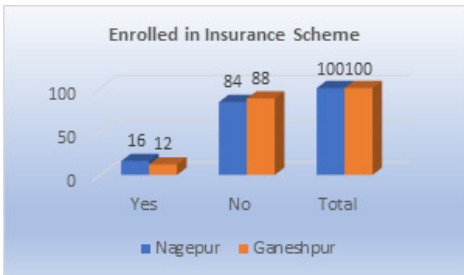


Figure No. 10

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 9 shows that in Nagepur, 54% of households have access to government welfare schemes such as pensions and scholarships, while in Ganeshpur, only 38% have this access. This shows that Nagepur has better participation in social welfare programs as compared to Ganeshpur where people are not getting the fully benefits of government social welfare schemes.

Figure No. 10 shows that in both villages, enrollment in insurance schemes is very low. Only 16% of households in Nagepur and 12% in Ganeshpur are enrolled in such schemes. This suggests that both villages face challenges in providing insurance coverage to their residents.

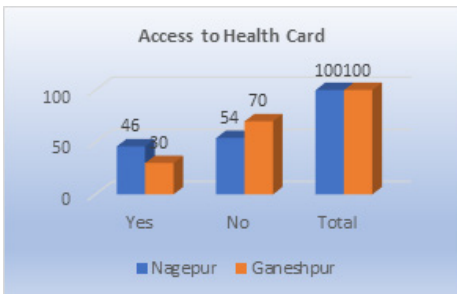


Figure No. 11

Source: Field Survey, 2024

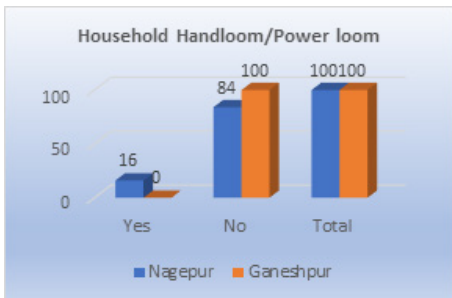


Figure No. 12

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 11 shows that in Nagepur, 46% of households have access to health cards¹ while only 30% of households in Ganeshpur have health cards. This indicates that Nagepur has better health service coverage as compared to Ganeshpur, although the access rate is still relatively low in both areas.

Figure No. 12 shows that in Nagepur, 16% of households have access to handlooms/power looms, while in Ganeshpur, there are no handlooms/power

¹ Health Card: Ayushman Card, Abha Card, etc.

looms in any house. This indicates that Nagepur has some involvement in traditional crafts like Banarasi Saree, which is lacking in Ganeshpur.

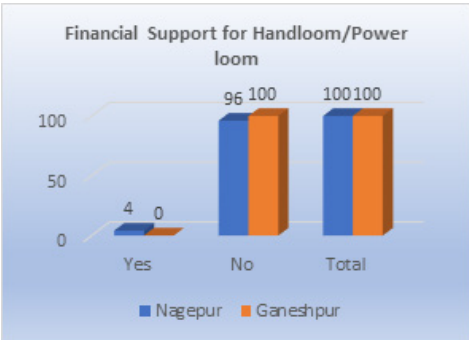


Figure No. 13

Source: Field Survey, 2024

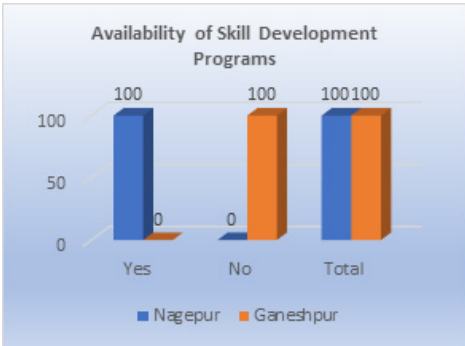


Figure No. 14

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 13 shows that only 4% of households in Nagepur receive financial support for handlooms or power looms, and no such support in Ganeshpur. This shows that government is not providing any financial assistance to improve traditional crafts such as Banarasi Saree and other local products in both villages.

Figure No. 14 shows that in Nagepur, there is availability of skill development programs as compared to Ganeshpur which has lack of access to skill development programs. This suggests that Nagepur offers better opportunities for skill development like Community Development Centre, computer training, and agricultural training (Krishi Prashikshan Kendra), etc. which are lacking in Ganeshpur village.



Figure No. 15

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Figure No. 16

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 15 shows that in Nagepur, 58% of households reported receiving skill training, while the 42% have not received any training. This indicates people in Nagepur are benefiting from skill development programs. In Ganeshpur, no

households have received skill training, as 100% of respondents report not having access to such programs. This suggests a complete lack of skill training opportunities in Ganeshpur.

Figure No. 16 shows that in Nagepur, 68% of households report a positive impact of skill development programs on self-employment, while in Ganeshpur, there is no impact of skill development programs on employability of the villagers. This suggests that in Nagepur, skill development programs are more successful in providing skill training to citizens, whereas Ganeshpur has not benefited from such programs.

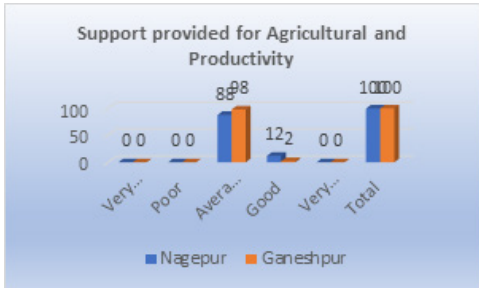


Figure No. 17

Source: Field Survey, 2024

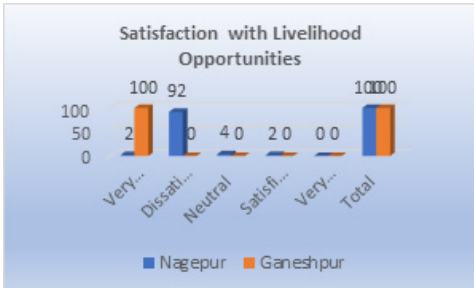


Figure No. 18

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 17 shows that in both Nagepur and Ganeshpur, the majority of respondents 88% and 98%, respectively viewed that there is average agricultural support as given by the government. This suggests that some support is available. Neither Nagepur nor Ganeshpur experiences significant high-quality support for agriculture development by the government. This highlights the need for government initiatives for more agricultural development in both the villages.

Figure No. 18 shows that in Nagepur, 92% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the livelihood opportunities and support available. In Ganeshpur, all respondents stated that they are very dissatisfied with livelihood opportunities and support. This reflects that both villages face dissatisfaction as there are not much livelihood opportunities in both villages which need for considerable improvement in the availability and quality of livelihood support. These livelihood opportunities include including agriculture (crop farming, horticulture, and organic farming); animal husbandry (dairy, poultry, beekeeping and goat farming), traditional crafts (like weaving, pottery, and embroidery), small businesses (grocery stores, tailoring, and carpentry), skilled trades (plumbing, electrical work, and vehicle repair), service-based opportunities (beauty care, education, healthcare, and repair services), and others (fisheries, renewable energy, tourism, and e-commerce), etc. These activities help in improving the socio-economic conditions of the people in rural areas.

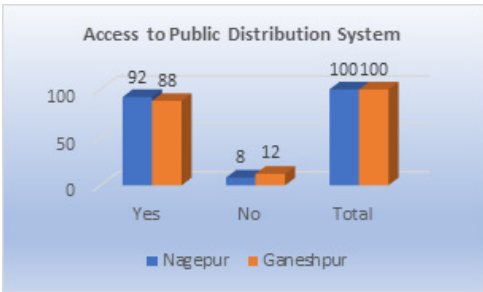


Figure No. 19

Source: Field Survey, 2024

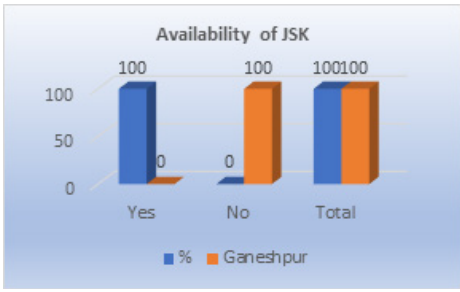


Figure No. 20

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 19 shows that in Nagepur, 92% of households have access to the Public Distribution System (PDS), while in Ganeshpur, 88% have access. Both villages have good access to PDS, with Nagepur having a slightly higher percentage of households benefiting from the PDS.

Figure No. 20 shows that in Nagepur, all households (100%) reported the availability of JSK which has recently been constructed but not properly functional which shows that the JSK services are not highly accessible and functioning effectively. In Ganeshpur, no households report easy access to JSK services, suggesting that these services are either hard to reach or unavailable in the village as there is no JSK in Ganeshpur.

Table 3: Details of Services to be provided by JSK in Nagepur

Name of the Service	Time Limit
Caste Certificate	20 days
Income Certificate	20 days
Domicile Certificate	20 days
Character Certificate	7 days
Complaint about atrocities	7 days
Computer Courses	Course Duration
Disability Certificate	60 days
Illness and Fitness Certificate	30 days
Decision on Domestic Electricity Connection	30 days
Drinking Water/Sewer Connection	15 days
Employment Registration	Same day
Land Allotment Letter	21 days
Registration of Well	30 days
Decision on Old-Age Pension	30 days

<i>Name of the Service</i>	<i>Time Limit</i>
Decision on Widow's Pension	13 days
E-Wallet, M Wallet,	Same Day
Filing Income Tax Return	Same Day
Fire Accident Assistance Scheme	15-30 days
Grant Scheme for marriage of daughter of helpless women	30 days
Issue of Driving License	7 days
Life Insurance	7-30 days
Application for Ration Card Renewable Scheme	15-30 days
New Ration Card	15-30 days
Public Grievance Service	7-30 days
Railway Ticket Reservation	Same Day
Registration of Prohibition for complaint	7-15 days
PAN Card	15 days
Health Insurance	7-30 days
Vehicle Insurance	7 days
Legal Aid for women suffering from dowry system,	7-15 days
KIASK Banking Services	Same Day
Electricity Payment	Same Day

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table No. 3 highlights various services to be provided by JSK in Nagepur village, along with their respective time limits for delivery. Services like Caste Certificate, Character Certificate, and Income Certificate take 7-15 days, while other services like Disability Certificate or Grant Scheme for Marriage of Daughter of Helpless Women may require 15-60 days due to verification processes. Services like Covid Vaccination, Railway Ticket Reservation, Employment Registration, and financial services like E-Wallet or Electricity Payments are provided on the same day of application. The time limit for addressing the complaints about Atrocities and Legal Aid for Women Suffering from Dowry System is within 7-15 days. Insurance-related services vary between 7-30 days depending on the type and provider. In Nagepur Adarsh Gram, this JSK is not properly implemented but in Ganeshpur village, there is no JSK.

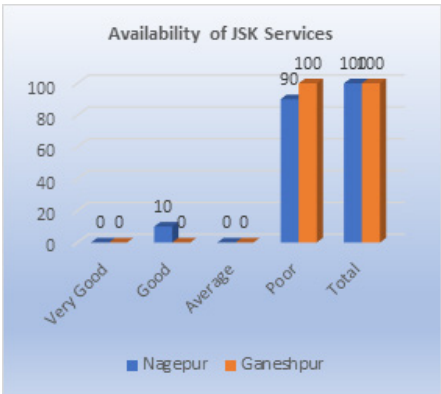


Figure No. 21

Source: Field Survey, 2024

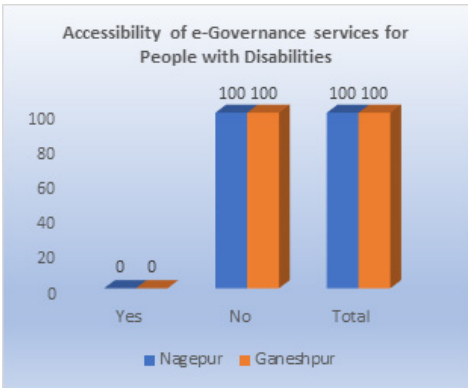


Figure No. 22

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure No. 21 shows that in Nagepur, 90% i.e. majority of the respondents stated that the availability of JSK services was poor indicating that services are not accessible and provided to the residents of the villages. In Ganeshpur, all the respondents rate the service as poor because there is no JSK in village.

Figure No. 22 shows that in both Nagepur and Ganeshpur, 100% of households report that there is no access to e-governance services for people with disabilities. This highlights that there is no inclusive access to digital government services for people with disabilities in either village.

CHALLENGES IN SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM AND NON-SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM IN VARANASI DISTRICT

As we have discussed in this paper that there is holistic development in Saansad Adarsh Gram as compared to non-Saansad Adarsh Gram but still there are various challenges faced by the Gram Panchayats and the citizens that we need to focus upon:

Table 4:

Saansad Adarsh Gram (Nagepur)	Non-Saansad Adarsh Gram (Ganeshpur)
Lack of Awareness about Government Services: Lack of awareness among villagers about government schemes prevents them from accessing benefits like old-age and widow pensions and social welfare schemes.	Lack of Awareness: Lack of awareness among villagers about government programs prevent them from accessing benefits like housing, pensions, and employment schemes.

<i>Saansad Adarsh Gram (Nagepur)</i>	<i>Non-Saansad Adarsh Gram (Ganeshpur)</i>
Allocation of Funds: Lack of separate funds for implementing SAGY force villages to rely on existing schemes, which hinders targeted development in Adarsh Grams.	No Jan Suvidha Kendra (JSK): The absence of a Jan Suvidha Kendra (JSK) causes delays in accessing government services such as issuance of birth and caste certificates, welfare schemes, bill payments, and complaint reporting.
Infrastructure Issues: Nagepur Adarsh Gram faces infrastructure gaps, such as absence of a Primary Health Centre, proper drainage system, and government middle or high schools, particularly for girls, leading to limited education and high dropout rates. The JSK lacks effective services, causing dissatisfaction, and the bus service timings are unsuitable for residents.	Poor Infrastructure and Resources: Villages suffer from poor infrastructure, including poor drainage system, issues like lack of bus services, clean streets, government housing, solar lights, and regular water supply, along with unsafe water sources hinder development and create unsafe living conditions.
Bureaucratic Delays: Delays in processing applications and implementing schemes make it difficult for villagers to get benefits from government schemes in a timely manner.	Shortage of Healthcare and Educational Facilities: Villages lack healthcare facilities like PHCs leading to poor health outcomes. The absence of middle and high schools, especially for girls, limits education and increases dropout rates, with many families unable to afford private schools.
Lack of Employment Opportunities: Nagepur villagers face limited employment opportunities, with no MGNREGA labor work, which makes it difficult for villagers to sustain their livelihoods.	Livelihood Issues: Villages have seen no significant improvement in job opportunities. Skill development and training programs are insufficient, leaving residents without employable skills. Villages lack job opportunities and sufficient skill development programs, leaving residents without employable skills.
Challenges for Traditional Crafts: Banarasi saree workers face challenges such as high electricity bills, declining sales, limited market access, and insufficient government support makes it harder to sustain their traditional crafts like Banarasi saree weaving.	Traditional Crafts (Handloom/Power loom): Banarasi saree weavers face challenges like high electricity costs, declining sales, lack of government support, limited market access which threaten their livelihoods and the sustainability of traditional crafts.
Corruption and Favoritism: Favoritism and corrupt practices by local leaders prevent fair benefit distribution, while limited participation of women in decision-making worsens the situation and they are not allowed to speak their voices in the Gram Sabha meetings.	PDS Access: The PDS faces issues such as poor Know Your Customer (KYC) management which leads to cause errors in beneficiary lists and uneven distribution of benefits, leaving some families without access to subsidized food grains.

<i>Saansad Adarsh Gram (Nagepur)</i>	<i>Non-Saansad Adarsh Gram (Ganeshpur)</i>
Grievance Redress Mechanism: Lack of proper grievances redressal mechanism causes delays in resolving villagers' complaints and their grievances are not resolved timely.	Social Welfare Programs: Many villagers do not receive benefits from programs like old-age pensions, widow pensions, or housing schemes due to poor implementation and lack of awareness.
Fewer Gram Sabha Meetings: Infrequent Gram Sabha meetings limit villagers' opportunities to voice their concerns and participate in planning development projects.	Women's Participation: Women are largely excluded from decision-making processes in village which limits their role in governance and development, making it harder to address issues specific to women and children.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions/recommendations have been made by the villagers to address the challenges they face and improve their living standards:

a) Infrastructure and Civic Facilities

- Villagers seek establishment of Government Middle and High Schools, especially for girls and provide Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and skill development programs
- Setting up local post office and ATM services to enhance access to banking and postal facilities in both villages
- Creation of community Infrastructure such as Panchayat Bhawan in Nagepur for Gram Sabha meetings and a marriage hall (Baraat Ghar) in both villages to support community events and social gatherings.
- Establish a Public Health Center (PHC) and a veterinary hospital to address the health needs of people and livestock, which are vital for rural livelihoods in both villages.
- Provide facilities like proper drainage system, cleanliness along with indoor toilets, especially for women and children, streetlights and solar lights and promoting sustainable energy. Provide affordable electricity and subsidies for power loom workers in both villages.

b) Improvement in Opportunities & Governance:

- Create local job opportunities for youth, women, and artisans, and support traditional crafts like handlooms and power looms with subsidies, modernized equipment, and better market access in both villages.

- Modernization of agricultural practices, irrigation systems, and enhance market access to increase farm productivity and income in both villages.
- Introduce e-governance services and establish Common Service Centres (CSCs) for better access to government benefits and grievance redress in both villages.
- Development of Awareness and Grievance Redressal to make the citizens aware of government schemes and services to ensure that benefits reach the eligible beneficiaries. Robust Grievance Redress Mechanism in both villages to help the residents to voice concerns and receive timely resolutions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that after being adopted as Adarsh Gram, there is some improvement in infrastructure and public service delivery in Nagepur Saansad Adarsh Gram as compared to Ganeshpur which is non-Adarsh Gram. These improvements are visible in areas like better roads, access to facilities like community centers, and improvements in basic services like water supply and electricity. But still both Nagepur and Ganeshpur face challenges in public service delivery. While, Nagepur has made some progress, both villages still require further attention and improvement to ensure that everyone has access to basic services and opportunities for a better quality of life.

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ICT IN RAISING AWARENESS OF THEIR RIGHTS AMONG WORKING WOMEN IN UNORGANISED SECTOR: A CASE OF VAISHALI BIHAR

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Abstract

In this age of industrial revolution 4.0, we expect the ICT and AI to play role in every walk of life. Women in Indian society, especially the working women, are still vulnerable to subjugation, deprivation and oppression by their male counterparts. It is also true that the unorganized sector provide employment to over 80 percent of workforce, in which women have substantial share. It is a predominant assumption that despite various politico-legal arrangements in their favour, the rights of working women of unorganized sector, particularly in Bihar, are grossly encroached. In brief, the rights include better treatment by employer, timely payment of proper wages, working hours and women specific facilities etc. On the other hand, ICT is most potential source of knowledge and awareness of rights of women, if they utilize it. Now the question is – can ICT and AI come to the rescue in protection of rights of women working in unorganized sector especially in Bihar? Are the social conditions conducive to the use of ICT by them? These queries make an urgent imperative to examine the extent of dissemination of information about the rights of working women by media, proper monitoring by governmental agencies, extent of awareness of rights among working women and impact on enjoying the rights by them at work place. It is found that because of these factors, women being inadequately exposed to both print and electronic media, are inadequately aware of their rights and ill-equipped to avail the ICT. As such they are still on losing side.

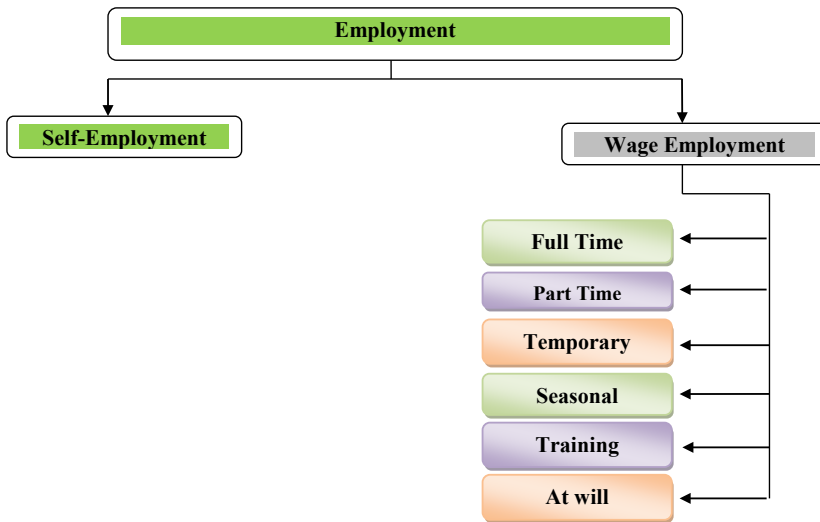
Keywords: Working-women, Rights, Workplace, Unorganised Sector, ICT, Media, Bihar

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INTRODUCTION

The present paper attempts to explore the prospects of ICT resources of Knowledge on Work-related Rights of the working women in Bihar engaged in unorganised sector. Almost 400 million people (more than 85 percent of the working population in India) work in unorganized sector and of these at least 120 million are women. The Indian constitution is one of the most progressive in the world and guarantees equal rights for men and women. Women continue to face discrimination and marginalization both subtle and blatant and do not share equally in the fruits of development. Their contribution is not given due credit. Women workers in unorganised sector lag behind the males in terms of level and quality of employment due to their ignorance about their rights. Every working woman should have full knowledge of the rights especially related to their field of work enabling them to claim them accordingly, if denied. Not only this, they may be able to guide the fellow women workers. But they are least equipped with the knowledge of concerned protective laws and schemes. Here comes the need of considering their access to the knowledge and available ICT facilities. In this view, a quick field study was conducted which reveals several facts, the most important of which was the non-availability of rights related to all the related politico-legal provisions, even if it is available somewhere, is not accessible to them.

Education is considered to be the most important tool for empowering women. It provides knowledge, skills and confidence required for active participation in the development process. Thereby it enables women to be aware of their due rights, ability to avail better employment opportunities. The economic empowerment acquires prime significance in the process of women's empowerment. Education facilitates them not only for more opportunities of employment but enables them to enjoy gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic development. Though women have the right to equal pay, protection against harassment at the workplace, right against female foeticide, right to property, right to dignity and decency, etc., yet they fail to enjoy them. On the other hand women make a huge contribution to the economy, whether in business, farming, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by performing unpaid care work at home. A wide range of jobs are available for earning a living, which mainly fall under two types of arrangements as shown in the following graph



Employment is divided into organised and unorganised sectors on the basis of the nature of employment:

Organised sector includes those places or work enterprises where the terms of employment are regulated and registered under government policies. The duration of employment is regular. This sector has to follow the rules and regulations of the government. They are registered by the government. Workers in this sector enjoy job security. Employees in this sector get paid for leave etc. They are paid overtime by the employer when there is more work. Employees in this sector enjoy other benefits like medical facilities etc.

The Unorganized sector- According to National Commission for Entrepreneur in Unorganised Sector (UCEUS), “*The Unorganized Sector is that sector which consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and wit less than ten total workers.*”(GoI: 2007). Another definition of Unorganized sector is characterized by scattered and small units which are largely outside the control of the government. The duration of employment is irregular. This sector has regulations but they are not bound to follow the rules of the government. They are not even registered with the government or its agencies. Workers in this sector do not have any fixed employment. Employees are not paid for holidays or leaves. Sometimes they may be fired without notice. Employees in this sector do not enjoy other benefits.

The unorganized sector is a significant part of the Indian economy. About 52% of unorganized workers are engaged in agriculture and allied sector and they constitute more than 90% of the labour workforce. Unorganized workers also

contribute 50% to the GDP. At least 120 million of these are women. Women in the unorganized sector work to meet their needs. Women have the dual responsibility of balancing their home and work. There are many problems faced by women in the unorganized sector, some of them are 1. No stability of employment of women workers, 2. Lack of proper training, 3. Exploitation and harassment at the workplace, 4. Often face discrimination due to gender inequality, 5. Women workers do not get the benefit of minimum wages, 6. Inadequate social security coverage and absenteeism among workers, etc. (Klaveren et al: 2010)

THE PROBLEM

Employment is not only about getting a job, but also about facing the challenges of the job. The situation in Bihar and in this area is discouraging. It may be difficult to assess how empowered women are in employment, but it will not be so difficult to assess how satisfied they are, because in most situations working women complain less and compromise more and then the challenges/problems start increasing gradually. Knowledge of workplace laws and rights, advancement, achievements, balance between family and workplace responsibilities and finally satisfaction with the job - all these are important and every woman should strive for it in the workplace. But this does not happen. Both the employer and the woman herself are responsible for this.

The first and foremost responsibility of the employer is to provide proper wages and conducive conditions of work place as per essential needs of the workers, like shade for rest, drinking water, toilet facilities, crèches etc. Besides, they must also provide the information about workers' rights like rules, regulations, facilities etc. There should also be a cell to take care of harassment of female workers, periodic satisfaction assessment of employees, fulfillment of their needs as much as possible, etc. In case of any deficiency on the part of the employer, other measures can also prove to be helpful, such as women helpline, NGO, labour employment office and in extreme cases legal assistance (not easy for anyone). Various mass media can also be able to provide information and help, such as websites and social media. Websites are a powerful source, but it is not possible that they can provide all the necessary information in a collected form and according to the problem of a particular person. But all these are rarely provided and women are left to suffer.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is difficult for women to get a job, but it is even more difficult to face difficulties in remaining in the workplace, and the extreme limit is reached when along with oneself, the family is also affected and finally it becomes impossible to remain in the job or one has to leave the job. One can neither leave a permanent job nor

continue it. Overall, the job starts to seem like a curse. They lack sources that can guide them in the right direction, why does this happen? The presented research is an attempt to know these. Work related acts and rights - these are two such weapons whose use prepares one to face many challenges, teaches one to protect oneself, reduces dependence on others. Every woman will have to make efforts to get complete information about these two weapons, no matter what the source is, workplace, government office, NGO, women helpline or women mass media. There are employment opportunities in unorganized sectors in Bihar, women's participation is increasing and so are the challenges. But very little effort has been made to understand the aspects related to this field. The presented research results will clarify many situations, which will definitely improve the condition of women in both the fields at present and will also help in preparing a roadmap for the future.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

International Labour Organization in its strategic plan, mentions that there are many legal instruments to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women workers, but there is still a gap between the rights set out in national and international standards and their implementation in real situations. Women workers around the world are unclear or unaware of their rights and this is perhaps the biggest obstacle in their work. It is imperative to make them aware (I L O: 2007) In their work on working women and their rights in the workplace in the context Libyan laws Naeima et al (2022) attempted to shed light on how women's rights can be recognised, some solutions to the problem of conflict between work and motherhood, and how they should be promoted. Singh, Vivek. (2014) finds that today's women seek work, but the occurrence of crimes against them at the workplace poses a hurdles even on their psyche. It is found in the study that if there is complete security and proper facilities in the office, then it can reduce the cases of workplace related problems. Along with this, women employees should be employed in every post in the country at places like police station and human resource department office etc., so that the victim women do not feel hesitant in telling about the incident that happened with them and their problem can be solved. The role of ICT in improving their situation has largely been ignored.

Thus the present study intends to assess the role of ICT in sourcing knowledge on workers' related rights in the unorganised sectors especially working women. We hypothesized that there are many sources of knowledge regarding work-related rights of working women in unorganized sector, but women workers' access to them is very poor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An empirical enquiry was done at the micro level in Vaishali District of Bihar covering women working in various jobs like as farm labour, working in shops, hotel workers, brick klin labourers, labeling and packaging staff etc. The data was collected by Interview with the help of interview schedule. The data was treated with simple statistical principles and results are presented in the form of tables, graphs, diagrams etc. Using a bar diagram or bar chart, the obtained marks are shown in small and big rectangles of equal width but different lengths. Based on this, the traditional relation, percentage and nature of the data can be understood.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

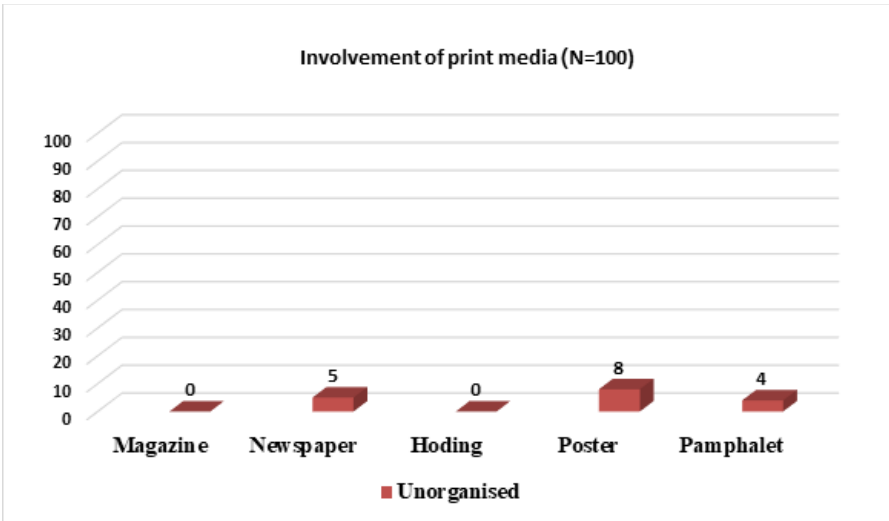
Sr no.	Objective	Result
1.	Study of information about the Assessment the role of ICT in sourcing knowledge on Work-related Rights of Unorganised Sectors Working Women.	Graph 1.1 Involvement of print media in the field of work-related rights of working women Graph 1.2 Involvement of electronic media in the field of work-related rights of working women

The involvement of types of non-human resources in the field of work-related rights of working women:

Print Media- Magazines, Newspapers, Hoardings, Leaflets, Pamphlets, Stickers, Banners- Though these are all forms of written communication and are more suitable for the educated class, but if these are pictorial then these are capable of communicating to the illiterate and less educated people also.

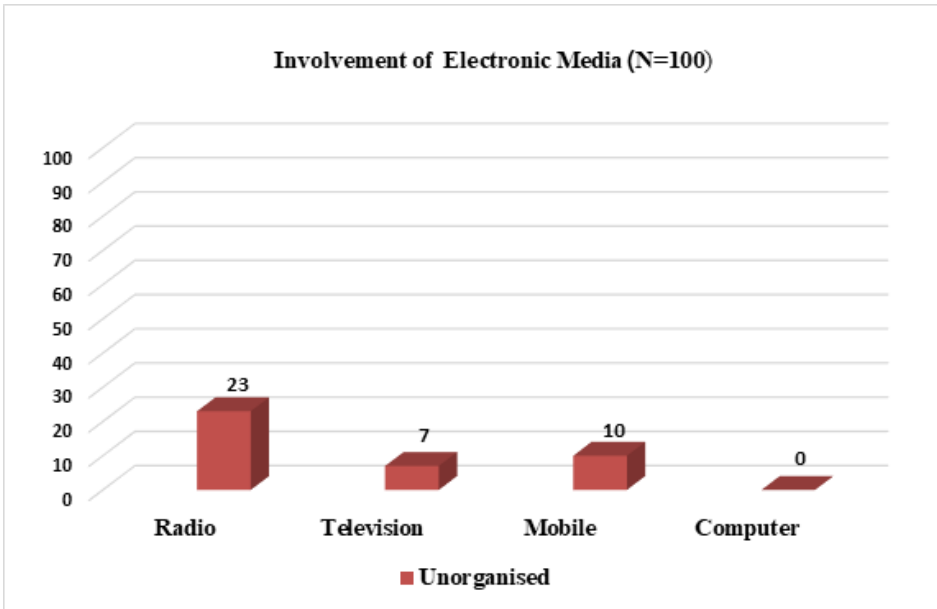
Electronic Media- Radio, Television - These are traditional electronic media. They are very popular and used but have become a little weak in front of the new age media (smart mobile, computer). Media tries to spread awareness about the Acts every day, tries to benefit people from them. New age media has brought revolution in every field. All kinds of information available on these media has made self-learning (Muslim learning) and updating by reading (Nachkanjpadh Il Tamankpadh) easy, within reach and self-reliant. Almost all the information related to the work-related rights of working women is available on the Internet. There is a need to make efforts. It is worth mentioning that people of every field can benefit by getting information from these media as per their requirement.

Participation of print media types in the field of work-related rights of women working in the unorganized sector:



Source: field study

Graph 1.1: Involvement of print media in the field of work-related rights of unorganized sector working women



Source: field study

Graph 1.1: Involvement of electronic media in the field of work-related rights of unorganized sector working women

- Print media is a written medium (which is useful for literate people) but when it is pictorial then it is able to convey its message to the illiterate as well. Colourful and pictorial presentation, such as picture messages with advertisements, is a powerful medium to convey the message to the people. Not all types of print media were found available for communication. Only when a new act was introduced and implemented and when an incident related to it occurred, the relevant facts were published in the print media, otherwise not.
- Electronic media is a powerful medium to reach people, but in words it can be placed in the category of antiquated. Television is important only because it is not only local but also region specific. These communication mediums also used to give more emphasis on some acts.
- New age media- In fact, today's consumers benefit the most from them. It would not be an exaggeration to say "the whole world in one's fist". Women in the organized sector used to read and listen about the laws to some extent using print and electronic media. When an educated woman faced a problem, she first tried to understand and solve it by reading the available information using the internet on a smartphone.

FINDINGS

Sources of knowledge on women's work rights reveals that information and awareness of their rights is essential. A powerful medium of this information is media (both print and electronic). In the field of work-related rights of working women, the participation of print media was very minimal among women in the unorganized sector through magazines (0%), newspapers (5%), hoardings (0%), posters (8%) and pamphlets (4%).

On the other hand, women in the unorganized sector were getting information from electronic media through radio (23%), television (7%), mobile phone (10%) and computer (0%). These were the right mediums to provide information to women in the unorganized sector. Illiterate and less educated women were using the media formats very little.

Use of print and electronic media, using internet or smartphones to read and understand the available information and try to solve the problem. Due to lack of knowledge and curiosity, women in the unorganized sector had limited access to these. When things came to light, it was limited to just taking life.

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WEB LINKS

1. https://hi.wikipedia.org/wiki/महिला_सशक्तीकरण
2. <https://www.worldvision.com.au/womens-empowerment>



GANDHI'S RAMRAJYA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: A REVIEW

Ameena Maryam*

Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi proposed numerous theories of reconstructing politics and governance for India, i.e. Bharat, most significant of them is Ramrajya. Although his ideas are often considered as old, yet have now become widely accepted principles. Here it is posited that his vision of Ramrajya aligns well with contemporary ideas of effective governance. Thus, it makes an imperative to trace the alignment of his ideas of Ramrajya with parameters of present concept of good governance. As such the present paper is an attempt to underline the Gandhian concept of Ramrajya in the frame of Good Governance. On the basis of examination of the issue, based on secondary sources, it can easily be inferred that Gandhi's Ramrajya aligns with good governance, especially for Indian conditions.

Keywords: Ramrajya, Good Governance, State, Citizens, Hind-Swaraj, India.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'Governance' is not new. It is as old as human civilization. The concept of "good governance" encompasses a normative framework that delineates the values guiding governance practices and the interactions among various social actors within a specific societal context. The absence of a universally accepted definition is mitigated by the identification of principles that underpin good governance across different societies. Commonly recognized principles include

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participation, adherence to the rule of law, transparency in decision-making, accountability, predictability, and effectiveness. The international donor community largely concurs that these principles are fundamental to achieving sustainable development (Bhayani: 2014, pp. 4-5). Thus it becomes essential to understand the intricacies of both the ideas of good governance and *Ramrajya*.

TENETS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The people's participation in governance, as a parameter of good governance, emphasizes the importance of equal involvement from all societal members, ensuring that everyone has a voice in the decision-making process. Furthermore, good governance necessitates the rule of law, which is upheld through an impartial and effective legal system. This principle also encompasses the safeguarding of human rights, particularly for minority groups, as well as the existence of an independent judiciary and law enforcement agencies that operate without corruption. The rule of law is contingent upon several factors, including the proper administration of justice, a robust legal framework, reliable dispute resolution mechanisms, equitable access to justice, and the independence of legal professionals such as judges and lawyers.

Further, good governance is characterized by the transparency of decision-making processes, which guarantees that relevant information is readily available and accessible to those impacted by the decisions made. Transparency, therefore, entails the unrestricted access to information. Lastly, accountability and responsibility are essential components of good governance, requiring that all participants in political and economic processes are answerable for their decisions to one another, including both institutions and civil society (Farzmand & Pinkowski: 2007, pp. 12-13).

The concept of good governance emerged mainly because practices of bad governance, characterized by corruption, unaccountable governments, irresponsiveness and lack of respect for human rights, had become increasingly dangerous, and the need to intervene in such cases had become urgent. Good governance has become an important element of the political and economic agendas, and has meanwhile been better specified along with the proliferation of good practices that take the concept into consideration.

TENETS OF RAMRAJYA

Ramarajya serves as a pivotal ideal within Gandhi's political philosophy, representing a transformative vision for Governance. The term *Ramarajya* translates to the "reign of Rama," who is revered as the seventh *avatar* of Lord Vishnu and the central figure in the *Ramayana*. However, on a metaphorical level, *Ramarajya* embodies the notions of "ideal justice," "perfect democracy," and "righteous governance." In

order to understand the ethos of Good Governance inherent in the paradigm of *Ramarajya*, it is essential to first examine the concept of the state, as indicated by the term *rajya* within *Ramarajya*.

Gandhi posits that the state functions as an institution that facilitates the relationship between the government and its citizens. It provides a framework for political unity within a community; without such a structure, disorder would prevail. The colonial experience in India underscored the importance of political unity, leading the populace to embrace nationalism as a means of collective identity. Despite this, Gandhi expressed reservations about the modern conception of the state, characterizing it as a manifestation of organized violence. He argued that while individuals possess a soul, the state operates as a soulless entity, inherently linked to violence, which is fundamental to its existence. Such assertions may lead one to infer that Gandhi harbored a fundamental opposition to the concept of the state (The Modern Review, 1935, p. 412).

Gandhi's perspective, as articulated in *Hind Swaraj*, critiques the notion of an absolute and aggressive state. He expressed profound apprehension regarding the expansion of state power, stating, "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with greatest fear." (Parel: 2011, p. 159). While he acknowledged that the state would prioritize national interests, he opposed the concept of "reason of state," which posits that state interests hold moral superiority over individual human interests. Gandhi emphasized the significance of individuals, asserting that the state alone is inadequate for fostering human development and well-being; rather, it requires a foundation of ethics and spirituality. As Anthony Parel aptly notes, "An adequate theory of the state therefore should be mindful of the contributions that ethics and spirituality make." (Srikrishna: nd, p. 137). Gandhi envisioned a state where laws are informed by moral principles, power is decentralized, individuals govern themselves, and justice prevails, which he termed *Ramarajya*. These elements underline the ethos of Good Governance.

From an early age, the concept of Ramanama profoundly influenced Gandhi. He was raised in a devout and traditional family that revered Lord Vishnu, of whom Rama is the seventh *avatar*. His mother, a deeply religious woman, significantly shaped Gandhi's spiritual outlook, leaving him with a lasting impression of her saintliness. She adhered to strict religious practices, including prayer before meals and frequent fasting. Gandhi's close relationship with his mother and her religious discipline left a lasting impact on him, fostering his devotion to Rama. To cope with childhood fears, Gandhi engaged in the practice of Ramanama. During his father's illness, he frequently listened to the Ramayana, and he and his brother recited the Rama Raksha under the guidance of a cousin. These experiences illustrate the integral role of Ramanama in Gandhi's upbringing and daily life.

An immediate inquiry arises regarding the concept of *Ramarajya*. The most comprehensive understanding can be derived from Valmiki's Ramayana. In this epic, Valmiki illustrates the societal conditions during the reign of King Rama, where widows did not mourn, and there was an absence of fear from wild animals or diseases. Under Rama's governance, the populace was free from thieves, and calamities were nonexistent; the elderly did not perform last rites for the young. The society was characterized by happiness, with individuals diligently fulfilling their responsibilities, refraining from violence, and looking up to Rama as a moral exemplar (Gandhi: 1947).

This portrayal of *Ramarajya* emphasizes a state of universal contentment and a strong sense of duty among its citizens. The principles of non-violence and truth were upheld, fostering a harmonious community. In this idealized realm, individuals aspired to emulate King Rama, who epitomized truthfulness. Valmiki's depiction of *Ramarajya* encompasses several fundamental elements: respect for women, fulfillment of basic needs, health consciousness, a commitment to one's dharma, and the cultivation of virtue. In this vision, King Rama stands as a paragon of virtue and morality, inspiring all to embrace ethical conduct and truthfulness.

Rama holds a significant place within Hinduism, and Gandhi identified himself as a *sanatani* Hindu. This raises the question of whether *Ramarajya* signifies a Hindu state. Gandhi clarified that by *Ramarajya*, he did not intend to imply a Hindu Raj; rather, he referred to it as Divine Raj, or the kingdom of God. Gandhi advocated for secularism and opposed the notion of a state founded on a specific religion. He asserted that "the state should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance." (Young India: 1929, p. 305). Gandhi was aware of the potential misinterpretation of the term *Ramarajya*, which led him to use alternative terms when addressing different religious audiences. To Muslims, he referred to it as "Khudai Raj," and to Christians, he described it as "the kingdom of God." In an effort to garner support from Muslims, he not only translated *Ramarajya* into "Khudai Raj" but also stated that "the first Caliphs may be said to have established *Ramarajya*." Furthermore, he expressed that "for me, Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity." (Nandi: 2010, p. 62). According to Gandhi, *Ramarajya* embodies a state characterized by morality and righteousness, rather than a theocratic state. Ashis Nandy, in his article "Final Encounter: The Politics of the Assassination of Gandhi," notes that Gandhi experienced profound distress in his final days, particularly concerning the partition of India. Nandy recounts Gandhi's declaration: "I can never be willing party to the vivisection. I would employ non-violent means to prevent it.... My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines. To assent to such doctrine is for me denial of God.... if the Congress wishes to accept partition; it will be over my dead body." (Parel: 2013, p. 64)

To comprehend Gandhi's portrayal of Rama, it is essential to first grasp his interpretation of religion. Gandhi perceives religion as that which transcends the confines of Hinduism, fundamentally transforming one's essence, forging an unbreakable connection to inner truth, and perpetually purifying the individual. A. J. Parel describes Gandhi's conception of religion as one that surpasses all historical faiths, emphasizing a stance that opposes sectarianism. In his work *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi asserts the existence of a universal religion that underpins all others, proclaiming that "there is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness" (Ibid.). For Gandhi, religion is inextricably linked to morality; he posits that the loss of a moral foundation results in the cessation of religiousness. When discussing Rama, Gandhi alludes to ideals of truth and justice rather than a particular deity. His vision of Rama extends beyond Hinduism, embodying a universal principle of truth, which he equates with God. In his autobiography, he articulates his worship of God as truth.

Gandhi's revered Rama epitomizes truthfulness. He characterizes Rama as the embodiment of virtue, while the *Ramayana* serves as a narrative of unwavering commitment to one's promises. Gandhi notes that the concept of *Ramarajya* is derived from the *Ramayana*'s portrayal of Rama's triumph, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, represented by Ravana. From the *Ramayana*, Gandhi discerned that truth constitutes the bedrock of all virtues and merits.

Gandhi sought to harness the potent symbolism of Rama and *Ramarajya* to represent ideals of truth and justice. Parel articulates that the figure of Rama transcends historical context, embodying an imagined, spiritual essence that symbolizes perfection. Gandhi himself remarked that the name of Rama ignites a deeper passion within him than the abstract concept of "God" (Balram: 1989, p. 73). To fully grasp the significance of *Ramarajya*, it is essential to explore the influence of Indian mythology. S. Balaram, asserts that Gandhi employed numerous symbols deeply rooted in mythological narratives. He emphasizes that mythology serves as a vital cultural heritage, encapsulating the collective dreams, aspirations, and visions of a community (Young India: op. cit).

The impact of mythology on individuals is profound, fostering discipline, morality, and virtue among both the educated and uneducated, regardless of their geographical origins. Recognizing the pivotal role of mythology, Gandhi likely embraced the concept of *Ramarajya* for its mythological resonance. In a diverse and multicultural India, particularly prior to independence, Gandhi faced the formidable task of unifying the nation. Thus, he utilized mythological references as a means to connect people. Whether or not *Ramarajya*, the realm of Rama, ever existed in reality, Gandhi regarded it as a representation of "true democracy." He stated in "Young India" that the ancient ideal of *Ramarajya* embodies genuine democratic principles, asserting that it signifies the sovereignty of the people

grounded in moral authority. *Ramarajya* necessitates that individuals be guided by virtuous principles. By presenting *Ramarajya* as his aspirational goal, Gandhi aimed to inspire individuals to cultivate the virtues associated with the image of Rama within themselves.

RAMRAJYA VIS-À-VIS GOOD GOVERNANCE

Gandhi recognized the intrinsic worth of the individual and opposed all forms of social discrimination. Throughout his life, he actively campaigned against societal injustices such as untouchability and Brahmanism. His vision of *Ramarajya* was rooted in the pursuit of equal rights for all individuals, encapsulated in his assertion that “the *Ramarajya* of my dream ensures equal rights alike of prince and pauper” (Gandhi: 1947, p. 116). Gandhi was a politically astute leader who understood that Rama, revered by devotees across all castes, including the so-called ‘untouchables,’ could serve as a powerful symbol of inclusivity. His primary objective was to harness the concept of *Ramanama* to foster social character and cohesion, thereby creating a society grounded in moral authority, which he envisioned as a kingdom of righteousness. This brings to the fore the basic tenets of Good Governance. Importantly, the idea of *Ramarajya* does not advocate for a monarchy; instead, it promotes the principle of self-governance. Gandhi articulated that “my conception of *Ramarajya* excludes the replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country governed by its own national army cannot achieve moral freedom, and thus, its weakest members can never attain their fullest moral potential.” (Hindi Navjeevan: 1930).

Gandhi’s vision of *Ramarajya* was fundamentally secular rather than religious. By associating *Ramarajya* with various concepts, Gandhi aimed to make it resonate with a diverse audience. He recognized the heterogeneous nature of India, which is characterized by inter-caste and inter-religious tensions. Gandhi posited that the resolution of these issues could be achieved through the practice of morality and virtuous living. To address the inter-caste challenges within Hinduism, he introduced the idea of *Ramarajya*, encouraging individuals to draw inspiration from the virtues exemplified by Rama. Gandhi asserted that “Truth is God,” suggesting that all religions ultimately seek to worship this universal truth, with the divergence lying in the methods employed. To engage with different religious communities, he employed various terms to describe *Ramarajya*; for instance, he referred to it as “*Khudai Raj*” for Muslims, “Kingdom of God” for Christians, and “*Dharmarajya*” for a broader audience. He stated, “if the word *Ramarajya* offends anyone, then I shall call it ‘*Dharmarajya*’” (Nandi: 2010 a, p. 57). Gandhi’s interpretation of Hinduism diverges significantly from traditional views, as he sought to reshape it through processes of “de-Brahminization” and “de-intellectualization.” According to Ashis Nandy, Gandhi perceived Hinduism

as a lifestyle and an adaptable system of universal ethics capable of integrating new ideas continuously (Parekh: 1989, p. 112).

Ramarajya, in Gandhi's framework, encompasses independence across political, economic, and moral dimensions. Parel notes that the historical alienation of the soul from the modern state can be traced back to Machiavelli. In the Hobbesian state, individuals experienced a disconnection from their essence. Bhikhu Parekh, in his analysis of Gandhi's political philosophy, argues that the state and human nature became misaligned, with one being devoid of soul and the other imbued with it. In Gandhi's philosophy, the means are as crucial as the ends; he contended that the nature of the means will ultimately shape the ends. The outcomes of the state are intrinsically linked to the means employed by its citizens. Parekh advocates for humans to seek "an alternative way of structuring their organized life." (Parekh: 2001, p. 81). Further Parekh says that 'the vital task today was to explore alternatives not just to the contemporary forms of government but to the very institution of the state.' (Parel: 2013, p. 63).

Gandhi posits that governance should be guided by moral principles, or Dharma. Parel asserts that for a cooperative relationship to thrive between the state and civil society, the general populace must attain a sufficient level of both material and moral advancement. He further argues that a more dynamic civil society correlates with a reduction in state violence. B.N. Srikrishna highlights the crucial roles of both the state and its citizens in actualizing the vision of Ramarajya, describing it as a realm characterized by perfect harmony among citizens, widespread happiness, and economic contributions through honest labor, with the state providing support to the needy and impoverished – conditions reminiscent of King Rama's reign (Srikrishna: op. cit.)

Gandhi emphasizes the necessity of a proper equilibrium between civil society and the state to achieve a just governance, or *su-rajya*. He firmly believes that Ramarajya can be realized by fostering civic virtues among citizens, asserting that both the state and civil society share a collective responsibility in creating an ideal society. It is essential for citizens to develop the requisite virtues to facilitate this ideal.

CONCLUSION

The concept of good governance in India can be traced back to the very foundations of Indian civilization. Historically, rulers were expected to adhere to Dharma, commonly referred to as Raj Dharma, which fundamentally entailed the responsibility of ensuring effective governance for their subjects. This principle underscores that those engaged in governance must uphold righteousness and deliver justice to the populace, establishing a vital connection to social welfare and inclusive development.

In simple terms, the entire concept of Ramarajya developed by Gandhi is centered on Good Governance. Gandhi envisioned a free India characterized by governance that prioritizes the needs of the people, encapsulated in his idea of 'Ramrajya.' Gandhi's interpretation of 'Ramrajya' represented his aspiration for good governance in India, reflecting a commitment to a just and equitable society.

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ILLEGAL MIGRANTS INTO MANIPUR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONCERNS

Shyam Kumar* and Tayenjam Priyokumar Singh**

Abstract

Manipur, a small north eastern state of India, has long been a subject of concern regarding the influx of illegal migrants into its borders. The presence of a large population of undocumented individuals or illegal migrants from neighbouring countries has contributed to an increase in crime rates and social tensions, posing a threat to the overall stability and harmony of the region. This paper based on secondary sources, critically analyses the multifaceted impacts of this phenomenon on the region, encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

Keywords: Illegal Migrants, National security, Manipur, Poppy Cultivation, Conflict.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary geopolitics, we need to move beyond the traditional security threats, which centre on the state, to the non-traditional security threats. In the post-Cold War era, there were a lot of security threats that were transboundary and transnational in nature. The issues and challenges related to illegal migrants and the national security threats are classic examples of non-traditional security threats in the present global politics. We have to securitize this issue in order to resolve the conflict in the region. In this context, the ongoing conflict in Manipur triggers policymakers to look beyond the state-centric security approach and localized

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nature of the conflict to analyse or rather merely analyse the conflict from a myopic perspective of ethnic conflict between the Meitei and the Kuki communities in the state of Manipur.

Situated in the north eastern region of India, the state of Manipur is a geographically diverse and culturally rich territory that boasts a unique blend of natural wonders and human ingenuity. Manipur is bordered by the Indian states of Nagaland to the north, Mizoram to the south, and Assam to the west, as well as Myanmar to the east. The total geographical area of the state is 22,327 square kilometers, with a significant portion of the land being occupied by hilly terrain surrounding a small, oval-shaped central valley (Singh, 2016). The state's unique geographical position, nestled between the hills and valleys, has shaped its economic and social development over time. While the state is endowed with an abundance of natural resources and a strategic location for trade with neighboring ASEAN countries, it has also faced significant challenges in terms of illegal migrants, poppy cultivation, socio-political conflicts, and so on.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The influx of illegal migrants into the state of Manipur has had a profound and multifaceted impact on its economy. Situated in the northeastern region of India, Manipur shares a porous border with Myanmar, making it susceptible to illegal immigration. While the presence of migrants introduces both challenges and opportunities, their unauthorized status complicates the socio-economic dynamics of the region.

One of the most significant impacts of illegal migration is on the labour market. The influx of a large, unregulated workforce creates downward pressure on wages, particularly in low-skilled sectors. Illegal migrants even work on lower wages and in more unconducive conditions than local workers demand. Even employers prefer such migrant labourers to minimize labour expenditures. This leads to the displacement of local workers, particularly those in vulnerable employment situations.

However, the impact on the labour market is not entirely negative. Illegal migrants also contribute to the economy by meeting the labour shortages in certain sectors, such as agriculture and construction. Their presence can stimulate economic activity by increasing demand for goods and services. Moreover, some migrants possess skills and entrepreneurial spirit that might be contributed to the local economy in positive ways.

The presence of a significant illegal migrant population places a strain on public services, such as healthcare, education, and housing. These services are often already stretched thin in Manipur, and the influx of migrants further exacerbates

the situation. Illegal migrants are often reluctant to access public services due to fear of detection and deportation, which can lead to public health risks and other social problems.

The cost of providing public services to illegal migrants is a contentious issue. While some argue that it is a humanitarian obligation, others contend that it places an unfair burden on taxpayers. The lack of accurate data on the size and characteristics of the illegal migrant population makes it difficult to assess the true cost of providing these services. The influx of illegal migrants can also have significant social and cultural impacts. While some argue that it enriches the social fabric of Manipur, others express concerns about the erosion of local culture and identity. The presence of a large migrant population can lead to tensions between communities, particularly if there are perceived disparities in access to resources and opportunities.

THORNS OF ILLEGALITY: POPPY CULTIVATION IN MANIPUR

Nestled in the heart of Northeast India, Manipur grapples with the intricate challenges posed by illegal poppy cultivation. This illicit activity, driven by a complex web of socio-economic factors, casts a long shadow over the state, impacting its security, health, and development trajectory. It delves into the multifaceted issue of illegal poppy cultivation in Manipur, examining its root causes, consequences, and potential solutions.

Another issue related to the presence of illegal migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh is the cultivation of poppy, which is used for the production of opium and other illicit drugs. Manipur's remote border regions have become a hub for the cultivation of poppy, with the involvement of both local and migrant communities. The consequences of illegal poppy cultivation in Manipur are far-reaching and devastating:

- **Drug Abuse and Addiction:** The easy availability of opium and heroin, derived from poppy, fuels drug abuse and addiction, particularly among the youth, leading to severe health and social problems (Peri, 2018).
- **Crime and Insurgency:** The illicit drug trade fosters criminal networks and provides funding for insurgent groups operating in the region, undermining law and order and jeopardizing security (Laithangbam, 2017).
- **Environmental Degradation:** Poppy cultivation often leads to deforestation, soil erosion, and water contamination due to the use of harmful chemicals and unsustainable farming practices.
- **Health Risks:** The processing of opium involves hazardous chemicals, posing health risks to those involved in the trade and contaminating the environment.

Illegal poppy cultivation in Manipur poses a significant threat to the state's well-being, hindering its development and jeopardizing the future of its people. Addressing this complex issue requires a concerted effort from the state government, law enforcement authorities, civil society organisations, and local communities. By tackling the root causes, strengthening law enforcement, providing alternative livelihoods, and fostering community engagement, Manipur can hope to eradicate the thorns of illegal poppy cultivation and pave the way for a healthier, safer, and more prosperous future.

ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Manipur, a small state in northeastern India, has long been a region plagued by ethnic tensions and conflict. The region is home to numerous ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture, language, and political aspirations, leading to a complex and volatile social landscape (Singh, 2018). The root causes of the ethnic conflict in Manipur are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the region's history. The unequal distribution of resources and power among the different ethnic groups, coupled with the desire for greater political representation and autonomy, have been significant factors fueling the tensions in the region (Mukherjee, 2017). Additionally, the presence of various insurgent groups, each championing the cause of a particular ethnic community, has further exacerbated the conflict, leading to a cycle of violence and instability.

However, the ongoing conflict in the state revolves around the issue of illegal migration in Manipur, primarily involving concerns about migrants from Myanmar, Bangladesh, and neighboring regions, has intensified ethnic tensions, particularly between the Meitei and Kuki communities. These dynamics are fuelled by historical migration patterns, porous borders, and ongoing humanitarian crises, especially from Myanmar. The influx of people into Manipur is a point of contention because of competition over resources, land, and political power. It also intersects with broader national concerns about illegal migration, especially in the northeast.

Resolving the Kuki-Meitei conflict in Manipur is crucial for maintaining national security and promoting sustainable development in the region. Reducing conflicts in Manipur is a complex and challenging endeavour that demands a comprehensive, inclusive, and sustained approach. By addressing the root causes of tension, promoting dialogue and reconciliation, strengthening the rule of law, and fostering socio-economic development, there is hope for a more peaceful and prosperous future for all communities in Manipur.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The influx of illegal migrants has also raised environmental concerns in Manipur. These individuals often settle in environmentally sensitive areas, leading to the

depletion of natural resources, the destruction of fragile ecosystems, and the generation of additional waste and pollution. The strain on the region's already limited resources can have far-reaching consequences, jeopardizing the long-term sustainability and ecological balance of Manipur.

Manipur, a state renowned for its natural beauty and biodiversity, faces a growing environmental crisis exacerbated by the influx of illegal migrants. While migration itself is a complex issue with various driving forces, the unregulated nature of illegal migration places a particularly heavy burden on the state's fragile ecosystem. This essay will explore the multifaceted ways in which illegal migration contributes to environmental degradation in Manipur.

The arrival of a large, undocumented population places immense pressure on Manipur's limited land and natural resources (Sophia & Devi, 2020). Illegal migrants often resort to clearing forests for agriculture and settlements, leading to deforestation and habitat loss for Manipur's diverse flora and fauna. This is particularly concerning given the state's rich biodiversity and the presence of several endangered species. The increased demand for water for domestic and agricultural purposes by a growing population strains Manipur's already limited water resources, leading to water scarcity and conflicts over water usage (Pathak & Boro, 2012). The methods employed by some illegal migrants to secure livelihoods can have detrimental effects on Manipur's agricultural practices and biodiversity. Driven by the need for immediate sustenance, some illegal migrants may resort to unsustainable farming practices, such as slash-and-burn agriculture, leading to soil erosion and degradation (Sophia & Devi, 2020).

The environmental strain caused by illegal migration compounds the existing environmental challenges faced by Manipur, such as climate change. The degradation of forests and natural resources reduces Manipur's resilience to climate change impacts, such as increased flooding and droughts. Environmental degradation directly impacts the livelihoods of local communities that depend on natural resources for agriculture, fishing, and forestry. The environmental degradation in Manipur due to illegal migration is a complex issue with far-reaching consequences. Addressing this issues and challenge requires a concerted effort from the government, local communities, and civil society organizations to promote sustainable practices, protect natural resources, and promote a healthy environment for current and future generations.

POLITICAL IMPACTS

While the social, economic, and environmental impacts of illegal migration in Manipur are significant, it is also crucial to consider the political implications of this issue. The influx of illegal migrants can lead to changes in the demographic

composition of the region, potentially altering the political landscape and power dynamics (Sophia & Devi, 2020).

The presence of a large population of non-native residents can create tensions and resentment among the local Manipuri population, who may feel that their political representation and influence are being diluted. This can lead to the rise of anti-nationalist and xenophobic sentiments, as well as the empowerment of political parties and movements that capitalize on these fears (Mukherjee, 2017; Singha, 2013)

Additionally, the presence of illegal migrants can make it more challenging for the government to maintain effective control and governance over the region. The need to address the issue of illegal migration can divert resources and attention away from other pressing political and developmental concerns, potentially exacerbating existing challenges and conflicts. The presence of illegal migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh in Manipur has been a significant concern for the state. These individuals often flee political persecution, conflict, and economic hardship in their home country, seeking refuge and opportunities in Manipur.

The influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar has also contributed to the ongoing ethnic tensions and conflicts between the Kuki and Meitei communities in Manipur. The Kuki community, who are more closely related to the migrants from Myanmar, has been perceived as being favoured or supported by the influx of these individuals, leading to resentment and conflict with the Meitei community, who are the dominant ethnic group in the state.

SECURITY CONCERNS AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

The inflow of illegal migrants has significantly altered the demographic landscape of Assam, leading to shifts in the state's ethnic composition and creating tensions between the local population and the migrant communities (Mitra & Murayama, 2009). The presence of a large population of illegal migrants has also raised security concerns, particularly regarding issues such as human trafficking, cross-border criminal activities, and the potential for radicalization. These security challenges have placed additional burdens on the state's law enforcement agencies and have necessitated the implementation of stringent border control measures.

As highlighted in most of the case studies on migration patterns in conflict-affected regions, the discrimination and lack of access to basic services experienced by these migrant communities can further exacerbate these security concerns. The influx of illegal migrants into Manipur has undoubtedly had far-reaching consequences, affecting the state's demographics, economy, and security. Addressing these complex issues will require a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration between the state government, civil society, and the affected communities. Effective

policy interventions, improved data collection, and a focus on social integration will be crucial in mitigating the impacts of this phenomenon and ensuring the sustainable development of the region.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

The government of Manipur has implemented various policies and initiatives to address the issue of illegal migration. These include strengthening border security, conducting identification drives, and providing incentives for voluntary repatriation. However, the effectiveness of these measures is often hampered by the porous nature of the border and the lack of resources.

The Indian government has also taken steps to address the underlying reasons of illegal migration, such as poverty and a lack of economic prospects in adjacent nations. This includes promoting cross-border trade and investment and providing humanitarian assistance to neighboring countries. Minimizing illegal migration to Manipur requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses both the push and pull factors driving migration while also strengthening border security and fostering regional cooperation. Here are some key strategies:

Strengthening Border Security

- Investing in advanced surveillance technologies, such as drones, sensors, and night vision equipment, can help monitor the porous border with Myanmar more effectively.
- Deploying additional border patrol personnel and establishing more checkpoints along known migration routes can deter illegal crossings.
- Strengthening intelligence gathering and sharing mechanisms with neighboring countries can help identify and apprehend traffickers and smugglers facilitating illegal migration.

Addressing Push Factors

- Supporting economic development initiatives, creating employment opportunities, and improving living conditions in neighboring countries can reduce the incentive for people to migrate illegally.
- Providing humanitarian assistance and support to countries facing conflict, persecution, or natural disasters can help stabilize populations and prevent displacement.

Addressing Pull Factors

- Implementing stricter employment verification procedures and penalizing employers who hire undocumented workers can discourage illegal migration for work.
- While ensuring basic humanitarian assistance for all, linking access to non-essential public services and benefits to legal residency can reduce the pull factors for illegal migrants.

Fostering Regional Cooperation

- Establishing bilateral agreements with neighboring countries on border management, repatriation of illegal migrants, and combating human trafficking can foster a coordinated response.
- Conducting joint border patrols with neighboring countries can enhance security and deter illegal crossings.

Promoting Legal Migration Channels

- Creating more legal avenues for migration, such as expanding work visa programs for sectors facing labor shortages, can provide a controlled and regulated alternative to illegal migration.
- Streamlining the process for refugee resettlement and providing support for integration can offer a safe and legal pathway for those fleeing persecution.

Raising Awareness

- Launching public awareness campaigns to educate potential migrants about the risks of illegal migration and the benefits of legal pathways can discourage risky journeys.
- Engaging with local communities and civil society organizations to raise awareness about the issue and encourage reporting of suspected illegal migration activities.

Addressing illegal migration from our neighbouring nations is a complicated and continuous task that needs a long-term and comprehensive approach. By implementing these strategies, Manipur can work towards minimizing illegal migration while upholding humanitarian principles and fostering regional stability.

CONCLUSION

The impact of illegal migrants on the economy of Manipur is complex and multifaceted. The presence of a large undocumented population has contributed to social tensions, increased crime rates, and challenges in the provision of essential

services (Mallick et al., 2023; Gheorghiu, 2007). Economically, illegal migrants have often taken up jobs in the informal sector, leading to unfair labor practices and the undercutting of local wages. Moreover, the strain on the region's limited resources and infrastructure has raised environmental concerns, with the depletion of natural resources and the destruction of fragile ecosystems. Addressing these challenges and issues require a comprehensive approach that balances the need for national security, and the socio-political and economic realities of the region.

It is crucial to develop policies that promote sustainable development, reduce poverty and inequality, and foster regional cooperation to address the root causes of illegal migration. Additionally, accurate data collection and analysis are essential for informed policymaking and effective resource allocation. Ultimately, finding a balanced and humane approach to this complex issue is crucial for the long-term economic and social well-being of Manipur.

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INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS PREDICTING WORK ALIENATION AMONG WOMEN TEACHERS IN BIHAR

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Abstract

Recognizing the significant impact teachers have on educational outcomes, it is important to understand the factors that lead to their disengagement. Therefore, the study aims to examine the impact of organizational injustice and formalization on the feeling of alienation among female teachers in Bihar. Work alienation, a pervasive phenomenon with significant financial and psychological implications for employers and employees, is a crucial study area. complying with the quantitative method, the study adopted a structured questionnaire to collect the data from the female educators. A total of 243 responses were analysed in SPSS. Correlational and multiple regression analyses confirm that organizational injustice and formalization are strong predictors of work alienation, with organizational injustice exerting the greatest impact. This study draws on John Stacey Adams' equity theory, which explains how perceived inequity in organizational settings can lead to psychological withdrawal and increased work alienation. The study contributes to the literature on workplace alienation and extends theoretical implications for policymakers and educational institutions to foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Future research should explore intervention strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of these factors on teacher engagement and retention.

Keywords: Organizational Injustice, Formalization, Work Alienation, Female, Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

As a sociologist, Karl Marx analyzed society through the lens of class relations, social structures, and the economic systems that shape human behavior and interaction. One of his significant sociological contributions is his theory of alienation. (Stokols, 1975). The concept refers to the feeling of disconnection, dissatisfaction, and disillusionment that employees may experience in their work environments. (Nair & Vohra, 2012). The idea has evolved significantly from the Industrial Revolution to contemporary times, influenced by changes in economic systems, technological advancements, and sociocultural dynamics. Work alienation continues to be a pressing concern within contemporary workplaces, as numerous employees report elevated levels of dissatisfaction and burnout (İnandi & Büyüközkan, 2022). Additionally, the growing awareness and focus on well-being and mental health in the workplace has increased attention on how work alienation can impact employees' overall psychological and emotional well-being (Ifeagwazi et al., 2015). Teachers in schools play a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape as they instil values, empathy, and a sense of equality and respect in students through direct engagement (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative to address feelings of disengagement or disconnection among teachers in schools in Bihar. The feeling of alienation significantly increased due to structural elements such as centralization and formalization, the nature of work, work relationships, and justice perception (Nair & Vohra, 2010). Moreover, these contribute to a sense of disconnection from one's work, colleagues, and organizational goals, providing essential insights into the functioning of individuals and organizations. Schmitt & Dörfel (1999) studied the effect of injustice perception on job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being, where procedural injustice was found to be negatively correlated with job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being. A formalised structure mixed with a complex review system can severely impact employees, making them alienated at work (Senthil Ganesh & Joseph, 2011). Combined, these could contribute to feelings of disconnection and frustration.

Work alienation is a concept that has been central to the study of occupational psychology and employee well-being for several decades now (Coburn, 1979). However, its application in the context of education and gender, especially among the women teachers in Bihar, is yet to be satisfactorily explored. Undoubtedly, studies conducted on teachers will ultimately help to improve the teaching-learning process. Research has shown that a healthy mind delivers impactful lessons in both academic and social learning. This is why educational institutions cannot afford to have their employees feel alienated. Therefore, this paper examines the root causes of work alienation, enabling a deeper understanding of its impact. The various structural and gender-based challenges encountered in workplaces across Bihar lead to significant psychological strain among employees (Sinha & Kumar, 2025).

Additionally, women teachers are often expected and even pressured (overtly and covertly) to balance professional responsibilities with traditional household roles, leading to physical, emotional, and even social exhaustion (Lall, 2024). Therefore, by shedding light on the experiences of women teachers in this specific socio-cultural and economic context, this study has the potential to influence policy changes that could improve teacher morale and overall educational quality in Bihar. Understanding alienation among women teachers could lead to strategies for greater autonomy, better working conditions, and a more inclusive and supportive, sustainable educational environment. In doing so, this research will contribute to the field of education and support women's overall empowerment in one of India's most crucial sectors for social development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Equity Theory

Equity theory (Adams, 1963) is a perspective rooted in social psychology and organizational behavior that provides insights into the intricacies of social relationships and interactions within an organization. The overall perception of what is fair in the workplace influences employees' level of engagement, motivation, and psychological well-being (Colquitt & Chertkoff, 2002; Abbas & Wu, 2018). On one hand, perceived inequities within interpersonal and organizational relationships can lead to psychological withdrawal (Taris et al., 2004). Conversely, such experiences may also undermine emotional engagement and overall well-being. Individuals assess their efforts to their compensation. This evaluation influences their sense of equity or inequity, depending on whether they perceive the rewards they receive as fair and justified relative to their efforts (Lawler, 1968). Consistent with equity theory (Ambrose et al., 2002; O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019), workplace injustice is perceived as a violation of fairness or integrity, which may result in feelings of organizational disidentification and work alienation (Jahanzeb et al., 2020; Sharma, 2018). Conversely, securing procedural, interpersonal, and distributive justice could contribute to employees' motivation and productivity. (Barclay, 2002) demonstrated that adopting rigid procedures for organizational decision-making unintentionally increases employee entitlement and reduces managers' ability to act fairly, which may lower perceptions of fairness. Further, fairness perception is crucial in shaping employee attitudes, behaviors, and engagement. Hence, equity theory suggests a probable linkage between formalization and alienation. Therefore, from an equity perspective, a robust explanatory framework in which rigid, formalized structures and perceived injustice diminish the balance of perceived fairness ultimately fosters feelings of alienation among employees.

ORGANISATIONAL INJUSTICE AND WORK ALIENATION

When employees perceive fairness in decision-making, reward distribution, and interpersonal treatment, they are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors, such as increased commitment, higher job satisfaction, and greater engagement (Pan et al., 2018) organizational justice is thought to be a universal predictor of employee and organizational outcomes. The current set of two studies examined the effects of organizational justice (OJ). Conversely, when justice perceptions are negative — stemming from unfair treatment, biased processes, or inequitable outcomes — employees are more prone to disengagement, reduced productivity, and counterproductive behaviors (Aisha et al., 2024). There are various forms of injustice, including distributive, interactional, procedural, and informational (Colquitt, 2001). The perception of interactional and procedural injustices has the strongest association with adverse workplace outcomes, such as reduced job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and increased work alienation among teachers (Loerbroks et al., 2014). Therefore, this paper addresses the dimensions of organizational injustice. Interactional justice pertains to how employees are treated on an interpersonal level, including respect, dignity, and trust, especially by their supervisors and colleagues. Meanwhile, procedural justice refers to the fairness of the processes used to make decisions. Moreover, various studies have concluded that these two factors are not only related but also reliable means of understanding employee attitudes within the organization (interactional and procedural) (Damar & ÇeliK, 2017; Srivastava, 2017). As noted by Ceylan & Sulu (2011), feelings of alienation arise when unfairness prevails in the organization. A sense of detachment arises when there is no control over the decision-making process and when there is unjust treatment in the workplace (Sookoo, 2014). Ghasemi & Herman (2024) factors contributing to it in educational settings and teachers have not been adequately addressed. With participants of secondary school teachers working in public schools (270 underline the serious consequences of poor organizational justice, including perceived unfairness in decision-making, resource allocation, and interpersonal interactions. Workers tend to show greater commitment to the organization when perceptions of procedural and interactional justice are high; they feel valued, respected, and fairly treated in decision-making processes and workplace interactions. A study focusing on nursing staff found that high levels of perceived organizational injustice were positively correlated with increased feelings of workplace alienation, highlighting the detrimental impact of unfair practices on employees' psychological well-being and, by extension, their potential and capacity to be engaged and productive (Mohamed, 2022)healthcare organizations are still fighting to retain nursing staff by reducing intense workload and sustaining workplace justice in order to avoid nursing staff burnout, turnover, and alienation. Aim: This research aimed to identify the influence of perceived

organizational injustice on workplace alienation among nursing staff during COVID-19. Design: A descriptive, correlational research design was utilized to achieve the aim of the study. Settings: It was conducted in intensive care units (ICUs). Furthermore, prolonged exposure to an unjust work environment can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout, diminishing employees' well-being and impairing their affective organizational commitment, reducing their emotional attachment and willingness to contribute positively to the organization (Chênevert et al., 2013). Given these findings, we can conclude that organizational injustice exacerbates feelings of alienation at work.

H1: Organizational injustice is positively related to work alienation

FORMALIZATION AND WORK ALIENATION

Marx observed and predicted that alienation results from the capitalist economic society, as workers experience a lack of freedom in the workplace. Blauner (1964) also highlighted that alienation could be generated by performing repetitive, routine tasks without having control over them. However, organizations inevitably develop more complex and formalized structures as they grow to maintain standardization and control over procedures and operations (Hage & Aiken, 1967; Hales, 1999). Researchers claimed that the subdimensions of formalization (rules observation, and job codification) are significantly positively linked with intense feelings of estrangement (Aiken & Hage, 1966). Subsequent literature has established that formalization driven by organizational hierarchy leads to work alienation (Sarros et al., 2002) formalization dimensions. However, the existing literature establishes a direct causation between the two- that formalization of corporate structure is indirectly linked to increasing worker alienation by affecting other variables- perceived performance review system complexity, abusive leadership, and role stress (Ramaswami et al., 1993; Aryee et al., 2008; Senthil Ganesh & Joseph, 2011). Formalization has been directly linked to constrained employee expression, strict hierarchies, and a generally inflexible approach. Formalization, most notably, creates a structure of extreme limits, which leads to an adverse workplace for employees, who are discouraged by the disingenuity of the formal structure (Mattes, 2014; Lauritzen, 2020). An apt example to explain this is bureaucracy, which is often the poster child of formalization in practice (Torsteinsen, 2012). Previous research indicates that workplace outcomes can be significantly impacted by organizational structure. When the organizational structure is less centralized and formalized, interpersonal relationships among its members tend to flourish (Chen & Huang, 2007). Complex design, multiple variables, the specificity and rigidity of rules and processes, uniformity, and, ultimately, the goal of control within the structure—these create highly specific conditions for the employees of such structures (Aiken & Hage, 1966; Hetherington, 1990; Hetherington, 1991). These

conditions may include feelings of estrangement at the workplace. Individuals feel alienated by delayed information about decision-making at managerial and executive levels (Sarros et al., 2002; formalization dimensions Ramaswami et al., 1993). This alienation creates a minimally effective workforce, and an alienated workforce is a sustainability nightmare. Therefore, an uncaring or over-exhausted workforce needs to be motivated to maximize both the company’s and employees’ potential (Uglanova & Dettmers, 2018; Kim et al., 2020). Hence, in line with the above discussion, it may be suggested that worker alienation could be generated by formalization.

H2: Formalization is positively related to work alienation

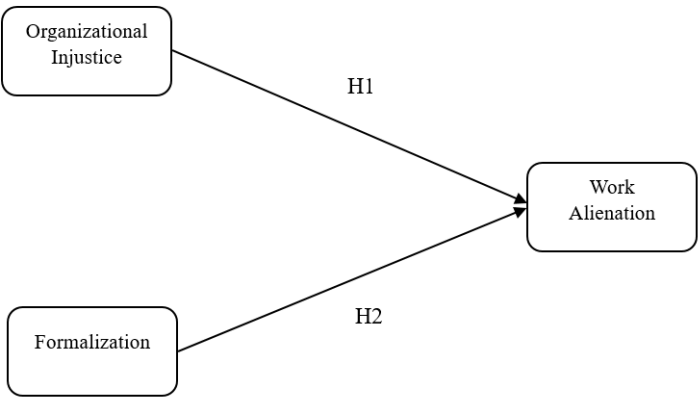


Fig 1: Hypothesized Conceptual Model (based on the above literature review)

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and procedure

The study focuses on women working as teachers in the Patna district of Bihar. 300 structured questionnaires were distributed in October 2024 through on-site visits to multiple schools, and 259 responses (response rate = 86.33%) were received. After cleaning the dataset, 243 responses (response rate = 93.82%) were deemed suitable for analysis. The participants include both government and private school teachers, as they encounter similar challenges in their daily lives. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who had worked for at least one year, ensuring that respondents had sufficient exposure to the school environment. The questionnaire contains two sections: demographic details are collected in section one, and the other section includes questions on constructs of organizational injustice, formalization, and work alienation. The demographic

distribution of participants is detailed in Table 1. However, these demographic variables were considered as control variables in the paper.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Samples

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age		
18-30	97	39.91 %
31-40	79	32.51 %
41-50	41	16.87 %
Above 50	26	10.69 %
Marital Status		
Married	151	62.51%
Unmarried	92	37.86%
Stages		
Primary	99	40.74%
Secondary	56	23.04%
Higher	88	36.21%
Work Experience		
1-5	109	44.85 %
6-10	98	40.32 %
10-15	23	9.46%
Above 15	13	5.34%

Source: Author’s own (extracted from the questionnaire)

MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Injustice Perception: The perception of injustice among women teachers has been measured through a scale named Colquitt (2001), measured on 5 Likert scales from “agree” to “disagree”. For the purposes of this study, the scoring of Colquitt’s original organizational justice scale was reversed, so that higher values indicated increased perceptions of organizational injustice rather than justice. The scale comprises 11 questions related to procedural and interpersonal issues.

Formalization: This particular construct is measured using a scale named Aiken & Hage (1966), measured on a four-point scale ranging from “definitely true” to “definitely false”. A total of 7 items were present in the scale.

Work Alienation: The feeling of alienation is measured via a scale developed by Nair & Vohra (2009)in the interest of facilitating further research in this area and

aiding the detection and assessment of worker alienation, providing cues to which management should pay attention for any consequent correction, if needed. In Study 1, we developed an initial scale in order to assess the construct and administered it to 99 management executives in India. Exploratory factor analysis led to a revised unidimensional scale, which was then administered to a second sample. In Study 2 (N = 371. A total of 8 items were identified that measure work alienation (e.g. “I enjoy my work). The constructs were evaluated with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

Furthermore, Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess the questionnaires’ reliability. Below are the values for each construct. The reliability test results supported the internal consistency of the measurement tools, as all values are above .80 (Taber, 2018).

Table 2: Reliability test statistics

<i>All Variables</i>	<i>Reliability test (α)</i>	<i>Number of items</i>
Justice Perception	0.936	11
Formalization	0.911	7
Work Alienation	0.915	8

DATA ANALYSIS

The study is based on primary data and employs a quantitative cross-sectional research design. It was analyzed using IBM-SPSS-26. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, correlation analysis, and multiple regression.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the results of the descriptive analysis of the study. The work alienation construct has the highest average (5.11 ± 1.27), indicating moderately high workplace alienation. Correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between the predictors and work alienation. Poor organisational justice positively relates to work alienation ($r = .691$). Meanwhile, the formalized organizational structure is also positively associated with work alienation ($r = .649$). Thus, these results provide preliminary support for further analysis.

Table 3: Mean, Standard deviation and Correlation coefficients

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Justice perception</i>	<i>Formalization</i>	<i>Work Alienation</i>
Justice Perception	3.58	1.24	1		
Formalization	2.42	1.37	.615	1	
Work Alienation	5.11	1.27	.691	.649	1

A multivariate regression analysis confirmed that poor organizational justice and formalization are associated with work alienation. The Durbin-Watson coefficient is below 2.5, and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is under 10, indicating no multicollinearity or autocorrelation. Table 3 shows that the R-square is 0.615, which depicts that organizational injustice and formalization impact work alienation and explain it by 61.5 %.

Table 3: Summary for Model

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>	<i>Durbin-Watson</i>
1	.784a	.615	.612	.757415	1.831
a. Predictors: (Constant), OI, F					
b. Dependent Variable: WA					

As shown in Table No. 4, the p-value is less than 0.05; hence, we conclude that the predictors (Organizational injustice and formalization) are significantly related to employee alienation. This indicates that the overall proposed conceptual model is significant and a good fit.

Table 4: ANOVA

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	219.813	2	109.208	191.583	.000b
Residual	137.682	240	.574		
Total	357.492	242			

Table 5: Coefficient Table

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Standardized coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>VIF</i>
(Constant)	.696	.206		3.376	.000	
Justice Perception	.623	.059	.587	10.517	.000	1.941
Formalization	.235	.052	.253	4.528	.000	1.941

Regarding the outcome displayed in Table 5, both independent variables made significant individual contributions to predicting the dependent variable, i.e., Work alienation. Coefficients are further examined to ascertain the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable. For organizational justice, a significant positive relationship ($\beta = .623, p < .05$) is reported. Hence, H1 is supported. The regression coefficient for formalization was ($\beta = .235, p < .05$), indicating a positive relationship between formalization and work alienation. Hence, H2 is also accepted. In other words, work alienation tends to be augmented when organisational injustice and formalisation increase.

PRACTICAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This research holds considerable significance for both theory and practice. The findings show that many female teachers feel disconnected from their work in schools. This situation points to important issues in the organization and structure of the schools that need to be addressed. The study not only advances theoretical understanding of how organizational injustice and formalization contribute to teacher alienation but also provides a foundation for practical and policy recommendations. Based on this, here are specific educational policies and institutional practices in Bihar that could be improved or reformed, informed by the study's insights.

Female teacher's Retention and Motivation Programs

- Fair procedure (low procedural injustice), they are more likely to trust the system and feel valued. Fair decision-making in areas such as promotions, workload distribution, and transfers reinforces a sense of equity, thereby improving their willingness to remain in the organization.
- Interactional justice helps in ensuring that teachers are treated with respect, dignity, and open communication—strengthens their emotional attachment to the institution.
- Autonomy at work helps to gain long-term encouragement among female employees at school as they feel a greater sense of control and ownership over their work. The freedom to craft their daily tasks improves meaningfulness in their work

Enhancing Transparency and a Flexible Work Environment

- Mitigation of unfair practices and promoting clear communication, fair evaluation systems, and open channels for feedback create a healthy and transparent platform to work.
- A less formalized organizational structure enhances flexibility at work, empowering teachers to perform their roles more effectively and creatively. When rigid rules, procedures, and excessive hierarchical controls are reduced, teachers gain greater autonomy in planning lessons, managing classrooms, and making instructional decisions.

Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies

- Policymakers must design and implement gender-responsive policies that address unique challenges faced by female teachers, such as a lack of recognition, limited advancement opportunities, and conflicts at work.

- Providing safe, equitable, and supportive work environments will help improve overall job satisfaction and engagement, ultimately reducing alienation at work.

Capacity Building and Training for School Leaders

- Training programs for school leaders, such as principals and administrators, should be trained to tackle problems related to unfairness and detachment among employees by emphasizing leadership ethics, fair management practices, and interpersonal communication.
- Training programs should help to recognize the importance of a respectful and inclusive school culture and should try to cultivate one.

Monitoring Feedback and Mechanisms

- It is imperative for the government and education departments should establish continuous monitoring systems to assess workplace climate and teacher satisfaction.
- And ensuring regular feedback surveys can identify emerging issues early and inform targeted interventions to prevent alienation and disengagement.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The growing literature recognizes the importance of reducing alienation at work, a key factor in boosting employee motivation, satisfaction, productivity, and well-being. This investigation aimed to assess the role of organizational injustice and formalized structure in predicting work alienation among female teachers in Bihar. In a state like Bihar, developing an effective learning environment is crucial, given the growing demand for teacher recruitment and the need to improve overall education quality. And by highlighting the justice perception and the formalization process, we can see how the two influence the sense of alienation and helps to retain them in schools; the study fills the gap in the existing literature, where there is a dearth of research investigating the factors linked to alienation at the workplace in the specific context of women educators at school-level in a state such as Bihar. Findings reveal that female educators, who already face entrenched gender-based discrimination and societal constraints, experience intensified alienation when they perceive interactional and procedural injustice. Additionally, excessive formalization, marked by rigid bureaucratic procedures, extensive documentation, and inflexible administrative protocols, further erodes their autonomy, creativity, and sense of purpose. Consequently, the combination of injustice and rigid formalization creates a toxic work environment where teachers feel disconnected from their profession, colleagues, students, and institutional goals. One of the more significant findings from this study is that most female faculty feel alienated

at work, as the mean score (5.11 ± 1.27) for work alienation exceeds the neutral level on the scale. The findings from this study make numerous contributions to the existing literature. First, it showcases the significant impact of organizational injustice and excessive formalization on work alienation among female teachers in Bihar, illuminating how systemic inefficiencies and unfair treatment contribute to professional disengagement. Second, the study provides empirical evidence on the gendered experiences of work alienation, emphasizing the unique challenges faced by female educators, including interactional injustice, limited career growth opportunities, and stringent policies. Third, by examining the interplay between structural constraints and psychological well-being, this research expands the discourse on teacher motivation and job satisfaction, offering policymakers and educational institutions insights to create more inclusive and supportive work environments. The study is limited by the lack of information on various other factors that may influence work alienation among female educators. The study primarily captures cross-sectional data and does not explore the long-term impacts of organizational injustice and formalization on teacher retention, motivation, or career progression. A longitudinal technique could provide a deeper understanding of how these factors influence work alienation over time. A more focused approach and effort are required to determine the extent of work alienation among female teachers in Bihar and to identify effective interventions that can mitigate these challenges and improve teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and overall educational outcomes. In short, it is a way to achieve sustainable practices and outcomes.

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DETERMINING ABUSE OF DOMINANCE IN DIGITAL ECONOMY: A STUDY OF PECULIARITIES AND COMPETITION LAW IN INDIA

Ishita Bisht* and Akanksha Yadav**

Abstract

Establishing a free-market economy aims at combating anti-trust and coping with competition law. But the rise of the digitalization of markets, poses several new challenges as digital markets operate in a different manner from traditional markets. One of the major challenge is abuse of dominance in digital markets. In digital sphere, it becomes even more complex to establish the dominance of an enterprise due to issues in determining the relevant market or establishing the abuse. Another significant factor to be considered is the exploitation of user data to establish a dominant position in the market by major enterprises because digital markets, are, at the very core, more dependent on data than traditional markets. As such, the present paper intends to address these concerns by analysing the legislations, judicial precedents and current issues in the sphere of abuse of dominant position in digital markets.

Keywords: Abuse of Dominant Position, Digital Markets, Competition Law, Relevant Market

INTRODUCTION

Digital Economy is characterized by interactions between goods, services, data, people, and businesses over the internet. It can be understood by economic and online commercial transactions. There are two contentions towards the first use of

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the term 'digital economy'. Some believe that the word was first used by a Japanese Professor during the recession in Japan in 1990s. Others claim that it was coined by Don Tapscott in his book titled 'The Digital Economy: Promise & Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence' (1995), as mentioned by (Abbos et.al: 2021).

The global digital economy was valued at \$14.5 Trillion in 2021 and by 2025 it is expected to reach \$20.8 trillion as per a 2022 report by the World Economic Forum (2022). In India particularly, the growth of the digital economy is found to be 2.4 times faster than the normal economic growth and is expected to be worth \$1 trillion by 2030 (TOI: 2024). Though this *prima facie* appears as a step towards innovation, development and progress, however, it has deeper concerns. A significant contribution to these numbers is made by a few large companies that predominantly dominate the digital markets. In a number of cases, these companies not only act as goods and service providers but also as intermediaries (Prado: 2020). The concentrated structure of such a market raises economic concerns and doubts.

It was rightly stated by Ashok K. Gupta, the erstwhile Chairman of Competition Commission of India that what were seen as the epicentres of innovation have now come down to being perpetrators of entrenched dominance (Economic Times: 2024). The digital market is highly dynamic. Notions and tests that fit the traditional market cannot be relied upon blindly to work effectively on the digital market. The complex economic analyses involved in digital markets make it difficult to assess not just abuse but also the fact of dominance using the traditional tools. In such a scenario, a need for newer and better fit mechanisms to determine and deal with this rapidly evolving digital market are pertinent.

An ideal market is characterized by free flow and interaction of competing market forces so as to ensure better prices and products to the consumers. The antithesis to such ideal market conditions is monopoly where one dominant player dictates the market terms. In India's competition law jurisprudence, it has been clearly laid down that 'big is not per se bad'. At the same time, it is also believed that dominance has a likelihood to be abused and thus, S. 4(1) of the Competition Act, 2002 makes such practice illegal. It is, therefore, that the Competition Act, 2002 provides against abuse of dominance and not dominance per se. Section 4, explanation (a) of the Act defines 'Dominant Position' as any enterprise reflecting a stronghold position in the relevant market, in the country by virtue of which:

- it can function unaided by the competitive forces that prevail in that respective relevant market
- it can influence its competitors, consumers or even the relevant market in its own favour.

PECULIARITIES OF THE DIGITAL MARKET

Digital markets have certain special characteristics that are not common to the traditional markets. The use of algorithms by the players of the digital market to process the large chunks of data collected is utilized for many purposes including entering into other business spaces. One of the biggest advantages to such players is the data network effects. Network effects in general is making a commodity or a service relatively more valuable as and when more people join it making it function like a community. Data network effects is a form of network effects where data collected from people is interpreted and used to make the product or service more relevant to its user (Truck: 2024). Classic examples would be the recommendations on marketplaces like Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra or the personalization of experience on Google.

The problem arises when such a platform reaches a 'tipping point'. Tipping point is when the data provided by the existing users on a platform is sufficient to enhance and add value to the product or service. Further engagement of more users is not required to generate networks effect once the data tipping point is reached (Ingersleben-Seip: 2023). The data present with such an enterprise is enough for it to make the experience of users more personalized. Not only does this help in retaining the present of customers, it further increases engagement amongst others. More users would provide additional data, which is never problematic for the enterprise. This leads to a position of domination being achieved by such an enterprise that has the power to defeat the market forces and create barriers for newer entrants (Kathuria: 2019).

Another peculiar feature of digital markets is the massive economies of scale involved by virtue of very high fixed cost initially and relatively very less or negligible variable costs. This results in a natural entry barrier being created because of which potential players do not prefer to enter the market (OECD: 2023). These digital markets are often interlinked or multisided and bring together a host of customers on a platform. While on one hand being multisided can result in reaping benefits by users in terms of convenience and discounts, such a market structure can also lead to cross-platform network effects where decisions of the enterprise in one aspect of the market can show results and affect the other side. For instance, decisions with respect to pricing can impact the demand on the other side of the market (OECD: 2023). This can intensify anti-competitive conduct shown by such enterprises which in many cases goes unchecked.

Further in cases where a particular enterprise performs the role of both a competitor and a marketplace, it is prone to give preferential listing and advantages to some over others. This is a peculiar problem of digital market being in the form of conglomerate structure in many cases where openness to third parties is often

uncertain. E-commerce is flourishing as these enterprises are in a position to offer goods and services at a highly discounted rate. Many a time, they use the revenue generated from other aspects of the platform to offer such discounts which is a major advantage of such platforms being multisided.

Enterprises like Facebook, Amazon and Google have achieved domination in their respective spheres whereby they can effectively customize user experience and match preferences giving rise to more data and making it improbable for customers to switch. These data network effects, huge economies of scales involved, the access and control over data, conglomerate structures, multi-sided nature of market, low marginal costs and sunk costs being upfront, dynamic nature of the market lead to digital market not fitting into the traditional structures created by Competition Policies (EEMC: 2024). In such a scenario given the complexities, it also becomes difficult to determine the correct stage of intervention of competition law policies for ensuring fair play.

ABUSE OF DOMINANCE IN DIGITAL MARKETS

Between 2014 to 2021, the Competition Commission of India dealt with around 38 major cases concerning digital markets. 92% of these cases were allegations of abuse of dominant position in their respective markets (Sarswat: 2023). In order to establish a case against an enterprise for abusing its dominant position, the Act provides for a three-step enquiry (CCI: 2024):

- Defining the relevant market
- Determination of dominance
- Establishing abuse of such dominance.

This is relatively easy in terms of traditional market setups but poses innumerable challenges in the domain of digital markets.

DEFINING THE RELEVANT MARKET

The relevant market is provided under S. 2(r) of the Act of 2002 and includes both the relevant product market and also the relevant geographic market. Relevant geographic market is defined under S. 2(s) as an area having homogeneous conditions for competition or demand for goods or services so as to easily distinguish them from neighboring areas. Section 19(6) enlists factors that help in determining relevant geographic market and includes transportation costs, regulatory trade barriers, language, distribution facilities etc. S. 2(t) defines relevant product market as the market where products are regarded by consumers as substitutable or interchangeable by reason of characteristics, prices or uses. Section 19(7) provides the factors that help the Commission in identifying relevant

product market and includes factors like presence of specialised producers, price, physical characteristics, consumer taste etc.

The test commonly used for identifying the relevant market is called the SSNIP, that is, the Small but Significatory and Non-Transitory Increase in Price where it is seen that whether for a 5-10% increase in price of any product or service will the consumer shift to a substitute. In Digital Markets which are majorly zero-price markets not charging customers for accessing their platforms, this poses problems as any percentage increase be it five or ten from zero would be zero (WB: 2024). Further, to decide that in case of multi-sided platforms on which side will the enterprise increase price is not easy. Hence, instead of the SSNIP test, for digital markets economists suggest the SSNDQ test which is the Small but Significatory and Non-Transitory Decrease in Quality which tests that for decrease in quality will the customers switch. Quality could include user-friendliness of the platform or privacy or retainer rate etc (Mandrescu: 2018).

Another problem posed in defining relevant market for digital platforms is the multi-sided nature of such markets. Whether to treat the different sides of such market as one or as different has not yet been decided unanimously. Further platforms like Amazon which act as intermediary-platform provider and also as seller in many cases, the lines of specifying relevant market get blurred. The Commission had also been unclear in the beginning as to whether to treat the digital counterpart of any physical market as part of the same market or not. In **Ashish Ahuja v. Snapdeal.com and Anr.**, the CCI had held that offline and offline channels of making distribution are part of the same relevant market. However, in the latest judgment of **Matrimony.com Ltd. v. Google LLC & Ors.**, CCI has cleared the position that offline and online markets like advertising markets in this case cannot be said to be part of the same relevant market. In **Meru Travel Solutions Pvt. Ltd. v. Uber India Digital Pvt. Ltd.**, the CCI had also clarified that online cab system providing point-to-point services cannot in its relevant market include local public transport even in a city like Delhi where the public transport system is highly developed.

DETERMINING DOMINANCE OF ANY ENTERPRISE

Dominance was defined in the **United Brands case** as the position that enables an enterprise to behave independently of the enterprises' competitors and even consumers. Section 19(4) of the Act of 2002 provides for a list of factors to be considered to find out whether an enterprise is dominant or not and it includes factors like market share, vertical integration, consumer dependence, resources available, entry barriers, market structure, size of competitors, social costs, etc. The Commission is further empowered to look into any other factor that it may

consider relevant in this regard. These factors are relatively easy to identify and assess in case of traditional markets which are static.

Digital markets being a product of technology do not answer appropriately to these factors (Mohindroo: 2018). Digital markets are majorly zero-price markets meaning thereby that most of these platforms do not charge for the service they offer and thus, it is extremely tough to assess competition in terms of price of good or service offered (UNCT: 2024). In such a scenario, to determine competition in terms of technology, innovation or other factors will be extremely tough. Section 19(4) does not take into consideration such dynamic factors like networks effect, privacy concerns or data gathering by such platforms.

While the R&D costs involved in these markets act as a natural entry barrier for all those wanting to take a step into the digital market, but this can still be overlooked. The problem is when major enterprises enjoying dominance in their field having access to immense data use it to its advantage to not just enter another field but also block competition in such field, this is another entry barrier that may exist for digital firms willing to step into a new market or for fresh entrants.

ESTABLISHING ABUSE

The Act does not per se punish dominance, but abuse of dominance. For the same, Section 4(2) provides a list of exhaustive categories that constitute abuse of an enterprise's dominant position in the relevant market. They include:

- Imposition of discriminatory or unfair price or condition for sale or purchase.
- Restriction in the production or provision or technical development in connection with goods or services.
- Practices that result in denial of market access.
- Applying unrelated conditions to conclusion of contracts.
- Entering or protecting its position in one market by virtue of dominance in another relevant market.

Further Predatory Pricing is defined under Explanation (b) to Section 4 as pricing below the production cost in order to either completely eliminate or reduce competition. In India, not the marginal cost but AVC is used for determining predatory price.

In digital markets, most platforms are vertically integrated where platforms that started only as intermediaries, now also act as competitors to individual sellers relying on such platforms. One such case is of one of the most powerful e-commerce player Amazon (Roychoudhuri: 2020). In such circumstances, it is easy for these enterprises to enter into anti-competitive conduct which is difficult to assess. The enormous amount of data possessed by such enterprises, especially in cases of mergers or acquisitions, cannot be valued (Cantell: 2021).

User policies of such enterprises may also be abusive to the users especially in the context of data. The stipulations provided by websites to access them and the mandate to accept cookie option may also be abusive in the right context. Similar is the case with the mandatory 'Autopay' option enabled by various platforms for using them. Dark patterns also trick the users into giving their data or money. Such conduct is specific to the digital market and determination of such abusive conduct is difficult keeping in mind the traditional tests and notions.

INSTANCES OF ABUSE IN DIGITAL MARKETS (INDIA)

One of the first cases of digital market the Commission was faced with was **FHRAI v. MakeMyTrip India Pvt. Ltd & Ors.** where the Commission imposed massive penalties on MMT-Go on account of abuse of its dominant position (violation of Section 4) by offering not just big discounts but also the exclusivity contracts which in turn not just blocked competition of the Online Travel Agencies but also increase the commission sought by the platform later on. Further delisting of Treebo and Fab Hotels upon agreement by MMT-Go and OYO itself amounted to refusal to deal in violation of Section 3 as well.

In **Harshita Chawla v. Whatsapp Inc. and Facebook Inc.**, where the allegation against WhatsApp were violation of Sections 3 and 4 by virtue of bundling the WhatsApp pay service in the messaging app itself. The CCI rejected the contentions of the informant on the ground of absence of any form of coercion in using the Pay service of WhatsApp and the customers were free to use any other UPI service. On the contention that WhatsApp being a pre-installed service, the Pay service will get an unfair advantage, CCI remarked that the Pay feature of WhatsApp was still in the Beta stage of its operation and thus, it could not be effectively concluded that such an allegation would be true. Thus, holding no violation of S.3 and 4, CCI concluded that bundling and tying are not the same.

In **Baglekar Akash Kumar v. Google LLC and Anr.**, the CCI did not hold the inclusion of the Google Meet App in the G-mail application as abuse of dominant position on the ground that any user whether or not having a google mail account can use G-Meet and similarly there was not mandatory requirement to also register with the Meet option upon opening a mail account with Google. The same was held as a mere enhancement of service and not abuse of Google's dominant position.

In **Meru Travel Solutions Pvt. Ltd. v. Uber India Digital Pvt. Ltdte**, the Commission rejected the contention of Meru that Uber abused in abuse of dominance by getting into below-cost pricing on the ground that Uber was not dominant in the presence of Ola. The COMPAT and Supreme Court ordered re-investigation by DG majorly relying on the fact of losses accrued to Uber, however, even upon re-investigation dominance of Uber was not concluded on the ground that the market share between Ola and Uber kept on fluctuating and the funding received

by Ola was much greater than that received by Uber not highlighting dominance. Thus, the question of abuse was not looked into. The present case is also pending appeal before the Supreme Court.

The Commission has thus, been faced with a variety of challenging cases pertaining to enterprises abusing their dominant position in such a dynamic digital market, where the jurisprudence is still developing.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The digital medium in the present age provides the perfect platform for communication, transactions, interactions, collaborations, trading, and commerce. The ease of access such platforms have provided to the customers is unmatched, however, the problems associated with these platforms cannot be ignored on this count. These markets work on the 'Winner takes it all' philosophy. Few prominent players who have established their foot in their respective domains have either become dominant or are on the verge of becoming dominant. The tendency of such players to disrupt competitive forces that play out, in their own favour cannot be ignored and must be looked at stringently. This is the reason why the number of cases with the Commission dealing with allegations of abuse by such platform markets is only multiplying. The dynamics of such market is still unfolding.

Traditional Competition Law principles were never in the first place designed to be applicable to such a dynamic market space. Problems like network effects, data trapping, dark patterns, multi-sided markets, zero-price markets, and failure of the SSNIP test were never imagined by drafters when coming up with Competition Act. Particularly with respect to the abuse of dominant position, these factors pose problems at each stage of the three-step inquiry. Right from demarcating the relevant market to establishing dominance or its abuse, the peculiarities that are associated with the digital market make the determination very challenging. This explains why the jurisprudence laid by CCI in this regard has not been consistent.

In this regard, the government has been proactive which can be seen from latest Amendments in the Act to the panel appointed by the government to review and draft a Digital Competition Law. The need is for an ex-ante regulation in India to identify and effectively deal with the challenges of the digital market. However, such a regulation should be flexible in view of the dynamic nature of such market where any static test would fail. The assessment must be on an individual and interpersonal case basis. The obligation must not just be on Gatekeepers but all platforms entering this domain. Thus, Digital markets require new-age solutions as they do not answer well to the stagnant traditional norms already laid.

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CORE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Manoj Kumar Pandey* and Anil R. Pande**

Abstract

The employability of engineering and management students has received significant focus in the last two decades due to diminishing demand in the job market. A number of studies suggest the variety of some other core skills required to be developed among the graduating students during their academic programmes. Given the limitations of the time and resources with the educational institutions, it may not be feasible to imbibe all the core skills. Therefore, a need arises to identify the most important core skills among the graduating students to meet the job market needs. Therefore, this study develops a framework to create a link between institutional and individual factors that contribute to the identified core employability skills. The present study suggests communication, creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving and inter-personal skills as the core employable skills to be developed.

Keywords: Employability, Core-skills, Communication, Problem Solving, Critical Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of decline in employability of engineering and management students has become an urgent to be discussed over the recent decades. It is argued that evolving from a simple measure of getting and retaining a job to a comprehensive set of competencies that graduates must possess to thrive in the globalized and

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technologically advanced job market (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Currently, employability encompasses not only the ability to secure initial employment but also the capability to navigate multiple job roles, adapt to changes, and pursue ongoing personal and professional development (Forrier & Sels, 2003). This expanded understanding highlights the need for a diverse array of skills and qualities that empower an individual to contribute effectively to their workplace, manage their career path, and attain economic and personal satisfaction.

The significance of aligning educational outputs with labor market requirements is undeniable. In the realm of higher education, such alignment is vital to ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their chosen careers (Lindsay, 2009). This is especially relevant in engineering and management fields, where the complexity and rapid evolution of the professional landscape demand not only technical expertise but also a variety of soft skills and competencies (McQuaid et al., 2005). Skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking are essential for graduates striving to succeed in today's complex job market, particularly in regions with unique economic and industrial challenges.

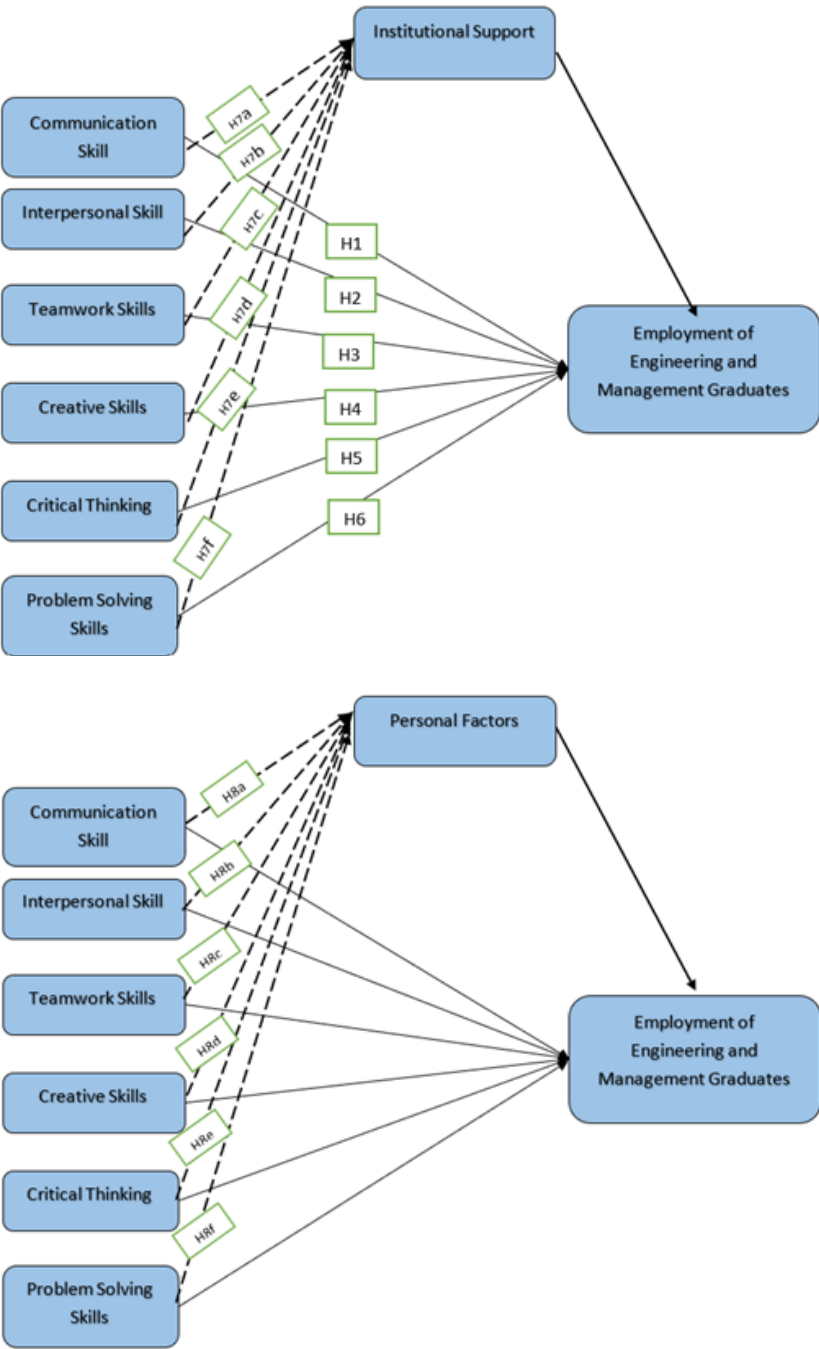
Employers in India, like their global counterparts, favor graduates who are not only technically proficient but also adaptable, innovative, and effective in diverse teams. Yet, there is an increasing concern about the mismatch between the skills imparted by educational institutions and those demanded by employers, a gap that could significantly affect graduate employability. The literature review delves into the research surrounding employability skills within this specific geographic and industrial context. It seeks to identify the key skills valued by employers and examine how local educational institutions are meeting these demands. Additionally, it evaluates how these skills influence the employability of engineering and management graduates, pinpointing potential areas of deficiency in knowledge or training. By focusing on this region, the present conceptual framework aims to enrich our understanding of local labor market dynamics and provide insights that can guide educational policy and curriculum development.

The exploration of employability skills also opens up broader discussions on the role of higher education in preparing graduates for successful careers. It encourages reflection on how educational institutions can adapt to the shifting work landscape and develop curricula that more closely meet industry needs. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of ongoing collaboration between academia and industry to ensure that graduates are employable and ready to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the economy at large. In nutshell, the evolving notion of employability underscores the necessity for an integrated educational approach that combines technical knowledge with a wide range of soft skills and competencies. As global and local economies evolve, so too

must the strategies for preparing graduates for the workforce. This study attempts to understand the core employability skills and the employability challenges faced by engineering and management graduates, with potential implications for educational practices and policy formulation in similar contexts worldwide. The study focuses on core employability skills, employability of engineering and management students to be required by the industry and also suggest a suitable framework that could be adopted by higher education institutions for preparing students to meet the present industry requirements.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Igwe et al. (2020), in a model developed emphasizes that in “advanced economies, employers place less importance on graduates’ actual degree discipline in favor of the more generic skills”. Bandaranaike (2018,) also supports that “from the employers’ point of view, social skills and personality type are more important than graduates’ degree qualifications”. While, Grosemans et al. (2017) are of the view that generic competencies receive priorities since, the interdisciplinary approaches of several studies on employability might overlook study-specific competences. The model developed by (Bandaranaike, 2018) highlights the issues related to students’ autonomy in displaying a number of generic skills (e.g., problem solving) and attitudes. It recommends the framework exclusively to identify skill development through work integrated learning phases. In a study by Ehlers (2021), a model was developed in German for teaching the future skills. In this study, the future skills are explained as, “dispositions and readiness to act for dealing with complex, unknown problem situations through reflection, values and attitudes.” (Ehlers, 2021), underlines and focuses developing dispositions where individuals can manage unpredictable situations in a flexible and adequate manner. According to Reid et al. (2021) and of Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007), the individual has an important and outstanding role. All these models stresses on strengthening individual development attributes. Therefore, the following conceptual framework is developed for the study based on the core employability skills identified based on available literature.



The above model predicts as how the personal and institutional factors contribute to development of core employability skills among the graduating students and thus immensely help to gain better employment opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cranmer (2006) argues that soft skills and increasing use ICT are core competencies at work place. Further, individuals require excellence in teamwork, organization, and problem-solving areas. These skills enable quicker response times, shortening the duration from product conception to market. Businesses, in turn, benefit from increased adaptability to technological advancements and organizational changes (Clarke, 2018). Chhinzer and Russo (2018) have examined employer perceptions of graduate employability, highlighting key qualities and skills valued by employers in assessing potential hires.

The body of literature across various educational and skill development fields offers profound insights into the challenges and opportunities facing modern education. Spliid (2013) emphasizes the importance of discussion in problem-based learning environments, highlighting its role in fostering effective learning. Sudha (2013) explores the adoption of total quality management in higher education, discussing strategies to improve educational quality. Sweetland (1996) investigates human capital theory, providing a foundational understanding of its implications for education and workforce development. Tan et al. (2021) analyze factors influencing the employability of sports science graduates, contributing to the knowledge on career success determinants. Tan (2014) critically assesses human capital theory, urging a reevaluation of its relevance in current educational contexts. Terenzini et al. (1995) explore the various influences on students' critical thinking skills, advocating for comprehensive development strategies. Thomas and Unninarayanan (2018) examine employability skills among MBA students, linking academic programs with industry requirements. Thomas (2011) promotes the development of critical thinking skills in first-year students, suggesting pedagogical strategies to enhance analytical capabilities. Tomar (2024) discusses methods to improve employability skills in evolving job markets, providing insights into adapting to changing employment landscapes. Tripathi (2021) focuses on the role of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial skills, emphasizing its importance for innovation and economic growth.

Türkmen and Sertkahya (2015) investigate creative thinking skills in vocational high school students, exploring factors that influence creativity and critical thinking. Ülger (2016) looks at the relationship between creative and critical thinking skills, noting their synergistic effects in education. Wadhwani and Goyal (2019) evaluate the impact of management education on employability skills, offering valuable

perspectives on the effectiveness of academic programs. Wilton (2012) discusses the transformative effects of work placements on skills development and labor market integration, advocating for experiential learning opportunities. Yi and Park (2024) analyze the connection between university students' core competencies and their employment prospects, shedding light on how academic performance impacts career success. Zaghoul and Mahdy (2020) explore the development of communication and thinking skills, focusing on holistic approaches to self-management skills in university students. Zhang (2009) promotes the integration of oral communication skills in language education, underscoring the foundational role of reading in enhancing speaking abilities. Zubaidah et al. (2017) propose innovative teaching methods to boost creative thinking among students, utilizing differentiated science inquiry combined with mind maps. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive overview of educational initiatives and skill development efforts, laying the groundwork for informed pedagogical practices and policy measures to cultivate a skilled and adaptable workforce.

It can be inferred from the above literature that all the studies emphasize the need and importance of core employability skills and they also stress that these skills can be gained through education system. However, there are hardly any study that provides the nature and arrangements the academic institutions have to infuse such skills. Or the practices and nature of pedagogy the higher education institutions follow to imbibe these skills among the students.

CORE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills are critical attributes that facilitate a graduate's smooth transition from academia to the professional world, and are highly regarded in job markets and industries worldwide. Key employability skills include effective communication, problem-solving, teamwork, critical thinking, and adaptability (Guilbert, et al., 2016). These competencies are crucial not just for securing a job, but also for thriving in one's long-term career. Employers look for these skills as they indicate an individual's capability to handle complex workplace challenges, lead projects, and contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2013). Ahuja (2019) assessed the disparity between the skills taught in educational institutions and those valued by employers in Madhya Pradesh, highlighting a significant shortage in soft skills like communication and teamwork. Asiedu, et al. (2024) explored how reflective practices integrated into business education programs can enhance the employability skills of graduates. It argues that reflective learning techniques improve critical thinking and adaptability, which are crucial for career success.

Asonitou, (2015) assessed the alignment of higher education curricula with the employability skills demanded by the job market in Greece. The paper suggests that

Greek educational institutions need to more closely integrate soft skills training into their academic programs.

Azmi, et al. (2018) evaluated the employability skills possessed by Malaysian university students and identifies significant gaps in communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Recommendations include more interactive and collaborative learning experiences in university curricula. Belwal, et al. (2017) examined the mismatch between the skills Omani graduates possess and what employers expect. The study highlights a significant gap in soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and teamwork, and suggests that higher education institutions need to focus more on these areas to enhance graduate employability.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication skills are consistently ranked among the most critical employability skills. They encompass the ability to effectively articulate ideas and information both verbally and non-verbally, including writing and presentation skills as well as listening abilities (Azmi, Hashim, & Yusoff, 2018). Reitmeier, Svendsen, & Vrchota (2004) highlight the importance of oral communication skills, particularly in specialized fields such as food science. Similarly, Zubaidah et al. (2017) emphasize the benefits of using differentiated science inquiry combined with mind maps to enhance communication skills, aligning with Zhang's (2009) approach of integrating reading and speaking activities to boost communicative competence among English language learners. Let us discuss the various significant core skills that required to be developed.

CREATIVE SKILLS

Creativity is the ability to generate novel ideas and concepts, or new associations between existing ones. An education system that nurtures creativity significantly boosts students' employability (Türkmen & Sertkahya, 2015). Research by Zubaidah et al. (2017) and Akhmedov et al. (2021) supports the use of mind mapping and science inquiry to cultivate creativity in students, indicating that creative abilities are essential for problem-solving and innovation in professional environments. Traditionally linked to the arts, creativity is now acknowledged as a crucial element of employability across all fields (Mauldin, 2013). It involves thinking innovatively, devising fresh ideas, and tackling problems from unique perspectives. In dynamic sectors like engineering and management, creativity fuels innovation and leads to the creation of new products, services, and processes. It is fundamental to adaptability and progress in a constantly evolving business world.

Yet, in educational systems that prioritize rote learning and standardized testing, the development of creative skills often receives inadequate attention. To

reverse this trend, educational institutions need to create an environment that promotes creative thinking, experimentation, and the pursuit of new ideas, thus producing graduates who can offer innovative solutions to modern challenges.

Creativity is increasingly prized in the workplace for its role in driving innovation and solving problems. Zubaidah et al. (2017) highlight how differentiated science inquiry can enhance students' creative thinking skills, emphasizing the importance of integrating creativity into educational programs to align with employer expectations.

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

It involves a level of skepticism and introspection about one's own beliefs and thought processes. Hughes & Jones (2011) and Gueldenzoph Snyder & Snyder (2008) stress the importance of educational systems that push students to sharpen their reasoning skills, preparing them for the complexities of modern work environments. Terenzini et al. (1995) and Ülger (2016) delve deeper into this concept, associating critical thinking with educational approaches that foster profound learning and equip students to manage ambiguous situations in their careers. Defined by Robotham (2007) as the disciplined practice of assessing information and arguments, questioning preconceptions, and forming reasoned judgments, critical thinking is crucial in a world overloaded with data and diverse viewpoints. In professional contexts, it allows individuals to evaluate situations, pinpoint underlying issues, and devise strategic responses (Forrier & Sels, 2003). This skill is particularly vital in fields like engineering and management, where decisions often carry substantial technical and financial stakes.

However, a significant discrepancy often exists between the critical thinking skills developed in academic settings and those demanded in the workplace. Many educational programs do not sufficiently challenge students to think independently or apply their theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios. Closing this gap necessitates a reassessment of educational strategies, emphasizing the use of case studies, practical projects, and other hands-on learning experiences that cultivate critical analytical skills (Guilbert et al., 2016). Critical thinking is indispensable for evaluating situations and making well-informed decisions. Terenzini et al. (1995) found that both academic courses and extracurricular activities play crucial roles in fostering students' critical thinking abilities. Additionally, research by Kulkarni and Kulkarni (2019) revealed a notable deficiency in critical thinking skills among management students, highlighting the need for higher education curricula to bridge this gap to boost employability.

TEAMWORK SKILLS

Teamwork entails collaborative efforts towards a shared objective and is crucial in most contemporary workplaces. Foster et al. (2018) explore the deployment of simulations to cultivate teamwork skills in nursing students, reflecting wider educational initiatives that emphasize experiential learning. The modern workplace often relies on multidisciplinary teams working together to achieve collective aims (Binkley et al., 2012). Skills related to teamwork include effective collaboration, respecting diverse perspectives, conflict management, and contributing to a constructive team atmosphere. These competencies are vital for the success of projects and the overall harmony of an organization.

Transitioning from the typically individual-centric academic settings to team-based professional environments can pose significant challenges. Many graduates find themselves inadequately prepared for the teamwork demands they face in their careers (Abrami et al., 2008). Teamwork skills are indispensable in collaborative work settings. This approach not only equips students with essential collaborative skills but also prepares them for the complexities of teamwork in healthcare, which is critical for both patient care and effective healthcare team dynamics.

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Problem-solving is a fundamental aspect of employability, particularly in technical sectors such as engineering and management (Mauldin, 2013). It encompasses the identification of issues, creation of various solutions, and implementation of effective strategies. Politsinsky et al. (2015) and Coşkun, Garipağaoğlu, & Tosun (2014) suggest that problem-solving capabilities can be greatly enhanced through educational programs designed to mimic real-world problems. Wismath, Orr, & Zhong (2014) also affirm that strong problem-solving skills are essential for both academic and professional success. These skills are indispensable for navigating the complexities and uncertainties of the workplace, enabling individuals to efficiently address tasks and foster innovation within their roles. In addition to engineering and management, numerous other fields depend on robust problem-solving skills (Rao, 2014). However, there is a noticeable gap between the theoretical problem-solving methods taught in academic institutions and the practical, applied problem-solving needed in professional environments (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). This disparity underscores the need for educational programs to incorporate more experiential learning methods such as project-based learning, internships, and simulations. The study by Coşkun, Garipağaoğlu, and Tosun (2014) ties problem-solving skills to resilience among university students, indicating that greater problem-solving proficiency is associated with enhanced adaptability in professional environments. The research by Coşkun et al. (2014), published in "Procedia - Social and Behavioral

Sciences,” delves into the link between psychological resilience and problem-solving abilities, showing how resilience can influence students’ effectiveness in resolving problems. Understanding this connection can guide the development of strategies to improve student resilience and problem-solving skills.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Lopes et al. (2015) discuss the importance of these skills among engineering students, who typically receive less training in interpersonal dynamics compared to students in human-focused disciplines. These skills are vital for professional success as they support robust teamwork, leadership, and client interactions. However, the cultivation of interpersonal skills often receives inadequate attention in the technically oriented curricula of many educational programs, particularly in engineering and management. This neglect can hinder graduates’ effectiveness in team and leadership roles. Engineering graduates also benefit significantly from robust interpersonal skills, especially when working with multidisciplinary teams (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018). Interpersonal skills are crucial for building effective relationships and interactions at work. Lopes et al. (2015) underscore the benefits of social skills training for enhancing interpersonal abilities among engineering students, essential for their career advancement in technical fields.

Galloway et al. (2005) argue that enterprise skills are vital for economic success in today’s markets, noting that these abilities are increasingly necessary not just for entrepreneurs but also for employees in larger organizations tasked with driving ongoing improvement and innovation. Gueldenzoph & Snyder, (2008) highlighted the importance of these skills in helping students succeed in a complex and rapidly changing world. The authors provide evidence that teaching strategies involving active learning, real-world problem solving, and collaborative learning can significantly enhance students’ critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. They recommend that educators implement these strategies across various subjects to better prepare students for professional and personal challenges.

The above studies very clearly emphasize the need and significance of the six core employability skills that help to a greater extent the graduated students in gaining better employment opportunities after passing out the courses as well for further advancement in their career. The industry needs such skills to meet the emerging challenges in terms of competition, globalization of markets and changed business perspective. However, there is scanty research to study, assess and analyze as how these core skills are injected among the students during the course curricula and also how the students and academic institutions do perceive the importance and significance of these skills?

CONCLUSION

There are many employability skills that impact the good employment opportunities of management and engineering students. However, it is difficult that each student adopts and imbibes all the skills during the higher education on account of lack of time and other limitations. Therefore, this framework has identified the most relevant and specific skills needed by the corporate sector in the present market conditions. The above six skills such as, communication skills, Inter-personal skills, Team work, Creative skills, critical thinking, and problem solving skills are identified based on the most suggested employability factors in number of past studies. To develop these skills, this is essential that students need to enhance personal factors and capacities to strengthen the above identified employability skills. To develop each skill set, personal factors i.e. attitude, behavior, passion, communication and presentation skills have to be developed through personal initiation. The institutional initiatives i.e. inclusion and focusing on the course curriculum on the contents like, Simulation Exercises, Demonstration and presentation, Collaborative learning, Industry-job training, case studies etc. will help to contribute to the professional skills and add to better employment opportunities. Likewise, under each component of the identified skills the growth of personal factors assume significance.

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ASSESSING IMPACT OF SAGY ON CHRONIC POVERTY: A CASE OF TWO 'MODEL' VILLAGES OF VARANASI

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Abstract

Chronic poverty is a social reality for a greater portion of rural India. In order to minimize the chronic poverty the scheme of 'Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana' has been launched. The scheme involves community participation in implementation. It is a general assumption that the poor infrastructure along with sedentary economic growth causes distressed migration and demographic precarity in rural India which can be confronted by capacity building of human resources and infrastructure upgradation. The present paper critically assesses two 'Model' villages of Varanasi district, namely Jayapur and Nagepur, that have been adopted under 'SAGY' framework. The study of these 'Model' villages discloses the purview and the possible enhancements of the scheme in respect to income precarity, basic literacy, health and sanitation, housing and many other essential aspects. The paper explores the methods of community participation as envisaged under the scheme and its plausibility in eradicating generational destitution in those 'Model' villages. Through the exploratory field visits, stakeholder interviews and assessment of formal and informal statistics of these villages, the paper brings out the structure of holistic development attempted through the scheme. Finally, the incorporation of Gandhian precepts of 'Gram Swaraj' and 'Rural-centric Economy' are critically presented as the factors revolutionizing the present discourses regarding the rural development policies.

Keywords: SAGY, Chronic-Poverty, Model Village, Gramswaraj, Infrastructure, Varanasi, UP.

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INTRODUCTION

Any discourse pertaining to the modality of development in India must come across the question of the development of its villages as nearly two-third of Indian population reside in the rural space as per World Bank indicators. A 2015 survey by Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) revealed that more than 70 per cent of its village residents are extremely poor and dependent on manual labour to meet their needs. The incidence of chronic poverty as defined by Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) as a form of poverty that endures for at least five years, and often passes from generation to generation within a family (Shah, A et al., 2010). The multidimensionality of poverty in rural milieu goes well beyond familial constraints as chronic poverty can also be read in terms of space, social groups and social amenity related causes. The eradication of this multipronged poverty, which is not a transient economic state, but an ontological orientation of rural India is a momentous challenge for policy makers and facilitators alike. Through Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the United Nations stated the common agenda of eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 as under the chronicity of poverty, “Poor people are particularly vulnerable to adverse events outside their control. They are often treated badly by institutions of the state and society and excluded from voice and power in those institutions” (Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch, 2000). Under these power dynamics poverty gets established as a social reality in life of the rural population rather than a kind of economic precarity and thus any centralized policy addressing the different manifestations of it fails to bring any positive change. As a result, the distressed migration becomes a common occurrence that depletes the human resources as villagers lose confidence in the rural milieu in meeting their needs. This trend later concretizes and provides impetus for the Rural-Urban migration, which “further contributes to urban poverty and leads to stress and societal turbulence” (Kalam and Singh, 2011).

In Indian context, it is a general assumption that most of the schemes of Union and state governments end up delivering the services and amenities either too late or not as per the demands of the beneficiaries. The conundrum of using the Top-Down approach to address the effects of poverty (such as Public Distribution System to address Food Security or Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to reduce the unemployment in villages) rather than poverty as a whole permeate through the existing schemes. This lacuna in rural welfare policy is removed in Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana that addresses the fundamentals of chronic poverty in rural India holistically as it uses Bottoms-Up approach in stakeholder identification and capacity building accordingly. The infrastructure establishment, upgradation, basic amenities are only there to complement the development process. The scheme differs from its predecessors and practices (such as MPLADS

or CSR) in its envisioned relationship which according to the Prime Minister of India “.... does not look at the beneficiaries as receivers and the Government as the doer.” The relation between the ‘Model’ villages under SAGY framework and the ‘Saansad’ or Parliament representative echoes the Gandhian model of Gram Swaraj and Trusteeship, although the present scheme has a modified and robust framework that make the very relation multi-dimensional, as the villagers are the active participants of the development of their own milieu and the representative only communicates the demand forward.

The essence of the SAGY framework can best be understood if its functionalities are understood through real practice, as such the two villages of Uttar Pradesh’s Varanasi district, namely Jayapur and Nagepur were surveyed. The qualitative analysis of these ‘Model’ villages contextualizes the scheme’s impact on the overall village planning and implementation.

SCHEME OVERVIEW

Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) was launched on 11th October 2014 with the aim to translate the comprehensive vision of Mahatma Gandhi about an ideal Indian village into reality, keeping in view the present context. Under the SAGY framework, any Member of Parliament can adopt a village and guide its holistic progress giving importance for social development at par with infrastructure. The ‘Adarsh Grams’ is to become schools of local development and governance, inspiring other Gram Panchayats. By involving villagers and leveraging scientific tools, a village development plan is prepared under the leadership of Members of Parliament.

In nature, it is purely demand driven and ideally comes only in existence with community participation. Its primary objectives are to trigger the holistic development of the identified Gram Panchayats and substantially improving the standard of living of the rural population through a slew of direct and indirect interventions in regards of basic amenities, capacity enhancement, livelihood, reducing disparities, social mobilizations, enriched social capital and income precarity. Along with the specific developments, the farsighted objectives too are taken under the ambit of the scheme, such as generating models of local level development and effective local government which can motivate and inspire neighbouring Gram Panchayats to adapt and nurturing the identified Adarsh Grams as schools of local development to train other Gram Panchayats as well. This way, the scheme envisions a multi-pronged approach of development, where the ‘Model’ village is not used merely as an end, but as a means to spread the development and build confidence among the rural populace. The scheme ensures that rural areas are not socially, economically or politically ostracized from the development drive and the ‘Model’ villages are placed as the concretisation of such an integration.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected under an exploratory field survey undertaken between the months of February and March in 2022. Impact assessment and analytical study of Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana of the Prime Minister of India adopted 'Model' villages consisting of a sample study of 275 representative households and 236 households in Jayapur and Nagepur, respectively. These households were chosen randomly, but prioritizing all the categories of viz. gender, cast, age, social status, educational level etc. In-depth interviews were conducted with the stakeholders, who also assisted the field study team in conducting the analytical study in the village. Qualitative research method was adopted. In order to study the response of people over specific activities, quantitative research methodology was adopted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

For discussing the role of community participation in eradication of chronic poverty, the examples of systemic development in the 'Model' villages of Jayapur and Nagepur will be discussed in the following section, since "Cooperation of village apparatus in organizing village government is one indicator to see the performance of village apparatus." (Rumkel, L., Sam, B., & Umanailo, M.C.B., 2019). The age-old discourse of 'Gram Swaraj' has also been rekindled through the core tenets of the scheme and it has added a newer dimension to the developmental schemes of rural India. Aided by statistics of the two 'Model' villages of Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), the following section will discuss the findings and the progression made by the scheme to bring out the ways of community participation in changing the rural policy making in general.

DEVELOPMENT GRAPH OF 'MODEL' VILLAGES

It is a widely accepted truth that any notion of development is quite subjective and dynamic in nature and no uniform and concrete notion should be prioritized over the other prevailing notions. Singh describes the essential complexity of the notion of 'Development' in these terms, "Since what is desirable at a particular time, place and in a particular culture may not be desirable at other places or at other times at the same place and in the same cultural milieu, it is impossible to think of a universally acceptable definition of development." (Singh, K. 1999.). The scheme of SAGY has duly undertaken most of these indicators of development, from infrastructure to services, the culturally aligned framework to the stakeholder identification and the voluntary participation of the local communities for the smooth maintenance of the services provided. In this regard, the overall demographics and socio-economic status of the 'Model' villages in the post-adoption phase must be contextualized with the projects implemented, both the governmental and corporate interventions, for the better understanding of its structures, desired and the present outcomes.

A. Demographics of growth in Jayapur Village

Jayapur comes under the Sevapuri legislative assembly and part of Arajiline block. In our exploratory field survey, where we analysed nearly 275 households, it was revealed through the census data of 2011 that the village consists of around 14 per cent population of unreserved category, 78.2 percent comprise OBC, 4.3 per cent comprise Scheduled Caste and 3.5 per cent of the total population belongs to Scheduled Tribe. About 65 per cent of the surveyed population comes under Below Poverty Line (BPL) bracket. Almost the entire population have not any life insurance schemes such as AABY, although the PMJJY and PMSBY are making inroads upon the establishment of the banking facilities. Almost the entire population have not availed RSBY that is meant of BPL population and are deprived of any health insurance benefits. The lack of information regarding the benefits of insurances and health related casualties are to be blamed for the tangible condition in the village. Nearly 63 per cent of the surveyed population, majority being farmers, have availed this KCC (Kisan Credit Card) facility and the numbers are soaring with the banking literacy making inroads in Jayapur. Out of the surveyed population, 62 per cent have enrolled themselves under the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) program. There 77 per cent of the surveyed population lives in pucca houses. Out of the surveyed population 65 per cent has their own private toilets and the villagers either constructed these toilets themselves or through the support of the government under the “Swaccha Bharat Mission” program. The survey has found the village to be open defecation free and sanitation has improved considerably upon coming under SAGY’s ambit. But at the same time, 93 per cent of the surveyed population don’t have any access to disposal mechanism of household waste and even the common collection centers are found to be improperly functional. Majority of the surveyed population (about 65 per cent) of the surveyed population are involved in agricultural activities. Farming activities have a huge scope for the area. Owing to the opportunities and the SAGY’s positive interventions, 92 per cent of the surveyed population were found free from out migration phenomenon which indicates the impact SAGY on employment to the villagers in their own surroundings, thus retaining the material as well as human wealth of the village itself.

B. Demographics of growth in Nagepur Village

Nagepur is the other SAGY ‘Model’ village of Varanasi district that we surveyed for our project. Like Jayapur, it too is situated in the Sevapuri constituent Assembly and part of Arajiline block, but it’s Tehsil is at Rajtalab. The sample analysis of 236 households reveals that population wise it is a backward caste dominated village that consists of around 95 per cent OBC, population, 2 per cent Scheduled Caste, 2 per cent Scheduled Tribe and only 1 per cent of unreserved population. Here,

merely 7 per cent of the population have availed the credit facility under KCC and the totality of the population is not covered under any form of life insurance. Among the surveyed population 61 per cent have enrolled themselves under MGNREGA program and seeks employment within the rural milieu. Many of the pucca houses in the village is recently constructed under PMGAY scheme, but even after that only 46 per cent of the survey population lives in pucca houses. About 61 per cent of the surveyed population has their own private toilets in their homes. These toilets are either constructed through themselves or through the support of the government under the “Swaccha Bharat Mission” programme. For potable water, the overhead tanks and pipeline network has been established in the Nagepur and its success can be realised from the data collected that depict 99 per cent of the surveyed households were covered with piped water. Total surveyed population have got the electricity connection. Rural electrification provides incentives for utilities that switch from fossil fuels to electricity as an end-use energy source. In Nagepur, two third of the surveyed population was found to be using LPG connection for their cooking necessities., which improve the health and safety of the total household. Quite similar to Jayapur, 90 per cent of the surveyed population have not faced distressed migration, which is an indicator that the economic opportunities are quite modest for the villagers and it can be interpreted as the presence and possibility of economic stability and independence, respectively, in the specific rural milieu.

The study undertaken in the ‘Model’ villages reveal not only specifics of those villages alone, but the system of beneficiary identification, demand location and community participation of the scheme. The abstract ideas when concretised in the process of charting the policy tend to reveal some opportunities of development and it is therefore of paramount importance to review the specific models of development for understanding the limitations and explore those opportunities. The capacity of the village to sustain its folks equitably is the first step of attaining ‘Gram Swaraj’ by the eradication of chronic poverty.

SAGY AS GANDHIAN ‘GRAM SWARAJ’

Policies have often been extensions of discernible ideologies with overt objectives to satisfy. The rural development policies in India mostly redress the effects rather than the factors motivating them. The lacuna in policy can be attributed to the ideological apparatus that has failed to understand chronic poverty and rural backwardness as the recurring phenomenon caused by the unevaluated primary factors. For example, poor infrastructure reduced economic activities in the village, but policies took it as the problem of unemployment and addressed it using the employment guarantee schemes, leaving the primary causes largely unanswered. With the introduction of the SAGY scheme, the Indian rural development policy has attempted to incorporate the holistic model of growth, arguably for the first

time. The emphasis on establishing the infrastructure such as roads, housing accommodations, toilets, primary healthcare system, water pipelines, electricity, centres for economic activities and their smooth maintenance has been the paradigmatic thinking of the scheme. This ideological apparatus of the scheme must be interpreted along with its objectives to realize its systemic strengths and further refinements for wider usage. The discourse pertaining to the holistic development of rural milieu has been the pivotal part of M.K. Gandhi's cultural politics, emanated through the 'Constructive Programme' for the Indian villages. The creation of a self-sustained rural community and its voluntary contribution to the nation building through the structural remodelling draw an unmistakable equivalence with the "Gandhian approach has always said about the voluntary wants, the need for self-sufficient village communities and issues relating to better balance between man and nature." (Pandey, A., 2008).

The developmental framework as seen in SAGY scheme is acknowledged by the policy makers to be in line with Gandhi's vision of an ideal self-sufficient village system. This approach holistically hypothesizes poverty to be a local and universal problem at once that needs material as well as an ethical apparatus in its course. Gandhian model of development, especially in context of 'Gram Swaraj', does not see material prosperity devoid of ethics. For Gandhi,

"True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics. An economics that inculcates Mammon worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life." (Gandhi, M.K., 1937).

Gandhian 'Constructive Programme' is not merely limited to politics or philosophy of development, rather it is a marriage between the conceptual model and its adaptation in the concrete life. This way, independence surpasses the political notion and presents development in all known fields of existence at once. In the scheme of things, the rural development through the community and voluntary participation takes precedence, as it is the native villagers who develop their own model to eradicate the palpable situation of their villages. In this respect, SAGY scheme becomes an umbrella term for the local heterogeneous models of development for the capacity and confidence building through the basic amenities and services in rural milieus, rather than any singular framework of development. This way, the assessment of the Prime Minister adopted villages in Varanasi is understanding of the holistic systemic changes undertaken and not merely stating the specific growth registered rather understanding a model in use.

In our survey, we found the present scheme to embody Gandhian ethical concerns in combating chronic poverty. In Jayapur, a Khadi Gramodyog centre has been established by a corporate unit under their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) intervention and the initiative is found to be totally women driven, with all women beneficiaries and the staff. It operates from 10 am to 4 pm with a total of 75 spinning wheels, where 80 women regularly make threads from cotton. Similarly, a Navkiran Sewing Center has been established by another corporate unit that offers a 6-months free training program with dedicated sewing machines, material and ancillaries free of cost. Nearly 30 beneficiaries from Nagepur are registered in the center and most of them get some form of employment with their sewing skills. Similarly, the digital education of the villagers is also taken care of through the Navkiran Computer Training Center that offers a certificate program in computer training approved by NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation) and this too funded by CSR. Till the date of survey, more than hundred certificates denoting primary digital literacy have also been distributed and many are on arrival and it predominantly covers the youth age bracket. Similarly, solar power plants of 25 Kilowatt and 12.5 Kilowatt have been established in the Patel Basti and Harijan Basti respectively, under the CSR responsibilities by the same corporate players. In totality, these two solar power plants supply the need of electricity to more than 600 households in the concerned village. Another great leap taken through SAGY is the housing accommodation for the Scheduled Caste 'Mushahar' community, who had no permanent accommodation or access to basic amenities such as health, sanitation and social security schemes prior to the adoption of Jayapur. There, with the establishment of 'Atal Nagar' in 2015, 14 one room pucca house accommodations, along with community garden, electricity, sanitation have been fully transferred to the 'Mushahar' households and the title deed bears the names of beneficiaries. The inclusion of a socially excluded group into the mainstream of rural life, while maintaining their cultural uniqueness shows that the 'Antodaya' or the welfare of the poorest is at the core of the scheme. Their palpable socio-economic status has been largely restored through the accommodation and inclusion and by building confidence at their present existence, generational poverty has also been significantly reduced.

In Nagepur, a Farmer Training Center is established under the CSR obligations of a public sector bank to aid the workforce predominantly employed in agricultural and manual labour. The Farmers' Training Center provides facilities such as non-chargeable soil testing, free 3 months computer training program for the educated girls and boys, free 3 months stitching and sewing training program for women, free consultation and training on advanced farming techniques, horticulture practices and so on. In the survey months, the Farmers' Training Centre in Nagepur was found to run training programs for improving the productivity and efficiency

technology for production of Moong in 'Jayed' season, technology for production of wheat in 'Ravi' season, Vermicomposting practices, water management in crop production, free training on animal husbandry and livestock management by scientists on a daily basis, free library facility for the villagers, weekly human and animal health check-up camps on village level and 'Mobile banking' facility in the nearby villages and so on. In the village more than 300 anticultural insurances have been disbursed and loans for nearly 30 Self-help groups, consisting 150 women, have been benefited from monetary support through special loaning schemes. Therefore, it is fair to say that the integration of the demand-driven services and community efforts within the rural development policy in these villages has paved the road towards some form of self-sufficiency for the eradication of Chronic Poverty.

Through the critical assessment of these villages upon getting SAGY adoption, it can be inferred that the primary requisites of Gandhian 'Gram Swaraj' are taken care of. Through the SAGY scheme the very sense of trusteeship too has been reconstructed as numerous corporate units have realized their Corporate Social responsibilities, especially in Jayapur. The combination of financial and logistic support from the corporate's end and the community efforts of the villagers have provided options beyond the centralised development. Envisioning a decentralized growth for the rural liberation is paved with the confidence building among the villagers and the scope grows beyond just modern services or amenities, but constructing villages as one complete unit from socio-economic perspectives. Thus, Benjamin Zachariah observed that the Gandhian model of development as, "the organization of the national economy around village-centered production by self-sufficient small producers. (Zachariah, 252) The structure of SAGY as seen in the development of the 'Model' villages reiterate Gandhian tenets of 'Gram Swaraj' that propagate economic gains to be insufficient until it is equitable among the different spheres of human existence, rich and poor, urban and rural. The social upliftment of all or 'Sarvodaya' is the ultimate objective to gratify through the intervention of holistic rural policies and the scheme of SAGY is an exemplary turn towards the same.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of SAGY has exploded the rural development discourses and policy-making in the Indian context with a multitude of practical opportunities for which the 'Model' villages can speak. The different modalities add some noble knowledge into the discourse and add dynamicity to the ever-changing needs of rural India. The scheme must be taken in relation to the other existing schemes and not in isolation as SAGY does not provide any specialised fund for development, but proposes for better utilisation of other existing schemes such as MGNREGA,

PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana), JJM (Jal Jeevan Mission), PMJAY (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) and so on. The approximation and better channelisation of existing schemes according to the demand driven growth as seen in the SAGY 'Model' villages of Jayapur and Nagepur bear the testimony of such a possibility. The latent structure of the scheme needs some strategic changes in form and the need for improved care in the case of the long-term functionality of services, information channel to the stakeholders and demand driven CSR interventions are felt in the analysis of the survey report. These can be adapted by enhancing the stakeholder identification and their voluntary participation in the schemes. The eradication of the chronicity of poverty is a long-term objective in itself and it cannot be rushed as the development in Gandhian terms is not an end but a life in its heterogeneous whole, with all the challenges and opportunities modestly retained. This way, the community participation in Jayapur and Nagepur is a journey towards the utopic 'Gram Swaraj,' while the ideal is at far and its plausibility can be questioned, but the holistic development growth witnessed cannot be refuted. Aided with a highly flexible model of development, the chronic poverty and the socio-economic vagaries of rural India can be curtailed through local or decentralised efforts and central oversight.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT INTERESTS

The authors of the paper declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and publication of this article.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Manhar Charan and Shail Shankar; data collection: Manhar Charan, Abhisek Mudgal and Alekh N. Sahu; analysis and interpretation of results: Manhar Charan, Debendra Nath Dash, Shail Shankar; draft manuscript preparation: Manhar Charan, Shail Shankar, Abhisek Mudgal and Alekh N. Sahu. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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ENDNOTES

- [1]. 64.61 percent of population in 2021, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources. Rural population (% of total population) – India | Data (worldbank.org)
- [2]. Introductory note in <https://saanjhi.gov.in/>
- [3]. Constructive Programme is a Gandhian coinage that denotes Poorna Swaraj or complete Independence by truthful and nonviolent means, where the theoretical tenets are brought into the social sphere to exercise the mass level. It consists of perspectives for education, rural upliftment, social service and appropriate technology.
- [4]. The name of the corporate unit that funded the said project or service under its CSR program is REC Foundation.
- [5]. The name of the corporate unit that funded the said project(s) or services(s) under its CSR program is Aavada Private Limited.
- [6]. The public sector bank that funded the said project is Punjab National Bank.



POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN OF WEAKER SECTIONS IN RURAL BIHAR: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF JEEVIKA (BRLP)

Rajeev Ranjan*

Abstract

The situation of weaker sections of a society cannot be improved unless they acquire place in politics. Several studies indicate that women's political participation has improved substantially since 2005, evident from increasing number of women in voters' turnout in general elections and their participation in local self-government bodies. Such studies indicate that the ensured entrance (reservation of seats) of women of weaker sections in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), role voluntary organisations and their desire to ladder up in society are the reasons of their increased political participation. On the other hand it has widely been claimed that the programmes like Bihar Rural livelihood Project (BRLP – commonly known as Jeevika) and Self Help Groups have played significant role in economic empowerment of women of especially weaker sections in rural Bihar. With this view in mind, the present paper intends to underline the role of BRLP in political empowerment women of weaker sections of rural Bihar. The study is based on secondary sources of data and finds that Jeevika has played significant role in facilitating women in taking self-assertive roles in political domain but they have to face challenges also.

Keywords: Political-empowerment, Women, Jeevika (BRLP), Identity, Influence, PRIs, Bihar.

INTRODUCTION

A few studies can be found exploring the reasons of their improved political participation. The SC women are the worst sufferer in Indian society and they bear

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the 'triple burden of caste, class and gender'. But situation may change if they are politically empowered. Some studies have found that owing to introduction of new panchayat raj institutions (PRIs) have paved way for the political empowerment of women of the most down trodden category, particularly in Bihar where fifty per cent of seats are reserved for women in all categories (say SC women too) since 2006. But it has been argued that entered into politics in one go has caused the proxy leadership among them – sometimes roles played on their behalf by male members of their family or males of dominants of the locality. The scholarship argue that with passage of time their situation has changed and they have started exerting self-assertive role in public affairs. Now the questions are – do women of weaker sections playing substantial role in political affairs at the grassroots level after entering into political institutions (PRIs)? What are the factors responsible for enhanced political participation among women? Has the scheme like Jeevika implemented by Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society empowered women of weaker sections? In what way the Jeevika empower women politically? What are – the factors leading to their (women of weaker social categories) political empowerment?

In view of these quests, the present paper assesses the modes in which Jeevika scheme facilitate women of weaker sections to play roles in political domain. The analysis in the present paper based on secondary sources of data collection. The paper examines the role of Jeevika scheme in developing modes of political empowerment among women, like building social capital, leadership capabilities, advocating their rights, substantial participation in local bodies, seeking accountability of institutions, political consciousness, raising voice with collective identity etc.

WOMEN'S POSITION IN BIHAR POLITICS: TRENDS BEFORE 21ST CENTURY

Globally speaking women have been prey of capitalism and patriarchal dominance. The Western philosophers like Aristotle, Rousseau etc. did not believe in the equality of women with men, particularly in political arena. However, the feminist movements and introduction of human rights in their favour vibrated women for political roles. The basic aim of feminism at the starting point was to prove, convince and believe that women were also rational beings. Mary Wollstonecraft in her '*Vindication of the Rights of Women*' attacked Rousseau for proposing different education for girls and boys. The noted liberal philosopher, John Stuart Mill forcefully presented the feminist thought in his article '*On Subjection of Women*'. He believed in the principle of perfect equality without giving privilege to either side. Later on Karl Marx established that capitalism and patriarchy are similar patterns and go hand in hand. Women can attain free status only by the removal of capitalist system. Margaret Benton held the orthodox view that the Industrial Revolution

excluded women from the public sphere and confined them to the private sphere. The later radical feminists believed that a woman should enjoy her womanhood. Alexander Kolantai raised the issue of women's rights, in context of wingless love, in the communist ideologies.

Women in Bihar society have been subjugated, deprived and oppressed for ages through institutionalized methods. But in the wake of feminist movement and socio-economic developments, women's roles in social and political domains have gradually improved, especially from last quarter of 20th century. Political participation means the involvement in the decision-making process and voluntary involvement in political activities, like casting votes, contesting elections for a political or administrative office etc. Let us examine the trend of voters turnout and contestants among women of Bihar during last quarter of 20th century. Though increasing gradually, the trend of women voters turnout remained well behind their male counterparts. Viz. women contesting Lok Sabha Elections from Bihar was meagre such as 12 each in 1967 and 1971, 9 each in 1977 and 1980, 16 in 1984 and 13 in 1989. So far the women voters turnout is concerned, it was 40.7 per cent in 1967, 37.0 per cent on 1972, 41.6 per cent in 1980, 43.8 per cent in 1984 and 50.1 per cent in 1989 as compared to male voters turnout was 61.8, 60.0, 54.5, 60.1 and 69.7 per cent respectively in the corresponding years. However, the actual women voters turnout was much below the official figures owing to impersonation and electoral malpractices (Verma: 1986). So far Assembly elections is concerned, there were 59 women contested in 1980, 96 in 1985 and 122 women in 1990 as compared to over thousands of male contestants. The success ratio among women candidates was more disappointing (Verma and Yadav: 1996) evident from the fact that 63 per cent of women contestants got forfeited their security deposits in 1980 as compared to 64 per cent in 1985 and 74.6 per cent in 1990. The overall success has been on the decline since 1980. The success percentage was 14.4 in 1980 which came down to 9.8 per cent in 1990. The study by Verma & Yadav (1996) argues that if the re-election of a woman candidates to the assembly for consecutive terms is taken as an indicator of women survival in politics, it was found that the women contestants who consecutively won the elections for two or three terms, largely belonged either to affluent sections of society or elites of SC category. But the trend changed sharply since Assembly elections 1990 onwards. The following table-1 depicts the gap between women and Men voters turnout in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections for the period from 1962 to 1989.

Table 1: Gap between Men & Women Voters Turnout in General Elections

Election Years	Voters Turnout in LS Elections			Election Years	Voters Turnout in Assembly Elections		
	Women	Men	Difference		Women	Men	Difference
1962	32.8	55.4	(-) 22.6	1962	32.5	54.9	(-) 22.4
1967	40.7	61.2	(-) 20.5	1967	41.1	60.8	(-) 19.7
1971	36.7	60.0	(-) 23.3	1972	41.3	63.1	(-) 21.8
1977	50.8	70.0	(-) 19.2	1977	38.3	61.5	(-) 23.2
1980	43.9	58.9	(-) 15.0	1980	53.3	69.6	(-) 16.3
1984	49.1	67.5	(-) 18.4	1985	45.6	65.8	(-) 20.2
1989	50.2	68.9	(-) 18.7	1990	44.5	47.0	(-) 2.5
1991	49.4	69.8	(-) 20.4	–	–	–	–

Source: Calculated on the basis of Reports of Election Commission of India & CEO, Bihar.

<https://www.eci.gov.in/eci-backend/public/api/download?url>

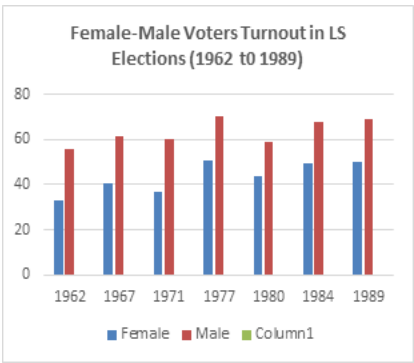


Diagram-1.a

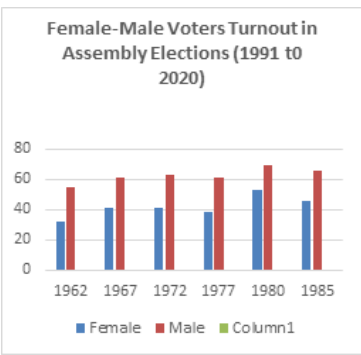


Diagram-1.b

CHANGES IN POST-REFORMS PERIOD

Though gap between women and men voters turnout began decreasing since 1991 the year of economic reforms, it finally over numbered their male counterparts since 2010. The previous highest voter turnout in assembly elections for men was 70.71% in 2000 and the women's voter turnout was 53.27%. The gap between in female-male voter turnout was marked narrowest (merely 2.5 % less than men) and started over numbering men since 2010. The voting percentage of men was 54.68% in 2020 and 59.69% for women. The voter turnout in Bihar in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections was 56.28%. The following Table 2 depicts the clear picture.

Table 2: Gap between Men & Women Voters Turnout in General Elections

Election Years	Voters Turnout in LS Elections			Election Years	Voters Turnout in Assembly Elections		
	Women	Men	Difference		Women	Men	Difference
1991	49.8	69.9	(-) 22.6	1990	53.2	69.6	(-) 16.4
1996	50.4	67.5	(-) 20.5	1995	55.8	67.1	(-) 11.3
1998	54.2	73.9	(-) 23.3	2000	53.3	70.7	(-) 17.4
1999	53.3	68.7	(-) 19.2				
2004	51.6	63.6	(-) 15.0	2005	44.5	47.0	(-) 2.5
2009	42.6	46.6	(-) 18.4	2010	54.5	51.1	(+) 3.4
2014	57.7	54.9	(-) 18.7	2015	60.5	53.3	(+) 7.2
2019	59.6	54.9	(-) 20.4	2020	59.7	54.4	(+) 5.3
2024	59.5	53.0		2025	To be held	Not held	To be held

Source: Calculated on the basis of Reports of Election Commission of India & CEO, Bihar

<https://www.eci.gov.in/eci-backend/public/api/download?url>

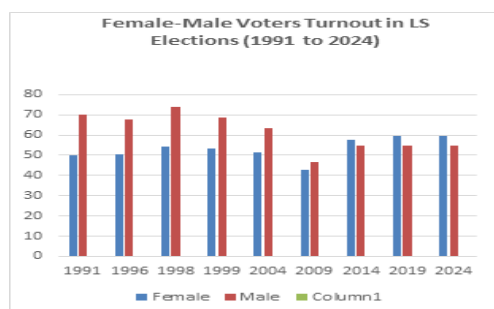


Diagram-2.a

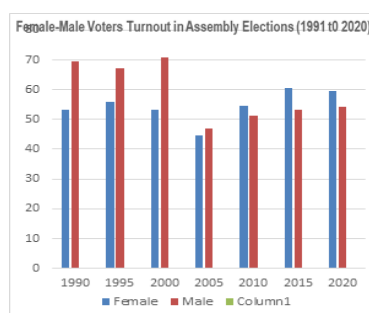


Diagram-2.b

The voters' turnout in general elections among women voters has sharply improved as compared to that of their male counterparts. So far their participation at the grassroots level politics is concerned, women were hardly visible. But with the introduction of new panchayati raj institutions, a large chunk of women entered into political arena through the provision of reservation, particularly after 2006 since when fifty percent of seats are reserved for women in all categories and at all tiers. In the initial years, these women were drawn from the traditional dominant families or proxy women leaders of poor categories. But with passage of time SC women began to exert political roles inspired by family members, community fellows, voluntary organisations and understanding of utilising their rights (Kumari: 2016). Several studies argue that SC women are more enthused to political opening than

that of women of upper strata of society. Political participation has been considered as any voluntary action employing legitimate methods to influence the choice of public policies, administration of public affairs or the choice of political leaders at any level local or national. The above discussion depict that SC women are getting politically empowered gradually.

ABOUT JEEVIKA (BIHAR RURAL LIVELIHOOD PROJECT)

Department of Rural Development, Government of Bihar launched the State Rural Livelihood Mission with a participatory mechanism in the year 2006. The Mission introduced Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (a registered society) as its implementation mechanism involving Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at grassroots level. It is a World Bank aided Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project (BRLP), locally known as JEEViKA with the objective of social & economic empowerment of the rural poor. Bihar Government commits itself for poverty alleviation through building, supporting and sustaining institutions of the poor and enhancing their livelihoods. The major objective of the scheme is to enhance social and economic empowerment of the rural poor in Bihar by Improving rural livelihoods, developing organizations of the rural poor and producers, Investing in capacity building of public and private service providers and playing a catalytic role in promoting development of microfinance and agribusiness sectors. It has covered 1.25 crore rural poor mobilized into 10 Lakh SHGs by the year 2017-18 (<<https://brlps.in/objective>>). The figure has grown substantially by 2024. It mobilizes women, including those from vulnerable backgrounds like Scheduled Caste (SC) communities, into SHGs for collective action and empowerment. The project empowers women of weaker sections through Livelihood Enhancement, Financial access, capacity building, socio-economic independence and so on.

According to a study, through their participation in BRLP, SHG women have developed social networks of their own both within their communities and beyond – this is significant social capital, particularly for economically and socially disadvantaged women. JEEViKA cultivated new cultural competencies and capabilities that defied the traditional conventions of gender, as well as more formal federated institutions. Combined, they give economically and socially disadvantaged women access to a well-defined network of people (women cutting across caste and religious boundaries, and both within and outside the village), new leadership roles and access to new systems of knowledge with which they can challenge old generationally transmitted cultural systems that are more concerned with preserving boundaries rather than disrupting them (Amrit: 2020).

ROLE OF JEEVIKA IN POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Several studies agree that the introduction of PRIs has sensitized women of weaker sections of society at large. They have become more capable in exerting roles in social and political domains. A study finds that the voluntary organisations have played significant role in empowering women and other weaker sections politically (Verma and Singh: 2001). Some studies find that SC women have been able to create social capital among them inspired by voluntary organisations in Bihar. This has made them to participate in political activities and decision making both at family level and PRIs level (Kumari: 2016 and Kumar: 2013). Here we are concerned with the role of Jeevika in empowering women politically at grassroots level.

Let us have an idea of mechanisms owing to Jeevika that facilitate women's political empowerment. It builds social capital, (collective accountability and raising voice) facilitates their participation in local governance, developing understanding of public accountability, fostering leadership capabilities, advocating rights, increased participation in decision making at household level, holding institutions accountable and so on. Kumar (2023) identifies three modes through which women are politically empowered by Jeevika project – namely, (a) it facilitates them to interact with women in Jeevika group, create social capital and discuss issues, (b) making several Jeevika didis (women) to contest panchayat elections inspired better networking among them and (c) women from lower castes mostly participated in Jeevika groups.

Jeevika facilitates women to participate in local governance. Chibbar (2002) argues that *Jeevika* women are more likely than other women in the panchayat context to contest local body elections. *Jeevika* women who were taking on an identity not associated with the household were more likely to participate in elections. Several *Jeevika didis* before participated in the ward member elections. Ward member elections are considered a favorite because they required fewer resources and is a conglomeration of households in the panchayats. The wards' jurisdiction is small – the size of a hamlet, which enabled accessibility for *Jeevika* women in a context where women are only allowed to visit the neighborhood. Moreover, most of the *Jeevika* women were averse to political affiliations. Although, these women are usually invited to attend political rallies of the incumbent Chief Minister of Bihar. Women's group have been reeling under an elite capture and impact the lower caste women to access this elite capture.

The Jeevika didis are groomed as community resource persons (CRPs) who mobilise weaker section women. It is estimated that by 2020 80,000 CRPs from SHGs were trained in social mapping. The project promotes inculcating principles of planning (especially micro-planning) in them, as result they participate in decision making process in public domain. The project develops the ability to

self-representation and self-determination, particularly against male bastion. The members of SHGs and VOs attached with Jeevika have acquired the position of political constituency, fought panchayat elections and won sizeably. A sizeable number of Jeevika didis take up responsibilities of public distribution system both as dealers and keeping surveillance over malpractices in food distribution. Through their participation in BRLP, SHG women have gained a voice in their communities. Creation of an identity beyond the gender roles has been empowering. The feeling of belonging to a women's development program has also increased their influence, or agency. Amongst the women members, the impact is most evident on the Community Resource Persons (CRPs), a cadre created from the community to mobilise women into SHGs and implement and oversee other strategies of the project (Amrit: 2020).

The scholarship argue that household economic heft brings bargaining power and autonomy to them from gender bias. Therefore, economic resources, individual identity, diminishing gender norms make them avail the quota in PRIs in more self-assertive role taking (Brule & Gaikwad: 2021 and Chibbar: 2002). A world Bank study conducted by Dutta (2020) finds that after joining Jeevika, women's participation in house hold decision making increased evident from 5 per cent increase in inspiring women to visit health care centres and attending Gram Sabha meetings. 18 to 20 per cent more women have a say in the political preferences of the households. Contribution in house hold economy by them has also abled them a greater say in family. The study further found that cow ownership to them has brought social prestige and they are counted as wisdom among the development community that efforts targeted at women yield more far-reaching and holistic development outcomes.

EPILOGUE

The above discussion depicts that women's political participation has gradually increased in post-reforms period and overridden the males' participation since 2010. Two major factors have been found responsible for their improved political empowerment, first, increased reservation in PRIs for women since 2006 and introduction of various women friendly schemes launched by Bihar Government under leadership of Nitish Kumar. Jeevika project under Bihar Rural Livelihoods Mission implemented by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society has been proved the most promising step towards women empowerment in Bihar. The Jeevika has not only empowered women in economic sphere but also in their political empowerment. It has facilitated women's political empowerment in the ways like building social capital, (collective accountability and raising voice), facilitating their participation in local governance, developing understanding of public accountability, fostering leadership capabilities, advocating rights, increased

participation in decision making at household level, holding institutions accountable and so on. Finally, our paper establishes improvement in entrepreneurship and economic independence have made them able to exert self-assertive roles in political affairs, especially in panchayat raj institutions as well as raising voice for their cause. The present study suggests to conduct the comprehensive studies to trace the roles of Jeevika project in political empowerment of women of weaker sections.

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ACCESSIBILITY OF JUSTICE FOR MARGINALIZED DALIT: A STUDY OF PATHERWA VILLAGE OF KUSHINAGAR DISTRICT

Amarnath Paswan*

Abstract

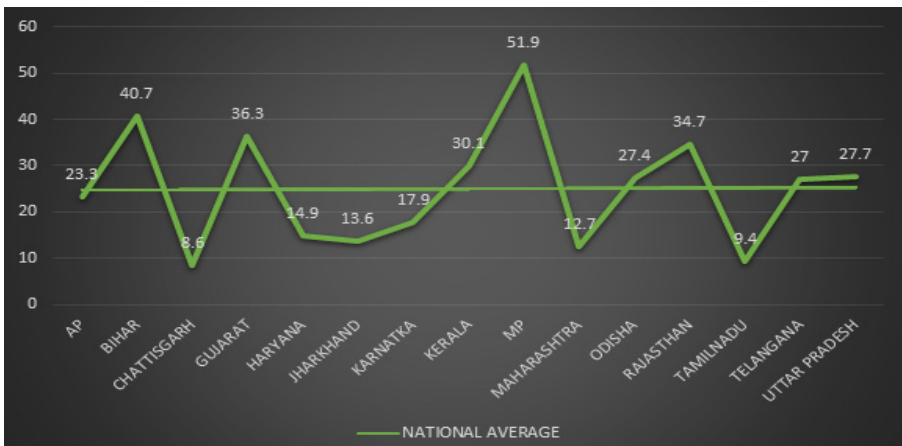
In every democratic society, the foundational prerogative of access to justice emerges as a cardinal constituent, ensuring the provision of impartial and equitable treatment for every individual within the established legal framework. However, this right remains elusive for a significant portion of the population – the Dalit communities socially marginalized and downtrodden. The present study delves into the nuanced dimensions of justice accessibility for marginalized Dalit communities, with a specific focus on Patherwa village situated in Kushinagar district of Uttar Pradesh. It aims to evaluate the current state of justice accessibility for Dalit individuals and pinpoints the major barriers impeding their access to justice. For this, it employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews, and secondary resources such as Government reports, media reports and relevant legal and research documents. Our findings depict that Dalit community is not well at getting justice due to the hurdles like the limited awareness of legal rights among Dalit communities, the influence of socioeconomic barriers, the inadequacies in legal infrastructure in marginalized areas, and disparities in legal representation. In conclusion, the situation raises the issue of justice accessibility for these communities is not merely a matter of legal reform but a question of social justice and human rights. The present study further goes to suggest that it is high time to address awareness gaps, combating socio-economic barriers, compensate infrastructure deficits, and disparities in legal representation.

Keywords: Dalit, Justice, Accessibility, Legal-awareness, Socio-economic Barriers, Legal Aid, Kushinagar, UP.

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INTRODUCTION

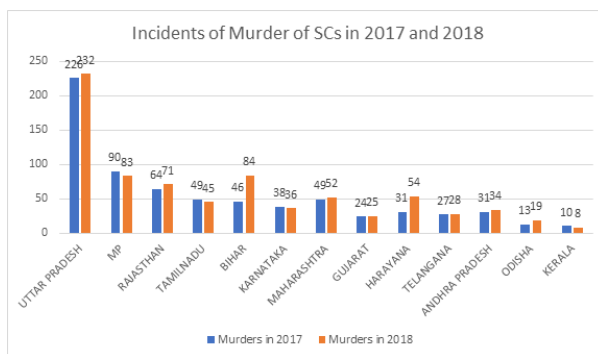
The Indian Constitution offers specific safeguards for Dalit individuals to fulfil the commitment to ensuring fundamental human rights. Since lack of education is a wider issue among the Dalits which has resulted in making them face injustice and discrimination in all aspects of their lives. They are discriminated based on their identity due to the work they are engaged in and the caste within the social structure they belong to. Dalit community faces social and structural exclusion from accessing justice. Dalits in the country are deeply concerning, accompanied by formidable challenges in securing justice at various stages. They face challenges at the time of lodging complaint, at the time of registration of FIR, at the time of arrest of the accused, when the police officials investigate the case, at the time of Charge sheet, at the time of trial in the Court and at the stage of Judgment. It can be assumed that due to increasing assertion by Dalits on their Rights and entitlements have resulted in further increase in atrocities against them. On the other hand, they face challenges in accessing legal services, or claim to occupation of their choice, or getting just and fair wages, or enjoy their right to dignity and self-respect. The atrocities against them range from verbal abuse, physical assault, socio and economic boycotts, torture, custodial violence, rape and even mass attacks. Despite the politico-legal safeguards like constitutional provisions under Article 17 and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976 (PCR Act) and Rules, 1977, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (POA Act) and some administrative measures, the conditions of Dalits have not improved up to desired level. It is evident from the following Graph:



Graph 1: Rate of crimes against Dalits (2017) vis-à-vis National Average.

Source: NCRB Report-Crimes in India 2017 Statistics.

The national average of crime rate against Dalits in 2017 was 21.5 %. Nine states had higher crime rates than this average. These were MP (51.9 %), Bihar (40.7 %), Gujarat (36.3%), Rajasthan (34.7%), Kerala (30.1%), UP (27.7%), Odisha (27.4%), Telangana (27%) and AP (23.3%). These figures highlight the imperative for a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and the formulation of tailored policies to address the specific challenges contributing to higher crime rates in these states. The Indian government has provided two specific pieces of legislation, namely the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (PCR Act), and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 (PoA Act), along with their respective regulations. These acts are designed to ensure equitable treatment and justice for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The primary aim of both legislative measures is to implement affirmative action, fostering the empowerment of the SC/ST communities by eliminating discriminatory practices ingrained in the caste system that have historically marginalized these communities. It's been 34 years since the Indian Parliament passed these Acts. This legislation was enacted to curb targeted crimes based on caste and ethnicity against Dalits and Adivasis by non-Dalits and non-Adivasis. Before the POA Act, the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 (PCR Act) and the Indian Penal Code 1860 (IPC) were in place but were deemed insufficient in deterring such crimes. The POA Act introduced the category of "atrocities," establishing special procedures and courts to prosecute offenses committed against SCs or STs and imposing harsher penalties for those found guilty. Despite these protections, atrocities against Dalit communities persist. Research demonstrates that individuals or communities belonging to upper castes often perpetrate violence against Dalits. These acts are driven either by a desire to uphold existing socio-economic and power disparities or to suppress the Dalits' efforts to assert their rights and stake a claim to resources and opportunities for socio-economic advancement, including access to land, fair wages, and education.



Graph 2: Incidents of Murder of SCs 2017 and 2018.

Source: NCRB Report-Crimes in India 2017, 2018 Statistics.

Graph 2 shows the cases involving the murder of individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes by those outside this category has been incorporated into the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2017 data. In the year 2017, a total of 718 such incidents were recorded, involving 748 victims. The analysis indicates that Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of murder incidents at 226, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 90 and Rajasthan with 64, resulting in 233, 96, and 65 victims, respectively. Moving on to the year 2018, there were a total of 798 incidents involving 821 victims. Uttar Pradesh again reported the highest number of murder incidents at 232, followed by Bihar with 84, Madhya Pradesh with 83, and Rajasthan with 71, resulting in 239, 86, 87, and 71 victims, respectively. For centuries, Dalits have endured various forms of exploitation and demeaning practices, particularly the pervasive issue of “untouchability.” Recently, there has been a surge in crimes targeting Dalits in the country. These offenses range from compelling them to consume human excreta to physical assaults, severe injuries, arson, mass killings, and instances of both individual and gang rape perpetrated against Dalit women. Violence is wielded as a tool to subjugate and quash any resistance, aiming to safeguard and reinforce the dignity of the upper castes.

It can be hypothesized that the atrocities against them persist because of many reasons like hierarchical social structure of Indian caste system, limited awareness of legal rights among Dalits, socioeconomic barriers, the inadequacy of legal infrastructure in marginalized areas, disparities in legal representation, inadequate legal support in legal proceedings, etc. The present study intends to address the issue.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study adopts both primary and secondary sources of data collection. As primary source, it used the survey method by conducting interviews with the help of semi-structured schedule. Patherwa village of Kushinagar District in Uttar Pradesh was selected in view of its being the area where Dalits are more prone to atrocities. Dalits in the village have low income and engaged in either their traditional occupation like manual scavenging and sanitation work or agricultural and construction labour. 50 respondents (male and female both) were sampled using the purposive sampling method from Dalit community. The interviews were conducted in the local language, Bhojpuri. Each interview lasted for about 10–20 minutes on an average and the interview was audio-recorded for further use. Data were analysed using the thematic analysis method. The secondary data consists of books, journals, and other relevant materials relating to the justice accessibility for Dalit community.



Figure 1: Location of Patherwa village in Kushinagar District of Uttar Pradesh

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Dalits, who are supposed to exist primarily to serve the twice born castes, and who are regarded unclean, impure, and unworthy even of touch are compelled to deal with a variety of prejudices in the society. The structure of society has been very derogatory in nature for these communities, they have been deprived of many basic rights they are intitled to.

Societal Attitude towards Dalits

Caste-based segregation persists in India, with social interactions predominantly occurring within established caste hierarchies. Despite efforts to address this issue, the influence of caste continues to shape various aspects of Indian society, impacting relationships, opportunities, and access to resources. The deeply ingrained nature of caste dynamics can be observed in social gatherings, educational institutions, and workplace environments, where individuals often find themselves constrained by traditional caste divisions. In Patherwa village, Dalits think upper caste people are still driven by narrow consideration of caste hierarchy.

- The responses on the societal attitude towards Dalits are as follows:
 “We are denied our humanity; they view us not as people, but as if we are some animals. The prejudice runs deep, stripping away our dignity and reducing us to a status beneath humanity. Our struggle is not just for rights; it is a fight for recognition, for the acknowledgment of our inherent worth. The gaze upon us is not one of equals but that of

superiority, the dehumanization ingrained in their perception. In their eyes, we are not individuals with dreams and aspirations; we are seen as 'other,' relegated to a place where humanity is denied." (An educated Dalit respondent, Interview, Patherwa)

- Another Dalit person mentioned the following:
"We come into a world where our identity is predetermined by the caste of discrimination and stigma. Our birth is not a celebration but an entry into a life shadowed by the weight of historical biases. From the very beginning, our existence is known by societal hierarchies that relegate us to a status marked by discrimination. The stigma is not a choice; it's an inheritance thrust upon us. Each step we take, every dream we aspire, is coloured by the predetermined narratives of our caste. We live in a world that often refuses to see us beyond these imposed labels."

Awareness Gaps of Legal Rights

Dalits often lack awareness of their legal entitlements; they think legal system is very difficult to understand and time-consuming. This lack of knowledge creates a significant barrier, that many Dalits cannot seek justice. Some responses regarding this theme are as follows:

- "Justice seems like an alien concept to us; it's a system designed for the elites. The corridors of justice appear distant and exclusive, catering to a privileged few. We, the marginalized, feel like outsiders in a realm where fairness is meant for those with privilege. It's a system that often fails to resonate with the struggles of the downtrodden. Achieving justice feels like reaching for the stars, a distant dream made for others." (An old Dalit lady respondent, Interview, Patherwa)
- "The legal system, for someone like me, is puzzle that feels like persecution rather than protection. It's like walking on a road with barriers at every turn. If you get caught in its complexities, your life takes a downward spiral, almost like a ruinous descent. Then it becomes a struggle for survival, as the complexities of the legal process overshadow any hope for a fair resolution. The difficulty of the legal system becomes a formidable obstacle, especially for those of us who are already marginalized." (A daily wage labourer respondent, Interview, Patherwa)

Socio-economic Barriers

Socio-economic barriers severely impede their access to justice. Economic disparities often hinder their ability to afford legal representation, making the pursuit of justice financially burdensome. Discrimination in employment and

economic spheres confines many Dalits to low-income occupations, limiting their financial capacity to engage with the legal apparatus effectively. Moreover, societal prejudices further marginalize Dalits, that creates an environment where their voices are rarely heard within legal system. Some responses of Dalit members are as follows:

- “We live trapped in a web of social structure that strangle our hopes for justice. The weight of poverty is a constant burden, making the very idea of affording legal help seem like a distant dream. Limited access to education keeps us in the dark about our rights, leaving us vulnerable to exploitation. They do not give us jobs in offices, forcing us into low-paying occupations that barely sustain us, let alone fund a legal battle. When we dare to seek justice, our voices are drowned out by societal prejudices, leaving us feeling unheard and powerless.” (A Dalit lady respondent, Interview, Patherwa)
- “I have experienced exclusion in my whole life, sometimes I feel like leaving this place and starting a new journey with new identity, but it is impossible I know. I do not like when people ask my caste, they judge me. Even when seeking healthcare, there’s a noticeable difference in treatment, as if my concerns matter less. It’s disheartening to witness my children facing discrimination at school, I do not know when this system will come to an end. We have witnessed discrimination, but I don’t want my children to witness this, I don’t want them to be like me.” (A young Dalit respondent, Interview, Patherwa)

Infrastructure Deficits

The physical distance to legal institutions creates a lot of problem, it becomes challenging for Dalits to engage with the justice system. In Patherwa village, people say any legal awareness programme is not conducted, leaving many uninformed about their rights and the avenues available to them. Furthermore, the dearth of Dalit representation within legal institutions contributes to a sense of alienation. This infrastructure deficit not only hampers the pursuit of justice but perpetuates a cycle of inequality for Dalits in Patherwa village. Rule 11 of the PoA Rules provides for every victim of atrocity or witnesses to be paid to and fro rail fare by second class or actual bus or taxi fare from his/her place of residence to the place of investigation or hearing of trial of an offence under the Act. It is the duty of the District Magistrate or the Sub-Divisional Magistrate or any other Executive Magistrate to make the necessary arrangements for providing transport facilities or reimbursement of full payment thereof to the victims of atrocity and witnesses. Despite having the above provision to support the victims and witnesses, the gaps in non-implementation can be seen. The lack of awareness among the Dalit victims about their entitlements and ignorance among the concerned authorities need to be addressed, even if they are aware of the provision of entitlements some key

reasons for the gaps in implementation of this provision can be seen. In practice, Dalit victims are summoned to the courts by the investigating officers without any information in writing, and in the absence of documentary proofs, they cannot claim reimbursement for travel and daily allowance. The State government has also failed to create awareness about these entitlements among the Dalit communities by, for example, explicitly publicising information in the premises of the police stations and courts and through other media.

- “In our village, the legal system for Dalits is like a distant mirage. We don’t have legal aid centres or accessible community resources to guide us through the complexities. The absence of awareness programs means we are often unaware of our rights, when they will not tell us about our rights then how we will know them. We are like outsiders in a system that should protect us. We are very powerless sir, no one listens to us.” (A young Dalit respondent, Interview, Patherwa)

Table 3: State wise Pendency of Cases by Courts in Year 2017

S. No.	States	Total No. of Cases Investigated	Pending Cases in Courts
1.	ANDHRA PRADESH	4414	2975
2.	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	0
3.	ASSAM	13	8
4.	BIHAR	11069	32949
5.	CHHATTISGARH	327	851
6.	GOA	20	21
7.	GUJARAT	1630	8388
8.	HARYANA	865	874
9.	HIMANCHAL PRADESH	140	338
10.	JAMMU & KASHMIR	0	2
11.	JHARKHAND	1487	1535
12.	KARNATAKA	2723	7388
13.	KERALA	1467	2159
14.	MADHYA PRADESH	6380	16616
15.	MAHARASHTRA	2511	8280
16.	MANIPUR	1	3
17.	MEGHALAYA	0	0
18.	MIZORAM	0	0
19.	NAGALAND	0	0
20.	ODISHA	3258	8615

S. No.	States	Total No. of Cases Investigated	Pending Cases in Courts
21.	PUNJAB	193	126
22.	RAJASTHAN	4759	12232
23.	SIKKIM	6	3
24.	TAMIL NADU	2004	4234
25.	TELANGANA	2506	2070
26.	TRIPURA	1	1
27.	UTTAR PRADESH	13023	40274
28.	UTTARA KHAND	133	139
29.	WEST BENGAL	296	2797
	TOTAL	59,229	15,2878

Source: NCRB Report -Crimes in India Statistics 2015 to 2018.

Despite the establishment of several Special Courts across the country, there remains a substantial backlog in the adjudication of cases involving crimes against Dalits, as indicated in Table 3. Analysing all forms of crimes against Scheduled Castes from 2015 to 2017 reveals a noteworthy trend. It is notable that there was an escalation in the pendency rate in courts, rising from 89.6% in 2016 to 91.7% in 2017 and 93.5% in 2018. Dalit people are not getting justice despite their legal rights, because there is some deficit in the legal system. These legal systems have not effectively addressed the challenge of Dalits. These findings underscore the insufficiency of the current number of Exclusive Special Courts in ensuring justice for victims of atrocities.

- “They have purposefully kept us marginalized; they do not see us worthy of doing anything. It’s their deliberate act, so that we remain distant from the opportunities and privileges they take for granted. They don’t want us to rise; they fear us breaking free from the chains of oppression. We are not allowed to be like them, to share the same spaces or dreams. Some of them are very good but some people have a primitive mindset. They still oppress us, and we do not have a stringent legal system that can protect us.” (A Dalit boy respondent, Interview, Patherwa).

DISPARITIES IN LEGAL REPRESENTATION

The lack of fair representation for Dalits in the legal system is a big problem. In Patherwa village, Dalit’s representation is very low due to their caste factor. This underrepresentation means that Dalit litigants often face challenges in getting their voices heard in the court. It’s very important to have a legal system that

truly represents everyone and doesn't perpetuate biases against marginalized communities like the Dalits.

"Our pleas for help often fall on deaf ears. When we approach authorities with our problems, sometimes their attitude seems very rude. They accuse us of fabricating stories and label our genuine concerns as mere 'bogus arguments.' The trust we place in the justice system is shattered when they refuse to even lodge an FIR, leaving us stranded in the face of injustice. This lack of empathy perpetuates a cycle of invisibility, where our genuine grievances are swept aside, and we are left in this hostile world alone." (An old Dalit respondent, Interview, Patherwa)

- "Justice seems to have a price tag that we can't afford. I have seen it firsthand, where those with money effortlessly seek justice, while we struggle just to be heard. I remember a fellow Dalit, a neighbour, who faced blatant discrimination at work. When he sought justice, he quickly realized that the legal battle required resources he didn't have. Lawyers demanded fees that were beyond his means, and court proceedings was very difficult. This isn't just a single instance; it's a pervasive truth in our community. The notion that justice is bought and not served is a bitter pill to swallow." (A Dalit male respondent, Interview, Patherwa)

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this research illuminate the intricate challenges faced by Dalits in Patherwa village, shedding light on persistent issues such as caste-based segregation, awareness gaps in legal rights, socioeconomic barriers, infrastructure deficits, and disparities in legal representation. These themes collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of systemic challenges that hinder the Dalit community's access to justice, perpetuating historical inequalities. Caste-based segregation remains a prevalent concern in India, as evidenced in the social dynamics of Patherwa village, where interactions largely occur within established caste hierarchies. The narratives shared by Dalit respondents suggest that upper-caste individuals in the village still adhere to traditional considerations of caste hierarchy, reinforcing a social environment where Dalits feel marginalized.

Societal attitudes towards Dalits, as revealed by the respondents, portray a pervasive prejudice that denies them their humanity. They describe experiencing a dehumanizing gaze, with others viewing them as less than equals and, in extreme cases, even likening them to animals. These accounts underscore the need for societal transformation to dismantle discriminatory attitudes and maintain social harmony. A critical barrier to justice for Dalits is the awareness gap concerning their legal rights. The research findings indicate that many Dalits lack awareness of their entitlements within the legal system, viewing it as difficult to understand and time-

consuming. This knowledge deficit serves as a significant obstacle, preventing many Dalits from seeking justice effectively. The disparity in legal awareness emphasizes the need for targeted legal education and awareness programs to empower the community with the requisite knowledge. The societal prejudices faced by Dalits create an environment where their voices are seldom heard within the legal system, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and reinforcing systemic biases. Infrastructure deficits within the legal system also contribute to the challenges faced by Dalits in accessing justice, the absence of legal aid centers and awareness programs creates barriers that hinder effective engagement with the justice system. The lack of representation within legal institutions further contributes to a sense of alienation for Dalits, limiting their ability to deal with the legal system confidently. The research findings reveal that the lack of fair representation often results in dismissive attitudes, skepticism, and, at times, a refusal to lodge an FIR. The narratives depict a legal system where justice appears to be a privilege reserved for the wealthy, perpetuating a sense of powerlessness and reinforcing the notion that justice is a commodity that can be bought rather than served. In conclusion, the research findings paint a nuanced picture of the challenges faced by Dalits in Patherwa village in their pursuit of justice. Caste-based segregation, societal attitudes, awareness gaps, socioeconomic barriers, infrastructure deficits, and disparities in legal representation collectively contribute to a pervasive sense of marginalization and hindered access to justice. Addressing these systemic issues necessitates a comprehensive approach involving legal education, awareness campaigns, economic empowerment, and initiatives to enhance inclusivity within the legal profession. The narratives shared by Dalit respondents emphasize the need for transformative measures to ensure that justice is not only accessible but also equitable for all members of society.

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EXPLORING FIXED VERSUS GROWTH ORIENTED MINDSET¹

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Abstract

A sample of 200 postgraduate students volunteered to respond to a 40 item questionnaire, which was designed to explore whether they organize their mindset in the fixed or growth oriented sets of beliefs and if so, what are their correlates and antecedent conditions. Results confirmed the presence of discrete categories of fixed or growth oriented sets of beliefs. Most of the respondents believed to have a growth oriented mindset. Growth oriented mindset was associated with a tendency to self-aggrandize in helping friends, aspiring, and achieving success. It was also related to peace seeking behavior and a sense of satisfaction. Enabling milieu consisting of adequate facilities for education and health care as well as low levels of corruptions facilitate the growth oriented mindset. The generalization of the findings, however, requires further investigations employing multiple measures, larger samples, and diverse life domains.

Keywords: Enabling environment, growth oriented mindset, fixed mindset, and self-aggrandizement.

INTRODUCTION

There is a controversy that dates back to the 17th century, and yet it refuses to be resolved. Galton (1875) sharpened it in terms of the role of human *nature versus*

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nurture for explaining individual differences in intelligence. Rationalists of that period sided with the nature while empiricists argued in favour of the nurture in shaping human abilities (Fancher, 1996). Nature was defined as consisting of all that humans bring with themselves at the time of their birth whereas nurture meant the totality of influences that they are subjected to after their birth (Galton, 1874). The former stands for the determining impact of genetic factors while the latter advocates for the primacy of the influences of person-environment interactions. In other words, the controversy pertained to whether human intelligence is wholly determined by genetic factors that can hardly be modified by subsequent human efforts or it is cultivated and evolved in the process of humans encountering environmental demands and gaining success in their efforts.

Some studies (e.g., Calvin et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2009; Vernon, 1969) sided with genetic factors while others (e.g., Plomin et al., 1997; 2008) were more inclusive. In the latter ones, it was argued that both genetic and environmental factors jointly determine the extent of intelligence. According to them, genetic factors provide a general frame of individual differences in intelligence, setting up strict limits to the extent that it can be improved by efforts in meeting the challenges of the environment and serving one's striving for better performance. This was specifically exemplified in Spearman's theory of G-S (General and Specific) factors of intelligence. While general intelligence is primarily determined by the genetic makeup of individuals, who can enhance their specific abilities, S-factors, by their efforts. General intelligence is the foundation on which specific abilities are built as edifices, which still reflect the impact of the basic abilities. Probably, the inspiration for positing the jointly determined view of intelligence was drawn from the evolutionary view of human development. Humans, of course, evolve biologically, though slowly over generations. However, they also cultivate and improve their adaptive skills and other psychological functions for meeting the compelling demands from the social and physical surroundings (Buss, 2019; Chiappe & MacDonald, 2005). That is, both genetic and environmental factors determine human characteristics such as intelligence as adaptive skills.

The controversy regarding the duality of intelligence was revived again by Dweck (2006) referring them as fixed versus incremental entity of intelligence. The researcher, however, shifted the focus from intelligence as such to the beliefs about their abilities either being fixed or expandable. By shifting the focus from intelligence to beliefs about it, Dweck raised the controversy into the realm of mindset. A mindset is a broader construct that does not only include abilities, but also other entities such as dispositions, beliefs, norms, and action orientation. Intelligence still remains as the core of the belief that it can or cannot be increased further than what individuals get at the time of their birth (Dweck & Legett, 1988). Dweck (2015) contended that a fixed mindset is the belief that individuals are born

with certain invariant characteristics, which cannot be altered by experiences. That is, the ones who have higher levels of abilities and talents will succeed without much trying. On the other hands, those having low levels of abilities and lesser of talents have to live with their compromised dreams irrespective of how much they struggle. The fixed mindset is a fixed and unchangeable perspective (Dweck, 2019) whereas a growth mindset is human abilities which are not fixed but may be developed over time. Fixed beliefs mean that good or bad will happen automatically, others cannot be blamed for their failures or credited for their success, they have to live with whatever, sufficient or insufficient, knowledge and understanding they have, and so on. On the other hand, growth oriented mindset consists of the beliefs that humans can increase their abilities, success comes from efforts, hard work can lead to more achievement, failures must instigate more efforts, individuals can achieve a lot if encouraged to do so, individuals should look for opportunities to learn and seek out challenging tasks, and so on. Growth oriented mindset has been found to lead to success in a variety of life domains (e.g., Dweck, 2006; Yeager et al., 2019) such as sports (Zanin et al., 2020), business (Canning et al., 2020), situation dependent (Dweck, 2017), academic achievement (Bahník & Vranka, 2017; Costa & Faria, 2018). Failure, on the other hand, found to be related on the fixed mindset (Akin & Radford, 2018).

Following Dweck's formulation, individuals can be categorized having primarily either fixed or growth oriented mindset, or both in equal strength. For example, those having fixed mindset about basketball skills could have growth oriented mindset about mathematics (Dweck, 2006). Sinha (2014) postulated that Indians have an amalgam of consistent, discrepant, as well as contradictory ideas in their mindset. It implies that Indians can have both - fixed as well as growth oriented beliefs, values, and action orientations in equally available strength, which they can selectively retrieve in response to a specific situations. The issue needs to be empirically examined in order to ascertain whether fixed and growth oriented mindset are discrete categories to which samples of Indians differentially belong. If that is so, a corollary issue has to be addressed by exploring the antecedent conditions that lead to the formation of either fixed or growth oriented mindset. Stimulating and challenging background can facilitate growth oriented mindset. For example, educated parents or those having challenging job in private sector, urban compared to rural upbringing, adequacy of infrastructure where they live, and so on can facilitate the process of cultivating growth oriented mindset. Additionally, the very nomenclature, fixed versus growth oriented, rings a bell: Growth is socially desirable while fixed is static that is less desirable in this changing world. Such a connotation can make individuals fake having growth oriented mindset and deny having actually fixed mindset.

The present study aims to examine these issues by testing the following hypotheses:

1. Fixed and growth oriented mindsets are discrete categories to either of which the respondents primarily belong.
2. Stimulating environment is conducive to cultivate growth oriented mindset.
3. Growth oriented mindset is susceptible to social desirability orientation.

METHOD

Sample

The sample comprised of 200 postgraduate students from different colleges of Hajipur and Patna district of Bihar (India) who were willing to participate in the study. Their average age was 23.23 ($SD = 2.14$, range of 19 to 31) years. They were predominantly girls (55.50%) with urban background (60.50%). Their fathers were either in government jobs (28.50%), business (24.50%), farming (21%), or private companies (15.50%) being either non-matriculates (11.5%), matriculates (32.5%), graduates (40.5%), or postgraduates (15.5%). About ten per cent of them were not working. They belonged to either general (28.50%), backward (23.50%), schedule (23.50%) and other backward castes (11.50%). A large percentage of them belonged to joint family (60.5%) and reported to belong primarily to middle (82%) with some in low (13%) economic classes.

Measures

The questionnaire that the respondents completed consisted of three parts.

Part 1 had 40 statements that two experienced psychologists had jointly prepared in Hindi. Most of the statements pertained to either fixed or growth oriented beliefs with some items tapping respondents' orientation to present themselves in socially desirable ways. A few additional statements, unrelated to fixed and growth oriented mindset, were added as a check of the response set in rating fixed or growth oriented statements. Respondents rated them on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). Two items for each of four categories – (a) fixed mindset, (b) growth-oriented mindset, (c) social desirability, and (d) response set – are given below:

Growth-Oriented Mindset

I learn from mistakes; success comes from hard work.

Fixed Mindset

It is difficult to change my mind; whatever knowledge I have, is enough for me.

Social Desirability

I try to be nice in front of others; I want people to think good of me.

Unrelated Statements

I have variety of ideas in my mind; I use them differently on different occasions; I like peace of mind very much.

Part 2 consisted of the items assessing respondents' perception of how stimulating the place where they were currently living in terms of adequacy of educational, transportation, entertainment, and medical facilities, good law & order, satisfactory water supply. Respondents were asked to rate items very bad (1), bad (2), so-so (3), good (4), and very good (5) in response to each item. Similarly, respondents rated items related to less of noise, corruption, and harmonious social relationships very high (1), high (2), so-so (3), low (4) and very low (5). Again a 5-point scale was used. However, the alternatives had different nomenclature to suit the items.

Part 3 collected the background information of the respondents asking their age, upbringing in rural or urban setting, fathers' education (Matric, Graduate, Post-graduate, others), their occupation (farming, government job, private companies, business, and others), family being joint or nuclear, castes (General, Other Backward Castes, Schedule Castes or Tribes). Respondents were also asked the percentage of marks obtained in the last examination (Achievement) and the percentage that they expect to get in the next one (Expectations), Expectation-Achievement score for each respondent led to create their Aspiration level, generating a set of three scores – *Achievement*, *Expectation*, and *Aspiration* – of each respondent for relating them to the fixed and growth oriented mindsets. The questionnaire was prepared in Hindi and data were collected from May to June 2024.

RESULTS

Structure of Mindset

All statements were analyzed to check if any one of them had any alternative that 75% or more respondents endorsed in order to eliminate them from further analysis. None of the statements was eliminated. So, the responses to all 40 statements were subjected to a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and the factors were rotated to the Varimax solution employing the criteria that Eigenvalue should not be less

than one and the factor must have acceptable reliability coefficients ($\alpha > 0.60$). The rotated factors were converted into a simple structure. First, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (Kaiser, 1970) measure was applied to test the sample adequacy for applying the factor analysis, $KMO = 0.68$, which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.50 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2 (780) = 2066.49$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that correlations between statements were sufficiently large for principal component analysis. An initial analysis (SPSS-21 version) was run to obtain Eigenvalue for each component in the data. Results were reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Factor Structure of the Mindset

<i>Factor 1: Growth Oriented Mindset (N = 10, $\alpha = 0.82$, $V=12.30$, Eigenvalue = 4.92)</i>				
<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
08	I learn from mistakes.	0.62	4.50	0.77
10	When I fail, I find my faults.	0.61	4.33	0.85
17	If a friend of mine gets discouraged, I boost his morale.	0.60	4.34	0.81
12	Success comes from hard work.	0.59	4.47	0.88
09	I want to learn new things all the time.	0.57	4.35	0.89
01	I do not give up on failure.	0.57	4.38	78
02	Having done well in the examination, I want to do even better	0.57	4.46	0.72
11	I can do anything if my elders encourage me.	0.53	4.19	1.03
16	I encourage my colleagues to try harder.	0.52	4.27	0.79
04	I like to do challenging work.	0.49	4.24	0.82
<i>Factor 2: Fixed Mindset (N = 8, $\alpha = 0.70$, $V = 8.96$, Eigenvalue = 3.58)</i>				
<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
30	I try to be nice in front of others.	0.59	2.65	1.30
36	It is difficult to change my mind.	0.53	2.37	1.22
27	I always agree with others.	0.52	2.11	1.15
39	One will get what is in destiny.	0.51	2.65	1.41

24	A person with a sharp mind does not need to try again.	0.46	2.07	1.06
33	Whatever knowledge I have, that is enough.	0.46	2.03	1.24
35	I am afraid of success of others.	0.43.	1.68	0.97
25	When I have an estrangement with a partner, I blame him only.	0.41	2.23	1.15
Factor 3: Self-Aggrandizing Mindset (N = 4, $\alpha = 0.52$, V = 5.85, Eigenvalue = 2.34)				
Item Number	Items	Loadings	M	SD
26	I am always ready to help a friend.	0.57	4.05	1.03
29	I am intelligent; I will do well in the examination.	0.52	3.82	1.04
37	There is no limit to achieve success through effort.	0.45	4.20	0.99
07	For sightseeing, I like to go to new places.	0.42	3.83	1.17
Factor 4: Satisfied Mindset (N = 3, $\alpha = 0.31$, V= 4.71, Eigenvalue = 1.91)				
Item Number	Items	Loadings	M	SD
20	Whatever is to be good will happen automatically.	0.55	2.82	1.30
23	I make good relations with whom-ever I want.	0.41	3.33	1.16
14	I am satisfied with what I achieve.	0.41	3.27	1.25
Factor 5: Blaming Mindset (N = 2, $\alpha = 0.25$, V = 4.53, Eigenvalue = 1.81)				
Item Number	Items	Loadings	M	SD
22	I have to suffer for the mistakes of others.	0.54	2.60	1.14
15	I hesitate to increase affinity with new people.	0.41	2.85	1.27

Table 1 showed five distinct factors of beliefs; the first two were the most robust ones in terms of their pattern, number of items and reliability coefficients. As expected, they were growth oriented ($\alpha = 0.82$) and fixed ($\alpha = 0.70$) mindsets. The growth oriented mindset had large number of items having acceptable loading and high reliability. It also had larger mean value ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.51$) than the fixed

mindset ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.67$) and the difference between them, the dependent t-test was highly significant $t(199) = 34.32$, $p < .001$, $r = -0.08$.

The growth oriented mindset consisted of the beliefs that one learns from mistakes; in case of failure, one seeks out the reasons; boosts morale of a friend who fails; believes that success comes from hard work; wants to learn new things; and prefers challenging work; and so on. Those who have fixed mindset find it difficult to change their mind; always agree with others; blindly belief in destiny; do not need to try hard for success as they have sharp mind; think to have enough knowledge for what they need, and so on.

The other three factors of mindset, though having distinct configurations, had less than acceptable reliability coefficients and had only a few items with acceptable loadings. Factor 3, Self Aggrandizing Mindset, characterized those who are always ready to help a friend, they think that they do well in the examinations because they are intelligent, they can achieve success through efforts, and they like to go to new places for sightseeing. Factor 4, Satisfied Mindset revealed in beliefs that whatever is to be good will happen automatically; satisfaction with achievements, and orientation to make good relations. Factor 5: those with a Blaming Mindset hesitate to have close affinity with new people and blame others for their own mistakes.

CORRELATES OF GROWTH ORIENTED AND FIXED MINDSETS

There were a few items which had cross loadings, but none of them had acceptable levels of loadings (≥ 0.40) on both fixed and growth oriented factors negating the postulate of Sinha (2014) that even discrepant and contradictory beliefs coexist the same mindset. In fact, the growth oriented mindset and fixed mindset were configured independently of each other. There still remained a question whether the two discrete factors co-varied with the remaining three forming over-arching frames to function in tandem when situations so require. The issue was addressed by inter-correlating the factors of growth oriented and fixed mindsets with self-aggrandizing, satisfying and blaming mindsets. The study had also proposed to check if any contamination of the growth oriented and fixed mindsets with social desirability and response set. Social desirability did not emerge as a distinct factor. Hence, the four items that had contents of social desirability were combined and averaged. They were the following: making good relations with a person of liking; always agreeing with others; trying to look nice in front of others; and wishing others to think positive of me ($\alpha = 0.32$). In order to check the response set, two items of anxiety were combined and averaged. They were being nervous in doing something new and getting anxious in new situation ($\alpha = 0.79$). One more item, peace seeking orientation, was also used for the check up of response set. Thus,

the growth oriented and fixed mindsets were also correlated with the variables of social desirability, anxiety, and peace seeking mind. The findings were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean, SD & Coefficient of Correlations Among the Factors of Mindset.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mindset</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>Growth Oriented</i>	<i>Fixed</i>		
Self Aggrandizing Mindset	0.25**	0.01	3.97	0.68
Satisfied Mindset	0.22**	0.10	3.14	0.80
Blaming Mindset	0.08	0.25**	2.72	0.91
Peace Seeking	0.18*	0.12	3.90	0.80
Anxiety	-0.02	0.24**	3.20	1.15
Social Desirability	0.12	0.54**	2.94	0.68

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, $N = 200$

Table 2 indicated that the respondents having growth oriented mindset tended to remain satisfied and peace seeking, but they did boast of being always ready to help friends; sure of doing well in the examination because they are intelligent, convinced that they have no limit to success through efforts, and eager to go to new places for sightseeing. Social desirability and anxiety were not related to growth oriented mindset. The respondents with fixed mindset tended to blame others for their failures and did not want to affiliate with new persons. They were also tended to be anxious and defensive in presenting themselves in socially desirable ways.

ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS

There were three sets of antecedent conditions that were examined to see whether they contributed to the fixed and growth oriented mindsets. The first was 10 items about the perception of the place where respondents live. The second asked the respondents to report the percentage of marks that they obtained in the last examination and what do they expect to get in the forthcoming examination. Responses of the two yielded three measures: *Achievement*, *Expectation*, and *Aspiration* that was computed by subtracting the first from the second. The third set was aimed to check the background of the respondents in terms of their age, father's education, and occupations, and so on. Respondents' perception of the place in living was subjected to factor analysis employing the same principle, method, and criteria for accepting orthogonal factors. The findings were reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Factors of Environment

<i>Factor 1: Enabling Milieu (N = 3, $\alpha = 0.71$, V = 18.07, Eigenvalue = 2.17)</i>				
<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Condition of educational institutions	0.80	3.81	0.93
2	Medical facilities	0.77	3.64	0.96
5	Law & order situation	0.66	3.15	0.93
<i>Factor 2: Ease in Living (N = 4, $\alpha = 0.60$, V = 15.23, Eigenvalue = 1.83)</i>				
<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
9	Condition of noise in localities	0.77	2.82	1.06
10	Corruption in society	0.72	2.17	1.06
7	Relationship with neighbors	0.53	3.01	0.92
8	Availability of water	0.51	3.86	0.96

Perceptions of the places yielded two viable factors: Enabling Milieu consisting of adequate educational and medical facilities and good law and order. The second factor, Ease in Living consisted of low levels of noise at the place of living, low levels of corruption in the society, and sufficient supply of water for domestic use. It is of interest to see the pattern of relationships among different factors of mindsets, enabling milieu and ease of living, coefficient of correlations have been computed. The findings were reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean, SD & Coefficient of Correlations among Environmental & Factors of Mindset.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mindset</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>Growth Oriented</i>	<i>Fixed</i>		
Enabling milieu	0.22**	-0.01	3.53	0.75
Ease in living	0.14	0.00	3.38	0.49
Achievement	0.08	0.02	3.79	0.69
Expectation	0.25**	-0.11	4.36	0.83
Aspiration	0.15*	-0.11	0.58	0.99

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, N = 200

Table 4 displayed that *Enabling milieu* was found to contribute significantly to growth oriented mindset $r(198) = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$. Fixed mindset was unrelated to

either of the factors ($rs, p > 0.05$). Growth oriented mindset was positively related to expectation to get higher percentage of marks $r(198) = 0.25, p < 0.01$ as well as higher aspirations $r(198) = 0.15, p < 0.05$. It was unrelated to achievement. Fixed mindset was not related to any of the three: *Achievement, expectation, and aspiration* ($rs, p > 0.05$). In fact, its correlation with expectation and aspiration was negative $r(198) = -0.11, p > 0.05$. None of the background factor variables such as, gender for growth oriented $t(198) = 0.31, p > 0.05$ and fixed $t(198) = 0.96, p > 0.05$, rural or urban setting, fathers' education, occupations, castes, types of family etc did not differentially affected the two mindsets. It was because the majority of respondents were growth minded and majority of them were females, from urban background, belonged to the joint family, and most of them (over 82%) belonged to middle class. The findings of Macnamara and Rupani (2017) did not find gender differences in growth mindset. Similar results were also found by Sigmundsson et al. (2020). However, females showed higher mean scores than men on growth mindset.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Two findings stand out: Fixed and growth oriented mindsets were discrete clusters of beliefs and most of the respondents reported having the growth oriented mindset and disowned having a fixed mindset. They believed that success comes from hard work, tended to learn new things and failures ignited them to make more efforts, they encouraged friends to try again when they failed; preferred challenging work; and so on. The fixed mindset that they disowned was associated with the beliefs that it is difficult to change one's mind; natural to agree with others; people get what they have in their destiny; and intelligent persons succeed without trying hard; the knowledge they have is enough to get what they want in life; and so on. Those having growth oriented mindset were also had aggrandizing tendency to claim that they were always ready to help friends, being sure of doing well in examinations because they were intelligent, explore new places for sightseeing, and so on. They were also satisfied, peace seeking, and oriented to make new friends. The fixed mindset was associated with a tendency to blame others for own mistakes and unwillingness to develop affinity with new persons. Responses to the growth oriented items were not contaminated by social desirability. Rather it was the fixed mindset items that were associated with it. Enabling environment was reported to lead to growth oriented mindset, but other demographic variables did not have any impact. Thus, hypothesis 2, growth oriented mindset is contaminated by social desirability, was rejected while hypothesis 3, it was not affected by response set, was accepted, and the most critical hypothesis 1, fixed and growth oriented are discrete categories of mindset, was retained too.

The findings of the discrete categories of mindset and the most respondents claiming to have a growth oriented mindset apparently negated Sinha's (2014) conceptualization that Indian mindset has amalgam of consistent, discrepant, and contradictory ideas, which are not exclusively arranged in rigid categories. He contended that the ideas are retrieved and organized according to their relevance to specific situations. However, the negation should not be considered conclusive till some related relevant issues are adequately addressed.

For example, while responding to a similar controversy, whether Indians are individualists or collectivists, Durganand Sinha and Tripathi (1994) pointed out that opposites have always coexisted simultaneously in Indian culture. They prepared 22 life events and goals. Respondents were asked to choose from triplets (instead of Likert type scale) either a collectivistic, an individualistic, or "Both" option. Over 86 per cent of the respondents endorsed both, that is they were both collectivists and individualists behaving in collectivistic ways in certain situations and individualistic ways in certain other situations. This finding reinforces Sinha's contention that Indian mindset is situation specific; ideas can be configured in either homogenous or heterogeneous sets. The growth oriented mindset in the present study was an exemplary case of situational specificity.

Respondents were all postgraduate students who have climbed the academic ladder from matriculation and were gearing up for their final examination that will lead to their exploration for jobs. The success behind and the job search ahead indeed is invested with lots of efforts hardly let them rest in belief of destiny or previous achievement. Naturally, such a state of mind strives to make efforts, not to get discouraged by failures, and keep trying for success. They had high expectations and aspirations from their final examination. Over 80 per cent of them came from middle class and urban background. Middle class urban Indians have struggled hard to rise on socio-economic ladder, but realize that they have to struggle and compete further to keep on rising up (Pandey, 2012). All these factors might have sensitized them to present themselves as growth oriented persons. Anderson (2019) suggested that students in developing growth mindsets could not only help them in enhancing academic performance but also aid in improving the capacity to deal effectively with a range of life challenges.

The finding of the present study is unequivocal, but is valid only for the kind of sample employed in the study. Its generalization to Indians at large will require further studies employing multiple methods, diverse samples, and different domains such as work, family, social, religion, and leisure. This is a beginning of a long journey.

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LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN COLONIAL INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF DEGREE OF AUTONOMY AND POWER-SHARING

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Abstract

The representative local self-government, despite not being practiced in England, was initiated by the British rulers in India. A pertinent question arises here – why did British rulers introduce the local self-government in India? What legal arrangements, they made from time to time say from East India Company rule to rule of British crown? What necessitated them to involve native Indian representatives in managing the local affairs? Beyond these questions, we hypothesize that it was because of our traditional system of managing the affairs and resolution of conflicts at local level by local elders, may it be by informal institutions inherited from ancient times. The present paper intends to examine the gradual institutionalization of rural and urban local bodies during British rule and to trace the legal arrangements made by them which provided base for the present participatory local self-government in India.

Keywords: Local Self-Government, British Rule, Resolutions, Reforms, Laws. India, Bihar

INTRODUCTION

It is claimed that local-self-governments especially Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India are the models of more decentralized democratic system than that of any other developed country (Verma: 2009). The decentralized administration of local affairs in India has its roots in ancient period, from Vedic period. During the Vedic period, Aryavart (Bharat) was the centre of best administration, education and trade of its time. Village administration was the primary unit of government

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evident from study of tamrapatras (inscriptions engraved on copper plate). It is claimed that with emergence of civilized society begins with local administration as Vedas depict that saints attempted to make public life happy by 'sangh shakti' (power of organization) at village level and in turn the creation of society or nation and in turn (Panchayat Sandesh: 1981). There are evidences of 'gram sabhas' consisting of representatives of people who later contributed to the macro level organisations for management of the state affairs as mentioned in Atharva Ved (section 8/10/1/8). These institutions were known as gramsabha, samiti and amantran panchayat. The system were applied by Chola and Pandeya dynasties in south India. Vedas depict that these panchayats were elected bodies and decisions were taken by majority opinion. The members known as 'padwahak' were not elected by majority vote but by consensus on the basis of merits like wisdom, skills, reason, integrity, impartiality etc. (Singh: 1987). The people maintained mutual respect, harmony and sympathy ('प्रियोनो अस्तु विष्पतिर्होता मन्द्रोवेरण्यः। प्रियाः स्वप्रथा वयम्॥ Rigved: 2/26/7). These panchayats performed three kinds of functions namely, development, governance and justice. Similarly in religious literature like Ramayan and Mahabharat the village administration was looked after by 'gramini' or 'mahattar' the head of panchayat who was considered as an important officer for the king (Sarg 14 verse 40 and 52 in Ayodhya Kand of Valmiki Ramayan). These graminis used to play roles in central assembly also. Similarly in Mahabharat 'paur' or 'paur vridha' were the village level heads who were autonomous institutions for local affairs as per Bhishma Parv verses 35 to 39 (Singh: 1987). As per Kautilya's Arthshastra, written during 300 BC, the village level governance was looked after by kul, Shreni and 'Gram-Vridhdh'. They performed the three functions - legislature, executive and judiciary - at village level. The 'sangrahnai courts' were at the lowest level. The gram-vridhdh resolved all the conflicts by their wisdom (Shamasastri:1915).

The institutions of local self-government gradually disappeared by the Moughal period. However, the informal institutions of panchayat existed at the village level in which the local affairs, especially the conflict resolution were done by the elders of the villages. Though these informal institutions existed in medieval period yet these institutions had no legal sanction by the then rulers, The local governors like *subedar*, *mansabdars*, *sarkars* etc. normally did not interfere except for collection of rents and other taxes (Char: 1983).

In the backdrop of the above description of local self-government in ancient and medieval periods, it becomes an imperative to examine the initiation and evolution of local self-governments in modern times especially during British rule and also analyse the reforms in the context of autonomy to elected representatives of local self-governments and participatory characters of the local self-governments during the British rule. It will also be important to mark the changes brought between

Company rule and rule of Crown since 1858. Further, the present paper traces the responsible factors of introducing local self-governments by British rulers.

PERIOD OF COMPANY RULE

The Company rulers felt difficulties in managing finances and local level affairs. Over centralisation of collecting revenue and taxes became a tough work for higher officials as such, they required support of such locals who were committed to Britishers. Further, they wanted to reduce the burden of expenses in providing civic amenities on their treasury, as these bodies were empowered to collect taxes for local facilities. They also needed the better civic facilities for economic contacts of Europeans and smoothening the trade and other administrative functions. They required local administration at par with European countries. Secondly, the nationalist feelings among Indians began to grow during the renaissance period which inspired the rulers to provide amenities and involvement of Indians in administration at least at local level. Association of Indians in administration, to them, would be proved as weapon to check the increasing politicisation. The involvement of Indians in administration was made through nomination modes who were under control of District Collectors, office of which was created by then. This was helpful for District Collectors to smoothen the tax collections. In other words, these institutions became another effective tools of tax collection.

The idea of creation of local government was limited to urban areas or big cities. First of all the Company itself established Madras Corporation and a Mayor's court in 17th century (1687 Charter). Later in 18th century itself the East India Company established corporations in presidency towns namely, Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. These corporations consisted of Britishers and Indians which managed the urban issues and provide minor privileges to Indian members. The Charter of 1726 introduced the organised local self-government with model of British municipal system. These Corporations were led by Mayors and supported by alderman (high ranking members). The Charter allowed East India Company to create laws (by-laws), manage trade, collect revenue and administer justice for its employees as well as inhabitants of such urban localities

These corporations served as foundational structure for British Administration. Mayors were conferred judicial power also. The Charter made a provision of subordinate legislation by these three corporations. Each Corporation consisted of one Mayor and 9 aldermen. Mayor was to be elected every year by aldermen from among themselves. Mayor had power to nominate vacant post of alderman from principal inhabitant of the town. Governor-in-Council had power to remove any alderman on any reasonable cause. The charter made provisions of a Mayor's Court for each of the presidency which functioned as the Royal courts wielding

power from Crown with the system of appeals from the courts in India to King-in-Council or Privy council in England. The Mayor's court consisted of Mayor and two aldermen which had authority to hear and try all Civil suits arising within the town and subordinate factories. However, criminal cases were tried by Governor-in-Council. The procedures of criminal justice was same as that of English criminal justice in these Presidency towns. It is to be made clear that the Charter did not make any provisions of rural local self-government rather it was specifically concerned with establishing a uniform system of royal courts and corporations in the three British Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. The Directors of East India Company opined, "contrive a form of a Corporation to be established, of the Natives mixed with some English freemen, for aught we know some public use might be made thereof; and we might give the members some privileges and pre-eminences by Charter under our seal, that might please them (as all men are naturally with a little power); and we might make a public advantage of them, without abating any part of our dominion when we please to exert it." (Singh et al: 2010).

PERIOD OF RULE OF BRITISH CROWN (POST 1858 PERIOD)

Although Lord Rippon's resolution is taken to be magna carta of Panchayat system in India, yet Mayo's resolution of 1870 is the main take off point for rural local self-government in British India. Mayo's resolution was a key step in devolution of finances and legislative affairs. It allowed the provincial governments to manage their own budgets by assigning them revenues and control over the affairs of education, sanitation and roads with power to levy taxes to meet the costs. It proposed the provincial governments to raise local funds and improve local administration. All these facilitated the state government to move towards reforms in local self-government and making them financially responsible. Finally, the resolution emphasized serving the local interest, conducting supervision and taking care of local subjects.

Lord Ripon evaluated the progress of the local self-Government since 1870. The Resolution not only initiated the legislative devolution on state governments but facilitated conceptual shift towards local self-government and provided foundation of the stage for Lord Ripon's more explicit resolution in 1882, often called the "Magna Carta of Local Self-Government," which sought to build truly representative local bodies. The then Viceroy of India, Lord Ripon introduced elected municipalities and district boards with Indian representatives instead of nominated officials to manage local affairs and decentralising power and fostering civic responsibilities. He is regarded as 'father of local self-government in India'. Main features of Ripon's resolutions are – first, decentralisation of power from central to local levels and inclusion of Indians therein, second, elected members of wards and districts instead

of nominated officials, third, granted local people with authority over local affairs (civic amenities), four, provided political education and foster civic responsibilities to Indians and finally, the laying the democratic foundation at grassroots level. All these helped fight for independence among Indians (<https://www.tnrd.tn.gov.in/reports/firstsfcr/english/1-2.pdf>). He took care of the autonomy both the rural and urban local affairs - the district boards were for rural areas and municipalities for urban areas. He introduced mandated majority of elected non-official members and chairpersons in local bodies. He further entrusted these local bodies with managing health, education, civic facilities and roads etc. Lord Ripon's resolution said, "It is not, primarily, with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education." (as quoted in Char: 1983). Not only this, Lord Ripon, proposed substantial financial autonomy and powers to raise revenue for them. His resolution was applied across the country including Bihar. It provided the structural framework for modern municipal corporations and panchayats, influencing the development of local administration in Bihar's cities and villages. The step of Ripon facilitated emergence of leadership at grassroots level in Bihar villages.

It was felt that the situation of growing inefficiency in administration was due to over centralised decision making system under British rule and financial crunch. With a view to improve financial relations between central and provincial governments and subordinate authorities and effectivity of administration, the British Government appointed a Commission under the leadership of Sir Henry William Primrose with an Indian Member R C Dutt to suggest reforms. It is known as **Royal Commission on Decentralisation 1907** which submitted its report in 1909. In its report the Commission put emphasis on strengthening local bodies (both panchayats and municipalities) and giving them more power to foster local responsibility and better adapt governance to local conditions. It was considered as a significant step in conceptualising local bodies and administrative reforms. The Commission diagnosed the inadequate funding for local bodies as a crucial impediment for poor performance and suggested to give more administrative autonomy which would entail more financial autonomy.

In case panchayat bodies, the Royal Commission recommended a) empowerment of village Panchayats for faster resolution of minor disputes in order to relieve the district courts of burden of cases, b) enable village panchayats to control and supervise school infrastructure and support administration of primary level education at village level, c) panchayats should have responsibility of management of small water reserves and ensure the network between government and people, d) it recommended to establishment of Sub-District Boards at Taluk level so that these could function as intermediary governance between the district

and village levels. These Boards should play a critical position in rural governance by overseeing numerous administrative functions and ensuring the efficient delivery of services on the grassroots level (Singh & Singh: 2022).

In case of municipalities, the Commission recommended – a) municipalities should get hold of normal grants-in-useful resources from regional governments, enabling them to undertake obligations without heavy relevant interference, b) For larger projects, including water supply and drainage systems, the provincial government should offer direct help, allowing municipalities to devote their resources on other crucial service, c) giving responsibilities of primary education and, if feasible, middle vernacular education and d) municipalities should be relieved of different duties like secondary education, hospitals, police, famine response, and veterinary care so that it might focus on primary local concerns (Singh & Singh: 2022).

Another significant step was Government of India Resolution 1915. Among other resolutions, resolutions on local self-government, though discussed the issue of decentralisation of powers to local bodies at length, yet endorsed the recommendations of Royal Commission. The decentralization resolution showed the British reluctance to devolve real power to Indian local bodies. In other words, it acknowledged the decentralisation of power to local bodies but implemented minimal changes. The resolution (1915) failed to recommend substantial power to local self-governments. As result, the local self-governments remained weak and depended on state and other higher authorities. Further, the Resolution of May 1918 did also review the local self-government in light of the 1917 announcement on constitutional advance. It suggested making local bodies as representative as possible with real authority vested in them.

Considering the recommendations of Royal Commission, Morley-Minto Reforms 1909 resorted to expand the election process that influenced the local bodies also. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) had also substantial impact on local self-governments. The Government of India Act 1919 introduced the diarchy system in which the subject of local self-government was transferred to Indian Ministers responsible to provincial legislatures, marking a significant step towards greater autonomy to local self-governments.

The Simon Commission in May 1930 did also note that there was poor progress in village panchayats bodies in terms of decentralisation of power to them. However, the Commission marked some progress in certain provinces. It suggested increasing provincial control over panchayat bodies for efficient functioning and felt that these bodies were reluctant to impose local taxes which hampered the financial soundness of panchayat bodies. It also criticized the deterioration in financial management of local bodies, particularly since Morley-Minto Reforms. Government of India Act

1935 empowered provinces to legislate on local governments allowing for more substantial local autonomy.

CONCLUSION

As our primary aim is to assess the degree of autonomy, we found that the local self-governments in Company rule did not, in fact, intend to share power with Indians. It will be evident from the fact that the first elected local bodies were not elected or representative in any systematic way. Instead, colonial administrators would nominate some chosen Indians and Europeans to share power in the municipal councils. However, the situation seems changed in period of post 1858. It was also clear that local self-government was part of a policy to share power with Indians in the management of the towns and cities of colonial India particularly from Ripon's proposal of 1882 and further strengthened by Government of India Resolution 1915. The Resolution on local self-government was clearly enunciate the logic of decentralisation, making the 'political education' and co-option of Indians were central to the project of local self-government. Finally, one can easily conclude that although Local self-government under British India initiated as a means for efficient administration, it evolved gradually, providing Indians with a degree of participation in governance. The system evolved over time which granted greater autonomy to provincial governments and further enhanced the development of local self-governing institutions. Local bodies provided Indians with valuable experience in governance and served as a precursor to the democratic institutions that emerged in post-independence period.

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REFUGEES IN INDIA: AN EXAMINATION OF POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Anil Kumar Maurya* and Abdullah Nasir**

Abstract

India is one of the preferred refugee destination especially for those coming from neighbouring countries. However, India has no uniform law to deal with the refugees and neither it is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. India has adopted an adhoc administrative policy to accord protection to refugees. In the absence of any uniform law, India has chooses to treat incoming refugees based on their nationality, religion and political consideration. This has serious implication on the rights of refugees and discrimination between refugees themselves. This paper critically analyze the India's domestic refugee policy and it's obligation under international law and ascertain whether to what extend India is fulfilling its international law obligation. The paper also looks into the role of judiciary and human rights instutitons in protecting the rights of the refugees in India. The paper argues that India should become become a party to the Refugee Convention, 1951 and enact a domestic legislation in accordance with its commitment under international law.

Keywords: India, Refugee, Non-refoulement, Asylum Seekers and UNHCR.

INTRODUCTION

In general terms refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. Predominantly the international instruments, municipal statutes have

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identified refugees as a person who had crossed international borders owing to well-founded fear of persecution (Shacknove: 1985). The definition propounded at the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951 appears to be the norm.¹ However, the conventions core elements were shaped having regard to the circumstances in which the convention was adopted and it has produced unintended consequences against the different circumstances of modern refugee crisis. For the convention obligates the state parties only for non-refoulment but does not require them to affirmatively take in asylum seekers. As a result various states have adopted the approach to prohibit the initial entry of asylum seekers into their territory in order to avoid any duty which may arise toward refugees (Ormsby: 2017). Even those countries which are obligated under the 1951 Convention, faces the challenges of assessing the claims of asylum seekers. Establishing a credible account of their experiences in the country of origin becomes extremely complicated due to lack of documentary proof in many cases (McDonald: 2014). It also leaves the states to widely using their discretionary powers in assessing such claims. The definition of “refugee” adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is the only salient challenge to the proposition that persecution is an essential criterion of refugeehood (Shacknove: 1985). This definition incorporates various other components to define a refugee.²

Seeking refuge in another country or fleeing the country of origin is a continuing phenomenon. Even before the world war II, the League of Nations had established the Office of High Commissioner for Russian Refugees to address the issues of Russian citizen fleeing their country due to persecution led by Bolshevik regime (Hathaway: 1984). As per the latest data available at UNHCR, at least 82.4 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes. Among them are nearly 26.4 million refugees, around half of whom are under the age of eighteen. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement.

India also stand among the most prominent nations to receive refugee influx in the world. As of 2020, the data from World Bank shows a total of 1,95,403 refugee living in India. At the same time many other organisations have report the number of actual refugees much more higher in India (see reports of Right and Risk Analysis Group, 2021 and UNCHR). India’s multi ethnic, multi lingual relatively stable society in South Asia has made it a default choice for asylum seekers. Tibetans from Tibet, tamils from Srilanka, Jumma people from Bangladesh, other refugees from Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, Afganistan, Pakistan, Iran comprise the bulk of India’s refugee population (Nair: 1997). India although accommodates huge refugee population but it does not produce refugee. Despite the severity of protracted violence there has been no noticeable exodus of people to any of neighbouring

countries from India. In a way, India produces a horde of internally displaced person sometimes in large scale, who are scattered in many corners of the country depending upon the nature, magnitude and place of violence (Lama: 1998).

A cursory look at the traditions and history, India's record in accepting refugee populations appears magnificent and attractive. However, till this date India has neither signed the 1951 Convention relating to The Status of Refugees nor it has enacted a refugee specific legislation. Many have argued that the absence of specific law is attributed to India's volatile situation in South Asian politics and threats of terrorism faced by it (Sarker: 2017). India has accorded differential treatment and varying degree of protection to the refugees belonging to different countries.⁴ In May 2021, the Union ministry of home affairs (MHA), whose constitutional validity has yet to be decided by the Supreme Court of India, began inviting applications for Indian citizenship from non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan seeking refuge in India after passing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

In the absence of specific law, India address the refugee issues under general laws relating to foreigners. However, application of these laws do not guarantee the treatment of which refugees are entitled under accepted norms of International law (Sagar and Ahmed: 2005). A refugee may face detention as soon as he illegally crosses international border into India for violation of Passport Act, 1967, Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners Order, 1948 (Ibid.). Moreover, treatment of refugee through ad-hoc administrative mechanisms has left more space for administrative bias and discrimination and the application of law relating to foreigners may not make a difference between refugees and foreigners as separate classes (Sarker: 2017).

The most significant piece of general legislation applicable to refugees entering India is the Foreigners Act, 1946 under which Central Government is empowered to make rules to regulate the entry, presence and departure of foreigners.⁵ However, the policies and rules framed therein are extremely hollow and leave wide discretion to the executive. The unrestricted power of the executive to remove foreigners was first confirmed by the Supreme Court in 1955 in the case of *Hans Muller vs. Superintendent, Presidency Jail, Calcutt* (AIR 1955 SC 367), held:

“The Foreigners Act confers the power to expel foreigners from India. It vests the Central Government with absolute and unfettered discretion and, as there is no provision fettering this discretion in the Constitution, an unrestricted right to expel remains.”

INDIA'S INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Although India has not signed the 1951 protocol but its duties towards refugees under International law cannot be said to non-existent. It is for the reason that India

being a member of United Nations is duty bound to follow the rules of customary international law. The principle of non-refoulment has been regarded as part of customary international law (Chimni: 2000). The principle of non-refoulement is the very foundation of the refugee regime. According to this principle, state is under an obligation not to return the refugee to their country of origin where the fear of persecution still exist. Article 33 of 1951 Refugee Convention emphasizes on principle of non-refoulement. However there are two exceptions to the application of non-refoulement provided under 33(2) of 1951 Convention, i.e. firstly, there must be reasonable ground that particular refugee is danger to national security of state and secondly, when person is convicted by final judgment of particular serious crime, constitute a danger to the community of asylum state. As far as India's practice on non-refoulement is concerned, it has largely followed it. There have, been exceptions to the rule, where india has deviated from the norm of non-refoulement, especially in matters of so-called 'national security.

Apart from refugee convention of 1951, there is a significant number of international treaties and conventions which bind a state party to disallow unequal treatment of non-citizens including refugees. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, etc. have been accepted as a non-derogable norm under the International Law. India's accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), The Convention on Rights of Child (CRC), The International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), The Convention against all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), etc. makes a perfect case for respectful treatment of refugees (Sarker: 2017). Apart from these conventions, India is also a party to Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), 1948 of which Article 14(1) specifically says "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." It does not grant individuals an absolute right to asylum, but it does obligate the state where asylum is sought to scrutinize the application for asylum. India's respect, positive commitments and duties towards refugee in international law is amplified due to the directive principles of the state policy wherein Indian constitution expects that the state shall endeavour to "foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another." (Art 51(c).

Despite the India's practice towards refugees, question still arises about the binding nature of customary international laws when it is in direct conflict with Indian laws applicable to foreigners. However, a ground does exist for separate treatment of refugees and foreigners. While a state has unfettered powers to control entry, stay and deportation of a foreigners, customary international laws expects the state parties to adopt more humane approach towards people in distress and need.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS DEALING WITH REFUGEES

The Constitution of India is a unique and transformative documents which inculcates various international norms such as principles of non discrimination, protection against arbitrary detention, freedom of movement, right to shelter, forced labor, etc. in different provisions (Mahajan: 1984). Hence, in India, almost all the basic refugee rights have got constitutional recognition (Kumar: 2001). These rights are: equality before the law (Article 14), protection in respect of conviction for offences (Article 20), protection of life and personal liberty (Article 21), the right to education (Article 21A), protection against arrest and detention in certain cases (Article 22), prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labor (Article 23), prohibition of employment of children in factories (24), freedom of religious practice and so on (Articles 25–28). It is important to mention that most of the judicial decisions relating to refugees revolves around Art. 14 and 21 of the Constitution. Under Indian Constituion even a foreigner has a right to invoke Article 14 and he cannot be discriminated against within the territory of India. It is the responsibility of the state that it does not discriminate between refugees on the basis of race, religion and country of origin. However, it may be noted that an alien cannot claim equal rights under Article 14 with that of the Indian nationals. The Supreme Court of India in *Louis De Raedt v. Union of India* (AIR 1991 SC 1886), has ruled that the fundamental rights of the foreigner was confined to Article 21 and a foreigner cannot claim, the right to reside and settle in India, as stated in Article 19(1)(e).

APPROACH OF JUDICIARY

Among the hierarchy of judicial orders, the trial courts are the first one who are directly involved with refugees. Immediately after detention, the refugees are produced in the trial courts and tried under abovementioned laws in the absence of refugee specific law. In the absence of wide discretionary powers or power to interpret the law, the trial courts are often guided by principles of precedent or follow the applicable law in its literal sense. At the same time it is also worth noting that there has been divergent opinions of different High Courts towards refugee rights therefore trial courts subordinates to them also follow the suit. In the case of *Anwar vs. State of Jammu and Kashmir* (AIR 1971 SC 337) Supreme Court had refused to interfere with the executive authority of the union to deport the foreigners. The Court held that the deportation of a foreigner cannot be said to fall within the category of Article 22 of the Constitution of India. In the case of *State of Arunachal Pradesh vs. Khudiram Chakma* (AIR 1994 SC 1461) the court has refused to provide the rights under Article 19 (1) (d) & (e) to the foreigners as these rights are expressly withheld from them and are available to citizen's only.

However, the judicial orientation towards refugee rights is not as gloomy as it appears. Various High Courts and even Supreme Court of India in many cases have while supporting the strict interpretation of stringent statutes relating to foreigners evolved a more holistic approach towards refugee rights. For example Supreme Court in the case of *N.H.R.C. vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh* (AIR 1996 (1) SC 1235) has decided to treat the refugees as a separate class from foreigners by adopting liberal interpretation of the law and ensuring their rights under the Constitution of India. Further in the case of *Chairman Railway Board vs. Chandrima Das and others* (AIR 2000 SC 988) the Supreme Court has taken a strong stand against the incident of gang rape of a Bangladeshi women and decided that she is entitled to receive the compensation for the violation of her fundamental rights. Further the Courts in India have developed the jurisprudence of adopting harmonious construction of laws in such a way that the conflict between domestic and international law could be avoided. Proceeding with this approach the courts have given effect to various international laws in India in order to protect the rights of the Individuals.

In the recent case of *Mohammed Salimullah v. Union of India* [AIR 2021 SC (CIVIL) 1753], pertaining to the deportation of Rohingya refugee, the Supreme Court observed that the Rohingya refugees be deported from India according to the procedure prescribed for deportation. Interestingly the Supreme Court, rather than relying on Article 21 of the constitution, relied on Article 19(1) (e), i.e. right to reside or settle, and this right applies to citizens and not to foreigners. The court also concluded that national courts could draw inspiration from treaties or convention unless it is not in contravention of the municipal law.

A brief look at the abovementioned cases makes it clear that trial courts often follows the law such as Foreigners Act in its strict sense and most of the asylum seekers landed up in jail seeking bail or early hearing from superior courts. Approaching superior courts with limited resources to engage lawyers or seeking pro bono services often results into prolonged detentions. However, the higher judiciary in India has adopted a humane approach in establishing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in India. Nevertheless, the observation of the supreme court in the Salimullah case seems to depart from its earlier observations as the court took recourse to Article 19(1)(e), which is apparently available only to citizens. Therefore, in the case of Rohingya refugees it can be concluded that the supreme court has failed to protect the rights of “the most persecuted minority in the world” as United Nations has described Rohingya.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the refugees in India are protected on an ad-hoc basis. In the absence of a law, the refugees in India are constantly at the mercy of the executive. The

absence of refugee law and possible executive bias is counterproductive as large number of asylum seekers entering into the territory of India do not report before the governmental authorities because of the possible fear of deportation. As B.S. Chimni (2000), has rightly observed that refugees in India are required to be protected from a rights-based approach rather than a charity-based approach. Although, it is observed that despite the lackadaisical attitude of the executive, the judiciary in India historically has been forthcoming to protect the rights of refugee under its own constitution. However, the stand taken by judiciary in Salimullah case is quiet disturbing and it reflects the policy of executive at least in terms of Rohingya refugees. Authors hope that India in near future will become a party to the Refugee Convention, 1951 and enact a domestic legislation in accordance with its commitment under international law.

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ENDNOTES

- [1] Article 1A(2) of the Convention says, "a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.
- [2] Article I(2) of OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 1969 States that "The term "refugee" shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public

order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.”

- [3] For more details visit <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG?locations=IN> (last accessed on 11 May 2022).
- [4] In the case of refugees from Tibet and Srilanka specific policies and rules were framed by the government. On the other hand, around 43,157 refugees from Myanmar, Afghanistan and other countries who are directly registered with UNHCR, the UNHCR issues its own documents of registration, which are recognized by Indian authorities to only a limited extent.
- [5] Preamble of the Foreigners Act, 1946 reads as “WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for the exercise by the Central Government of certain powers in respect of the entry of foreigners into India their presence therein and their departure therefrom.”



A RESEARCH NOTE ON INDIAN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, GANDHI AND ENABLING RURAL WOMEN: NEED OF REVISITING

Binita Supriya*

Abstract

Indian traditional knowledge and Gandhi's view on women empowerment have had a profound impact on India's social and political landscape. Ancient Indian civilization marked the equal contribution of men and women in the society. In the context of India, Gandhiji always focused on women's involvement in every sphere of life especially, education and political activities. He was of view that if they participate in the activities in social and political domains, they will be empowerment through traditional Indian values like, self-reliance, non-violence and equal gender rights. Gandhiji always felt that women are intellectually and mentally equal to men and can participate in all the social and political activities. His idea of decentralized democracy through panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) and women's involvement there in. The present paper attempts to analyse the influence of Gandhi's ideas and traditional Indian values in upliftment of women in social status.

Keywords: Indian Tradition, Gandhian Philosophy, Rural Women, Empowerment, PRIs

INTRODUCTION

The Vaidik inscription यत्र नारयस्ती पुज्यते रमन्ते तत्र देवता: depicts significance of women in Indian knowledge system. A progressive, optimistic society, where men and women enjoy the equal status in terms of equality, liberty and all human rights which has been provided by the nature for both the creation of universe. Looking into Indus civilization and Vedic period to later Vedic period, it can be found that

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woman in every sphere of life – social, economic, cultural, religious and political – enjoyed equal status at par with men. viz. in the Early Vedic period women given the title of queen emperor of the family. As mentioned in “Nirukta text” in early Vedic era, women had ‘Rights to Succession’ and could claim their rights in courts also. In Vedic era was the golden era for the women where they enjoyed freedom in selecting their life partner, they could educate themselves, they were permitted to “Remarry” after the death of her husband, however divorce was not permissible. Even in married life women were considered as Ardhangini. Shaathpath Brahman also reflects the women’s status as equal to men. The degree of freedom enjoyed by women to take part in public activities indicates the nature of status of freedom enjoyed by the women during Vedic period.

But with the passage of time, the foreign invasions and alien rulers caused the establishment of strong patriarchal norms. Thereby, subjugating, depriving and oppressing women through institutional methods. In medieval period, the ‘parda pratha’ and ‘sati pratha’ ‘Johar’ came into existence. Women could not even cross the threshold of the courtyard. It was unimaginable for women to participate in public demonstrations, processions, and marches under the burden of feudal system and patriarchal social order. In 19th century movements led by Ishwarchandra Vidysagar, Rajaram Mohan Roy and renaissance leaders began fighting against social evils and women’s rights. But situation did not change substantially.

With the advent of Gandhi’s entry in Indian freedom movement, women’s involvement in political activities through Champaran movement in 1917. Mahatma Gandhi recognized the cause of women’s freedom and rights in the society. Gandhiji’s vision, ideas and beliefs reflects that the person standing at the last end of the society should be empowered, who is deprived of all the comforts of the society. The Gandhian dream of Gram Swaraj and his ideas of local self-government in India is a contribution of Gandhiji’s vision itself, where women were supposed to take substantial role.

ANCIENT PERIOD

In the Indian ancient civilization, it is reflected that status and position of women in the society was equal. In the Rig Vedic era, women had equal rights with men, and availed a fair amount of freedom and equality, such as equal respectful position in family, social-political and religious participation, property rights, age of girl’s marriage between 16 or 17 years, widow marriage, were allowed. They had the freedom to participate in Yagya, recite the Vedas and be educated.

Vedas, Upnishads and Puranas reveal the presence of many female scholars, or “Brahmavadinis” like Gargi, Apala, Ghosa, Maitreyi, Godha, Visvavara, Aditi, Lopamudra, Medha, Nadya, Yami and many who studied topics related to Culture

and epic of Indian mythology and took part in debate and discussions similar to how men participated. The Vedic period can be termed as the feminine glory and prestigious life. The post-Vedic period a little decline in their status was marked evident from the fact that only Vedic God [Sun and Moon] was worshiped. In epic literature women enjoyed great deal of freedom, along with allowed to remarry and Niyoga.

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS

After the rule of Harshvardhan, India was invaded by foreign rulers during which the status of women began deteriorating in the spheres of - economic, social and political. *Parda pratha* evolved in religious customs, early marriage, *sati pratha* and institutions of *Devdasi* came into vogue. The system persisted even during British rule. Not only this these evils were fortified by religious rituals.

In the Middle of the 19th century, many religious reformist movements made significant contribution in removing social evils, especially practices against women. The Bhakti Movement did make efforts to improve the condition of women, but they were not successful to the desired level. Only selected women, such as Mirabai, Akka Mahadevi, Mahapatra, Muktabai, Ammaiyar, Andal challenged patriarchy through their songs, poems and ways of life. Soon after, Sikhism came into existence and also preached equality of women and men in war, leadership and religious management committees. It was the British rulers that facilitated the social reforms by introducing laws in their favour.

MODERN PERIODS

Gandhiji acquired prominence in people's mind and commanded respect in society, especially women after Champaran Movement 1917 onwards. Gandhiji believed that India's liberation movement cannot be successful unless the sacrifice and wisdom of women are brought to fore. Gandhiji was, in fact, a practical realist. He believed that equal rights for women and men are necessary. He was of opinion that for making them self-assertive, they should be educated and oriented towards their roles in social domain. Gandhiji called women as the Noble gender and described women as the embodiment of sacrifice and non-violent service. During the Freedom moment of India, Gandhiji inspired women to take up leadership roles in the spree of social change and social reforms. He said that women leaders should be "Sattvic" form and controlled like "Sita, Draupadi and Damyanti" only then they would be able to inculcate a sense of equality with men and conscious of their rights and independence. According to Gandhi, equality never meant that women should do all the things that men do. In Gandhiji's philosophy, ideal world,

separate areas of work are fixed for women and men according to their nature and ability.

IKS AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

Indian traditional Knowledge system, useful in all spheres of life like agriculture, health, education, such as *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, *Grihasti*, etc. make women more self-assertive. Gandhi's idea of self-reliance gives lessons to women to act independently. Present SHGs are burning example. As a trained lawyer, Gandhiji's never lost respect for the majesty of law. He called for the acceptance of the state's right to make and enforce laws for both man and women. Gandhiji believed that education was essential for women empowerment. Rural women have been encouraged by him to pursue education which enables them to make informed decision about their lives and family. Gandhiji's vision of Non-violence had impact on women's psyche and inspire them to take part in decision making process.

Gandhi's views on women empowerment have influenced India's political landscape significantly. Gandhiji tried to ensure the political participation of women in the political system, especially in freedom struggle. Women have become more active in local politics, participating in local self-government like Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and decision-making process. Panchayati Raj Institutions have played a significant role in empowering women in rural India, aligning with Mahatma Gandhi's vision of decentralization of power and women should have get 50% reservation in PRIs.

India's religious traditions place women above men viz. Radha-Krishna, Gauri-Shanker, Sita-Ram. Another example of Navratra, i.e. nine-days worship of Goddess Durga considering her almighty. Gauri, Kali, Lakshmi, And Saraswati all female goddess are worshiped. and considered as source of power of wisdom, wealth and courage. But on the contrary women of urban rural areas are still victims of perpetuated subjugation, deprivation and oppression. Despite constitutional and legal provisions in their favour. Gandhiji's four ideas – TRUTH, NONVIOLENCE, SARVODAYA and SATYAGRAH in life.

Gandhiji's said – "my life is my philosophy". He was of opinion that empowerment of women is a necessity in modern times. According to him – education gives women power to uphold their social and political rights. Employment through education improves the financial condition of women as well as their families. By 1920, Gandhi ji had become a legend. Gandhiji was greatly influenced by Annie Besant, a British feminist and a theosophist. Sarojini Naidu a trusted Gandhi colleague, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay: A Fierce Satyagrahi, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Pushpaben Mehta. Gandhiji said that this is the natural quality of Indian women-hood, because her important role is that of the mother.

Gandhi's thought that women were better suited to spread the message of peace and non-violence, having gone through the experience of pregnancy and motherhood. According to Gandhi, due to the difference of biological properties in men and women they have different roles and both of them are equally important. Due to Gandhiji's personal image being that of a saint, the patriotism movement started under his leadership at a mixed political and religious image. His field arose above politics and became religious. Patriotism was considered a religion, the country was given the name of mother Goddess, "Bharat Mata", for which even the biggest sacrifices were less. Gandhiji was in full support of women's participation in the movements. In his meetings, in his speeches, he considered the participation of women in the movements to be essential and also inspired them by saying that they have their own role in their movements like the leaders and they have the strength and courage to play this role.

India became independent after several revolutionary movements and after that Gandhiji's Vision towards Rural Women Empowerment by Indian constitution. The Panchayati Raj Institutions have been pivotal in strengthen grassroots-level democracy in India. The PRIs provide rural citizen a direct participation in the decision-making process out of respect of their villages. India is predominantly a rural nation, wherein about 68 percent of people lives in rural areas and around 75 per cent of human workforce contribute 47 per cent economy growth of the Nation. 50 per cent of India's population is women, these women may be from rural areas or Urban areas, their contribution in overall development of the nation are remain same as men participation. Today we will be able to save the dignity of India only when we will give equal respect to women, empowered them with their rights and inspire them to move ahead in every sphere of Society and it becomes the responsibility of the entire political forces along with the men living in the Society.

CONCLUSION

Gandhiji desired to build a new society based on social justice, equality and harmony.

For this women should have control not only on resources and political power but also on ideology and psyche of the social norms. It a truth that lack of awareness of their abilities, rural women are lagging behind. But we have seen that women's empowerment has been often discussed issue. But the discussions ignore considering lessons from Indian Knowledge System especially Vedas and religious literature in ancient times on one hand and Gandhi's ideas on the other. No doubt Gandhiji derived his ideas from these sources and experimented them in his life. As such, there is an urgent imperative to take up comprehensive studies on taking lessons from IKS for enabling women for self-assertive activities and roles

in social, economic and political domains. This is also important because despite several politico-legal arrangements in favour of women in rural India who still face the subjugation, deprivation and oppression by their male counterparts. The pace of improvement of women in rural India keeps arrested evident from the fact that the parameters of social development among rural women are far behind urban women. No doubt PRIs have created space for enabling women but not at expected level.

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हिन्दी प्रभाग

ग्रामीण महिलाओं के सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति पर मनरेगा योजना का प्रभाव

अजय कुमार निराला*

सार संक्षेप

भारतीय संसद ने सितम्बर 2005 में राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम पारित किया। इसे 5 सितम्बर को राष्ट्रपति की मंजूरी मिली और 7 सितम्बर को अधिसूचित किया गया। यह योजना शुरू में 200 पिछड़े जिलों में शुरू की गई थी और बाद में 1 अप्रैल 2008 से इसे अन्य 130 जिलों तक विस्तारित कर दिया गया। यह योजना 2 अक्टूबर को सभी जिलों में शुरू की गई थी और इसका नाम बदलकर महात्मा गांधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम (मनरेगा) कर दिया गया है। यह कानूनी अधिकार के रूप में काम करने के अधिकार को सुनिश्चित करता है। यह राज्य द्वारा शुरू की गई सबसे बड़ी मांग आधारित योजना है।

यह अधिनियम प्रत्येक ग्रामीण परिवार को एक वित्तीय वर्ष में प्रचलित न्यूनतम मजदूरी पर 100 दिन का रोजगार सुनिश्चित करता है। यह अधिनियम पुरुष और महिला दोनों के लिए समान मजदूरी दर सुनिश्चित करता है, यह लैंगिक समानता की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। एक अच्छी तरह से डिज़ाइन किए गए रोजगार कार्यक्रम में रोजगार की मात्रा बढ़ाने की क्षमता होती है जिससे गरीब-हितैषी विकास को बढ़ावा मिलेगा, ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में आय सृजन और महिला सशक्तिकरण पर गुणात्मक प्रभाव पड़ेगा।

प्रस्तुत शोध अध्ययन का अध्ययन क्षेत्र बिहार के अरवल जिला का चयन किया गया है, क्योंकि ग्रामीण विकास विभाग बिहार सरकार के वर्तमान रिपोर्ट के अनुसार अरवल जिला में मनरेगा योजना के तहत लक्षित कार्य का 100 प्रतिशत कार्य पूरा किया है। अरवल जिला से एक प्रखंड का चयन मनरेगा में महिला पंजीकरण की संख्या के आधार पर किया गया है, और चयनित प्रखंड से दो पंचायत का चयन दैव निदर्शन विधि के आधार पर किया गया है। प्रत्येक पंचायत से मनरेगा में पंजीकृत जनसंख्या के आधार पर दो-दो गांवों का चयन किया गया है। प्रत्येक गांव से 20-20 उत्तरदाताओं का चयन उद्देश्यपूर्ण निदर्शन विधि से किया गया है। कुल उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 80 है।

प्रमुख शब्द : सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति, सशक्तिकरण, विकास परियोजना, रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम और आत्मनिर्भर।

परिचय

भारतीय संसद ने सितम्बर 2005 में राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम पारित किया। इसे 5 सितम्बर को राष्ट्रपति की मंजूरी मिली और 7 सितम्बर को अधिसूचित किया गया। यह योजना शुरू में 200 पिछड़े

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जिलों में शुरू की गई थी और बाद में 1 अप्रैल 2008 से इसे अन्य 130 जिलों तक विस्तारित कर दिया गया। यह योजना 2 अक्टूबर को सभी जिलों में शुरू की गई थी और इसका नाम बदलकर महात्मा गांधी राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम (मनरेगा) कर दिया गया है। यह कानूनी अधिकार के रूप में काम करने के अधिकार को सुनिश्चित करता है। यह राज्य द्वारा शुरू की गई सबसे बड़ी मांग आधारित योजना है। यह अधिनियम प्रत्येक ग्रामीण परिवार को एक वित्तीय वर्ष में प्रचलित न्यूनतम मजदूरी पर 100 दिन का रोजगार सुनिश्चित करता है। यह अधिनियम पुरुष और महिला दोनों के लिए समान मजदूरी दर सुनिश्चित करता है, यह लैंगिक समानता की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। एक अच्छी तरह से डिजाइन किए गए रोजगार कार्यक्रम में रोजगार की मात्रा बढ़ाने की क्षमता होती है जिससे गरीब-हितैषी विकास को बढ़ावा मिलेगा, ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में आय सृजन और महिला सशक्तिकरण पर गुणात्मक प्रभाव पड़ेगा।

अधिनियम के प्रमुख प्रावधानों में साइट चयन, कार्य का चयन, पालना गृह (शिशु गृह) सुविधाएं, पेयजल, कार्यस्थल पर प्राथमिक चिकित्सा, चोट के मामले में चिकित्सा उपचार और योजना में कार्य के दौरान मृत्यु या विकलांगता के कारण अनुग्रह भुगतान के लिए वर्ष में कम से कम दो बार ग्राम सभा की बैठक बुलाना शामिल है। मस्टर रोल की जांच करने का अधिकार, आवेदन जमा करने के 15 दिनों के भीतर रोजगार उपलब्ध न होने पर बेरोजगारी भत्ता का अधिकार, सामाजिक अंकेक्षण, ग्राम सतर्कता समिति, बैंक और डाकघर के माध्यम से मजदूरी का भुगतान, कम से कम एक-तिहाई महिला लाभार्थी आदि अधिनियम के प्रमुख प्रावधान हैं। ये प्रावधान सहभागी विकास, सामान्य रूप से कमजोर वर्ग और विशेष रूप से महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण को सुनिश्चित करता है। उपरोक्त उपाय ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिरता और महिला सशक्तिकरण सुनिश्चित करते हैं।

मनरेगा की विकास क्षमता गरीब मजदूरों को आजीविका का वैकल्पिक स्रोत उपलब्ध कराना, जिलों से पलायन में कमी लाना, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य पर व्यय बढ़ाना है, जिससे विशेष रूप से सहभागी विकास और महिला सशक्तिकरण को मजबूती मिलेगी। महिला सशक्तिकरण का तात्पर्य लिंग संबंधों में परिवर्तन और लैंगिक असमानताओं में कमी से है। परिसंपत्ति स्वामित्व और आर्थिक भागीदारी महिलाओं के आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण के दो घटक हैं, जो सत्ता संबंधों को अपने पक्ष में बदलने का आत्मविश्वास और क्षमता प्रदान करते हैं। उत्पादक परिसंपत्तियों और आय पर स्वामित्व और नियंत्रण का अभाव, लैंगिक समानता, विकास परिणामों और समावेशी आर्थिक विकास को प्रभावित करता है।

मनरेगा की अनिवार्यताओं में से एक है, महिलाओं को कम से कम एक तिहाई रोजगार उपलब्ध कराना तथा मजदूरी में लैंगिक समानता सुनिश्चित करना। यह योजना ग्रामीण गरीबों, विशेषकर महिलाओं के लिए सम्मानजनक तरीके से जीविका कमाने का एक मूल्यवान अवसर है (ट्रेज, 2008)। पंकज और तन्खा ने पाया कि स्वतंत्र कमाई के कारण महिला सशक्तिकरण महत्वपूर्ण परिणाम के रूप में उभरा है। उन्होंने घरेलू आय में ठोस योगदान दिया है और इसने उनकी सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति को प्रभावित किया है। योजना ने महिलाओं की ऋण और वित्तीय संस्थानों तक पहुँच बढ़ा दी है। बैंकों और डाकघरों के माध्यम से मजदूरी भुगतान के अनिवार्य प्रावधान से बड़ी संख्या में महिलाएं संस्थागत वित्त के दायरे में आ गईं।

मनरेगा योजना की महिला कर्मियों ने कहा कि इस योजना से उन्हें अधिक आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता और आत्मविश्वास मिला है तथा वे सशक्त महसूस कर रही हैं। अब वे अपनी आय का उपयोग भोजन और उपभोग

की आवश्यकताओं, स्वास्थ्य देखभाल और अपने बच्चों की शिक्षा के लिए स्वतंत्र रूप से कर सकती हैं। एक सर्वेक्षण से पता चला है कि 79 प्रतिशत महिला कर्मचारी अपना वेतन स्वयं एकत्रित करती हैं तथा 68 प्रतिशत अपना वेतन अपने पास ही रखती हैं। मानव विकास संस्थान के द्वारा उत्तर प्रदेश, कर्नाटक, महाराष्ट्र और आंध्र प्रदेश में किए गए एक अन्य अध्ययन से पता चलता है कि 68:48 प्रतिशत महिला श्रमिकों के नाम पर बैंक और डाकघर में खाते हैं, 82 प्रतिशत महिलाओं ने बताया कि वे स्वयं ही अपने खाते का संचालन करती हैं।

साहित्य समीक्षा

अम्बष्टा एवं अन्य (2008) के अनुसार घर-घर जाकर रोजगार कार्ड के लिए श्रमिकों का पंजीकरण एवं जिले भर में जागरूकता फैलाने जैसी गतिविधियों के जरिए सीएसओ ने योजना के तहत रोजगार की मांग और ग्राम सभा में महिलाओं की भागीदारी दोनों को बढ़ाया है।

अधिकारी और भाटिया (2010) के अनुसार इन्होंने अपने लेख में लिखा है कि महात्मा गांधी नरेगा योजना के तहत मिलने वाली मजदूरी सीधे महिलाओं के खातों में ना आकर उनके पतियों के खाते में जाती है जिससे उनका पूर्ण सशक्तिकरण नहीं हो पाया है जिससे कि वह स्वतंत्र रूप से आर्थिक निर्णय ले सके।

राय, ज्योतिर्मय (2012) के अनुसार इन्होंने अपने लेख में लिखा है कि मनरेगा योजना ने देशभर में फैले गांवों के लोगों की तकदीर ही बदल दी है। जहां इस योजना ने महिलाओं को पुरुषों के समान पारिश्रमिक कमाने का अभूतपूर्व अवसर दिया है वहीं आर्थिक रूप से स्वावलंबी होने पर महिलाओं को परिवार के आर्थिक मामलों में स्वायत्तता से फैसले लेने का भी मौका मिला है।

कांत और अश्विन (2013) के अनुसार इन्होंने उत्तर प्रदेश में मनरेगा योजना में शामिल में महिलाओं की भागीदारी का अध्ययन किया और पाया कि मनरेगा में महिलाओं की भागीदारी 33.33 प्रतिशत से अधिक है, जो सराहनीय था। इसके अलावा महिला लाभार्थी अधिक संतुष्ट थी, क्योंकि उन्हें पुरुषों के समान मजदूरी मिल रही थी, साथ-साथ ही वह आर्थिक रूप से भी स्वतंत्र थी।

लावणा और मुहिमा (2013) ने पलक्कड़ में मनरेगा में शामिल महिलाओं का अध्ययन किया, और देखा कि मनरेगा में शामिल महिला लाभार्थी आर्थिक रूप से स्वतंत्र हुए हैं और साथ-ही-साथ इस कार्यक्रम ने महिला लाभार्थियों के लिए आत्मसम्मान और स्वतंत्रता की नींव रखी है।

भुवाना (2013) के अनुसार, इन्होंने कर्नाटक के बंगलुरु जिले के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों की महिला लाभार्थियों पर मनरेगा के प्रभावों का अध्ययन किया। इन्होंने अपने अध्ययन में महिला लाभार्थियों से साक्षात्कार विधि के आधार पर मनरेगा के बारे में पूछा तो महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि मनरेगा वर्क साइट पर सुविधाओं की बहुत कमी है, मनरेगा मजदूरी भी बहुत देर से प्राप्त होता है, साथ ही साथ जॉब कार्ड मिलने में भी बहुत-सी समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ता है। इस अध्ययन के आधार पर लेखक ने सुझाव दिया है कि मनरेगा योजना के तहत रोजगार के दिनों को बढ़ाया जाए साथ ही साथ मनरेगा वर्क साइट पर मुलभूत सुविधाएं उपलब्ध करायी जाए।

विनीता, कुलश्रेष्ठा और उपाध्याय (2013) के अनुसार, इन्होंने हरियाणा के रोहतक जिले में महिला सशक्तिकरण पर मनरेगा के महत्व का मूल्यांकन किया। मनरेगा योजना महिलाओं के लिए एक वरदान सिद्ध हुआ है, इस योजना के तहत महिलाओं को अधिक रोजगार मिला है, जिससे वह आर्थिक रूप से सशक्त हुए, और कोई निर्णय स्वयं लेती है।

पंकज, अशोक और तंखा, रूकमिणी (2014) ने अपने लेख पत्र में महिला सशक्तिकरण पर मनरेगा के प्रभाव का अध्ययन चार राज्यों बिहार, झारखंड, राजस्थान और हिमाचल प्रदेश में विश्लेषण के आधार पर लिखे हैं कि महिलाओं की आय प्राप्ति, घरेलू प्रभाव और पहले की तुलना में पसंद और क्षमता में वृद्धि के माध्यम से नगद भुगतान के कारण अधिक अवसर प्राप्त हुए हैं।

अध्ययन का उद्देश्य

प्रस्तावित शोध लेख का मुख्य उद्देश्य मनरेगा योजना के तहत काम करने वाली महिलाओं की बदलती सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति और ग्रामीण समाज पर इसके परिणामी प्रभावों का विश्लेषण करना है। प्रस्तुत शोध लेख का विशिष्ट उद्देश्य इस प्रकार है:-

- महिला श्रमिकों और उनके परिवारों की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति पर योजना के प्रभाव का आकलन करना।
- अपने परिवार और समाज में निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया में महिला श्रमिकों की भागीदारी के स्तर का आकलन करना।
- योजना के क्रियान्वयन के विभिन्न स्तरों पर महिलाओं की जागरूकता और भागीदारी के स्तर का पता लगाना।
- महिला श्रमिकों और उनके परिवारों की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति पर योजना के प्रभाव का आकलन करना।
- अपने परिवार और समाज में निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया में महिला श्रमिकों की भागीदारी के स्तर का आकलन करना।
- योजना के क्रियान्वयन के विभिन्न स्तरों पर महिलाओं की जागरूकता और भागीदारी के स्तर का पता लगाना।

अध्ययन पद्धति

अध्ययन के लिए अरवल जिला का चयन किया गया है। क्योंकि बिहार में मनरेगा योजना के तहत वृक्षारोपन प्रदर्शन रैंकिंग जिलों में अरवल जिला ने अपने लक्ष्य का 100 प्रतिशत कार्य पूरा किया है। अरवल जिला के 5 प्रखण्डों में से एक का चयन योजना के प्रदर्शन और महिला रोजगार के उच्चतम प्रतिशत के आधार पर किया गया है। उपरोक्त कारकों को ध्यान में रखते हुए प्रखंड से दो पंचायतों का चयन किया गया है। प्रत्येक पंचायत से मनरेगा में पंजीकृत जनसंख्या के आधार पर दो-दो गांवों का चयन किया गया है। प्रत्येक गांव से 20-20 उत्तरदाताओं का चयन उद्देश्यपूर्ण निदर्शन विधि से किया गया है। इस अध्ययन में क्षेत्र की सभी सामाजिक श्रेणियों को शामिल करने का प्रयास किया गया है, जिसमें महिला श्रमिकों पर विशेष जोर दिया गया है। कुल उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 80 है।

आंकड़ों और उपकरणों का स्रोत

आंकड़े प्राथमिक और द्वितीयक दोनों स्रोतों से एकत्रित किया गया है। ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार और ग्रामीण विकास विभाग, बिहार सरकार की वार्षिक रिपोर्ट, विभिन्न स्रोतों की सर्वेक्षण रिपोर्ट, पुस्तकें, साहित्य और विषय पर लेख द्वितीयक आंकड़ों के प्रमुख स्रोत हैं।

प्राथमिक आंकड़े गैर-प्रतिभागी अवलोकन और अर्ध-संरचित साक्षात्कार अनुसूचियों के साथ-साथ व्यक्तिगत और समूह चर्चा के माध्यम से एकत्र किया गया है।

बिहार की जननांकिय विवरण

2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार, बिहार की कुल जनसंख्या 104,099,452 है। यह राज्य भारत का तीसरा सबसे बड़ा राज्य है। यहां पर कुल जनसंख्या का 89 प्रतिशत ग्रामीण जनसंख्या है। यह राज्य भारत के सबसे घनी आबादी वाला राज्य है, जिसकी जनसंख्या घनत्व 1,106 प्रति व्यक्ति है। इस राज्य का शिक्षा दर 62.82 प्रतिशत, महिला साक्षरता दर 53.33 प्रतिशत, लिंगानुपात 918 और शिशु लिंगानुपात 935 है (जनगणना, 2011)।

अरवल जिला का जननांकिय विवरण

2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार, अरवल जिला का कुल जनसंख्या 7,00,883 है, जिसमें पुरुष और महिला जनसंख्या क्रमशः 51.87 प्रतिशत और 48.13 प्रतिशत है। इस जिले का जनसंख्या घनत्व 1,099 प्रति वर्ग कि०मी० है। जिले का लिंगानुपात 928 और साक्षरता दर 67.43 प्रतिशत है। अरवल जिला में 1 अनुमंडल, 5 प्रखंड और 316 गांव हैं (जनगणना, 2011)।

प्रखंड का चयन

प्रस्तुत शोध लेख का अध्ययन क्षेत्र कुर्था प्रखण्ड को चुना गया है, क्योंकि मनरेगा योजना के अंतर्गत महिलाओं का पंजीकरण 47.56 (41,507) प्रतिशत है, जो अरवल जिला के अंतर्गत प्रखण्डों में सबसे अधिक है (www.mgnrega.nic.in, FY-2024-2025)।

पंचायत का चयन

कुर्था प्रखण्ड के अंतर्गत 11 पंचायत हैं, जिसमें से दो पंचायतों निधवाँ पंचायत (50.31 प्रतिशत) और सचई पंचायत (49.87 प्रतिशत) का चयन मनरेगा योजना में पंजीकृत महिला उत्तरदाताओं की जनसंख्या के आधार पर किया गया है (www.mgnrega.nic.in)।

पंचायतों और गांवों में उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में चयनित पंचायतों के अंतर्गत गांवों में उत्तरदाताओं चयन का विवरण दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 1: चयनित पंचायतों के अंतर्गत गांवों में उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

जिला का नाम	पखंड का नाम	पंचायत का नाम	गांव का नाम	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या
अरवल	कुर्था	निगवाँ	लोदीपुर	40
		सचई	फुलसथर	40
			कुल	80

निगवाँ पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में निगवाँ पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 2: निगवाँ पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

-	कुल	पुरुष	महिला
कुल परिवार की संख्या	1,233	-	-
कुल जनसंख्या	7,279	3,715	3,584
अनुसूचित जाति	1,534	802	732
अनुसूचित जनजाति	1	1	-
साक्षर जनसंख्या	3,672	2,217	1,455
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	2,365	1,665	700
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	1,445	1,049	396
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	920	616	304

स्रोत-www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

गांव का चयन

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के लिए अध्ययन क्षेत्र का चयन दैव निदर्शन विधि के माध्यम से निगवाँ पंचायत से लोदीपुर गांव को लिया गया है।

तालिका 3: लोदीपुर गांव का संक्षिप्त विवरण

-	कुल	पुरुष	महिला
कुल परिवार की संख्या	409	-	-
कुल जनसंख्या	2,484	1,281	1,203
अनुसूचित जाति	464	235	229
अनुसूचित जनजाति	-	-	-
साक्षर जनसंख्या	1,081	728	353
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	787	651	136
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	319	306	13
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	468	345	123

स्रोत-www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

सचई पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

इस तालिका में सचई पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 4: सचई पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

-	कुल	पुरुष	महिला
कुल परिवार की संख्या	610	-	-
कुल जनसंख्या	3,587	1,870	1,717
अनुसूचित जाति	1,277	650	627
अनुसूचित जनजाति	-	-	-
साक्षर जनसंख्या	1,890	1,154	736
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	1,045	792	253
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	181	155	26
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	864	637	227

स्रोत-www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

गांव का चयन

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के लिए अध्ययन क्षेत्र का चयन दैव निदर्शन विधि के माध्यम से सचई पंचायत से फुलसथर गांव को लिया गया है।

तालिका 5: फुलसथर गांव का संक्षिप्त विवरण

-	कुल	पुरुष	महिला
कुल परिवार की संख्या	324	-	-
कुल जनसंख्या	1,757	940	817
अनुसूचित जाति	423	226	197
अनुसूचित जनजाति	-	-	-
साक्षर जनसंख्या	1,074	665	409
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	527	422	105
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	209	198	11
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	318	224	94

स्रोत-www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

उत्तरदाताओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक विवरण

यह खंड सर्वेक्षित पंचायतों में मनरेगा महिला लाभार्थियों के सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति के विश्लेषण से संबंधित है। इसमें लाभार्थियों की आयु, पारिवारिक आय, परिवार का प्रकार, शिक्षा, भूमि जोत का आकार एवं रोजगार के दिनों की संख्या को दर्शाया गया है, जो उनकी आजीविका के तौर-तरीके की स्थिति पर केन्द्रित है।

आयु

आयु के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में आयु के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

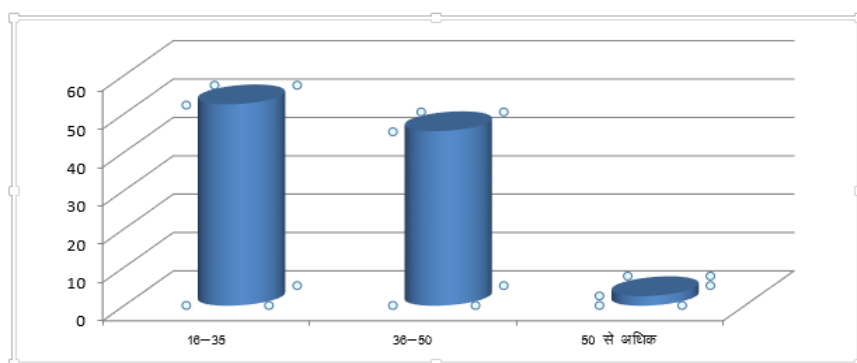
तालिका 6: आयु के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग-समूह	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
18-35	42	52.50
36-50	36	45.00
50 से अधिक	2	2.50
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 6 के अनुसार, कुल उत्तरदाताओं में से 52.50 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 18-35 वर्ष आयु वर्ग के बीच है, 45 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 36-50 आयु वर्ग के बीच है, तथा 2.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 50 वर्ष या उससे से अधिक आयु वर्ग के बीच है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाले अधिकांश उत्तरदाताओं की आयु 18-35 वर्ष के बीच है।



चित्र संख्या 1.12.1- में, आयु के आधार पर महिला लाभार्थियों का प्रतिशत विवरण

जाति

जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

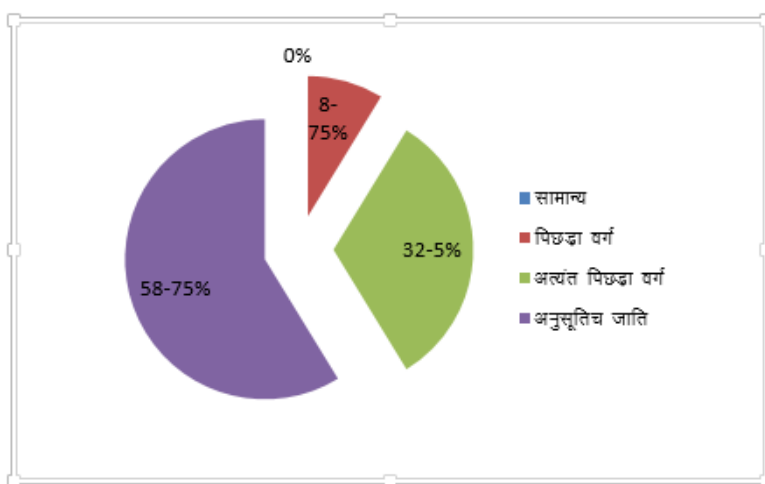
तालिका 7: जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

जाति-समूह	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
जाति-समूह	-	-
पिछड़ा वर्ग	7	8.75
अत्यंत पिछड़ा वर्ग	26	32.50
अनुसूचित जाति	47	58.75
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 7 से पता चलता है कि 58.75 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या अनुसूचित जाति से है, 32.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या अत्यंत पिछड़ी जाति से है, 8.75 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाता पिछड़ी जाति से है, और सामान्य वर्ग के जातियों की संख्या नगण्य है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाले अधिकांश उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या अनुसूचित जाति से है।



चित्र संख्या 1.12.2 में, जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत विवरण

पेशा

पेशा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में पेशा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं के विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

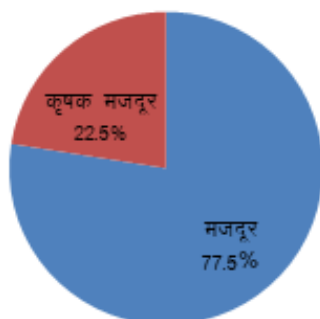
तालिका 8: पेशा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
मजदूर	62	77.50
कृषक मजदूर	18	22.50
कृषक व्यवसाय	0	0
अन्य	0	0
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 8 से स्पष्ट होता है कि कुल उत्तरदाताओं में से 77.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं का पेशा मजदूरी है, जबकि 22.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं का पेशा कृषक मजदूरी से है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के आधार पर देखा जा सकता है कि मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली अधिकांश महिलाएं मजदूरी का काम करती हैं।



चित्र संख्या: 1.12.3 में, पेशा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत विवरण

वार्षिक-आय**वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण**

दिए हुए तालिका में वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 9: वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

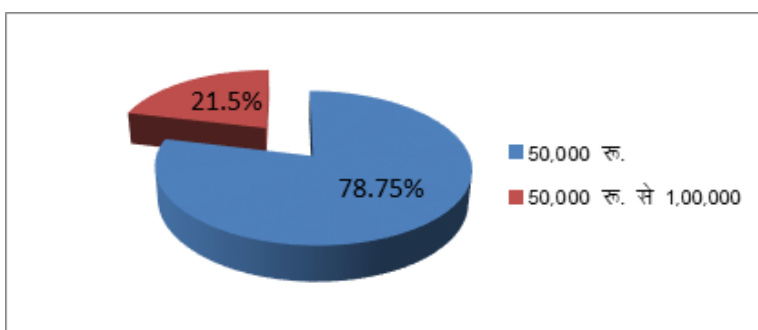
वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
50,000 रु. तक.	63	78.75
50,000 रु. से 1,00,000 रु.	17	21.25
1,00,000 रु. से 2,00,000 रु.	0	0

वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
2,00,000 रु. से अधिक	0	0
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 9 के अनुसार, कुल उत्तरदाताओं में से 78.75 उत्तरदाताओं का वार्षिक-आय 50,000 रूपए है, जबकि 21.25 उत्तरदाताओं का वार्षिक-आय 50,000 से 1,00,000 रूपए के बीच है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली अधिकांश महिला मजदूरों की वार्षिक-आय 50,000 रूपए है।



चित्र संख्या 1.12.4 में, वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत विवरण परिवार का प्रकार

परिवारिक प्रकार के आधार पर महिला लाभार्थियों का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में परिवारिक प्रकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण दर्शाया गया है।

परिवारिक प्रकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

तालिका 10: वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
एकल परिवार	65	81.25
संयुक्त परिवार	15	18.75
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 10 से हमें पता चलता है कि महिला मनरेगा लाभार्थियों में 81.25 प्रतिशत एकल परिवार में रहते हैं, और 18.75 प्रतिशत संयुक्त परिवार में रहते हैं।

शिक्षा

शिक्षा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में शिक्षा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण को दिखाया गया है।

तालिका 11: शिक्षा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

शिक्षा का स्तर	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
अशिक्षित	52	65.00
पढ़ना-लिखना	16	20.00
प्राथमिक शिक्षा	8	10.00
माध्यमिक शिक्षा	4	5.00
उच्च शिक्षा	-	-
स्नातक	-	-
अन्य	-	-
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 11 से स्पष्ट है कि मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली महिला लाभार्थियों में 65 प्रतिशत अशिक्षित है, 20 प्रतिशत पढ़ना-लिखना जानती है, 10 प्रतिशत प्राथमिक शिक्षा और 5 प्रतिशत माध्यमिक शिक्षा प्राप्त कर चुकी है।

भूमि का आकार

भूमि आकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में भूमि के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विस्तृत विवरण दिखाया गया है।

तालिका 12: भूमि आकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
सीमांत (1.00 एकड़ तक)	62	77.50
छोटा (1.01 से 2 एकड़ के बीच)	18	22.50
मध्यम (2.01 से 4 एकड़ के बीच)	0	0
बड़ा (4 एकड़ से अधिक)	0	0
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत- सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

उपर्युक्त तालिका 12 के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली महिला लाभार्थियों में 77.5 के पास एक एकड़ जमीन है, जबकि 23.34 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों के पास एक एकड़ से दो एकड़ के बीच जमीन है।

ग्रामीण महिला उत्तरदाताओं के सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति के सुधार में मनरेगा योजना का प्रभाव

प्रस्तुत शोध लेख में मनरेगा योजना के प्रभाव को आश्रित चर के रूप में लिया गया है, और इसका मूल्यांकन स्वतंत्र कारकों के उपयोग करके किया गया है। जिससे यह पता चल सके कि मनरेगा लाभार्थियों को मनरेगा योजना से लाभ मिला।

तालिका 13: सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति में सुधार के आधार पर महिला उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

क्र. सं.	विवरण	हाँ		नहीं	
		संख्या	प्रतिशत	संख्या	प्रतिशत
1.	क्या आप आर्थिक रूप से स्वतंत्र हुई है?	72	60.00	48	40.00
2.	आपके आत्म सम्मान में सुधार हुआ है?	65	54.00	55	46.00
3.	क्या आपकी घरेलू निर्णय लेने में भागीदारी बढ़ी है?	63	52.50	57	47.50
4.	क्या आप मजदूरी के पैसे की बचत करती है?	76	63.00	44	37.00
5.	बच्चों के लिए शिक्षा की संभावनाओं में वृद्धि हुआ है	66	55.00	54	45.00
6.	क्या आप कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक हुई है?	70	58.00	50	42.00
7.	क्या आप संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकारों को समझती है?	72	60.00	48	40.00
8.	घरेलू वस्तुओं, रसोई के समान और उकरणों को खरीदने की क्रय शक्ति में वृद्धि हुई है?	71	59.00	49	41.00
9.	क्या आप अपने बच्चों का नामांकन स्कूलों में कराने में सक्षम है?	66	55.00	54	45.00
10.	क्या आप सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग लेती है?	68	57.00	52	43.00
11.	क्या आप अपने परिवार की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने में योगदान देती है।	69	57.50	51	42.50
12.	क्या आपको कृषि श्रम अधिनियम 1948 के अनुसार न्यूनतम मजदूरी दी जाती है?	63	52.50	57	47.50
13.	मनरेगा योजना में शामिल होने के बाद आपके खान-पान में कोई अंतर आया है?	65	54.00	55	46.00

- तालिका 13 से स्पष्ट होता है कि सामाजिक-आर्थिक प्रभाव के तहत मनरेगा महिला लाभार्थियों में 60 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि उनकी आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता में सुधार हुआ है, जबकि 40 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि उनकी आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता में किसी भी प्रकार का कोई परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ है। इसके अलावा 54 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि उनकी आत्मसम्मान में वृद्धि हुई है, जबकि 46 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि उनकी आत्मसम्मान में कोई सुधार नहीं हुआ है।
- घरेलू निर्णय लेने के संबंध में, 52.5 प्रतिशत मनरेगा महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि उनकी भागीदारी घरेलू निर्णय लेने में वृद्धि हुई है, जबकि 47.5 प्रतिशत लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि उनकी भागीदारी घरेलू

निर्णय लेने में को सुधार नहीं हुआ है। इसके अलावा, 63 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा है कि वह अपनी मजदूरी में से कुछ पैसे बचाती है, जिससे कि वह आगे चलकर जरूरत पड़ने पर उस पैसे का उपयोग कर सकें, तथा 37 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह अपने मजदूरी में से पैसे को नहीं बचा पाती है।

- जब उनसे उनके बच्चों की शिक्षा की संभावनाओं के बारे में पूछा गया तो, 55 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि मनरेगा योजना के आने से उनके बच्चों की शिक्षा दिलाने की संभावनाओं में वृद्धि हुआ है, जबकि 45 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि उनके बच्चों की शिक्षा की संभावनाओं में कोई सुधार नहीं हुआ है।
- जब उनसे कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूकता के बारे में पूछा गया तो, 58 प्रतिशत महिला मनरेगा लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक है, जबकि 42 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वह कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक नहीं है। इसके अलावा, संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकारों के बारे में पूछा गया तो 60 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकारों को समझती है, जबकि 40 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वह संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकार को नहीं समझती है।
- अध्ययन के तहत जब उनसे घरेलू वस्तुओं, रसोई के समान और उकरणों को खरीदने के बारे में पूछा गया तो, 59 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह अपने घर के वस्तुओं एवं रसोई का समान स्वयं खरीदती है, जबकि 41 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह अपने घर का समान खरीदने में सक्षम नहीं है। इसके अलावा, 55 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह अपने बच्चों का विद्यालय में नामांकन कराने में सक्षम है, जबकि 45 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह अपने बच्चों का नामांकन कराने में सक्षम नहीं है।
- सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग लेने के बारे में पूछा गया तो, 57 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग लेती है, जबकि 43 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग नहीं लेती है, और 57 प्रतिशत मनरेगा लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह अपने परिवार की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने में योगदान देती है, जबकि 43 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वह अपने परिवार की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने में कोई योगदान नहीं देती है।
- 52.5 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि मनरेगा योजना में कृषि श्रम अधिनियम 1948 के अनुसार न्यूनतम मजदूरी मिलती है, जबकि 47.5 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि नहीं मिलता है, और 54 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि मनरेगा योजना में शामिल होने के बाद आपके खान-पान परिवर्तन आया है, जबकि 46 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि कोई परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ है।

निष्कर्ष

उपर्युक्त निष्कर्ष के आधार पर हम कह सकते हैं कि ग्रामीण महिलाओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति को सुधारने में मनरेगा योजना का सकारात्मक प्रभाव रहा है। मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली अधिकांश महिलाओं ने कहा है कि इस योजना में काम करने से उनकी आत्मसम्मान में वृद्धि हुई है, साथ ही साथ उन्हें घर में भी पुरुषों के समान समझा जाता है। वह अपने परिवार में आर्थिक भागीदार के रूप में अपनी भूमिका निभाती है।

मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली महिलाओं ने कहा है कि इस योजना के आने से वह अब अपने घर के चार दिवारी से बारह निकलकर काम करने जाती है, उन्हें इस योजना के तहत कार्यस्थल पर किसी भी प्रकार का कोई भी भेदभाव नहीं किया जाता है, उन्हें पुरुषों के समान मजदूरी उन्हें भी दिया जाता है।

मनरेगा योजना के तहत मिलने वाली मजदूरी से वह अपने बच्चों को विद्यालय में नामांकन करा रही है तथा वह अपने घर के लिए जरूरी सामान भी खरीदती है।

कुल मिलाकर कहा जाये तो मनरेगा योजना ने महिलाओं को पूर्ण रूप से सशक्त बनाया है, तथा वह अब कही भी आसानी से जा सकती है। साथ ही साथ वह अब अपने अधिकारों के प्रति पूर्णरूप से जागरूक हो चुकी है।

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मानवाधिकारों का बहुसांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य : एक विश्लेषण

अखलाख अहमद*

सार संक्षेप

मानव एक सामाजिक प्राणी है, वह समाज में जन्म लेता है एवं समाज में ही पूर्णत्व को प्राप्त करता है अर्थात् समाज में ही उसकी मृत्यु हो जाती है। जन्म लेने एवं पूर्णत्व प्राप्त करने के बीच के काल में हम सभी विकास करते हैं। विकास के लिए हमें कुछ सुविधाओं एवं आवश्यक परिस्थितियों की आवश्यकता होती है। उन अनिवार्य परिस्थितियों का उपलब्ध होना ही अधिकार कहलाता है। यहाँ यह स्पष्ट है कि अधिकार एक सामाजिक उत्पाद है जिसकी व्याख्या समाज के सापेक्ष ही किया जा सकता है। ज्ञातव्य है कि अधिकारों का एक प्रकार मानवाधिकार है जो व्यक्ति को जन्म से प्राप्त होता है एवं इसकी उपलब्धता के लिए समाज एवं राजकीय मान्यता की आवश्यकता नहीं होती है। इनकी प्राप्ति ईश्वरीय है। प्रस्तावित शोधपत्र में इस प्राकृतिक उपलब्धता की कृत्रिम मान्यता अर्थात् 10 दिसम्बर 1948 मानवाधिकारों की सार्वभौमिक घोषणा की मान्यता की पृष्ठभूमि का विश्लेषण किया जाएगा। यहाँ इस तथ्य की समीक्षा की जाएगी कि मानवाधिकारों की रक्षा का सन्दर्भ अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकारों की रक्षा के साथ कैसे जुड़ता है? समूह केन्द्रित अधिकार जो बहुसांस्कृतिक समाज की अनिवार्यता है, लोकतंत्र की खूबसूरती है, की सुरक्षा से अभिप्रेरित होकर मानवाधिकार को औपचारिक मान्यता मिली। प्रस्तावित शोधपत्र में इसी परिप्रेक्ष्य में मानवाधिकार एवं बहुसांस्कृतिकता में अंतर्संबद्धता स्थापित किया जाएगा।

शब्द-कुंजी : बहुसांस्कृतिकता, मानवाधिकार, समूह केन्द्रित

परिचय

सामान्यतः अधिकार वे दावे हैं जिसे समाज स्वीकार करता है एवं राज्य मान्यता देता है अर्थात् व्यक्ति के दावे को अधिकार के रूप में स्थापित करने की दो शर्तें हैं - सामाजिक स्वीकृति एवं राजकीय मान्यता। ये शर्तें सभी प्रकार के अधिकारों पर सामान्य रूप से लागू होते हैं सिवाय मानवाधिकार के। मानवाधिकार पर इन शर्तों के लागू न होने के पीछे कारण है इनकी सापेक्षिक स्थिति का न होना। ये अधिकार जन्मजात हैं, प्रकृति प्रदत्त हैं, सार्वभौमिक हैं, मानव अस्तित्व, उसके अस्मिता एवं गरिमा के साथ जुड़े हुए हैं, इनके

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अभाव में मानव जीवन की परिकल्पना नहीं की जा सकती। ऐसे में व्यक्ति के व्यक्तित्व के विकास की चर्चा करना निश्चय ही व्यर्थ है, जब जीवन ही नहीं, अस्तित्व ही नहीं, तो व्यक्तित्व कैसा? मानवाधिकार वे नैतिक सिद्धांत हैं जो मानव व्यवहार के संबंध में कुछ निश्चित मानक स्थापित करते हैं। ये अधिकार ऐसे आधारभूत होते हैं जिन्हें छीना नहीं जा सकता। इन अधिकारों पर आयु, मूल, जाति, निवास, भाषा, धर्म, लिंग आदि का कोई प्रभाव नहीं होता है। मानव जाति के लिए मानवाधिकार के अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण होने के कारण इन्हें अन्तर्निहित अधिकार, प्राकृतिक अधिकार और जन्मजात अधिकार की संज्ञा से विभूषित किया जाता है। मानवाधिकारों को किसी विधायी संस्था ने नहीं बनाया वरन् वह बहुत कुछ नैसर्गिक अधिकारों से मिलते हैं या उनके समरूप हैं। वैश्विक स्तर पर लगभग सभी राष्ट्र एवं संयुक्त राष्ट्र जैसी संस्थानें उन्हें किसी न किसी रूप में मन्यता प्रदान कर उनके अस्तित्व को स्वीकार किया है।

उपकल्पनाएँ

प्रस्तावित शोध विषय के सन्दर्भ में कई पुस्तकें, आलेख एवं शोधपत्रों का अध्ययन कर शोध अन्तराल की प्राप्ति हुई। संबंधित विषय के सन्दर्भ में उपकल्पनाएँ निम्नवत् हैं -

1. मानवाधिकारों के सार्वभौमिक घोषणा की औपचारिक मान्यता का सन्दर्भ अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकारों की रक्षा से अनिवार्य रूप से जुड़ता है।
2. मानवाधिकारों का एक आयाम समूह केन्द्रित अधिकारों की रक्षा की वकालत करता है।
3. मानवाधिकार, बहुसांस्कृतिकता एवं लोकतंत्र अंतर्संबंधित अवधारणाएँ हैं।
4. राष्ट्र-राज्य की मूर्तता, लोकतंत्र की व्यावहारिकता के उपरान्त अल्पसंख्यकों की अस्तित्व की रक्षा हेतु मानवाधिकारों को मान्यता प्रदान किया गया।

शोध-विधि

प्रस्तुत शोध हेतु व्याख्यात्मक, एवं विश्लेषणात्मक शोध पद्धति का प्रयोग किया गया है। ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोण का प्रयोग कर विषय की समीक्षा की गई है।

मानवाधिकार मानव के वे अधिकार हैं जो उन्हें जन्म से प्राप्त होते हैं, यथा : जीवन का अधिकार, श्वास लेने का अधिकार, रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान की उपलब्धता का अधिकार, आदि। मानवाधिकार से आशय मानव के लिए उन न्यूनतम आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति से है जो प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को अनिवार्य रूप से उपलब्ध होने चाहिए। मानवाधिकार और मानव गरिमा की धारणा के मध्य घनिष्ठ संबंध हैं अर्थात् वैसे अधिकार जो मानव गरिमा को बनाए रखने के लिए आवश्यक हैं, उन्हें मानवाधिकार कहा जाता है।

यहाँ उल्लेखनीय है कि मानव अधिकार एवं मौलिक अधिकार में अंतर होता है जो प्रायः जिज्ञासा का विषय-वस्तु है -

1. मानवाधिकार जन्मजात है, प्रकृति प्रदत्त है, नैसर्गिक है वही मूल अधिकार राज्यों के संविधान द्वारा प्रदत्त एवं संरक्षित हैं।
2. मानवाधिकार का संबंध व्यक्ति के अस्मिता से संबंधित है जबकि मूल अधिकार व्यक्तित्व के विकास से संबंधित है।

3. संविधान द्वारा प्रदत्त होने के कारण मूल अधिकार संबंधित राज्य की सीमाओं तक सीमित जबकि मानवाधिकारों का स्वरूप सार्वभौमिक है।
4. मानवाधिकार मानव होने मात्र से ही सभी को प्राप्त है जबकि मूल अधिकार संविधान द्वारा नागरिक एवं अनागरिक को आधार बनाकर इसके उपलब्धता को सीमित करता है, उदाहरणतः भारत के संविधान की धारा 15, 16 और 19 केवल नागरिकों को प्राप्त है।
5. अधिकार या मूल अधिकार सापेक्षिक होते हैं जबकि मानवाधिकार सर्वत्र उपलब्ध रहता है।

मानवाधिकार को विभिन्न विद्वानों ने भिन्न-भिन्न तरह से परिभाषित किया है - होब्स हाउस के अनुसार मानवाधिकार वह है जिसमें हम दूसरों से कुछ आशाएँ करते हैं तथा दूसरे भी हम से कुछ आशाएँ करते हैं। इस आशा के वातावरण में सभी सार्थक अधिकार समाज कल्याण की शर्तें होती हैं। इस प्रकार मानवाधिकार वह है जिसका दावा प्रत्येक व्यक्ति आवश्यक कार्यों की पूर्ति के लिए करता है, ऐसे दावों की समाज आशा करता है। ये दावे दूसरे के सामाजिक दायित्व के सहवर्ती हैं। अतः मानवाधिकार सामाजिक शर्त है। न्यायमूर्ति होम्स ने प्राकृतिक विधि का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा है कि “अधिकार विशुद्ध रूप से आगमनात्मक कथन की न्यूनतम निश्चित पूर्ति है, जिनके बिना हम जीवन को उत्तम नहीं बना सकते हैं।” हार्ट का कथन है कि यदि मानव प्राणी साथ-साथ रहना चाहता है तो उसके कुछ मूल नियमों का अनुपालन करना नितांत आवश्यक है। इस प्रकार के अनुपालन को मानवाधिकार के नाम से संबोधित किया जा सकता है।

डेविड सेलबाई के अनुसार “मानव अधिकार संसार के समस्त व्यक्ति को प्राप्त है क्योंकि वह स्वयं में मानवीय है, वे पैदा नहीं किए जा सकते, खरीद या संविदावादी प्रक्रियाओं से मुक्त होते हैं” (शर्मा: 2006)।

फ्रांसीसी क्रांति के तीन मूल सिद्धांतों के अनुरूप 1979 में चेक कानूनविद कैरल वाषा ने स्ट्रासवर्ग में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय मानवाधिकार संस्थान में मानवाधिकारों की तीन पीढ़ियों में विभाजन किया था। **पहली पीढ़ी** के मानवाधिकारों को ‘नीला’ अधिकार भी कहा जाता है जो मुख्यतः स्वतंत्रता एवं राजनीतिक सहभागिता से संबंधित है। ये राज्य के विरुद्ध व्यक्ति की रक्षा के लिए हैं, यही कारण है कि इन्हें नकारात्मक अधिकार माना जाता है। इसके अंतर्गत जीवन का अधिकार, कानून के समक्ष समानता, वाक् अभिव्यक्ति का अधिकार, निष्पक्ष सुनवाई का अधिकार, आदि समाहित है। **दूसरी पीढ़ी** के मानवाधिकार का संबंध समानता से है। इन्हें द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के बाद सरकारों ने मान्यता दी है। इनमें रोजगार, भोजन, आवास और स्वास्थ्य देखभाल के अधिकार के साथ-साथ सामाजिक सुरक्षा भी शामिल हैं। इन्हें ‘लाल’ अधिकार भी कहा जाता है। **तीसरी पीढ़ी** के मानवाधिकार जिन्हें ‘हरे’ अधिकार से भी जाना जाता है, अत्यंत व्यापक हैं। इसमें समूह और सामूहिक अधिकार, आत्मनिर्णय का अधिकार, पर्यावरण और सतत विकास शामिल है। वर्तमान में चौथी पीढ़ी की चर्चा भी हो रही है जिसमें पशुओं के अधिकार को गंभीरता से लिया जा रहा है।

वैश्विक स्तर पर मानवाधिकार के विकास के लिए संघर्ष 12 जून 1215 की उस घटना से आरम्भ होता है जब ब्रिटेन के तत्कालीन सम्राट जॉन का उसके सामंतों द्वारा मानवाधिकारों को मान्यता देने वाले घोषणा पत्र पर हस्ताक्षर करने के लिए विवश किया गया, इसे इतिहास में ‘मैग्नाकार्टा’ के नाम से जाना जाता है। तत्पश्चात् 1689 में ब्रिटेन की संसद तत्कालीन सम्राट विलियम से एक अधिकार पत्र पर हस्ताक्षर करने में सफल रही, जो मानवाधिकार के लिए मील का पत्थर साबित हुआ। 1766 में स्वीडेन सूचना के अधिकार कानून बनाने वाला विश्व का पहला देश था। 4 जुलाई 1776 को अमेरिकी क्रांति की घोषणा की गई जिसमें नारा दिया गया कि “सभी मनुष्य जन्म से समान हैं”। 1789 में फ्रांस की राष्ट्रीय सभा ने ‘राइट्स ऑफ मैन एंड सिटीजन’ की घोषणा की। 1791 में अमेरिका ने प्रथम

10 संशोधनों द्वारा नागरिकों के मूल अधिकार को संविधान का अंग बताकर सामूहिक रूप से 'बिल ऑफ राइट्स' की संज्ञा दी। 1917 में रूसी क्रांति के बाद सर्वहारा वर्ग के मूल अधिकार की घोषणा हुई। 1931 में भारत में राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस के द्वारा करांची अधिवेशन में अधिकारों की मांग की गई। अंततः 10 दिसंबर 1948 को संयुक्त राष्ट्र की महासभा ने मानवाधिकारों की सार्वभौमिक घोषणा पत्र को स्वीकार किया। मानवाधिकारों के इस घोषणा पत्र में कुल 30 अनुच्छेद हैं।" (जोशी एवं अन्य, 2003 एवं जाखड़, 2001)।

यहाँ रेखांकित करने योग्य तथ्य है कि मानवाधिकारों को औपचारिक रूप में सार्वभौमिक मान्यता वैश्विक स्तर पर द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के उपरांत ही प्राप्त हुआ, जब 30 अनुच्छेदों में उन्हें संकलित कर लिखित रूप में स्थापित किया गया। विश्वयुद्ध से पूर्व या सृष्टि के आरम्भ से भले ही मानवाधिकारों की उपलब्धता की वकालत की जाती हो परन्तु सत्य तो यही है कि उनका औपचारिक रूप में मान्य लिखित विवरण विश्वयुद्ध के बाद ही प्राप्त हुआ।

चूँकि मानवाधिकार एक बहुआयामी अवधारणा है, उन्हें औपचारिक रूप में द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के तत्काल बाद मान्यता का एक कारण निश्चित रूप से अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकार की सुरक्षा से जुड़ा है। हिटलर ने अपने आतंक से मानव सभ्यता को बड़ी क्षति पहुँचाई। लाखों की संख्या में यहूदी हताहत हुए। यहूदी अल्पसंख्यक थे, अतः बड़े पैमाने पर अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकारों की रक्षा की आवश्यकता बड़ी सिद्ध से महसूस की गई। विश्वयुद्ध के उपरांत मानवाधिकार का आयाम अल्पसंख्यक के अधिकार की सुरक्षा एवं महिला अधिकार की सुरक्षा से जुड़ा है। समूहों के अधिकार यथा : दिव्यांग, एलजीबीटी के राईट आदि भी केंद्र में रहा। यहाँ एक आयाम तो स्पष्ट है कि मानवाधिकार अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकार की सुरक्षा की गारंटी के रूप में विश्वयुद्ध के बाद अस्तित्व में आया। शायद हिटलर की क्रूर नीतियाँ, दमनात्मक करवाई मानवाधिकार के औपचारिक मान्यता की पृष्ठभूमि तैयार करने में सहायक सिद्ध हुई।

यहाँ उल्लेखनीय है कि बहुसांस्कृतिकता विश्वयुद्धोत्तर अवधारणा है। विश्वयुद्ध के बाद लोकतंत्रीकरण की आँधी चली, स्टेट नेशन को चुनौती दी गई, फलतः नेशन स्टेट अस्तित्व में आए। बड़े पैमाने पर लोगों का प्रवजन हुआ। लोकतंत्रीकरण के परिणामस्वरूप संरचनात्मक परिवर्तन हुए, लोग धर्म, जाति, क्षेत्र, वंश, नस्ल, भाषा आदि के आधार पर संगठित रूप में क्षेत्र निर्धारित कर बसने लगे। इनकी संस्कृति अलग थी। ये समूह एक बंद समाज की तरह रहना चाहते थे, हर हाल में अपनी अस्मिता को अक्षुण्ण रखकर राष्ट्रीयता को अपनाना चाहते थे। सह-अस्तित्व की भावना इनके मूल में थी। लोकतंत्र का तकाजा तो निर्णयन की प्रक्रिया में बहुमत को लेकर चलने का होता है, ऐसे में ये छोटे-छोटे समूहों के अधिकारों का मुद्दा सामने आया। ये समूह अल्पसंख्यक थे।

स्पष्ट है राज्य-राष्ट्र को चुनौती देकर विश्वयुद्ध के बाद लोकतांत्रिक समाजों की स्थापना हुई तो एक तरह के मूल्यों, आदर्शों, मान्यताओं, विचारों को मानने वाले लोग संगठित होकर समूह में निवास करने लगे। चूँकि यह विविधता लोकतंत्र में ही संभव था। अतः वैसे समूह जो मूल्यों, मान्यताओं, विचारों, आदर्शों, कुल मिलाकर सांस्कृतिक स्तर पर अलग है, अल्पसंख्यक है, उनके अस्मिता की सुरक्षा की बात सामने आई। बहुसांस्कृतिकता जीवन के प्रति एक दृष्टिकोण है जो लोकतंत्र की खूबसूरती बढ़ाता है।

बहुसंस्कृतिवाद से आशय "नीतियों के माध्यम से जातीय और सांस्कृतिक विविधताओं का प्रबंधन है जिसके तहत जातीय और सांस्कृतिक अल्पसंख्यकों की राष्ट्र की एकता में भागीदारी और पहुँच सुनिश्चित की

जाती है।” बहुसांस्कृतिक समार्जों में नागरिक समाज के मूल्यों को प्रतिष्ठित किया जाता है और नागरिकता नागरिक, अनुबंधात्मक अर्थों में परिभाषित की जाती है। जातीय एवं सांस्कृतिक संरचना को सम्मान देते हुए लोकतांत्रिक राजनीतिक व्यवस्था में संविधान को सर्वोपरि माना है। 1991 कि नोबल पुरस्कार विजेता आन सान सूकी के शब्दों में “चूँकि दुनिया में सांस्कृतिक विविधता व्याप्त है इसलिए जरूरी है कि तमाम देश और तमाम लोग मिलकर उन मूल मानवीय मूल्यों पर एकमत हों जो एकता स्थापित करने का आधार बन सकें।”

बहुसांस्कृतिक देश में संविधान, लोकतांत्रिक प्रणाली, राष्ट्रीय भाषा का उपयोग, व्यक्तिगत अधिकार, सामाजिक समानता, महिलाओं को समानता का अधिकार आदि कुछ महत्वपूर्ण एकता प्रदान करने वाले मानवीय मूल्य हैं। बहुसांस्कृतिकता को आज सार्वभौमिक मान्यता मिल जाने के बाद विविधता का प्रबंधन एवं जातीय तनाव कम करने की बातें विद्वानों के बीच चर्चा का विषय है। हालाँकि इस मुद्दे पर मतैक्य स्थापित नहीं हो सका। इसका प्रमुख कारण है राष्ट्रों की अपनी-अपनी विशेष परिस्थितियाँ एवं विशिष्ट सामाजिक संरचना, उदाहरणार्थ - फ्रांस की सांस्कृतिक विविधता की समस्या का समाधान जर्मनी एवं जापान से अलग है। ऑस्ट्रेलिया और कनाडा की भी स्थितियाँ एक-दूसरे से पृथक् है। यहाँ स्पष्ट है कि बहुसांस्कृतिकता का आशय सांस्कृतिक एवं जातीय विविधता के बावजूद इनका स्वरूप भिन्न-भिन्न होता है।

1970 के दशक के पहले चरण में बहुसांस्कृतिकता की अवधारणा ने एकीकरण एवं सम्मिलन की विचारधाराओं को खारिज किया और ब्रिटिश समूहों के संगठनों को प्रोत्साहित किया। सांस्कृतिक एवं जातीय विविधता के दूसरे चरण में गैर-बराबरी और सामाजिक प्रवंचना के मुद्दों की ओर ध्यान आकृष्ट किया गया। 1989 के राष्ट्रीय एजेंडा में सामाजिक न्याय के मुद्दे को प्रमुखता मिली। इसके तीन आयाम थे - सांस्कृतिक पहचान, सामाजिक न्याय और आर्थिक दक्षता। **सांस्कृतिक पहचान** - भाषा एवं धर्म समेत निजी सांस्कृतिक विरासतों की अभिव्यक्ति और भागीदार का अधिकार। **सामाजिक न्याय** - व्यवहार एवं अवसर की समता का अधिकार तथा नस्ल, जातीयता, संस्कृति, धर्म या जन्म स्थान के आधार पर भेदभाव का समापन। **आर्थिक दक्षता** - बिना किसी भेदभाव के उपलब्ध प्रतिभाओं और क्षमताओं को विकसित करने और बरकरार रखने की आवश्यकता। वास्तव में बहुसांस्कृतिकता के इन आयामों को सभी राज्यों में भाषा, सेवा और शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, आवास, तथा स्थानीय प्रशासन, ऐसे कार्य क्षेत्र हैं जिसमें सांस्कृतिक अस्मिता बरकरार रखते हुए सामाजिक न्याय एवं आर्थिक दक्षता विकसित करने की जरूरत है (कपूर, 2019)।

तीव्रगति से बढ़ती हुई जनसंख्या के कारण सांस्कृतिक विविधताओं, उच्च स्तरीय शिक्षा, शहरी जीवन और कई पीढ़ियों के सह-अस्तित्व को बढ़ावा मिला है। बहुत हद तक बहुसांस्कृतिकवाद के उदय का आधार अल्पसंख्यकों की अस्मिता अर्थात् उनके पहचान से है। बहुसांस्कृतिकता में आस्था रखने वालों का तर्क है कि इससे सामाजिक तनाव कम करने में सहायता मिलती है। इस विचारधारा का रास्ता संकीर्ण नहीं है। हेज के अनुसार “बहुसांस्कृतिकवाद विभिन्न हितों द्वारा निर्मित परिभाषाओं और संरचनाओं का संघर्ष क्षेत्र है।” आगे वे कहते हैं “बहुसांस्कृतिकवाद अंग्रेजी-केन्द्रित रणनीति है जिसने अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्वरूप अखिलचरित्र करना तब शुरू किया जब ऑस्ट्रेलिया ने अपनी सीमाएँ पड़ोसी देशों की जनता के लिए खोल दी।

बहुसांस्कृतिकता की अवधारणा को और स्पष्ट करने के लिए हम ‘सलाद का कटोरा’ सिद्धांत का सहारा ले सकते हैं। जिस प्रकार से एक कटोरा में विभिन्न तरह के सलाद के सामग्री को एक साथ रखकर

सभी का अस्तित्व बना रहता है, सबके अपने स्वाद होते हैं, ऐसा नहीं है कि उनके मिश्रण से सभी का अस्तित्व समाप्त हो जाता हो और एक अलग प्रकार का स्वाद उत्पन्न होता हो, ठीक उसी प्रकार एक राष्ट्र के अंतर्गत विभिन्न प्रकार के संस्कृतियों के आधार पर संगठित सामुदायिक समूह के होने से राष्ट्र की एकता और अखंडता को कोई खतरा नहीं होता वरन् उस राष्ट्र की महत्ता और बढ़ जाती है। यह केवल सह-अस्तित्व का मूर्तरूप है, जिससे समूह विशेष की मानवाधिकार की सुरक्षा होता है।



बहुसांस्कृतिकता के परिप्रेक्ष्य में अधिकारों की चर्चा अल्पसंख्यक समूहों के सन्दर्भ में सदैव होती रही है। विद्वानों के एक वर्ग का मानना है कि विभिन्न आधारों पर संगठित समूहों के आंतरिक मामले में राज्य को हस्तक्षेप नहीं करना चाहिए। यह स्वीकार्य विचार नहीं है। इस सन्दर्भ में दो बड़े विचारक - विल किमलिका एवं भीखू पारेख, जिनका अध्ययन आवश्यक प्रतीत होता है। किमलिका (1995) ने विस्तार से इन अल्पसंख्यक समूहों के सन्दर्भ में अपने विचार रखे, जिन पर विचार करना नितांत आवश्यक है। उन्होंने समूहों के अस्तित्व, अस्मिता एवं अधिकारों की रक्षा के दृष्टिगत तीन विशेष अधिकार इन समूहों को देने की वकालत की है -

1. विशेष सांस्कृतिक अधिकार जैसा कि भारतीय संविधान द्वारा अनुच्छेद 29-30 में अल्पसंख्यकों को अपनी संस्कृति की रक्षा हेतु प्रदत्त है।
2. समूहों के स्वशासन का अधिकार : भारतीय संविधान के अनुसूची 5 एवं 6 द्वारा विशेष प्रावधान कर इस तरह का अधिकार दिया गया है।
3. विशेष प्रतिनिधित्व का अधिकार : भारत के संविधान द्वारा अनुसूचित जाति एवं जनजाति के लिए इस तरह के प्रावधान किए गए हैं।

आशय यह है कि उपर्युक्त प्रावधान लोकतांत्रिक विभेदीकृत समाजों में अल्पसंख्यकों के लिए होनी चाहिए। भीखू पारेख (2006) ने समूह केन्द्रित कानून (Group Centric Law) बनाने की वकालत की अर्थात् जिस समूह को जिस तरह के कानून की आवश्यकता हो, वैसा कानून केवल संबंधित समूह के लिए बनाया जाए, वे कानून अन्य समूहों पर न लागू किया जाए, इसके अलावा दो और महत्वपूर्ण बातें उन्होंने कही -

1. राज्य अपने सकारात्मक प्रयासों द्वारा इन समूहों को सहयोग दे।
2. अल्पसंख्यक संस्थाओं के पल्लवित एवं पुष्पित करने की दिशा में राज्य कार्य करे।

अल्पसंख्यकों की समस्या आज वैश्विक पटल पर गंभीर विषय है। उदारवाद या तथाकथित साम्यवादी राज्य लोकतंत्र की दावा तो करते हैं किन्तु वहाँ की अल्पसंख्यकों की स्थिति कुछ और ही बयाँ कर रही है। अभी हाल ही में बांग्लादेश की गतिविधि से सभी वाकिफ हैं। अल्पसंख्यक वहाँ भीषण संघर्ष कर रहे हैं। विश्व के कई देशों में ऐसी स्थिति दृष्टिगत है। यहाँ भीखू पारीख के समूह केन्द्रित कानून का सुझाव समस्या के समाधान की दिशा में बहुत हद तक सकारात्मक पहल साबित हो सकता है।

उपसंहार

द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के बाद राष्ट्र-राज्य वैश्विक पटल पर अस्तित्व में आए। लोकतंत्रीकरण की प्रक्रिया के परिणामस्वरूप अल्पसंख्यकों की संस्कृति की रक्षा, उनकी महत्ता एवं अस्तित्व की समस्या सामने आई। इसके लिए समाज के स्वरूप का बहुसांस्कृतिक होना अनिवार्य था। बहुसांस्कृतिकता की रक्षा हेतु मानवाधिकार को लिखित रूप में विश्वयुद्ध के बाद सार्वभौमिक मान्यता प्रदान की गई जिसका संबंध अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकारों की सुरक्षा के साथ गहरे रूप से जुड़ा हुआ है। बहुसांस्कृतिकता की अवधारणा की जोरदार उपस्थिति विभिन्न आधार पर संगठित अल्पसंख्यक समूहों के अधिकार की सुरक्षा से अंतर्संबंधित है।

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जम्मू और कश्मीर की महिलाओं के विधिक एवं सामाजिक अधिकार: अनुच्छेद 370 के स्थगन के पूर्व और पश्चात् का एक तुलनात्मक विश्लेषण

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सार संक्षेप

अगस्त 2019 जम्मू और कश्मीर के संवैधानिक इतिहास में एक महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रखता है। इसी महीने में अनुच्छेद 370 के कुछ अंशों को रद्द किया गया था। इस ऐतिहासिक कदम ने इस क्षेत्र के सामाजिक-विधिक परिदृश्य को पूरी तरह से पुनः परिभाषित किया। यह शोधपत्र 'अनुच्छेद 370' के निरस्तीकरण से पूर्व और पश्चात् के संदर्भ में विधि और संस्कृति के ढांचे से संबंधित परिवर्तन के गहन विश्लेषण पर ध्यान केंद्रित करता है। संपत्ति का अधिकार, व्यक्तिगत कानूनों और लिंग – संवेदनशील नीतियों की जांच व विश्लेषण के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत शोध यह मूल्यांकन करता है कि किस हद तक जम्मू और कश्मीर को भारत के विधायी और विधिक मंच से एकीकृत किया गया है। इसके साथ ही यह लंबे समय से चले आ रहे लैंगिक असमानताओं को संबोधित करता है, विशेष रूप से ग्रामीण और हाशिए के क्षेत्रों में इन अधिकारों के व्यावहारिक वास्तविकता को संचालित करने वाले सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक संबंध की जांच करता है। नीति मूल्यांकन का एक बहुआयामी न्यायशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण और अनुभवात्मक अंतर्दृष्टियां यह दर्शाती हैं कि प्रगति का एक द्वैतिक स्वभाव है। जबकि विधिक सुधार बहुत महत्वपूर्ण रहे हैं, सामाजिक स्वीकार्यता और प्रवर्तन का स्तर असमान लग रहा है। क्षेत्र में कानून और समाज के बीच सूक्ष्म चर्चा में जैसे तरक्की हासिल की गई है, वैसे ही जम्मू और कश्मीर में महिलाओं के लिए अभी भी मौजूद चनौतियां व्यक्त होती हैं। यह अध्ययन नीतिकारों, विधिक विद्वानों और अधिवक्ताओं के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है जो संघर्ष या सामाजिक-राजनीतिक परिवर्तनशील परिवेश से प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण को समझने और बढ़ावा देने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं।

प्रमुख शब्द : अनुच्छेद 370, महिला-अधिकारी, जम्मू और कश्मीर विधिक-सामाजिक अधिकार, राजनीतिक बदलाव।

परिचय

जम्मू और कश्मीर ने पिछले कुछ वर्षों में भारत के संवैधानिक ढांचे के भीतर एक विशेष स्थान प्राप्त कर लिया है। इसे भारतीय संविधान के अनुच्छेद 370 के तहत विशेष स्वायत्तता दी गई थी, जिसने इस क्षेत्र को संपत्ति, शासन और नागरिकता से संबंधित कानून बनाने और उनके आधार पर काम करने की अनुमति दी थी। यह स्वायत्तता इस क्षेत्र की विभिन्न सांस्कृतिक, ऐतिहासिक और राजनीतिक पहचान को ध्यान में रख

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कर दी गई थी। हालाँकि इसने क्षेत्र के विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाने के साथ-साथ ही लैंगिक न्याय के संदर्भ में प्रणालीगत असमानताओं की स्थिति भी पैदा की (चौधरी, 2021)।

संपत्ति के अधिकार का क्षेत्र ऐसे सबसे स्पष्ट क्षेत्रों में से एक था, जो महिलाओं के खिलाफ अत्यंत भेदभावपूर्ण साबित हुआ। यह व्यवस्था महिलाओं को संपत्ति विरासत में लेने या शादी के बाद कब्जा बनाए रखने की अनुमति नहीं देता है। इसने उन्हें न केवल आर्थिक रूप से वंचित किया, बल्कि ऐसे अन्य कानूनों को बनाने का आधार भी बना। इसी तरह, आमतौर पर पितृसत्तात्मक रीति-रिवाजों द्वारा ढाले गए व्यक्तिगत कानूनों ने परिवार और समाज के भीतर उनके अधिकारों को और सीमित कर दिया। ऐसे मुद्दे सीमांत राजनीतिकरण की वकालत करने के लिए मौजूद थे। (भारत विकास समीक्षा, 2020)।

अगस्त 2019 में अनुच्छेद 370 को निरस्त करने से, यकीनन, जम्मू-कश्मीर के विधिक और प्रशासनिक माहौल में बड़ा बदलाव आया।² इसने इस क्षेत्र के विशेष दर्जे को खत्म कर दिया और साथ ही इसे भारत के केंद्रीय विधिक ढांचे में एकीकृत कर दिया। इसका उद्देश्य राष्ट्रीय कानूनों के अनुप्रयोग को एकरूप बनाना था, जिसमें क्षेत्र में लैंगिक समानता को बढ़ावा देने के उद्देश्य से बनाए गए कानून भी शामिल हैं।

यह परिवर्तन क्षेत्र में महिलाओं के अधिकारों को बढ़ावा देने के संभावनाओं को आधार प्रदान करता है, जैसे – लिंग-निरपेक्ष संपत्ति कानूनों का विस्तार और उदारीकरण, घरेलू हिंसा और अन्य प्रकार के लिंग आधारित भेदभाव के खिलाफ राष्ट्रीय संरक्षण स्थापित करना (चोपड़ा एन.डी.)। हालाँकि यह परिवर्तन न तो सहज है और न ही समान रूप से लाभकारी है। विधिक सुधार लिंग समानता के लिए अधिक अनुकूल आधार स्थापित करता है। यद्यपि इन अधिकारों के कार्यान्वयन में कई चुनौतीपूर्ण बाधाएँ हैं। सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रतिरोध, विशेष रूप से पारंपरिक और रूढ़िवादी ग्रामीण समुदायों से, चुनौतियाँ पेश करता रहता है। इसके अतिरिक्त क्षेत्र के लंबे समय से चले आ रहे संघर्षों और अस्थिरता ने संवेदनशीलता को बढ़ावा दिया है, जिससे इन सुधारों को लागू करना एक निरंतर संघर्ष बन गया है। यह शोधपत्र निरस्तीकरण से पहले और निरस्तीकरण के बाद सिद्धांत रूप से जम्मू और कश्मीर में महिलाओं के अधिकारों की प्रगति की समीक्षा करेगा। यह एक बहुविधात्मक विधि का उपयोग करता है। इस प्रकार, व्यापक परिवर्तनों पर चर्चा करने के लिए विधिक विश्लेषण, नीति मूल्यांकन और अनुभवात्मक डेटा को मिलाता है। यह प्रगतियों को पेश करने के साथ-साथ निरंतर चुनौतियों को भी प्रस्तुत करने का प्रयास करता है ताकि इस मुद्दे को व्यापक रूप से समझा जा सके एवं रैंकिंग करने वाले क्षेत्रों में लिंग समानता के मुद्दे को समझने में सहायक हो।

निरसन से पहले महिलाओं की विधिक और सामाजिक स्थिति

जम्मू और कश्मीर में 2019 से पहले लिंग समानता के लिए गंभीर बाधाएँ थीं:

संपत्ति का अधिकार: राज्य का कानून महिलाओं को राज्य की सीमाओं के बाहर विवाह करने पर विरासत के अधिकार से रोकता है। यह स्पष्ट रूप से लिंग भेदभाव के अंतर को बढ़ावा देता है।

व्यक्तिगत कानून: अधिकांशतः पितृसत्तात्मक, प्रथागत और वैधानिक कानून के साथ-साथ परिवार और सामाजिक स्तर पर निर्णयों में पुरुषों की महत्वपूर्ण भागीदारी के साथ महिलाओं की स्वायत्तता में कमी को स्थापित करता है।

राजनीतिक प्रतिनिधित्व: विकास तक पहुंच और सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक बाधाएं महिलाओं को शासन और राजनीतिक विमर्श में भाग लेने से हतोत्साहित करती है।

निरस्तीकरण के बाद विधिक सुधार और इसके परिणाम: विशेष रूप से, अनुच्छेद 370 के रद्द होने से केंद्रीय भारतीय कानून को जम्मू और कश्मीर पर लागू किया गया। यह विशेष रूप से महिलाओं के अधिकारों के सुधार से संबंधित है।

समान संपत्ति के अधिकार: लिंग-निरपेक्ष संपत्ति कानून ऐतिहासिक रूप से उत्पन्न लैंगिक अंतर को संबोधित करने में एक ऐतिहासिक छलांग प्रदान करते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए, एक महिला जो किसी व्यक्ति से जम्मू-कश्मीर के बाहर विवाह करती है वह संपत्ति का उत्तराधिकार नहीं प्राप्त कर सकती। इससे महिलाओं की आर्थिक सुरक्षा के अधिकार का हनन होता है। यह संपत्ति और धन पर पितृसत्तात्मक नियंत्रण को सशक्त करता है। केंद्रीय संपत्ति कानूनों के तहत आज महिलाओं को पति के निवास स्थान और उनके वैवाहिक स्थिति की परवाह किए बिना संपत्ति का उत्तराधिकार और सुरक्षा के संदर्भ में समान अधिकार प्राप्त है। यह सुधार स्वयं में आर्थिक रूप से महिलाओं को सशक्त बनाने और उन्हें अधिक स्वतंत्रता देने के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। यह उस पारंपरिक मानदंडों को चुनौती देता है जो उन्हें उत्तराधिकार और स्वामित्व में उन अधिकारों से वंचित करते हैं।

विधिक सुरक्षा उपायों में सुधार: राष्ट्रीय विधिक उपायों (जैसे – घरेलू हिंसा से महिलाओं की रक्षा अधिनियम और भारतीय दंड संहिता में संशोधन) की शुरुआत ने लिंग-आधारित हिंसा के खिलाफ मुकाबला करने के लिए तंत्र को मजबूत किया है। ये उपाय व्यापक दायरे में हैं, घरेलू हिंसा, यौन उत्पीड़न और अन्य प्रकार की हिंसा के संदर्भ में विभिन्न प्रकार के मामलों का समाधान करते हैं। इसने उन महिलाओं के लिए विधिक उपायों के द्वार खोले हैं जिन्हें पूर्व कानूनों या कमजोर प्रवर्तन तंत्रों के माध्यम से पर्याप्त उपाय नहीं मिले थे। विशेष हेल्पलाइन, आश्रय गृह, परामर्श केंद्र और अन्य माध्यम से जोड़कर, हिंसा से लड़ने और उसे रोकने की क्षमता कई गुना बढ़ जाती है। यद्यपि सही आधार स्तर पर प्रवर्तन क्षमताओं का निर्माण करना एक चुनौती है।

आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण: अधिकांश हस्तक्षेपों का ध्यान आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण के माध्यम से महिलाओं को कार्यबल और उद्यमिता में शामिल करने पर है। केंद्रीय श्रम कानूनों के कार्यान्वयन, जब कौशल आधारित प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमों और सूक्ष्म वित्त के साथ मिलकर काम करते हैं, तो यह महिलाओं के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में आर्थिक स्थिरता के लिए प्रवेश का एक मजबूत आधार प्रदान करता है। उद्यमिता विकास के संबंध में राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर योजनाएं, जैसे कि प्रधानमंत्री मुद्रा योजना, ने महिलाओं को छोटे पैमाने पर व्यावसायिक गतिविधियों को शुरू करने या आगे विकसित करने के लिए सशक्त किया है। यह घरेलू आय में वृद्धि और सामुदायिक विकास में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान करती है। हालाँकि, आर्थिक अवसरों तक पहुंच वितरण के मामले में असमान बनी हुई है। ग्रामीण महिलाएं आमतौर पर स्थानीय बाजारों तक सीमित पहुंच, खराब बुनियादी ढाँचे और वित्तीय साक्षरता के निम्न स्तर के कारण अधिक वंचित रहती हैं। ऐसी असमानता को संबोधित करने के लिए अधिक विस्तृत स्थायी नीति ध्यान और स्थानीयकृत समर्थन तंत्र जैसे स्थान विशिष्ट आयामों की आवश्यकता होगी, जो कमजोर और गरीब महिलाओं के लिए समर्पित हो (लालवानी और गेयनर, 2020)।

विधिक एकरूपता और पहुंच: केंद्र सरकार के कानूनों ने न केवल विधिक क्षेत्र को समान बनाया है, बल्कि महिलाओं को न्याय प्रणाली तक बेहतर पहुंच भी प्रदान की है। लिंग आधारित हिंसा के मामलों के लिए फास्ट-ट्रैक अदालतें, साथ ही विधिक सहायता सेवाओं के प्रावधानों ने विधिक प्रणाली की दक्षता और पहुंच को और बढ़ावा दिया है। ये उपाय सभी आर्थिक पृष्ठभूमि की महिलाओं को शिकायतों से निवारण की मांग करने में सक्षम बनाते हैं, जिससे महिलाओं के अधिकारों का सम्मान और जवाबदेही सुनिश्चित होती है।

लक्षित समुदायों पर प्रभाव: विशेष रूप से, जो महिलाएँ इन सुधारों के लिए सबसे महत्वपूर्ण हैं, वे आदिवासी महिलाओं और अल्पसंख्यक समुदायों की सीमांत पृष्ठभूमियों से आती हैं। नए विधिक ढांचे का उद्देश्य यह सुनिश्चित करना है कि भेदभाव को समाप्त कर संसाधनों तक पहुंच का अधिकार बढ़ाया जाए ताकि इंटरसेक्शनल असमानता द्वारा उत्पन्न त्रिकोणीय अंतर को भरा जा सके। कार्यान्वयन के लिए उचित निगरानी की आवश्यकता होगी ताकि लाभ समाज के सभी वर्गों तक पहुंचे और यहां तक कि उन लोगों तक भी जो ऐतिहासिक रूप से मुख्यधारा के विकास प्रयासों से वंचित रहे हैं। (लालवानी और गेनर, 2020)।

संक्षेप में, निरसन के बाद लागू किए गए विधिक सुधार जम्मू और कश्मीर में लिंग समानता के वादे को पूरा करने की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। इन परिवर्तनों ने महिलाओं के अधिकारों को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए एक ठोस आधार तैयार किया है, लेकिन अंततः यह इस बात पर निर्भर करेगा कि संस्थागत और सामाजिक नेतृत्व आदर्शवादी प्रावधानों को वास्तविकता में बदलने के लिए कितने इच्छुक और सक्षम हैं।

तुलनात्मक विश्लेषण: निरसन से पूर्व और पश्चात विधिक प्रगति: जम्मू और कश्मीर के विधिक ढांचे का भारत के केंद्रीय कानूनों के साथ संरेखण लिंग समानता की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण और प्रगतिशील परिवर्तन है। निरसन से पहले, ऐसे कानून ज्यादातर क्षेत्रीय थे और इनमें लिंग आधारित अधिकारों में गंभीर असमानताएँ थी। उदाहरण के लिए, जम्मू और कश्मीर के बाहर शादी करने वाली महिलाओं को विधिक और सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रतिबंधों का सामना करना पड़ा, विशेष रूप से जो विरासत और निवास से संबंधित थे। अब केंद्रीय कानून ऐसे प्रथाओं को अमान्य कर सकते हैं और राष्ट्रीय मानकों के आधार पर एक अधिक समान ढांचा बना सकते हैं। यद्यपि वास्तविक अधिनियम का कार्यान्वयन प्रभावशीलता के लिए समय-समय पर सक्षम संस्थानों द्वारा निगरानी की आवश्यकता की अपेक्षा रखता है।

सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रतिरोध: ये विधिक परिवर्तन पारंपरिक मानकों के खिलाफ एक प्रमुख चुनौती साबित हुए हैं। यह खासतौर पर ग्रामीण समुदायों के संदर्भ में विशेष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण है, जहाँ मूल्य पितृसत्तात्मक दृष्टिकोण के बहुत करीब हैं। इस संदर्भ में समाज की अपेक्षाएँ विधिक प्रावधानों के साथ समन्वय में नहीं हैं, जो महिलाओं को दिए गए सैद्धांतिक अधिकारों और उनकी वास्तविक जीवन की व्यावहारिकता के बीच द्वंद्व पैदा करती है। ऐसा प्रतिरोध विभिन्न रूपों में सामने आया, जैसे कि महिलाओं के लिए संपत्ति अधिकारों को मान्यता देने की अनिच्छा और निर्णय लेने की व्यवस्थाओं में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के लिए सीमित स्वीकृति, साथ ही लिंग आधारित हिंसा की लगातार घटनाएँ। ऐसे मुद्दों के लिए समुदायों में सक्रियता, सार्वजनिक सहभागिता, और सांस्कृतिक बदलाव के लिए केंद्रित शैक्षिक कार्यक्रमों की आवश्यकता है, ताकि लिंग समानता के मुद्दों को अपनाया जा सके।

ग्रामीण-शहरी विषमताएँ: ग्रामीण-शहरी विभाजन बस यह दर्शाता है कि रद्द किए गए सुधारों के लाभों का असमान वितरण हुआ है। अन्य महिलाओं की तुलना में, शहरी महिलाओं को शिक्षा, कानून और आर्थिक अवसरों में सुधार मिला है। उदाहरण के लिए, शहरों में महिलाओं ने उद्यमिता और औपचारिक रोजगार क्षेत्रों में अधिक संलग्नता दिखाई है। यहां बुनियादी ढाँचे और सरकारी समर्थन भी तुलनात्मक रूप से सहजता से उपलब्ध है। सामान्यतः ग्रामीण महिलाओं के पास इस उन्नति का कोई अवसर नहीं है। भौगोलिक और बुनियादी ढाँचे की सीमाओं, विधिक और वित्तीय संसाधनों की अपर्याप्त पहुंच और सांस्कृतिक बाधाएं इसका प्रमुख कारण हैं। आउटरीच कार्यक्रम, ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के लिए आधारभूत संरचना में सुधार और ग्रामीण महिलाओं की विशेष आवश्यकताओं के लिए विशेष आर्थिक रणनीतियाँ जैसी पहल ग्रामीण महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम हो सकता है।

अनुच्छेद 370 को निरस्त करना जम्मू और कश्मीर में महिलाओं के अधिकारों के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण घटना थी, जिसने विधिक और सामाजिक सुधार के लिए नए रास्ते खोले। इसके आधार पर भेदभावपूर्ण संपत्ति अधिकार और सीमित विधिक सुरक्षा जैसे मौलिक संरचनात्मक बाधाएँ सिद्धांत में हटा दी गईं और क्षेत्र के कानूनी ढाँचे को राष्ट्रीय ढाँचे के अनुरूप बनाया गया। केंद्रीय कानूनों ने महिलाओं को विरासत के अधिकार, घरेलू हिंसा से बचाव के लिए विधिक उपाय और अर्थव्यवस्था तक पहुंच के लिए व्यापक अवसर दिए, जिससे एक अधिक न्यायपूर्ण समाज की नींव रखी गई।

हालांकि, ये सुधार किसी भी तरह से सार्वभौमिक रूप से लागू नहीं हुए हैं। विशेष रूप से ग्रामीण और पारंपरिक स्थानों में, जहां पितृसत्तात्मक मानदंड और लैंगिक भूमिकाएँ प्रगति में बाधा डालती हैं व सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रतिरोध बहुत गहराई से जड़ें जमा चुकी हैं। शहरी महिलाएँ इन परिवर्तनों का लाभ उठा रही हैं और संसाधनों, शिक्षा और आर्थिक पहलों तक बेहतर पहुंच का आनंद ले रही हैं। ग्रामीण महिलाएँ इन लाभों से परे हैं और नए विधिक ढाँचे में भाग लेने या लाभ उठाने में आधारभूत, सांस्कृतिक और प्रणालीगत बाधाओं द्वारा प्रभावित हैं।

अतः यहां एक समग्र दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता होगी जहाँ संगठित, निरंतर समर्थन, शिक्षा और इनपुट के माध्यम से विधिक प्रगति और सामाजिक स्वीकृति के बीच पुल बनाया जा सके। उपयुक्त नीतियाँ जो शहरी और ग्रामीण वर्गों के बीच के फासले को पाटने की योजना बनाएँगी एवं महिलाओं की प्रगति में समुदाय-स्तरीय भागीदारी लाएगी। आज आवश्यकता है कि जम्मू और कश्मीर में महिलाओं की प्रतिभा को अभिव्यक्त करने का अवसर दिया जाए। यह लैंगिक समानता की यात्रा अभी भी जारी है व निरसन के बाद विधिक सुधार एक नए और व्यापक भविष्य की दशा में एक बड़ा कदम है जो स्थापित असमानताओं को समाप्त कर रही है।

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बिहार में बदलते सामाजिक परिवेश और दलित महिलाओं की दशा

सुधीर कुमार^{*}

संक्षेप

प्राचीन काल में समाज में प्रचलित प्रतिमान संस्थागत रिवाज एवं प्राचीनतम विचारधाराओं के कारण सबसे निचले पायदान पर खड़ी दलित महिलाएं लंबे काल से अवमानित, यातना और शोषण का शिकार रही हैं, जो लंबे अंतराल के बाद वर्तमान परिवेश में समाज के उन वर्जनाओं, निषेधाज्ञाओं को लांघते हुए कड़ी टक्कर दे रही हैं। पिछले दो दशकों से बिहार इसका ज्वलंत उदाहरण बन गया है। अध्ययन बताते हैं कि बिहार के लिंग आधारित अनेक योजनाओं एवं जेण्डर बजट के कारण बदलते परिवेश में दलित महिलाएं लिंग आधारित बाजारवाद के चुनौतियों को प्रत्यक्ष और अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से संघर्ष के माध्यम से अपना योगदान दे रही हैं। फिर भी वे क्यों इस विकास के दौर में पीछे हैं? इसी प्रश्न की पृष्ठभूमि में प्रस्तुत अध्ययन एक लघु प्रयास है। प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के पड़ताल से ज्ञात होता है कि वर्तमान सामाजिक परिवेश में दलित महिलाओं की बड़ी आबादी जो श्रमजीवी, दैनिक मजदूरी व खेत मजदूरी पर निर्भर है उन्हें उत्पादक समूह में शामिल नहीं किया जा सका है। क्योंकि भूमंडलीकरण के दौर में वे आधुनिक शिक्षा और नई प्रौद्योगिकी में दलित महिलाओं के प्रति समाज एवं व्यवस्था का संवेदनशील नहीं होना है। ऐसे में यह अनुशांसा किया जा सकता है कि वैज्ञानिक शिक्षा, तार्किकता, आधुनिक अनुसंधान के साथ जोड़कर वैज्ञानिक सूझबूझ विकसित करना तथा दलित महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में प्राथमिक शिक्षा से उच्च शिक्षा स्वास्थ्य प्रौद्योगिकी रोजगार के क्षेत्र में प्राथमिकता के साथ उनके सहयोग एवं योगदान प्राप्त कर ही उन्हें समाज के मुख्य धारा में शामिल किया जा सकता है।

प्रमुख शब्द : दलित महिला, महादलित मिशन, जाति-आधारित गणना, शिक्षा, प्रौद्योगिकी शिक्षा, बिहार।

विषय प्रवेश

भारतीय सामाजिक व्यवस्था में महिलाओं की स्थिति निम्न रही है और सामाजिक पदानुक्रम के कारण दलित महिलाओं की स्थिति तुलनात्मक रूप से बहुत कम रहा है। प्राचीन काल से दलितों को अछूत मानकर बहिष्कृत रखा गया और इस परिधि के अंतर्गत प्रत्येक स्तर पर दलित महिलाएं उत्पीड़न, शोषण, भूख, कुपोषण एवं यातना की शिकार होती रही हैं। उनकी इस दुरावस्था को समझकर उनके भविष्य को उज्ज्वल

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बनाने का बीड़ा उठाने में सर्वोच्च महामना ज्योतिबा फूले तथा उसके बाद दूसरे बाबा साहेब अंबेडकर का नाम उल्लेखनीय है। संवैधानिक प्रावधान, सामाजिक जागरूकता एवं शिक्षा के विकास ने महिलाओं को बराबरी का दर्जा प्राप्त होने से महिलाओं की स्थिति सुधार के शुभ संकेत प्राप्त हो रहे हैं। सामाजिक स्तर से नीचले पैदान पर खड़ी दलित महिलाओं की स्थिति भी आजादी के बाद कई क्रान्तिकारी परिवर्तन नजर आते हैं। आज भूमण्डलीकरण एवं बाजारवाद के दौर ने सामाजिक-आर्थिक विकास में दलित महिलाएं पिछड़ते जा रही हैं। आज बाजारवाद ने समाज के कुछ संस्थाओं के द्वारा महिलाओं को आकर्षित करने वाले लैंगिक प्रतीकों के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है। उन्हें पिंग कलर के नौकरियों के लिए उपयुक्त मानी जाती है, जैसे – नाई, रिसेप्शननिस्ट, आया, अध्यापिका, टाइपिस्ट आदी। दलित महिलाओं के संदर्भ में ह्यूमन राइट्स वाच के उद्गार सही प्रतीत होते हैं – “Scheduled Caste women in India bear the triple burden of caste, class and gender” (Human Rights Watch: 1997)। डॉ. अम्बेडकर ने संपूर्ण भारतीय समाज की नारी मुक्ति के सवाल को भी महत्वपूर्ण माना था और उन्होंने दलित नारी की मुक्ति के सवाल को विशेष महत्व दिया था। उनमें व्याप्त सामाजिक असमानता, निरक्षरता, अंधविश्वास, जाति-व्यवस्था, लिंगभेद आदि मुद्दों हेतु आवाज निरंतर उठ रही है। परन्तु इन सबसे पूरी तरह मुक्ति पाना अभी शेष है। दलित महिलाओं की दशा में समाज में सबसे नीचली सीढ़ी पर खड़ी है, क्योंकि अधिकांश दलित महिलाएं धार्मिक रूढ़िवादी परम्पराओं, पाखण्डों, जाति की संकुचित भावना, अंधविश्वास से मुक्त नहीं हुई और उन्हें जबरदस्त ढंग से जकड़ रखा है और सामाजिक बदलाव के लिए भी आसानी से तैयार नहीं होती है (सुमन: 2013)। संकीर्णता का वातावरण एवं हीन भावना होने के कारण वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोण एवं वैज्ञानिक मिजाज का प्रादुर्भाव एवं विकास नहीं हो पाता है। धार्मिक पाखण्ड एवं पुरुष आधिपत्य तथा निम्न सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा के कारण शिक्षा का अभाव मौजूद है (पांचल: 2013)। ई.वी. रामास्वामी पेरियार के अनुसार “पुरुष-स्त्री को अपनी सम्पत्ति मानता है और यह नहीं मानता कि उसके ही तरह स्त्री की भी भावनाएं हो सकती हैं। महिला को शिक्षा से वंचित रखा गया ताकि उन्हें उनकी मुक्ति से वंचित रखा जा सके और इस बहाने उन्हें दासी बनाया जा सके (कश्यप: 2022 से उद्धृत)। महात्मा गांधी का कथन है कि “जब किसी परिवार में एक महिला शिक्षित हो जाती है, उससे दो परिवार लाभान्वित होते हैं।” कोठारी आयोग ने स्त्रियों एवं बालिका शिक्षा के महत्व को बताया है कि शिक्षित स्त्रियों के अभाव में शिक्षित व्यक्ति नहीं हो सकते।

मान्यताओं, धार्मिक पाखण्ड, अंधविश्वास, जाति की संकुचित भावना, घोर गरीबी, आर्थिक पिछड़ेपन के कारण दलित महिला के बीच शिक्षा का अभाव मौजूद है। सामान्य महिलाओं की तुलना में शारीरिक-मानसिक शिक्षा संबंधी पिछड़ेपन के कारण को समझ नहीं पा रही है। निम्न सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा होने के कारण हिंसा एवं घरेलू हिंसा के शिकार दलित महिलाएं अपेक्षाकृत अधिक होती हैं। हमारे देश में प्रत्येक दिन औसतन चार दलित महिलाओं का बलात्कार होता है जिसमें बिहार भी अछूता नहीं है। अधिकांश मामलों में महिलाओं के खिलाफ होने वाले अपराध व हिंसा उनके स्वयं के पत्तियों द्वारा किया जाता है। दलित महिलाओं के अपहरण, हत्या व बलात्कार एवं शारीरिक शोषण के मूल में समाज में निहित ब्राह्मणवादी, पितृसत्ता एवं अपनी जाति के सर्वोच्च होने का अहंकार है। उच्च जाति का व्यक्ति अपने आप को सामाजिक क्रमानुक्रम में ऊपर मानते हैं। इसलिए दलित समुदाय के द्वारा विरोध वे प्रतिकार को वह अपनी बनाई सामाजिक जातीय संरचना के खिलाफ मानते हैं और उन्हें डर है कि उनकी बनाई संरचना ढह जाएगी। इसी कारण जातिवादी समाज अपने स्वभाव से हिंसात्मक हो जाता है और जब दलित महिलाओं का सवाल हो तब शोषण का स्वरूप और अधिक क्रूर हो जाता है और यौनशोषण जैसे कुकृत्य के जरिये अपनी जाति की सर्वोच्चता दर्शाने का प्रयास करते हैं। समाज के प्रगतिशील आंदोलन के माध्यम से दलित समुदाय एवं

दलित महिला उन समाज की वर्जनाओं, निषेधाज्ञाओं को हमेशा कड़ी टक्कर दे रही हैं और संवैधानिक प्रावधान इन्हें और मजबूती प्रदान कर रहे हैं। संघर्ष के माध्यम से अपने अस्तित्व और अस्मिता की लड़ाई को पूर्व दिनों से आज तक जारी रखा है (सिंह: 2017)। यही कारण है कि दलित महिलाएँ अपनी लड़ाई खुद भी लड़ रही हैं। इसलिए उन पर होने वाले हमले व प्रताड़ना पहले से अधिक क्रूर व कठोर नजर आ रहा है। दलित अधिकार कार्यकर्ता मंजूर प्रदीप कहती है कि “हमारे साथ होने वाली हिंसा व अत्याचार दिखती नहीं थी और उनका रिपोर्ट नहीं होता था। लेकिन अब हम अपनी बात रख रहे हैं। हम पहले से अधिक मजबूत और मुखर हैं। हमारे साथ एहसास होने वाले हिंसा अब हमें अपनी सीमा का एहसास कराने के लिए हो रहा है” (शाही: 2023)।

दलित महिलाएँ घोर गरीबी में जीवन बसर कर रही हैं। भूमण्डलीकरण, निजीकरण एवं उदारीकरण ने उनके आर्थिक जीवन के आधार परम्परागत व पुस्तैनी कार्य छिन चुके हैं। दलित महिला का विराट समुदाय जीविकोपार्जन के लिए खेत मजदूरी व दैनिक मजदूरी पर निर्भर रहती है। एक आंकड़े के अनुसार पता चलता है कि देश में 15 परिवार में पांच परिवार कमोवेश भुखमरी की हालत में है। इन पांच परिवार में तीन परिवार दलित हैं और दो गैर दलित। इसलिए सामाजिक न्याय के मुख्य उद्देश्य कल्याणकारी विचारधारा व समतावादी लक्ष्य के साथ समायोजित करके इस वर्ग का उत्थान एवं संतुलित विकास सुनिश्चित किया जा सके (बिहार सरकार: 2022)। इसलिए वर्तमान परिदृश्य में दलित महिलाओं की सशक्तिकरण और सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति में सुधार करने की आवश्यकता है। भूमण्डलीकरण के दौर में नई प्रौद्योगिक, वैज्ञानिक शिक्षा के साथ प्रशिक्षण, कौशल एवं स्व-निर्णय के ताकत के साथ उत्पादक समूह में शामिल कर समाज में इनका योगदान को महत्वपूर्ण स्थान दिया जा सकता है, जिससे सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा में वृद्धि के साथ दलित महिलाओं को सुदृढ़ किया जा सकता है।

हमारे संविधान में समता और न्याय के आदर्शों पर आधारित है जिसमें मौलिक अधिकार, मौलिक कर्तव्यों तथा राज्य के नीति निदेशक सिद्धान्त में लैंगिक समानता के सिद्धान्त का प्रावधान करता है। दलित तथा स्त्रियों के प्रति किसी भी प्रकार के भेदभाव का निषेध करता है, जैसे – संविधान के अनुच्छेद 14, 15(1), 21, 42, अनुच्छेद 51क (ड), 243घ (3) एवं 243न (3) आदि। सकारात्मक विभेद अथवा आरक्षण की नीति अपनाने के लिए राज्य को प्राधिकृत करता है। साथ ही दलित महिलाओं पर बढ़ते हिंसा के रोकथाम हेतु भारतीय दण्ड संहिता, अपराध प्रक्रिया संहिता (भारतीय न्याय संहिता, भारतीय नागरिक सुरक्षा संहिता-2023) के साथ अन्य कठोर विधायन लागू किया गया है। सामाजिक कुरीतियों, सामाजिक विघटन रोकने तथा समाज सुधार के अनुकूल परिस्थितियाँ उत्पन्न करने के लिए बहुत सारे सामाजिक विधान राज्य द्वारा पास किए गए हैं। उपरोक्त विवेचन एवं वैधानिक-राजनीतिक प्रावधानों के बावजूद-प्रश्न यह उठता है कि दलित महिलाओं की प्रस्थिति में सुधार क्यों नहीं हुआ? इसी प्रश्न के आलोक में प्रस्तुत शोधपत्र एक लघु प्रयास है।

शोधपत्र के उद्देश्य एवं शोध विधि

बिहार में बदलते परिवेश तथा दलित महिलाएँ इस भूमण्डलीकरण के दौर में उनके सशक्तिकरण में पिछड़ जाने का आकलन करना, प्रौद्योगिक प्रशिक्षण, जागरूकता एवं वैज्ञानिक शिक्षा के माध्यम से आर्थिक

विकास के उपायों के बावजूद उन्हें वांछित लाभ नहीं मिलने का आकलन करना तथा ऐसी स्थिति के कारणों को इंगित करना प्रस्तुत शोध के मुख्य उद्देश्य है। प्रस्तुत आलेख विशेषलणात्मक अध्ययन पर आधारित है तथा तथ्य संकलन के द्वितीयक स्रोतों पर निर्भर है। प्रस्तुत शोध हेतु हमारी परिकल्पना है कि बिहार की सामाजिक संरचना में दलित महिलाएँ आज भी हाशिए पर रहती हैं जिसका मुख्य कारण आधुनिक शिक्षा व वैज्ञानिक शिक्षा से उनका वंचित रह जाना है।

बिहार में दलित महिलाओं की स्थिति एवं कारण

जाति, लिंग तथा धार्मिक भेदभाव के विरुद्ध कई आंदोलन हुए हैं लेकिन इसके बावजूद पूर्वाग्रह बना हुआ है। समाज में दलित महिलाएँ गरीब एवं मजदूर महिलाएँ हैं। जिस प्रकार अन्याय दलित महिलाओं के साथ होता है, वैसा अन्य वर्ग व सामान्य वर्ग के महिलाओं के साथ नहीं होता है। राज्य के सामाजिक-आर्थिक संरचनाओं में एक बड़ा वर्ग कृषि कार्य व मजदूरी से जुड़े हैं और जीविकोपार्जन के लिए खेत मजदूरी एवं दैनिक मजदूरी के साथ जातिवादी व्यवस्था आधारित श्रम से जुड़ा है जिसे हम दलित वर्ग के रूप में जानते हैं। जो अज्ञानता, अंधविश्वास, अशिक्षा, आर्थिक पिछड़ेपन एवं समाज में प्रचलित मान्यताओं के बंधनों से मुक्ति मार्ग के लिए संघर्षरत है। आजादी प्राप्त करने के उपरान्त सामाजिक तथा शैक्षणिक स्थिति में अनेक क्रान्तिकारी परिवर्तन हुए हैं, लेकिन उन्हें पूरी तरह से मुक्ति पाना अभी शेष है।

तालिका 1 में उक्त गणना की रिपोर्ट को सही मानते हैं तो एक अच्छा समाचार है कि लिंगानुपात 100 पुरुषों पर 918 महिला से बढ़कर 953 हुई है यानि पिछले बारह वर्षों में 35 महिलाएँ बढ़ी हैं, वहीं दलितों की आबादी में वृद्धि हुई है। राज्य में महिला आबादी का करीब 21 प्रतिशत से अधिक दलित महिलाओं की आबादी है। इसके साथ अत्यन्त पिछड़ा वर्ग के साथ सम्मिलित करते हैं तो इसकी कुल महिला आबादी का 56 प्रतिशत हो जाता है। इस वर्ग की बड़ी आबादी दैनिक मजदूरी एवं कृषक मजदूर के रूप में समाज में हाशिए पर स्थित है जो समाज के मुख्य धारा से कटे हुए हैं। यह वर्ग उपेक्षित व वंचित समाज बना हुआ है। बड़ी आबादी असुरक्षित समूह के रूप में जाना जाता है जो कि यह घोर गरीबी, आर्थिक पिछड़ेपन, शिक्षा का अभाव, धार्मिक पाखण्ड, मान्यताओं, जाति की संकुचित भावना से ग्रसित है। राज्य में दलित महिलाएँ तिहरी मार झेल रही हैं। प्रथम दलित होने के कारण, द्वितीय गरीब होने के कारण, तीसरा महिला होने के कारण। समाज में जिस प्रकार के अन्याय दलित महिला के साथ होता है वैसा सामान्य व अन्य वर्ग के महिला के साथ नहीं होता है। दलित महिलाओं के साथ ऊँची जाति के मानसिक पीड़ा ग्रसित लोगों के साथ अपने ही समुदाय के लोगों में भेदभाव किया जाता है। राज्य में दलित महिलाएँ सर्वाधिक कृषक मजदूर व कृषि के क्षेत्र लगी हैं जहाँ उन्हें पूरे वर्ष भी कार्य नहीं मिल पाता है। दलितों की बड़ी आबादी भूमिहीन है जिनका अपना भूमि नहीं है, जो अधिकांशतः कृषक मजदूर हैं। केन्द्रीय श्रम एवं रोजगार मंत्रालय की ओर से जारी रिपोर्ट के अनुसार ई-श्रम पोर्टल पर बिहार के दो करोड़ 86 लाख श्रमिकों का निबंधन हो चुका है जिसमें कृषि क्षेत्र में सर्वाधिक 1 करोड़ 52 लाख 23 हजार श्रमिकों ने निबंधन कराया है। कृषि क्षेत्र में मौसमी बेरोजगारी होने के कारण यह वर्ग रोजगार की तलाश में एक स्थान से दूसरे स्थान पर पलायन, करते हैं (बिहार सरकार: 2022)। कम मजदूरी, ऋणग्रस्ता, आवास विहीन, निम्न जीवन स्तर, सहायक धंधों का अभाव के कारण समाज के मुख्यधारा से कट जाते हैं और मिलने वाले सुविधाओं से वंचित रह जाते हैं। इसका सबसे अधिक प्रभाव दलित वर्ग की महिलाओं पर पड़ता है जो महिला सशक्तिकरण के मार्ग में बड़ी बाधा बना है।

तालिका 1 : बिहार जाति आधारित गणना-2023

कोटि	कुल आंकड़ा	प्रतिशत
अनुसूचित जाति	25689820	19.6518
अनुसूचित जनजाति	2199361	01.6824
अत्यन्त पिछड़ा वर्ग	45463936	36.0148

विकास योजनाओं से मिलने वाले लाभ भी उनके जीवन में व्यापक परिवर्तन नहीं ला सका है। मिलने वाले आरक्षण का लाभ भी उनकी सामूहिक स्थिति में कोई मौलिक सुधार नहीं ला सका है। इनके परिवार गांव के किनारे पर अलग ग्रामीण टोलों व बस्तियों या गांव के एक कोने में निर्वाह करते हैं और शहरी क्षेत्र में अक्सर झुग्गी बस्तियों में पाये जाते हैं जिस कारण पेयजल, स्वास्थ्य देखभाल, शिक्षा, सड़क तक पहुँच आदि से वंचित रह जाते हैं। दलित महिलाओं की पहचान सबसे असुरक्षित समूह के रूप में है जो पुरुषों के अपेक्षा अधिक प्रताड़ित एवं हिंसा का सामना करती हैं जो तस्करी और यौन शोषण की शिकार होती हैं। सामाजिक जीवन में असमानता का सबसे गंभीर प्रभाव उनके जीवन पर पड़ता है, सामाजिक मानदण्डों और नीतियाँ, प्रचलित प्रतिमान व प्रथा जो उनके शक्ति, धन व अन्य आवश्यक सामाजिक संसाधनों के अनुचित व असमान वितरण को बढ़ावा देता है। सामाजिक व्यवस्था पदानुक्रमों के कारण अंतर्निहित दलित महिलाओं में असमानताएँ उत्पन्न होती हैं जिस कारण स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, रोजगार पर दलित महिलाओं के सभी आयामों पर हानिकारक प्रभाव पड़ा है। मैला ढोने वाली दलित महिलाएँ दलित में भी महादलित है जिन्हें श्रम सुरक्षा कानूनों एवं नीतियों से भी बाहर रखा जाता है और अपमानजनक कार्य के लिए मजबूर होती है (पासवान : 2020)। राज्य में महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण एवं उत्थान के लिए लगातार प्रयास किया जा रहा है।

तालिका 2 के आंकड़ों में राज्य सरकार 2023-24 में अपने कुल बजट आकार 2.61 लाख करोड़ में से महिलाओं के लिए चलायी जा रही योजनाओं पर 37949 करोड़ रुपए खर्च करेगी। जेण्डर बजट के तहत शुरुआत 2008-09 में हुई तब इसमें 10 विभाग शामिल थे। इस बार सरकार ने महिलाओं से संबंधित जेण्डर बजट में 20 विभागों को शामिल किया है। जेण्डर बजट में दी जाने वाली राशि में से 15 प्रतिशत अलग से केवल महिलाओं के विकास एवं कल्याण पर खर्च करने को सुरक्षित कर दिया जाता है। समाज में महिला-पुरुषों की अलग-अलग जिम्मेदारियाँ, बाध्यताएँ हैं उसी तरह समाज में दलित महिला एवं अन्य महिलाओं के बीच अलग-अलग सामाजिक प्राथमिकता, अलग-अलग बाध्यताएँ एवं अलग-अलग जिम्मेदारियाँ निहित हैं। घर के अंदर एवं बाहर उनकी भूमिका आर्थिक लाभ एवं सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा उनको उचित हिस्सा पाने से रोकती है। दलित महिलाओं के परिस्थितियों को आकलन कर योजनाओं का निर्माण करना आवश्यक है। राज्य में दलित महिलाओं को सशक्त करने का माध्यम शिक्षा है। अशिक्षा के कारण कानून एवं नियम के प्रति जागरूक नहीं होती हैं और अपने अधिकार एवं कर्तव्यों का बोध नहीं होता है। करीब 95 प्रतिशत दलित महिलाएँ शिक्षा एवं रोजगार में आरक्षण का कोई वास्तविक लाभ नहीं ले पाती हैं। दलित महिलाओं की बड़ी आबादी बुनियादी शिक्षा से भी दूर है और असाक्षर है। शिक्षा के अधिकार कानून के तहत 6 से 14 वर्ष तक के बच्चों के लिए अनिवार्य एवं निःशुल्क शिक्षा की व्यवस्था संविधान के 86वें संशोधन द्वारा 21(क) में प्राथमिक शिक्षा को मौलिक अधिकार दिया गया है। दलित महिलाएँ जो 15 वर्ष की बड़ी आबादी अभी असाक्षर बनी हुई है।

तालिका 2 : बजट में महिलाओं की हिस्सेदारी

वर्ष	बजट आकार (लाख करोड़ में)	महिलाओं पर व्यय (करोड़ में)
2019-20	1.46	23095 (15.77 प्रतिशत)
2020-21	1.65	22418 (13.53 प्रतिशत)
2021-22	1.93	33696 (17.44 प्रतिशत)
2022-23	2.37	36657 (15.42 प्रतिशत)
2023-24	2.61	37949 (14.50 प्रतिशत)

तालिका 3 के आंकड़ों से पता चलता है कि बिहार में साक्षरता दर काफी कम है। जनगणना 2011 के अनुसार महिला साक्षरता दर 51.50 प्रतिशत है जिससे स्पष्ट होता है कि बिहार में करीब दो महिलाओं में एक महिला असाक्षर है। उन असाक्षर महिलाओं का कोटिवार जाति एवं वर्गीय आधार पर समीक्षा के दौरान पाया गया कि असाक्षर महिलाओं में बड़ी आबादी दलित महिलाओं की संख्या है। राज्य में महिला साक्षरता में वृद्धि के लिए 15 वर्ष महिलाओं को लक्षित समूह मानकर कई कार्यक्रम चलाये गए। जैसे मुख्यमंत्री अक्षर आंचल योजना, मुख्यमंत्री महादलित, दलित, अति पिछड़ा एवं अल्पसंख्यक वर्ग अक्षर आंचल योजना, केन्द्र प्रायोजित साक्षर भारत कार्यक्रम तथा प्रौढ़ शिक्षा शिक्षण कार्यक्रम आदि उक्त कार्यक्रम की सफलता हेतु 6 माह के दौरान राज्य में बुनियादी साक्षरता परीक्षा का आयोजन किया जाता है और साक्षरता दर में वृद्धि का प्रयास किया गया जिससे साक्षरता दर में वृद्धि भी हुई, लेकिन अभी शेष है और सामान्य वर्ग की महिलाओं की तुलना में साक्षरता दर में अंतराल मौजूद है। राज्य में प्राथमिक शिक्षा से माध्यमिक शिक्षा तक जाते हुए आठवीं के बाद 38.8 फीसदी बच्चे विद्यालय छोड़ देते हैं जिसमें सामान्य जनसंख्या के बच्चों के सापेक्ष दलित बालिकाओं की ड्रॉप आउट का अंतराल ज्यादा बना हुआ है। राज्य में दलित बालिकाओं के ड्रॉप आउट विद्यालय छोड़ने का प्रमुख कारणों में घरेलू कार्यों संलग्न होना एवं आर्थिक लाचारी है। बिहार महादलित आयोग की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार महादलित वर्ग भोक्ता, डोम, घासी, हलखोर, मुसहर, नट, चैपाल, दबगर जैसे वर्ग पर टिप्पणी करते हुए कहा है कि इस समुदाय व वर्ग के लोग अच्छे पदों पर आसीन कोई नहीं मिलता है (NITI Ayog, n.d.)। इस प्रकार अंधविश्वास, रूढ़िवाद, धार्मिक, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक परम्पराएँ इस समाज एवं दलित महिलाओं को बहुत ही जबर्दस्त ढंग से जकड़ रखा है। किसी भी प्रकार के परिवर्तन के लिए व सामाजिक बदलाव के लिए आसानी से तैयार नहीं होती है। दलित छात्रा अधिकांशतः लोअर प्राइमरी से आगे की शिक्षा जारी नहीं रख पाती है। प्रदेश में महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण के लिए किए गए कार्यों में संस्थागत प्रजातांत्रिक ढांचे में पंचायत चुनाव में नारी से नारायणी बनाने के प्रयास के फलस्वरूप 50 प्रतिशत महिला का कोटा भी निर्धारित किया गया है लेकिन उसमें भी पुरुषवादी सोच ने उनके स्वतंत्रता एवं निर्णय के अधिकार पर कब्जा कर लिया गया है।

निष्कर्ष व सुझाव

राज्य में दलित महिलाओं की बड़ी आबादी बुनियादी सुविधाओं एवं अधिकारों से वंचित है जिन्हें उबारना अत्यन्त आवश्यक है, क्योंकि सामाजिक, आर्थिक तथा राजनीति जीवन में महिलाओं के सक्रिय भागीदारी के बिना राज्य में तेज प्रगति एवं मूलगामी सामाजिक रूपान्तरण के बारे में सोचना संभव नहीं है। जाति, लिंग

एवं धार्मिक भेदभाव के विरुद्ध कई आंदोलन हुए हैं लेकिन इसके बावजूद पूर्वाग्रह बना हुआ है। आजादी के 77 वर्ष बीत जाने के बाद भी इस संदर्भ में कुछ किए जाने के बावजूद यह विभेद आज भी विद्यमान है। इसलिए केवल सरकारी हस्तक्षेप तथा विधि बनाए जाने से समाज में रूपान्तरण या बड़ा परिवर्तन नहीं आ सकता। इसके लिए प्रगतिशील, परिवर्तनकारी दृष्टिकोण, जागरूकता एवं संवेदनशीलता तथा समानता, न्याय जैसे मानवतावादी मूल्य के साथ एक सतत् सामाजिक अभियान चलाने की आवश्यकता है।

दलित महिलाओं को असमानता से संबंधित चिंताओं को वृहत आर्थिक नीति के ढांचे में सम्मिलित करना आवश्यक है, क्योंकि आर्थिक सुदृढ़ता उन महिलाओं के बीच अपने आर्थिक समस्याओं को दूर करने के साथ ही दक्षता में वृद्धि और सामाजिक स्तर में सुधार होगा और आर्थिक सुदृढ़ता व स्वावलंबन के माध्यम से ही समाज व परिवार में प्रतिष्ठा व निर्णय का ताकत प्राप्त करने का एक महत्वपूर्ण साधन होगा। दलित महिलाओं के सामाजिक बाध्यताओं के कारण आर्थिक लाभ एवं सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा उनको उचित हिस्सा पाने से व लेने से रोकती है। इसलिए विकास योजनाओं के साथ कार्य योजना का निर्माण दलित महिलाओं के प्राथमिकता के साथ उनकी परिस्थिति को ध्यान में रखकर निर्धारित किया जाए।

दलित महिलाओं के मुक्ति मार्ग का महत्वपूर्ण एवं शक्तिशाली साधन शिक्षा है। शिक्षा का प्रभाव दलित उत्थान में कारगर सिद्ध हुआ है जो मानव संसाधन विकास के लिए एवं सशक्त बनाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है। यह न केवल आर्थिक विकास की संभावनाओं में सुधार करता है बल्कि आत्मविश्वास को भी बढ़ाता है। शिक्षा एवं ज्ञान के क्षेत्र में आधुनिक अनुसंधान की अवहेलना भी उनके मुक्ति मार्ग में अवरोध उत्पन्न करता है तथा दलित महिलाओं का बड़ा समूह बुनियादी शिक्षा से अभी दूर है। सामुदायिक अभियान के द्वारा ग्रामीण टोला, बस्तियों, झुग्गी एवं मलिन बस्तियों में चलाकर पूर्ण साक्षरता का लक्ष्य पूरा किया जाए। उनमें से ड्रॉप आउट का दर दलित बच्चियों के मामले में बहुत अधिक है तथा उच्चतर शिक्षा में जाने की दर भी काफी निम्न है। इसके लिए प्राथमिक शिक्षा से उच्च माध्यमिक शिक्षा तक स्थानीय समुदाय, सिविल सोसायटी एवं गैर सरकारी संगठनों की सहभागिता बढ़ाकर व जागरूक व जानकार समाज का निर्माण की बुनियाद तैयार करना होगा। इस भूमण्डलीकरण के दौर में नई प्रौद्योगिक, वैज्ञानिक शिक्षा के साथ उत्पादक समूह में शामिल कर समाज में इनके योगदान को महत्वपूर्ण स्थान देना होगा।

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बिहार के महामहिम राज्यपाल-सह-कुलाधिपति श्री आरिफ मोहम्मद खान के मार्गदर्शन में मगध विश्वविद्यालय, बोधगया, गुणवत्ता, उत्कृष्टता और परिवर्तनकारी उपलब्धियों की असाधारण यात्रा पर दृढ़ता से अग्रसर है। अटूट प्रतिबद्धता के साथ माननीय कुलपति प्रोफेसर एस.पी. शाही के दूरदर्शी नेतृत्व में विश्वविद्यालय नई ऊँचाइयों पर पहुँचने तथा शिक्षा और शोध में अभूतपूर्व मानक स्थापित करने की ओर अग्रसर है। विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति ने छात्रों, शिक्षकों और अन्य सभी हितधारकों को अकादमिक क्षेत्र में उत्कृष्टता प्राप्त करने के लिए नई जिम्मेदारियों सौंपी है तथा उनके अब तक के कार्यकाल के दौरान निम्नलिखित उल्लेखनीय कार्य पूर्ण हुए हैं।

- स्नातक और स्नातकोत्तर स्तर पर पारंपरिक और व्यावसायिक पाठ्यक्रमों के विभिन्न सत्रों को नियमित करने हेतु वर्षों से लंबित परीक्षाएं आयोजित कर परिणाम घोषित किए गए एवं शेष प्रगति पर है।
- मार्च 2023 से आज तक 5,50,409 से अधिक प्रमाणपत्रों का निराकरण करते हुए संबंधित विभाग/महाविद्यालयों को भेज दिए गए हैं।
- सत्र 2023-2024 से स्नातक स्तर पर "राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020" लागू कर दी गई।
- विश्वविद्यालय में 409 से अधिक सेमिनार, कौन्फ्रेंस एवं वर्कशॉप किए जा चुके हैं।
- विश्वविद्यालय एवं महाविद्यालयों में वर्ग संचालन सुचारु रूप से हो तथा छात्र-छात्राओं की 75 प्रतिशत उपस्थिति सुनिश्चित हो, इसके लिए गंभीर प्रयास लगातार जारी है।
- मगध विश्वविद्यालय ने व्याख्यानों, संगोष्ठियों और कार्यशालाओं का आयोजन कर अकादमिक उत्कृष्टता में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि की है।
- शिक्षण कौशल अंतर-विषयक अध्ययन और शोध में नवाचारों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए यू0जी0री0 द्वारा स्थापित मानदण्डों को लागू किया गया है।
- अवकाश प्राप्त 90 प्रतिशत एवं शिक्षकेत्तर कर्मियों की समस्याओं का समाधान किया जा चुका है।
- जन शिकायत कोषांग का गठन किया गया है और प्राप्त आवेदनों का ससमय निष्पादन किया जा रहा है।
- विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा मार्च 2023 से आज तक कुल 150 से अधिक परीक्षाएँ आयोजित की गई हैं।
- अवकाश प्राप्त शिक्षक एवं शिक्षकेत्तर को सेवानिवृत्ति के दिन ही पेंशन भुगतान करने की परम्परा पुनः आरंभ की गई है।
- नैक में अच्छी ग्रेडिंग हेतु विश्वविद्यालय परिवार दृढ़ संकल्पित है।
- विश्वविद्यालय के भवनों के जीर्णोद्धार एवं नवीन भवनों के निर्माण हेतु अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर के वास्तुकार द्वारा DPR तैयार कर कार्यारंभ किया जा चुका है।
- विश्वविद्यालय के छात्र हित में गठित प्लेसमेंट सेल के अंतर्गत परिसर स्थित प्रबंधन विभाग के 12 छात्रों का बंधन बैंक में कैपस प्लेसमेंट हुआ इसे और अधिक बढ़ाये जाने की योजना है।
- IIT, Patna के Computer Science Department में Artificial Intelligence प्रारंभ के लिए मगध विश्वविद्यालय, बोधगया के प्राध्यापकों की Training एवं पढ़ाई प्रारंभ करने के लिए विभिन्न Statutory Bodies द्वारा अनुमोदन प्राप्त कर लिया गया है।
- Permanent IQAC Cell Functional है।
- विगत 9 वर्षों का AQAR (2015-2024) नैक पोर्टल पर सफलतापूर्वक अपलोड कर दिया गया है।
- शोध को बढ़ावा देने के लिए Research Development Cell की स्थापना की गई है। इस प्रकोष्ठ के तहत Research Project के लिए शोधार्थियों को वित्तीय सहायता देने हेतु 05 करोड़ ₹0 की राशि आवंटित की गई है।
- विद्यार्थियों की सुविधा के लिए दो बसों का संचालन परिवहन विभाग, बिहार सरकार पटना के द्वारा करवाया गया है।
- माननीय कुलपति महोदय के नेतृत्व में विश्वविद्यालय एवं महाविद्यालय के राजनीति विज्ञान विभाग के पाँच शिक्षकों के साथ सियोल (South Korea) में आयोजित अंतर्राष्ट्रीय राजनीति विज्ञान अधिवेशन में शोध पत्र प्रस्तुत किया और सत्र की अध्यक्षता की जो समावेशी शोध Inclusive Research का अन्यतम उदाहरण है।
- एक दशक के बाद मगध विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा दीक्षांत समारोह 22वें का भव्य आयोजन किया गया और 23वें दीक्षांत समारोह की तैयारी आरंभ कर दी गई है।
- सत्येंद्र नारायण सिन्हा A.I. Centre का शिलान्यास महामहिम श्री आरिफ मोहम्मद खान, राज्यपाल-सह-कुलाधिपति, बिहार एवं श्री हरिवंश जी, माननीय उपसभापति, राज्यसभा, नई दिल्ली के द्वारा किया गया।
- दो अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समझौता ज्ञापन-प्रबोरोमाणचनोक संस्थान, लोक स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय, थाईलैंड एवं एस्पायर संस्थान हार्वर्ड विश्वविद्यालय, अमेरिका के साथ किए गए। इसके अतिरिक्त 09 विभिन्न संस्थानों से राष्ट्रीय समझौता ज्ञापन भी हस्ताक्षरित हुए।
- जंतु विज्ञान और गृह विज्ञान के शिक्षकों और शोधार्थियों ने 03 पेटेंट भारत सरकार से हासिल कर विश्वविद्यालय को अत्याधुनिक फलक पर गौरवांचित किया।

कुलसचिव

मगध विश्वविद्यालय, बोधगया।