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Health and Morbidity in North Bengal: A Field Report from Mahipal Village in Phansidewa Block

Saswati Biswas

***Abstract:** The Alma Ata declaration of which India was a signatory promised Health for all by 2000 AD, in the year 2016 we find the government still grappling with problems of infant and maternal mortality. Tuberculosis is on the rise and new health issues like those related to environment, increasing use of pesticides and occupational hazards all contribute to the vulnerable health status of our people, leading to increasing levels of morbidity. At the same time rural people lack access to quality health care and those belonging to the poorer sections are prone to different types of morbidity due to their poor health. The present study tries to understand health and morbidity by taking up a village in the Phansidewa block of Siliguri subdivision in North Bengal.*

Keywords: Morbidity, Health Care, Maternal Health, Disease Prevalence.

Introduction

The study of health especially of the common people which belongs to the domain of public health has received considerable attention since the late seventies when the Alma Ata declaration was signed in 1978. The declaration declares public health to be a mission and the governments which were signatories agreed upon making public health a social movement the success of which would be ultimately judged by the attainment of 'health for all by the year 2000.' We have now approached the year 2016 and till now morbidity remains widespread. Diseases like tuberculosis is spreading, leprosy continues to afflict people, there is a continuous spread of AIDS and respiratory diseases and malaria and every year encephalitis, dengue kala-zar break out which undermines the health status of the people in addition to causing considerable number of deaths.

One of the important factors that is affecting public health care in the recent years in addition to poor socioeconomic status of a large section of our people is the dismal expenditure which the government makes on health.

As early as the mid-nineties the annual plan of 1994– 95 stated that the government's priority is no longer in enlarging health infrastructure but selectively strengthening facilities, accordingly the targets for setting up of Primary Health Centres and Sub-Centres had been drastically reduced. This inevitably shifts the focus to private health infrastructure and the government has for many years now been preparing various means for privatizing health. The government of India spent near about 1 pc of its GDP for health in 2010-2011 which is “abysmally” low compared to the other countries. The BJP government had reduced the health budget by 14 percent after coming to power.

In a study by Chaudhury and Nath (2012) we get a detailed idea about public expenditure on health in India. Their estimates show that in 2009-10 and 2010-11, public expenditure on health in India was around 1.1 percent of GDP. This estimate includes health expenditure by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, medical reimbursement by central and state governments, other central ministries (including the Ministry of Railways and the Ministry of Defence) and state's expenditure on Health and Family Welfare. Expenditure by other central ministries like that of Railways and Defence are confined to certain sections of the population and if these expenditures are excluded the estimate of health expenditure in the country is about 0.93 percent of GDP. If we add expenditure on water supply and sanitation to the estimate of 1.1 percent of GDP, the figure rises to 1.5 percent of GDP in 2010-11. Further, if expenditure on nutrition is added then, the expenditure will be about 1.7 percent of GDP. It has increased by 0.2 percent of GDP between 2004-05 and 2010-11.

Sociology actually understands health to be a function of social reality, health status varies from society to society depending upon the ability of the same to provide its members adequate income, employment, education, health awareness and nutrition in addition to institutional care. When the society provides the above to its people the latter have a higher health status compared to the society where the above are lacking. The present study tries to understand health and morbidity by taking up a village in the Phansidewa block of Siliguri subdivision in North Bengal.

Objective of the study

The present study on Health and Morbidity aims at understanding the health status of a village in North Bengal. Keeping in mind the low expenditure the government incurs on health and the poor socio-economic condition of

the villages of North Bengal, the study aims at understanding different dimensions of health in the rural setting. North Bengal has not been able to reap much benefit from the growth oriented development paradigm currently being followed by the government of India. It is being increasingly realised that poor people have shorter, more illness ridden lives than their more affluent counterparts.

At the same time the public health care system is on the decline with the persistent effort of the government to reduce its responsibilities of providing health care, the health of the poorer sections is bound to suffer. As such, the present study aims at understanding morbidity by trying to identify the nature of ailments which people predominantly suffer from, the utilisation they make of health care facilities, their modes of tackling communicable diseases like tuberculosis. The study would also attempt to identify the prevalence of diseases like AIDS which is taking serious proportion due to the increasing migration of male folk to distant places in search of employment who contact the disease and pass it on to their wives and children. An attempt will be made to take up all the above issues related to health and morbidity.

Public health in West Bengal

The following is an account from an assignment on Public Health in West Bengal taken up by the Administrative Training Institute, Govt. of West Bengal.

The population of West Bengal as per 2011 census was 9.13 crore, which is around 7.6 percent of the total population of our country. The growth rate of population during the decade 2001-2011 has been 14 pc in the state compared to national growth rate of 17.5 percent. The growth rate of population in the state in the previous decade was 17.8 percent indicating further reduction of fertility. As per SRS (Sample Registration System) data 2008 conducted by the Registrar General of India TFR of West Bengal was 1.9 compared to TRF of 2.6 for the Country.

The birth rate and the death rate of the state as per SRS 2009 was 17.2 in rural areas and in urban areas 6.4 respectively. In respect of the former West Bengal was behind three bigger states namely Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab. In respect of the latter the state was behind two bigger states namely Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir. As per the National Family Health survey (NFHS) 2005-2006, the state had 54 percent of women of the age

group 20-24 married before the age of 18 years. The same was as high as 63.2 percent for rural areas. Also, 25.3 percent (30 percent for rural areas) of all women aged 15-19 years were already mothers or pregnant at the time of survey. Early conception is fraught with risk of the mother and the child. At the same time 8 pc of the mothers had unmet need for family planning indicating poor access to services. Again, the child sex ratio had declined during the period 2001-2011; it was 650 during 2001 and has dropped to 640 during 2011. This declining child sex ratio is a serious threat to the gender balance which is so very necessary for the survival of society. The decline also points out to the status of women in society and the threats they face right from the period of conception when female feticide and infanticide deprives them of getting a chance to live and contribute to societal development. As per SRS 2009 the IMR of the state was 33 (rural 34 and urban 27) which was the fourth lowest in the Country. Thus when IMR is declining the fact that child sex ratio is also declining reveals the practice of sex selective feticide and infanticide.

The child Mortality Rate (CMR) in West Bengal was 40 as per SRS 2009. West Bengal is placed at a lower position in terms of CMR as compared to IMR and hence deserves greater attention so that it can be reduced. Though the MMR of the state is better than most of the states it is the only state where the MMR increased during 2004-2006. It is estimated that there are around 2100 cases of maternal deaths in the state every year. There are many reasons behind the inability of the state to reduce MMR as compared with states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Some of the reasons are that the state is lagging behind in institutional delivery. It was 71 percent at the end of the year 2010-2011 in the state compared to 100 percent in states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. So even after five years of the implementation of NRHM programmes institutional delivery could not reach out to all the corners of the state. The assignment of the Administrative Training Institute, Govt. of West Bengal (2012) observes that there is, lack of training of all nurses posted in labour rooms and there is a need for providing them skill for safe delivery, inadequate facilities and not following recommended protocols in the labour rooms including maintaining high level of sterility for preventing infection, inadequate beds and specialist doctors in Govt. Hospital for properly attending all health centre are serious issues. Providing facilities for delivery and having arrangement for blood transfusion and caesarean operation on a 24x7 basis as well as inability of identification and management of pregnancies having risk of delivery through better antenatal checking and appropriate interventions in mitigating the risks are of immediate concern. Poor status of nutrition, high incidence of anaemia

and early age at first birth of the child also contribute to higher MMR in this state.

Proper antenatal and postnatal check-ups (ANC and PNC) are very important for reducing morbidity and avoiding mortality of the mother and the new born. There should be three ANC during the first three trimesters and preferably a fourth check-up around 36th to 37th week. The expecting mother should register for first ANC within the first trimester of pregnancy. For the state as a whole 46pc of pregnant women got themselves registered for ANC within first trimester in 2009-2010. Out of all those registered for ANC only 69pc completed three ANCs.

Universal immunization is another very important public health measure for preventing vaccine preventable illness. Proper functioning of the Sub Centres, awareness of the mothers and coordination with Sub-Centres as well as reaching out through Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND) are crucial for successful immunization of 100 percent children. The percentage of immunized children varies from district to district; it was 54.1 percent in Uttar Dinajpur and 98 percent in Hugli in 2010-2011. On an average approximately 70 percent of the children could be said to be immunized. Thus the average achievements mask the poor performances in many pockets. This is the reason for delay in eradication of polio from the state. The last known case of polio in the country was detected in Howrah in early 2011 while 72.2 percent of children were immunized in the district.

As far as nutrition is concerned, West Bengal is facing a huge challenge. Recently Dr. Binayak Sen has identified the improperly managed sick teagardens in the Terai and Dooars as having famine like situation where more than 40 pc people have lower Body Mass Index (BMI) than the standard. Taking up the communicable diseases, people of the state, particularly the poorer section, face a very high burden of communicable diseases such as diarrhoea, tuberculosis, malaria, dengue encephalitis, HIV and AIDs etc.

Like the rest of the country the state of West Bengal is also facing growing incidence of several non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer and mental illness.

As far as health infrastructure is concerned the state has 10356 Sub Centres (SC) catering to around 622 lakh rural population as per 2011 census. Thus, average population covered by one SC comes to around 6000 against the

normal of 5000 and 3000 in tribal, hilly and backward areas. Thus there is a shortage of more than 2000 SCs.

Health and morbidity in Mahipal village

The study of morbidity and health was taken up in Mahipal village of Phansidewa Block in Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling District. North Bengal is a backward region of the country as well as of the state hence, the social and economic conditions of the people do not show a bright picture, a substantial number of the village people have little life chance to improve their condition. The present study has taken up about ten percent of the villagers to understand the status of health and morbidity the sample is purposive and focuses upon the poorest segment of the villages.

Prevalence and incidences of diseases and the nature of treatment

Good health is a primary requirement for society's to survive. Adequate food shelter and clothing are all necessary for good health. These basic preconditions are not to be found at the desired level in the village under study due to poverty, inadequate sources of livelihood and unequal access to the resources, there is a clear picture of increasing morbidity. The problem gets all the more acute as increasing privatization of healthcare has put health facilities out of reach of the poor people. In the words of Imrana Qadeer (2011) there has been a shift from comprehensive PHC to packaged PHC which is rooted in a different notion of public health. According to her the above has the following characteristics.

1. There is a shift in emphasis from programmes rooted in the needs and priorities of different sections to age and sex based clusters, arising out of the prerogatives of the donor – provider nexus.
2. The alternative to the state medical care – service is the market driven model where quality, costs and efficiency will be ensured by the competition between provider and by informed consumers.
3. It recognizes neither the importance of planning for regional priorities nor the necessity of a central coordinating agency. It advocates decentralization which is nothing but the diversification of health financing and services.

4. The brunt of this fragmentation falls on the national programmes for disease control, whose curative components are now offered in the market as lucrative goods for sale.
5. Clearly, it takes public health back to the bio – medical model where technology dominates and there is no feel for the social political, cultural and economic realities of a people. Thus financial considerations are the prime concern, societal dimensions become irrelevant, and the government withdraws itself leaving the marginal section vulnerable to the whims of the market.

As a result two systems thrive on the one side we have big multispecialty hospitals with all facilities to cater to those who can provide for health insurance or are solvent otherwise and on the other hand we have the multitude of common people including those from the middle and lower middle classes who have the govt. hospitals with most of them having dismal services as the only place to go.

The World Health Organization, New Public Health approach also shifts the onus of providing public health by the government to the people by emphasizing upon healthy life styles which can hardly be expected from a poverty and malnutrition ridden society like that of ours. The poor who constitute about 50 percent of our population can hardly be expected to follow healthy life system, having unhealthy life style can be nobody's choice other than the rich, it is imposed upon the poor accompanied with illiteracy, lack of awareness, and malnutrition and an indifferent state.

In the village under study there is substantial degree of morbidity including communicable diseases. The villagers have a number of problems like problem of vision, weakness, respiratory diseases or diseases of the digestive system. However only acute afflictions are categorized as sickness, living a low standard of life common ailments have become a part of their daily lives and they do not consider them to be worthy of being addressed by medical experts.

Fever, stomach troubles, rheumatism, weakness, skin problems afflict about 75 pc of the respondents. Communicable diseases like tuberculosis and AIDs also are found in the village. With increasing use of pesticides eye and dermatological problems are on the rise.

Problems of a more serious nature have also been found to prevail in the village, kidney problem, gall bladder stone, heart problems, diabetes, and hepatitis. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that every month

one member of the family or another falls sick. At the same time they are not bothered about their illnesses as long as they can carry on their daily chores. The need for money which is basic for survival is so great that they think earning for livelihood is most important. Even a day spent for going for treatment makes them to forego their daily wage which they can ill afford. In addition there is transport cost as well as expenditure for medicines. Hence it is only when the malady becomes unbearable that they visit the medical college even if they suffer from serious diseases.

This becomes clearer when we see the nature of treatment which they seek. This can be seen from all the forty households. About 25 percent of the households reported that it is either the quack or the traditional healer to whom they go for treatment. The quack is found in close proximity to the village and he can even provide emergency care like giving intravenous fluids. So a type of a parallel health care practice is flourishing in the villages and there is no means to regulate the activities of the quacks. Very often the villagers cannot afford to make payments to the quacks and he reduces the dosage of medicine, so it is really a havoc being played at the hands of ill trained quacks.

The other 75 percent of households do visit the primary health centre or medical college but they too fall back upon traditional healers and quacks. If we see the following instances the picture will become clearer to us and we will get a view of the situation.

1. One woman who suffered from typhoid during the birth of a child continues to suffer from symptoms of the invalidating disease without any hope of recovery and neither she nor any of her family members can afford to be concerned of her health.
2. A man suffered from a leg bone fracture in a road accident, the initial treatment was done in North Bengal Medical College but financial constraints led him to stop the treatment half way and at present the traditional healers have taken up.
3. Due to chemical reaction from pesticides one person is suffering from skin problems, His hands have become infected, yet the person is not taking any preventive measure during the use of pesticides. The initial treatment was done at the Medical College, but this involved a lot of expenditure hence the respondent stopped treatment and is now dependent on quacks. However the infection has not been cured.

4. The fourth afflicted respondent has been suffering from kidney problem; she has stones in her kidney. However due to financial constraints she has not been able to continue her treatment. She gets checked up at the Medical College Hospital but she cannot afford to take all the medicines, she buys whatever she can afford and then goes to the traditional healer.
5. There are many households where aged people live, for them quacks and traditional healers are the only option, in one particular household the aged father was suffering from respiratory problems, he was physically unable to move out, his sons too could not afford to get a medical practitioner at home and hence the aged seem to be totally left out of the health care system.
6. In this household a woman was found to be suffering from heart problem but no one seemed to be bothered about it, initially she got treatment from the Medical College and it was stopped after some time. Even when the family members understand the gravity of the affliction they remain helpless as any incident which disturb their daily routine is a threat to their sustenance.
7. In this instance a young girl was seen to be showing symptoms of ill health which included breathing problem as well as pain in the joints with swelling. Despite the seriousness of the situation the family could not afford to provide her any treatment, she was not taken for any check-ups and a traditional healer who is referred to as *ojha* in the village caters to her health requirements.
8. An aged woman was seen to be suffering from chest pain and another woman of the same family was suffering from chest pain as well as gall bladder stone. The patient visited the Medical College Hospital for the stone but a date for operation could be fixed only after two months as such they are still waiting for the date. The family members meanwhile are worried about the expenses to be incurred and from where they would be able to provide the required amount necessary to pay for tests and medicines as they live a hand to month existence.
9. In another household a female member was suffering from multiple ailments like diabetes, high blood pressure and also a bone fracture in one of her legs In this case too the initial treatment was taken from the Medical College Hospital but it was half done. She did not continue her treatment and has also stopped taking medicines.

10. A female member here was suffering from a problem of the uterus she too goes to the *ojha* for treatment.

Similarly there are others suffering from fever, headache, chest pain who do not go to the Medical College and prefer local healers. However about 25 percent of the respondents reported that whenever their family members fell ill they were taken either to the BPHC or the Medical College Hospital to be provided treatment. Other diseases include hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV, AIDS etc.

The aged are also vulnerable, about 20 percent of the households had aged members. They suffer from ailments like cataract and rheumatism and other types of physical ailments. In most of the cases the aged are not provided any treatment, in case of any serious problem the quack is called and no special care is taken of the aged as the families can hardly afford bare sustenance. One aged lady was suffering from cancer but she was not being provided any treatment, she was lying lonely in one of the rooms. The same can be seen in the sick teagardens of North Bengal, people afflicted with diseases like cancer, tuberculosis, heart problems etc. just cannot afford to get any worthwhile treatment.

We find from the above that poor people due to their poverty cannot access proper health care and also that sickness can be both a cause and consequence of poverty. Though income is essential to buy healthcare, sickness impoverishes poor people further and gives rise to extreme deprivations (Borkar 2014).

Households in poor areas often spend enormously, borrow and fall in debts to pay up for health care, in the village under study 70 percent of the households had incurred some type of debt in order to get treatment both from institutional as well as non-institutional sources. In the above instances cited, there is a larger number of women who are afflicted, as Borkar (2014) suggests that morbidity varies on the basis of age, gender literacy and socio – economic status. However for women more morbidity is reported from all age groups. As observed by the above scholar, (Borkar 2014: 118) ‘Also women in the reproductive age groups were found to have higher prevalence of illness, perhaps due to complications arising from pregnancy and child birth. The morbidity rates of sickness and morbidity of treated sickness showed high morbidity among females as compared to men. ... Women here experience higher levels of morbidity as they continuously work in a very degraded environment and seems to face a dual burden from paid work outside the home and household work pressure like raising

children'. Added to this are also the other domestic chores and as Unnithan (1999) observes that morbidity both self-perceived and clinically observed is highly affected by gender and is rooted in material, ideological and political dynamics of rural households. At the same time women have longer life expectancy and hence they live a life affected by morbidity till an advanced age and bear the pain and associated afflictions.

Coming to the question of health and hygiene we found in the village that health and hygiene is closely related to literacy, socio-economic conditions as well as willingness to accept the widely prevalent practices associated with them. At the same time there should be spread of awareness among the villagers as to the basic requirements of maintaining cleanliness and hygienic practices.

There is no proper means of waste disposal in the village; practice of washing hands before eating is also not found. The agricultural workers involved in spraying of pesticides do not follow the prescribed measures of wearing masks and gloves, even the practice of putting pesticides away from the reach of children is not observed. When a person is afflicted with cold and fever care is rarely taken regarding not sneeze or coughing openly.

Drinking water is available for 80 percent of the respondents, they get water from tube wells and 20 percent of the respondents use the public sources of water provided by the government or get water from their neighbours. 70 percent of the people do not have any toilet at their home premises and they defecate in open spaces. Many of them live on vested land and fear if their land is taken away then constructing a toilet would be a more wastage of money. This shows that the fact that a toilet is as necessary as a shelter to live in has not become a mental construct for the people. Had this been the case having a toilet would be as important as having a kitchen but as yet this has not become a part of the cognition of the villages. As a result of open defecation problems like pollution of underground water and spread of diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery etc. is widely prevalent. There are a number of villagers who also do not have the required money to construct toilets.

The fact that healthy practices are not followed is also seen at the time of child birth, even when bathing the baby, tonsuring it or putting oil is forbidden these are all done following traditional practices. Secluding the mother and baby and keeping them in isolation even during winter often leads them to suffer from respiratory problems, as an extra room with proper suitable conditions to keep a mother and her baby is hard to come by.

In the village under study taking all the forty households into consideration only 10pc of the households had ability to provide initial treatment but they also are not in a position to continue the treatment. All of them took loans from different sources banks and micro finance organizations. At times loans are taken from multiple sources like private loans as well as institutional loans and money is also borrowed from relatives. As many of the respondents were daily labourers they have to borrow to provide food for their families if they cannot work even for a day due to sickness. Thus treatment is beyond the ability of nearly 90 percent of the households. Even very low cost treatment is beyond their means. These households therefore go to the BPHC or North Bengal Medical College when health problem gets acute otherwise they get treated through quacks and traditional healers. There are even cases of land being sold or mortgaged to meet initial costs of acute illness episodes. Only 2.5 percent of the respondents reported their ability to provide treatment without any loan for some period of time at govt. health institutes.

In this section we cite four cases of patients afflicted with serious ailments. The names of the patients have been changed.

Case -1

Mr. Dinesh Roy, aged 41, is a driver. He is HIV positive and wife and child have also tested HIV positive. His wife is 26 years old and son only six years old, Mr. Roy went to Calcutta in 1995 and started working there as taxi driver. He came in contact with sex workers and contracted HIV. He came to know about his ailment only after returning in 2003. He started falling ill frequently and when he went to the BPHC for treatment he was diagnosed as HIV positive, after he did not respond to any type of treatment earlier, and his ailments started assuming serious proportions. At that time he know nothing about the disease and after receiving counselling from a counsellor he came to know about its seriousness. He got married in 2004 when he was already infected, the bride's family was not informed about his health problems and after marriage his wife got infected and their son also got infected from his parents.

The whole family including his parents is dependent on Mr. Roy and what is more surprising is that his wife conceived the baby even after knowing that they were both infected, it may have been the case that they were not aware of the full implication of their behaviour, but surprisingly even now

they want to have another child. Mr. Roy seems to be quite worried about his own and family's future.

Case-2

Mrs. Bakultala Roy is a housewife and her husband is a daily wage earner. They have two children, a daughter Ripa and son Suman. At the time of her daughter's birth in North Bengal Medical College and Hospital the attendant doctor took recourse to forceps delivery. The child's head started growing abnormally and she started having many health problems. At Shivmandir a private practitioner attended her and suggested a brain operation. Her parents took her to Vellore and a tumour was diagnosed on her head as a result of the pressure of forceps on her head. The tumour was operated upon and Ripa's father borrowed money from different sources for the treatment. However the girl has not been totally cured and now her father has sold off his land to fend for the treatment. Even now the treatment is going on and every single day Ripa must be given medicine, the family is finding it increasingly difficult to meet the expenses of treatment.

Case-3

This relates to Gouri Roy who is a housewife her husband is a daily wage-earner, they have two sons who are around eighteen and twelve years old. Gouri started having health problems after the birth of her second child, she was having pain in her stomach and when she visited the Medical College the Doctor diagnosed her with suffering from kidney stone. Her financial situation is such that she cannot undergo any surgical treatment or any other costly treatment, so during acute pain she visits the Medical College Hospital to get medicines and otherwise depends on traditional healers. At present she is bed ridden and can hardly do any work. She does not have anyone to help her financially, her husband's income is not enough to provide for household expenditures including the education of her sons, as such she has stopped taking treatment and is ready to accept whatever is waiting for her.

Case-4

The woman who is the subject of the case study is Rumpa Roy, she is thirty five years old and is working in one of the outlets of shopping Mall in

Siliguri. After the birth of her son her husband left for Mumbai in search of work and started working as a driver, he came in contact with sex workers and got HIV infected. Having fallen ill he returned to Phansidewa and got himself treated at Medical College Hospital but died after a few months soon after Rumpa also started feeling unwell and was identified as HIV positive as she had got infected from her husband. Now she is undergoing treatment and, she looks after her children as well as her in-laws, however, she keeps on suffering from different kinds of ailments like fever, body ache, stomach problems, and respiratory infections etc. She is easily prone to getting infected from any source of infection; she also misses out on her work quite often.

These case studies give us an idea of only the tip of an iceberg. If this is the health situation in such a small study of forty households in a village which is quite accessible and near the BPHC how widespread the maladies related to morbidity would be in the more remote and inaccessible villages can be surmised.

Maternal and child health

The importance of maternal health lies in the following factors.

1. Woman in the reproductive age group (between 15-49 years of age) constitute a substantial part of the population.
2. Mothers, infants and children under five years account for three fifths of the total deaths in our country while 50pc of all the deaths in the developed countries are among people above seventy years of age the same proportion of deaths are observed amongst children less than five years of age in developing countries.
3. Morbidity among mothers is rather high.
4. Women in India are overburdened. They often share the jobs of their husbands besides hard physical work and household chores. They bear the added burden of pregnancy over which they hardly have any control. They are undernourished and anaemic and need special care.

The major goal of maternal and child health services in primary healthcare is to reduce the incidence of illness, disabilities and deaths amongst mothers by providing treatment for illness during pregnancy and lactation. The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) has been launched in the country in 2005 with a view to improve health status of people living in the rural

areas. 'The mission seeks to provide universal access to equitable, affordable and quality healthcare which is accountable at the same time responsive to the needs of the people, reduction of child and maternal deaths as well as population stabilization, gender and demographic balance' (ATI 2012: 19). The specific objectives of the mission are:

- a. Reduction in IMR and MMR to 30 and 100 by 2012.
- b. Universal access to public services for food and nutrition, sanitation and hygiene and universal access to public health care services with emphasis on services addressing women's and children's health and universal immunization.
- c. Prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, including locally endemic diseases.
- d. Access to integrated comprehensive primary health care.
- e. Population stabilization, gender and demographic balance.
- f. Revitalization of local health traditions and mainstreaming AYUSH.
- g. Promotion of healthy life styles.

From the above it can be seen that NRHM lays considerable stress on Maternal and Child health. We will try to see how far the mission has impacted upon the health of mothers and children in the village understudy. We have already seen the poor health status of the sample respondents in the earlier section which does not reflect the implementation of the programmes of the NRHM in right earnest. Villages continue to face acute health problems along with rising costs of health care. The last point regarding promotion of healthy life styles also is meaningless in the context of poverty, malnourishment illiteracy and increasing costs of living.

The idea of institutional delivery is slowly catching on and at present attempts are being made to ensure delivery at the BPHC or Medical College Hospital. Despite the NRHM functioning since 2005 it is only very recently that there is some seriousness regarding institutional delivery.

It was found in the study that in about 60 percent of the households delivery was done at home, very often when there was more than one baby in the house one could have been born at an institution but the others were born at home. Two households, that is five percent, reported delivery in private nursing homes, only 35 percent of the households reported delivery of all babies in institutions.

Antenatal care was not available for most of the mothers; about 70 percent of the women did not have any source of prenatal care. The ICDS provides pregnant mothers egg and food before and after delivery, iron, calcium tablets and tetanus toxoid was given by the primary health centre. However most of the mothers being daily wage earners did not get the time for regular check-ups. It also happened that check-up was done once and the taking of iron tablets was also not regular. Only about 50pc of the households reported the intake of the above nutrient supplements.

However very recently the ASHA workers are seen to be moving around the village trying to convince the women about utility of antenatal, and post-natal care though much more could be done.

The NRHM has introduced the following programmes for ensuring maternal and child health (ATI 2012).

1. Promoting Institutional Delivery and safe motherhood. One major drive under NRHM is to improve access to institutional delivery for the safety of the mother and the new born.
2. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) The JSY has been launched with the vision of reducing MMR and IMR and increasing institutional delivery of pregnant mothers from BPL families. The strategy adopted has been promoting early registration, identification of risk pregnancies ensuring three ANC and post-delivery visit.
3. Janani-Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) The JSSK was launched in 2011 by Govt. of India as an initiative under the NRHM for providing free and cashless services to all pregnant mothers including normal deliveries and caesarean operations and also treatment of sick new born in all govt. health institutions across the country.
4. Referral Transport system for getting quick access to the health facilities for the expecting mother and the sick infants an arrangement has been made by placing ambulance /vehicle which may carry mother to health facility providing round the clock delivery services.
5. Improving neonatal care. In order to prevent neonatal deaths there is provision for both improving more home based neonatal care through training of ASHA and improving the level of consciousness of the mothers.
6. Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness (IMNCI). This refers to a training programme developed for better management

of neonatal and childhood illness and all the ANMS and Asha as well as ICDS workers are being imparted the training.

7. Birth and Death Audit for Maternal and Infant Death. Death audit is conducted for knowing the cause of death. Such audit is done through collecting information verbally from the members of the family when the death takes place at residence. In case of death at the hospital audit is to be done by the hospital authority.
8. Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND). The purpose of the VHND is to extend services related to nutrition and health particularly of the mother and child, to the village level by bringing all services given by the S C and the ICDS centre on fixed days.

In the village under study villagers were not aware of these programmes. Taking into account the number of babies born during the last five years in case of around 50pc of the pregnancies taking of iron tablets and iron folic acid was reported. At the same time the women reported diverse types of problems faced during pregnancy. Around 50pc of the pregnancies was associated with problems related to anaemia. Due to general weakness the mothers were not able to give required effort at childbirth which increased their suffering and pain. A number of them had to undergo caesarean section with its related complications. Transport problem was a very serious issue involved, often the women were forced to give birth at home as transport facilities were not available at the time of need or they could not just afford the transport cost. About 10 pc of the respondents had miscarriages and another 10 percent reported death of their babies just after birth. At present through the activities of the NRHM some efforts can be seen regarding prenatal and post-natal care but the office bearers seem to be more interested in reaching targets rather than providing quality care. Numbers attended are more important for them than actual quality care being provided.

Family planning has been the focus of maternal and child health for a long period of time. Reducing fertility, increasing spacing of childbirths, allowing the women to decide upon the time of her pregnancy and use of birth control measures are all important to improve maternal and child health as well as for stabilising population.

Though man and women are both involved in reproduction it is usually the husband and his family that mostly decides about when and how many times a woman is to become pregnant it is women who are targeted for implementation of birth control programmes.

Reproductive behaviour is only associated with women though men and the patriarchal family are primarily responsible for reproduction. It is either irresponsible sexual behaviour or the desire for a son that makes a woman to face repeated pregnancies at the risk of her own health and that of her children. We have seen how in Madhya Pradesh recently a large number of women died undergoing tubectomy. The operation was undertaken in unhygienic condition and medicines provided were also spurious. The women are herded together and after the operation they are just made to lie down on the floor crowded with women who had undergone the same operation. The men are hardly found to have undergone vasectomy, even though it is more simple than tubectomy, a general feeling is nurtured which suggests that such an operation would reduce the strength of the males and women as they are already used to taking all burden upon themselves are also reluctant to allow their husbands to undergo vasectomy. The use of condoms too has not become as widespread as it could have been especially among the lower socio-economic categories. The use of condoms in addition to controlling births also prevents the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. In the village under study two persons were found to be HIV positive and they have infected their wives and children, such irresponsible behaviour can be controlled by using condoms to which most men do not agree. Thus the whole responsibility of birth control vests upon women and they have to accept the different methods of birth control as well as their negative consequences.

In the village under study about 80 percent of the respondents felt that both husband and wife have the responsibility of having a small family. However in actual situations the women felt they the above did not prevail as they felt that giving birth to a child was very often out of their control. About 50 percent said they were not responsible for the size of the family, accepting measures for contraception by males was also not approved by the dominant social values and norms prevailing in the village. Thus it remains that the prime responsibility of having a small family and taking precautions against the birth of a child vests upon the women who in the final run do not have the final say regarding the number of children they would give birth to.

As far as vasectomy and tubectomy are concerned the opinion of the respondents conforms to the general pattern of male involvement in contraceptive use all over the world (Karim 1996). The husband being the bread earner it was felt by more than 60pc of the women that vasectomy could affect the working ability which in turn would affect the family this also indicates the low self-worth among women who feel that their lives

are of lesser worth than their husbands. The respondents were asked if their husbands would agree to vasectomy, 90pc of the women said that they would not agree. Thus utilization of health care as far as sterilization is concerned shows a very high gender bias against women. This govt. programme is directed mainly at women and conducted primarily for them. However a woman as the one who bears main responsibility regarding child bearing is the main target of the operation and face all the risks attendant upon the same. Proximity to the BPHC could not change the attitude of the males which could have been done with the spread of awareness.

In Mahipal only 37.5 pc of all the respondents asked about acceptance of family planning methods replied in the affirmative. Tubectomy after the birth of the second child if one of the earlier births was a male child seemed to be the option preferred. About two or three males were found to be using condoms, there are instances of forced pregnancy also, a woman was forced to get pregnant after giving birth to five daughters the sixth one was a son, about 40 percent of the respondents reported forced pregnancy for the birth of a son.

More than 63 percent of the respondents were not using any methods, as Mohan Rao (1993) wrote and it is still applicable to the area under study that despite repeated efforts the Family Planning programme has failed to take off, even the piecemeal way in which the programme was undertaken did not prove to be a success.

Family planning measures and the way they have been implemented shows that they have not become a part of health care system of women in the total implementation in the sphere of family welfare and planning. This becomes all the more important because the question of women's health in India is inextricably linked with their reproductive function.

Coming to maternal care, at present the NRHM is more or less in control of maternal and child care, despite the rule of going for three antenatal check-ups it is not done by the villagers however in recent months there is some seriousness in the NRHM, even when the check-ups are done it is not possible for the expecting mothers to follow the doctor's advice. Very often the doctors suggest nutritious food, vitamin supplements and rest from work. The women under the present study belonging to the very poor section are hardly able to afford any of the above. They have to carry out all the domestic chores, at the same time they cannot afford nutritious food. We have seen that govt. expenditure on health is about one percent

of the GDP, hence whatever nutrition is derived from the ICDS in case the village Health and Nutrition day is observed is a drop in the ocean. As the respondents mostly belong to the very poor sections it was found that hardly 10 percent of them had access to some type of nutritious food every day. The others could only provide for the basic minimum, this has led to the prevalence of anaemia among women who are precariously placed during child birth and remain highly vulnerable. As the women remain malnourished the babies born are often of low birth weight and suffer from different types of problems. Even after birth the neonatal and post neonatal care given to them is not adequate, and in the absence of proper hygienic condition they remain susceptible to infections of the digestive as well as respiratory system. As regards immunization of the new born it was found that the babies at present are immunized against different types of diseases, only about 10 percent of the households reported that the new born were not vaccinated.

The NRHM has not been able to make its presence felt in the village understudy as far as maternal and child care is concerned. The way maternal and child care is being carried out raises questions about the real intention of the government and its sense of responsibility towards the poor and illiterate women of our country. A large number of programmes are announced and advertised widely whereas allocation of funds continues to be meager.

Involvement of non-governmental organizations in the field of health care

The Voluntary Health Association (VHA) is working with HIV affected people. An attempt was made to understand the problems faced by the HIV affected people who are saved by the VHA. A meeting was convened with a number of HIV affected patients in the office of the VHA at Bagdogra, all the patients were from Phansidewa Block and included both men and women. The VHA helps HIV affected people to overcome the initial shock they suffer with the knowledge that they are HIV affected. The organization also is involved in counselling the patients as to how they should regulate their lives and receive funds from the government along with other sources. This NGO works with AIDS affected people who comprise sex workers, migrant labour and other people migrating to distant places for work. It was learnt from the NGO that there are 6000 HIV positive people in Darjeeling of them 3000 are migrants, 1220 reside in the

hill areas and 1780 reside in the plains areas. All of them can take help from VHA, the main purpose of the association is to provide a platform where HIV positive patients can interact with one another, learn from one another's experiences and get encouragement to live their lives as normally as possible. This also helps them to get out of the state of depression into which many of them get once diagnosed with HIV and once they come to face all the associated miseries. The NGO organizes sports for HIV affected children, and provides all types of guidance as to how they should organize and lead their lives.

Talking with the HIV positive men and women we could get an idea of the social world they live in, how they struggle on with their lives and how they strive to have a normal life even after knowing the vulnerability involved in being HIV positive. The HIV positive patients if married are advised not to conceive and even if they decide to have a baby they are advised about all the precautions they should take. If the new born baby is not HIV positive then the mother is barred from breast feeding the baby and thereby preventing the baby from getting infected.

Often when the HIV positive parents die their children do not get any place to stay, their relatives are also not ready to keep them and hence the HIV positive parents are very worried about what would happen to their children if they died.

In the villages the HIV positive patients do not reveal their sickness to other villagers as they fear being ostracized, even educated people behave in a very insensitive manner with them, whenever they go to a diagnostic centre their tests are done after the technician has finished with all the others even if they have arrived much earlier. This causes physical strain as they are already sick and are suffering from many health-related problems. One patient reported that after being tested positive he went to a doctor but the latter shut the door on his face, he then came to know of the VHA and the latter helped him to contact the centre providing treatment for AIDs.

The NGO in its limited capacity is playing an important role in providing hope and succour to HIV positive patients. They realize that they are not the only ones to be afflicted and everything is not lost if one gets infected with HIV.

At the same time some new social processes become clear, more and more men are migrating to distant places in search of work and in the process they have to stay away from home for a long period. They interact

with sex workers, get infected, ultimately passing on the infection to their wives and children, thus here too wives become the victims of their husbands undisciplined lives and they continue with the relationship and have children just because there is no alternative for them.

Summary and conclusion

The present study started out with the proposition that real health cannot be obtained for the poorer sections unless there is an improvement in their living standards. Education, income, nutritious food and proper conditions of living all come together and in the absence of all these and a paltry amount of expenditure being made by the government in the health sector morbidity is never going to be checked. At the same time increasing privatization of health care is taking place, the poor are totally left out of the purview of the same as they just cannot afford the expenditure involved and are forced to fall back upon the meagre health care services provided by the government. The government at the same time announces many programmes but allocates meagre financial outlays for the same and hence even when statistical figures regarding health care delivery like institutional delivery shows a rising trend the health condition of the mother and the new born continue to be poor.

The fact that social and economic conditions are the most important determining factors for health status is commonly agreed with. Williams (1995), in this context, observes: 'evidence continues to grow concerning the link between class and health and the fact that poorer people have shorter, more illness ridden lives than their more affluent counter parts, sociological studies have shown how peoples general beliefs about health and the degree to which they feel they have control over their daily lives are shaped by their position within the broader social structure, low norms regarding health are adopted by those living in poor socio-economic circumstances due to the relatively greater experience of illness suffered by this group.' The norms of behavior regarding health which the poor adopt are also related to the *habitus* which reveals the way they cognitively interpret the world in terms of their own life experiences.

The study shows how poor people do not give importance to their illness unless they assume serious dimensions and even in such situations they may begin the treatment but are not able to continue the same to achieve final recovery. Any illness episode disturbs the normal functioning of the family, as daily wage earners they have to forego a day's wage of both the

sick person and the one assisting the patient to the health care institute whether it is to the BPHC or the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital.

Borkar (2014) observed: 'morbidity has a distinct social class gradient with infant and adult mortality falling and days of work lost owing to ill health decreasing as one moves from lower social groups to higher ones' in this study people reported serious ailments like gall bladder stone, cancer, AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and diseases of the respiratory and digestive system. Like any other part of the country the villagers make use of government health care, traditional healers and quacks. The last two are sought regularly and only when they fail is a visit to institutions made. The elderly however in most of the households have to be satisfied with traditional healers or quacks. It is in the case of children that institutional care is most sought of compared to the other age groups.

Similarly social processes which have been initiated by globalization have also affected the health of the people. Production is mainly for the market, paddy cultivation is giving place to vegetable cultivation with large scale use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the vegetable growers do not follow the prescribed measures in the spraying of pesticides like spraying from a distance or wearing masks, heavy clothes and gloves and also use amount of pesticides much above the prescribed limits as allowing the crops to grow faster will enable them to sell the same quickly. As a result dermatological problems and problem of the eyes are increasing while the crops themselves are a source of ill health for both the producers and consumers due to the health hazard of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Again due to the fact that employment is not available in the villages many people migrate to distant places in the south and west of the country leaving their families behind. Once away from home they indulge in sexual practices with the sex workers and get infected with HIV. On returning they infect their wives and new born children, the problem is such that a man was diagnosed only after the blood specimen of his wife was tested and she tested positive and her husband followed and undertook a blood test. Government institutions provide medicines for HIV positive patients but this is a debilitating infection which reduces the working capacity of the infected people. These patients being poor cannot afford healthy, nutritious food and this affects their performance of daily activities and thus they cannot perform income earning activities on a regular basis. This in turn affects their standard of life, thus poverty becomes both a cause and as well as a consequence of morbidity.

The latest Human Development Report (Rao and Kurian 2013) puts India at the 134th position out of a total of 187 countries. Among the 47 countries in the 'Medium Human Development' group, India stands eighth from the bottom. These reveal the actual priority which health and education get by the policy formulators. It calls for higher government expenditure and a worthwhile public health care system. Another problem is also the availability of health care personnel in the government institutions, posts of nurses and doctors are not filled up, even where doctors are appointed often they come from urban areas and are not really interested in serving the rural areas. Most of them are involved in private practice and look upon their job in the government institution as a secondary one, and the beneficiaries of public health being the poor sections of society there is also hardly any sustained health movement observed in the region.

As far as the NRHM is concerned it covers maternal and child care as well as communicable diseases like leprosy, tuberculosis, encephalitis, dengue, AIDS and also acute respiratory infection. However in the village under study NRHM was found to be somewhat active in matters related to maternal and child care and to some extent in the treatment of AIDS and tuberculosis. However as maternal and child health as well as all these diseases are related to the basic requirements of life which is not available to the poor villages the NRHM has not really been able to provide real health to the people. Institutional delivery, antenatal check-ups and treatment to health institutions are being provided but the nutrition which the mother and baby is supposed to get is not available. The hygienic and healthy conditions of life required for the mother as well as the baby cannot be made available without improving the socio economic conditions of the people. Medicines for tuberculosis, leprosy and AIDS may be available but the widespread poverty in which the first two are found and the prevailing value systems as well as livelihood crises which feed the last cannot be addressed without providing for adequate sources of livelihood along with proper education and awareness.

Moreover, we have seen that the BJP government had reduced expenditure on health; in addition it has also reduced the ICDS budget from Rs.10,000 crores to Rs. 8,245 crores (*The Statesman* 12.3.15). Senior officials of the state government feel that implementing different programmes of the ICDS would be affected. This assume added significance as programmes under NRHM like village Health Nutrition day when some nutritious food would be given to mother is closely tied to the ICDS. The officials were further of the opinion that it would be difficult for them even to prepare the state

budget due to the reduction in allocation of funds. For normal children the rate of supplementary diet under ICDS was Rs.4 which was increased to Rs.6, the diet for lactating mother was Rs.5 increased to Rs.7 for severely malnourished children it was Rs.6 increased to Rs.9. Now that the total amount has been reduced the above amounts would also fall, one would wonder as to how real nutrition could be provided at the earlier rates and what is going to happen if even that is not available.

In a study on National Rural Health Mission, Sharma (2014) observes that while discussing the strategies of National Rural Health Mission the Eleventh Five year plan admits that there are formidable problems. 'The central government has focused on reducing the MMR the most. Efforts are made to minimise maternal deaths in the country, which still has an unusually high Maternal Mortality Rate. Janani Suraksha Yojana is precisely about this. At the same time the plan recognises that encouraging women to go to health facilities for delivery alone would not reduce maternal mortality to zero. It accepts that the country does not have adequate institutional capacity to receive all women giving birth each year and that half of the maternal deaths occur outside delivery, that is , during pregnancy, abortions and postpartum complications. The problem is mixed up with several issues such as lack of concern for women's health, malnutrition, lack of proper transport facilities, lack of awareness of danger signs, lack of full ante-natal care, and lack of stress management.'

Thus though a minimum of public care is accepted with immense gratitude by the poor people it does not really fulfill their health requirements. The costs involved cannot be met, the basic health requirement of cleanliness, adequate nutrition, proper shelter a sense of health and hygiene all have remained unaddressed. The poor are out of focus as far as any development agenda is concerned. Thus it must be realized that preventive care is as important as curative care and the former does not only mean vaccination, it means a wholesome life where all the basic necessities of life like food, shelter, clothing, education and employment are met. In the absence of these the minimum curative care which is provided by government institutions can only provide some temporary succour. It will not be able to solve the real health issues which the people of our country face today.

The village under study is no different from the rest of the country, the available health care services are inadequate, at the same time poverty makes the poor vulnerable to different health problems which does not get adequate medical attention and remains untreated after some initial treatment. Maternal and child health also suffers due to the poor socio

economic standards of the families and the usual indifference to the cause of women's health.

Thus, health and morbidity needs to be addressed, the former by raising the capability of the villages and the latter by having institutional health care which is sufficiently equipped with both financial allocation and health personnel which will only be able to address the health issue of the villages and ensure better health and reduced morbidity.

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Olfactory Social Stratification

Sayantana Ghosh

***Abstract:** Smell plays a crucial role in our everyday life. From dawn till night, social actors go through different types of smells, react differently and build an image on an olfactory basis. At a bazaar, we sniff out our preferred lemon or mango, we opt for our best perfume or deodorant during intimacy, we also opt for deodorants or perfumes for official purposes, but the choice of the fragrance and its intensity may vary. It is not only about food habits or self presentation but smell also plays a key role in stratifying individuals, groups and spaces. Each group in the hierarchy has a specific social and olfactory position. The social construct and olfactory construct often go hand in hand. Whether actual or not, the olfactory perception of each stratum is different. Thus, whether upper class and lower class people really smell different or not, they are socially constructed and hence are expected to smell differently. Similarly, men and women are often portrayed as having different olfactory identities.*

Smell tells the tale of a person – about his/her gender, caste or class position. Just like individuals and groups, spaces are also classified or stratified in terms of olfaction. It is often argued that each group in the social hierarchy has a distinct smell –whether it is real or not is not the search here. Rather this paper focuses on how each group (in terms of caste, class and gender) and space is socially constructed in specific olfactory terms and how groups and spaces are stratified in terms of olfaction. I have opted for literary sources and in-depth interviews as my method of study. This paper is an effort to reveal the relation between olfaction and social stratification.

Keywords: olfaction; stratification; marginalization; identity; transformation; rank; olfactory mask; scented class; stigmatization; social construct.

Introduction

Breathe deep. What do you smell? Flowers, your kitchen, the dirt in the wayside, pollution or the sweat or perfume of your co-passengers? Whatever it is, you just cannot refuse. Actually if we want, we may close our eyes, we might not open our mouth, we might shut our ears (with hands or cotton) but we cannot stop our nose. In order to live, we must breathe and if we

breathe, we will smell. Thus smell is a lifelong process which starts at birth and ends only at death.

From dawn to night we go through different types of smell and react differently to each and draw an image from it. At the bazaar we sniff out the best lemon or mango, we opt for our favorite perfume while going on a date. We also opt for deodorant or perfume at the workplace but the degree and intensity may vary. Anthony Synnott rightly puts it saying: ‘We are simultaneously emitting and perceiving odors, smelling and being smelled and these play important roles in virtually every area of social interaction.’ Smell is not only physical or real but also symbolic. For example, while driving if one gets an acrid smell one knows that there is something wrong with the car and gets alarmed, because acrid smell stands for burning, symbolizing danger.

Just imagine if a stink breaks your dream and you discover its source – a dead rat in the bedroom how would you react?

- a. If you have a whole-time servant you may call him/her to clear it.
- b. If you have a part time cleaning servant who is present at that time you may scream for him/her to clear it.
- c. But if you don’t have a cleaning maid present, but a cook working, then you would hesitate, eventually you may call her but the response is not guaranteed.
- d. In the last case if you don’t have a maid present and the cook refuses to help, then
 - i. You would have to do it yourself
 - ii. In a male dominated family a female member would have to clean
 - iii. In a neo-local family there might be an argument.

So whoever does the cleaning, it is evident that prompt action will be taken and in this scenario all other works become secondary as smell would snatch away paramount attention. The importance and place of smell in our everyday life is quite evident from this example. The above mentioned episode also reflects the relationship between olfaction and social stratification as this situation and the options to counter it reflects the class and gender hierarchy and the intermingling between these two. Thus social stratification and olfactory stratification often go hand in hand.

Each group in the social hierarchy has a special position in terms of class, caste, gender and the like. Social actors often make and receive comments like “feminine smell” “the lower class smell” or “the stink of untouchability”. These are not just olfactory remarks but more importantly moral judgments and social constructs. Thus each stratum in the hierarchy has a constructed olfactory and hence social and moral identity. Particular smells carry particular constructs with it. For example, in Saratchandra Chattopadhyay’s *Pather Dabi* the police of the British Government was in search of a freedom fighter – commonly known as Sabyasachi. The image which the police had was of a highly educated middleclass person, therefore they let go a suspect who smelled of “Nebur Tel” (cheap lemon scented hair oil) and dirt. Later we, the readers, come to know that that very person was Sabyasachi. He fooled the police with his olfactory disguise. The reason was that the police had a prior constructed olfactory image of an educated middleclass person as well as of a “lower-class individual” And Sabyasachi’s olfactory image conformed to the lower class identity. Here the police reflected the social construct about olfactory images of different classes or groups.

From the above examples it is clear that odour plays a significant role in our everyday life. Thus –

Odour is many things: a boundary marker, a status symbol, a distance maintainer, an impression management technique, a schoolboys joke or protest, and a danger signal – but it is above all a statement of who one is. Odours define the individual and the group. (Synnott 1993:18]

This paper deals with the relation between olfaction and social stratification and the social and moral construct of individual and group identity. However due to limitations of time and funding we have mainly interviewed people of middle class background in Kolkata. Therefore this paper will largely represent the middleclass view of the relation between olfaction and stratification. Moreover this study is based on literary sources and data gathered from in-depth interviews. Although this paper deals with the olfaction and stratification due to limitations of space, I would briefly deal with aspects of class, gender and caste. As a researcher I must acknowledge that this is a small study and smell perceptions varies a lot according to region, time, space and culture. Different parts of India and the world addresses olfaction differently. Thus this study does not claim generalization. However in my research I have found certain trends which confirm and strengthen the existing olfactory discourse in sociology. Some contemporary social trends are being noticed which definitely analyze the present, but

perhaps more predict the future. Some recent trends are found which are not ubiquitous but are surely present and diffusing. This paper records the traditional olfactory stereotypes and analyzes these changing social trends.

Class and Smell

‘That we smell the atmosphere of somebody is a most intimate perception of that person’ (Simmel 1908|2009: 578)

Smell constructs individual and group identity. Smell tells many a tales about a person or a group - about the person’s occupation, cultural taste, gender, class, caste and above all who one is. Smell determines the class of an individual and group. Class hatred is perhaps well explained in four words as George Orwell puts it: “The lower class smell”.

The lower class people are often portrayed as foul smelling. They often receive remarks from higher classes as stinkers.

‘... a white collar worker may be heard expressing a repugnance towards those who emit a ‘stinky sweat’ or those who “smell like a farmer” - dirty and unclean (Largey and Watson 1972: 1023).

Class stereotypes against lower classes and class hatred are often expressed in olfactory terms. Orwell puts it in this way:

I do not blame the working man because he stinks, but stinks he does. It makes social intercourse difficult to persons of sensitive nostrils. The matutinal tub divides the classes more effectively than birth, wealth or education (Orwell 1937:161, cited in Synnott 1991)

In Buddhadev Guha’s *Kojagar* the factory owner ordered his subordinated that the wage laborers (Kulis and Kamins) will be allowed to enter and receive their wages from the office only when he has left the place because they are “badbu lok” or foul persons. We can see the similar trend in our everyday life while describing or dealing with a toilet cleaner or sweeper. Thus the lower class is often portrayed as stinker or foul.

Even if there is no mention of foul odour or stink, there is no mention of fragrance either. For example Tilottoma, a princess in *Durgeshnandini*, is depicted as sweet smelling and compared to a spring jasmine. Aisha, the *nababjadi*, is compared to a morning lotus which attracts with its aroma while the same author Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay portrays Rajani the “malini” or garlander mentions nothing of the girl’s olfactory identity though she is the protagonist. However there exist vivid descriptions of the fragrant

flowers and the garlands with which Rajani is working and selling. She said:

She is in her room –

But there is no description of Rajani the garlander's own smell. Thus the lower classes are either portrayed as foul smelling or there remain an olfactory silence in their depiction. There exists a third trend in the olfactory construct of the lower classes. Often their olfactory identity is described in terms of their profession. For example Satyabati of Mahabharata was tagged as Matsyagandha as she was the daughter of the leader of the fishermen community. It is not only her olfactory description but it became her olfactory identity.

In everyday life in the description of the lower classes the smell of the individual is absent. It is only the smell of the profession which is omnipresent. Thus a fisherman is portrayed as smelling of fish, a sweeper of dirt, a farmer of mud, cow dung or manure and the like. That is to say the objects with which the person is working, as if the smell of those objects are the smell of the individual. Thus there is an objectification of subjects.

In contrast, the upper class is always portrayed as the fragrant class. Kings, queens and aristocrats are always believed to emit a rich aroma, consume aromatic meal and the atmosphere is always scented. In Banavatta's Kadambari the king takes a long bath which is a classic example of describing a royal bath with great olfactory vividness.

রাজা প্রবেশ করলেন স্নানগৃহে।

শেতকরবীর মত স্নানগৃহের চন্দ্রাতপ। গৃহের মাঝখানে কাঞ্চন জলদ্রোণী – গন্ধসলিলে পূর্ণ।

স্নানগৃহের একান্তে রয়েছে অতিসূরভিত গন্ধজলে-ভরা শত শত স্নানকলস; -

কলসগুলির মুখে ভিড় করে রয়েছে সৌরভাকৃষ্ট মধুকরের দলঃ-

বারবিলাসিনীরা তখন রাজার মাথায় সুগন্ধ আমলকীচূর্ণ লেপন করে দিল।

স্নানার্থ জলদ্রোণীতে অবতরণ করলেন রাজা।

.....

স্নান সমাপ্ত হতেই...

মৃগমদ কর্পূর ও কুঙ্কুমবাসিত চন্দনপঙ্কে

অনুলিপ্ত হল সর্বঙ্গ। চূড়ায় রচিত হল আমোদিমালতী কুসুমের মালা।

(কাদম্বরী বাণভট্ট অনুঃ গ্রী প্রবোধেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

Fragrance is not just a part of the preparation or the atmosphere of the upper class, rather sometimes fragrance becomes their identity. For example, Draupadi was regarded as Nilotpalgandha or Padmagandha. This is not just a part of Draupadi's beauty or status rather it becomes her identity. Thus during that time period Padmagandha meant Draupadi. Similar description can be found in history of Rajput queen Padmini.

To what extent fragrance was important to upper classes is evident from the following lines as Draupadi laments to Bhima in the Virata Parva of Mahabharata.

The above portion reflects that using of sandal paste was an everyday habit of the upper class. But the preparation part was performed by the people of "lower strata" while the consumption and hence the fragrant representation was enjoyed by the higher strata.

Such was the olfactory construct of the upper class environment that even the natural or biological processes were advised to restrict or manipulate. Thus, while advising the Pandavas to lead a proper life at the court of King Birata, purohit Dhauma warned them to control while breaking wind. This is also present in modern times as the "fart taboo" and conforms to the olfactory construct of society. In recent times also perfumes are often advertised as having an association to a royal heritage i.e. used by Cleopatra or Queen Elizabeth. This denotes the class of the perfume and constructs and confirms the belief that the upper classes are the scented class.

Individuals and groups are segregated and marginalized not only in terms of their physical or actual odour but also and perhaps more in terms of their alleged, perceived or symbolic odour. Brill observed: 'On the basis of reactions to forty-three different odours, respondents 'disliked most' the odour of perspiration....this was not only because of its very sour smell, but, because it was associated with people of the lower class' (Brill 1932: 40). Now I will conclude with Largey and Watson 'Class prejudices are equally supported by imputations that those of the lower class are "foul smelling and must be avoided' (Largey and Watson 1992:1025.

Olfactory transformation equals class transformation?

‘When I am in my bank working, I often find persons well dressed and from a distance it seems that they are of a high class, but in proximity when they smell foul, it destroys my impression. But once I saw a Lady who was dressed in ordinary clothes, I did not look twice at her but when she came near I got a sweet mild fragrance and thus I instantly knew that she belonged to a higher class.’ –This is how one of my respondents described his experience and viewpoint about the relationship between smell and class. Actually class or profession is often identified via smell. For example Helen Keller also identifies in the following way ‘...from exhalations I learn much about people. I often know the work they are engaged in. The odors of wood, iron, paint and drug cling to the clothes of the men who work with them. Thus I can distinguish the carpenter from the ironworker, the artist from the mason or the chemist’ (Keller 2006: 182).

My study also reflects similar trend as 95% of my respondents identify class along with space, occupation, religious community and gender in terms of smell. This is how social actors construct and conform to the constructs about the role of olfaction in social stratification. Just as smell constructs class, similarly it plays a key role in transforming class identity. This might not be ubiquitous but each group in the class hierarchy often tries to follow the immediately higher one. As each group in the class hierarchy has an constructed olfactory position and the “lower classes” are often marginalized as “stinkers” so along with other efforts like increase of income, opting for education, trying to lead a healthy life and many others, they also opt for olfactory transformation or metamorphosis consciously to uplift themselves in the class hierarchy. These efforts of mobility can be traced in two spheres – in the sphere of individual body and in the spatial sphere. They are trying to clean, deodorize and to some extent fragrantise their bodies and homes idealizing the middle class standard – as the large portion of middle class bodies are perfumed bodies and their houses are deodorized. Now the question is, do these efforts result in upward mobility? Is there really a relation between olfactory transformation and class transformation?

Let us take some examples. In Mahabharata, Satyabati, daughter of the leader of fishermen community was mentioned as “matsyagandha” in her early years. Later, meeting and mating with Parasara (a great scholar and intellectual, father of Vyasa) she became uniquely fragrant and was regarded as Yojangandha (someone whose fragrance travels miles). Afterwards her marriage with Santanu, the great king of Hastinapura strengthened her identity. Later queen Satyabati’s fragrance became a legend. Thus olfactory

transformation and class transformation go hand in hand. In this case there is a transformation from lower class occupational smell to upper class individual smell as she belonged to a fisherman community; the adjective “matsyagandha” was the smell of the profession. But when she lived with a Brahmin and afterwards married a king she became “yojangondha” which is not only her adjective but her unique identity. So there is a transformation from an objectified “lower class” smell to a subjective, individualistic, unique upper class fragrance.

Similarly the description of Rajani of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay or Titli in Kojagar of Buddhadev Guha, the mention of fragrance in terms of flowers, soap or scented hair oil occurs only when they are loved by or married to a person of higher class as Rajani is a daughter of a garlander and Titli a house-maid. Especially in case of Rajani there are mentions of the fragrance of the flowers, that is the things she deals with, but there is no mention of her individual fragrance before she was loved by an upper-class man. Thus when they belong to lower class there remain olfactory silence and in connection with upper-class they become fragrant.

As the olfactory construct varies according to class, so lower classes of contemporary world are trying to change their olfactory “presentation of self”. Nowadays it becomes difficult sometimes to differentiate due to the olfactory mask, between a middle class person and a lower class person. It is really difficult to judge a person’s class just from the appearance as due to the synthetic and/or artificial and cheaper version of the perfumes, hair oils, cosmetics are often used by lower class people to remove class boundary and mask their class identity. Sometimes these imitations look so original that it becomes difficult to differentiate. Therefore efforts of upliftment in the class hierarchy from an olfactory angle become successful to an extent. However, this is perhaps more apparent than actual. This olfactory mask is so intense that it raises doubt. In this regard Largey and Watson observed:

...deodorizing-odorizing practices to avoid being “foul-smelling” and thus being associated with the lower class remain widespread. And, as with the racial minority groups, it appears that the lower class often utilizes a great deal of perfume to avoid stigmatization – so much so that the lower class is sometimes described as being “scent smothered” or “daubed in cheap perfume”, cheap being a term used to imply lower class (Largey and Watson 1972).

This doubt itself distances the perceiver – contributing to further segregation and marginalization. Thus in order to counter olfactory, class constructs, efforts of upward mobility via smell is a social trend, particularly in some urban areas and it is diffusing surely. However, olfactory stigmatization in terms of class still remains. We may conclude with Synnott:

Times change and standards of living have risen. Perhaps the lower classes no longer smell so different from the upper classes. Or perhaps they do. Evidence suggests that hygienic practices vary significantly by socio economic status (Synnott 1991).

Gender and smell

Gender classifies smell and in turn smell also defines gender. Connotations and social meanings associated to smell vary according to time, space and culture. But the relation between gender and smell can be traced in different cultures across time and space. Women are often portrayed as fragrant. In literature most upper and middle class women bodies are perfumed bodies. As for example Kalidasa depicts Uma in Kumarsambhavam:

তঁার সুরভিনিঃশ্বাসে তৃষ্ণার্ত হয়ে একটি ভ্রমর তঁার বিশ্বফলের ন্যায় রক্তিম অধরের সম্মুখে বিচরণ
করছিলো। প্রতি মুহূর্তে ভীত ও চঞ্চল দৃষ্টিতে তিনি হস্তস্থিত লীলাপদ্মের দ্বারা তাকে বারণ
করছিলেন। (তৃতীয় সর্গঃ অনু-জ্যোতিভূষণ চাকী: ১৪৮)

Such was the aroma of Parbati's lips that bees were attracted being misled, assuming it as a flower. Radha in Vaishnav Padabali is also portrayed with vivid aromatic description as she comments about Krishna-

আমার অঙ্গের পরশ সৌরভ
যখন যে দিগে পায়।
বাহু পসারিয়া বাউল হইয়া
তখন সে দিগে যায়।।

(নরহরি দাস, সম্পাদক সুকুমার সেন :১৯৫৭-৩৬)

Such is the connection of fragrance with women that they are often compared to flowers. A scented flower is often used as metaphor for women. In everyday life a girl is sometimes named after a flower and often it is a fragrant flower like শেফালী, যুঁই, পদ্ম, গোলাপ, কমল, কুলদলিন্দিনী and like that. Moreover in everyday preparation of women fragrance takes a key place. For example while participating in a marriage ceremony or a religious ceremony the women often opt for different types of fragrance to present themselves socially. My study shows that most young women and some middle aged women opt for flowers and garlands in ceremonies. Deodorant or perfume is more common as it is used not only in ceremonies but regularly

in official purposes, although the degree and intensity may vary. The use of different types of scented cosmetics is a regular or habitual aspect of the presentation of the female self in everyday life. Thus women are socially allowed to spend a substantial time in their regular make up specifically in terms of deodorization and fragrantization as they are socially expected to smell fragrant. In this context the proscription and prescription of Kamasutra regarding the female self are noteworthy.

ঘর্ম, দন্তমল ও দুর্গন্ধ স্বামীর বিরাগের কারণ

ইহা বৃষ্টিয়া ওই সকল অপসরণ করিবে।

And

বহুভুষণ, বিবিধকুসুম ও অনুলেপন গ্রহণ এবং বিবিধপ্রকার অপরাগে অমুক্তল বসন পরিধান এই প্রকার বেশ আভিগামিক নামে খ্যাত। বসন অতি সূক্ষ্ম ও পরিমিত হইবে তাহাও পরিমিত দুইখানি পরিধান করিবে, পরিমিত আভরণ এবং গন্ধদ্রব্য গ্রহণ করিবে অতিরিক্ত অনুলেপন করিবে না এবং শুক্লপুষ্পসকাল ধারণ করিবে ইহা বইহারিক বেশ (বাস্যায়ন, অনু তর্করত্ন ১৩৩৪-১৫২)

From all these above mentioned descriptions and prescriptions it can be derived that society objectifies the female body as women are expected to smell fragrant not for themselves but for their male counterparts. Therefore most women bodies are perfumed bodies. To speak of their gendered role in intimacy the traditional social construct is it is women who must prepare and wait with a scented appearance and it is men who must come and consume.

Smell, for women, is not just a part of their social identity but in some cases it becomes their identity. The stories of Satyabati or Padmini are the cases in point. Satyabati in the *Mahabharata* is referred to as Yojangandha. It is not that Satyabati is Yojangandha, but that Yojangandha is Satyabati. Any other identifying mark or word is not required. Similarly Rajput queen Padmini is Padmagandha. So in case of women olfaction denotes identity.

On the other hand in case men the following trends can be traced. First, in describing men, sometimes there is an olfactory silence. For example in Vaishnabapadabali there are thick and vivid descriptions of Radha's fragrant preparation and presentation but very few words are used to describe Krishna's olfactory representation. He is described as:

কি রূপ দেখিনু মধুর মুরতি
 পিরীতিরসের সার।
 হেন লয় মনে এ তিন ভুবনে
 তুলনা নাহিক আর।।
 নব জলধর রসে ঢর ঢর
 বরণ চিকনমালা
 অপের ভূষণ রজত কাঞ্চন
 মনি-মুকুতার মালা।।
 (দ্বিজ ভীম, সেন, ১৯৫৭-১৬)

While Radha is portrayed as

কানড় ছান্দে করবী বান্দে
 নবমল্লিকার ফুলে।।
 ...
 ফুলের গেড়ুয়া ধরয়ে লুকিয়া
 সথনে দেখায় পাশ।।

This construct of olfactory description in terms of gender can also be traced in Kumarsambhavam in the description of Uma and Maheshwara as Maheshwara is described:

তাঁর জটাপুঞ্জ ভূজঙ্গের দ্বারা উন্নত করে আবদ্ধ। দুই কর্ণে দ্বিগুনীকৃত রুদ্রাঙ্কমালা অলঙ্কার রূপে শোভিত,
 গ্রন্থিমুক্ত যে কৃষ্ণ মৃগচর্ম তিনি পরিধান করে আছেন, তা তাঁর কণ্ঠনীলিমার আভায় গাঢ় নীলবর্ণে লিপ্ত

Whereas Uma –

যে অশোক পদ্মরাগমণীকেও পরাজিত করেছিল, যে কণিকার কুসুম স্বর্গের দীপ্তি আকর্ষণ করেছিল, যে
 সিন্ধুবার মুক্তামালায় স্থান পূর্ণ করেছিল, বসন্তকালীন সেই সকল কুসুমে ভূষিতা ছিলেন পার্বতী

In my study I found that more women, particularly young women spend more time and thought on their olfactory presentation than their male counterparts. Second there are some instances where fragrances occur in male descriptions but this is mostly in case of upper class and some middle class individuals. For example the king in Banabhatta's Kadambari takes a long bath which includes a variety of scented materials as mentioned earlier. In other descriptions of men, fragrance only appears occasionally – i.e. – a lover going for a date with garland or an elite male coming in a “Mahafil” adding lots of Ittar or a Babu having an elite meal with lots of aromatic herbs and spices. But in usual descriptions of men smell does not constitute a part. Thus unlike women, traditionally olfaction does not occupy a position in the masculine everyday.

The third trend in male descriptions is, in many instances smell does occur but that is the smell of sweat or blood. Interestingly these smells are not recognized socially as pleasant or desired. Specially the sweaty smell is often linked to the working class or for that matter any “lower class” and regarded as foul. But these smells are often the describing words for upper

or middle class men – indicating hard work, bravery, heroism. Especially in case of middle class men it glamorizes the male bread earner role. For example there was a ritual of “shir aghran” or smelling the head among *kshatriyas* especially after returning from a journey, a war or difficult mission and the like. Chances are high that at that time the person may smell of dust, mud, sweat, blood and the like which are categorized as “stink” or “foul”. But in this case the ritual is upheld and glamorized.

Even in intimacy which is glamorized as the most fragrant part of one’s life, a man can smell less fragrant or sometimes even sweaty which is proscribed socially for a woman. Yes men do opt for perfumes and fragrances during intimacy but the degree and intensity do vary. If a man smells less pleasant than desirable or sweaty that is traditionally accepted in society. However in the case of a woman, she is expected to look down upon this issue. As in the social construct of traditional gender roles men are the consumers and women are the consumed. So in case of men smell is often an added thing, not a constituent part of male identity while in case of women the olfaction is a paramount and indispensable part of the female identity.

Household

The olfactory construct of gender is quite evident from the household. Women (depending upon class) usually perform the preparation part of the meal - Cutting of fish or vegetables, cleaning and adding spices, marinating and cooking, cleaning the utensils and the kitchen in the post cooking phase - this entire process is mostly reek or foul. It has lots of undesirable smell. This is the preparation part. Men receive the prepared food with the desirable smell with aromatic spices and herbs at the dining table. It is not that women do not consume - they do but often with the leftovers of their male counterparts, at best only after the males have finished their meal. This reflects the patriarchal social structure. There are many instances in the literature which depicts a queen or an elite wife (who does not have to do all the cooking or cleaning by herself) is waiting for their male counterpart, preparing lots of delicious and fragrant food but the reverse picture is rare. So, in a patriarchal structure, women play the preparatory role while men are enjoying the prepared and desired fragrances. Whether at dining or at sex, it is women who must prepare and wait with aromatic meal or scented body; and it is men who must come and consume.

Gender and other factors

The story does not end here, as along with gender, aspects of age, class or race are intermingled. Age is not just a biological issue but also a social and olfactory phenomenon. Maybe women of different age smell differently but the point here is women of different age are categorized in olfactory terms and are socially expected to smell differently. For example a girl child is often portrayed as sweet smelling while a young maiden is often depicted in literature as fragrant and having a scented attractive appearance. An old lady on the other hand is odorless and sometimes foul. A young girl child is often compared to a bud while a maiden is compared to a fully bloomed flower with its fragrance. The teenage phase is compared to a transitional stage - a bud becoming a flower.

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay described his three female leading characters in *Durgeshnandini* accordingly - Tilottoma the heroine, a teenage girl is described as sweet smelling and compared to a spring jasmine; Bimala in turn is an experienced lady, Tilottoma's stepmother who is also beautiful compared to an evening lotus and described as odorless (*nirbasa*). Ayesha another important female character is in between the two. She is neither as naive as Tilottoma nor is she as vastly experienced as Bimala. Her beauty is compared to a morning lotus which is in full bloom and full of scent which attracts.

...কোন কোন তরুণীর সৌন্দর্য বাসন্তী মল্লিকার ন্যায়, নবস্ফুট, ব্রীড়াসঙ্কুচিত, কোমল, নির্মল, পরিমলময়।

তিলোত্তমার সৌন্দর্য সেইরূপ। কোন রমণীর রূপ অপরাহ্নের স্বপ্নময়ের ন্যায়, নির্বাস, মুদিতোন্মুখ, শুল্কপল্লব, অধিক বিকশিত, অধিক প্রভাবিশিষ্ট, মধুপরিপূর্ণ। বিমলা সেইরূপ সুন্দরী। আয়েশার সৌন্দর্য নব রবিকর ফুল জললিলিনীর ন্যায়। সুবিকশিত, সুবাসিত, রসপরিপূর্ণ, রৌদ্রপ্রদীপ্ত, না সঙ্কুচিত, না বিশুল্ক, কোমল অথচ প্রোঙ্কল

Therefore the olfactory construction of gender and age are intermingled.

People who are segregated from mainstream society are perhaps the worst victims of olfactory social stereotypes. For example, a witch is always described as ugly, dirty, foul and obviously a person who stinks. Perhaps this is more symbolic than real. Anything which does not fit in “normal” or “good” category of society is either glamorized as brave/heroic or in most cases segregated and victimized as cruel, bad, mischievous and the like. And the very binary of fragrant foul summarizes the entire story. For example, sex workers are often segregated of smelling too strongly of cheap perfume or smelling foul. Lucilius wrote: ‘It was possible to distinguish a “good” girl from a prostitute by their different scent, that of the former being of course preferable to that of the latter.’ While Timocles wrote: ‘Old prostitutes smell like swine’ (Lilja, *Treatment of Odours*, Cited in Classen et al 1994).

Similarly witches are also taken 'as completely antagonistic to the social order and even more repulsive.' (Classen et. al. 1994: 38). So the physical smell is interlinked to and often overshadowed by the moral smell. Thus the desirable is fragrant and undesirable is foul. 'Olfactory symbolism thus was used very effectively to pass value judgements on different groups of people' (Classen et al 1994: 38)

Recent Trends: Continuity and Change

The gendered stereotype of olfaction and the consumer consumed dichotomy are undergoing significant transformation in contemporary urban spaces. The bipolar categorization of male and female smell world and the consumer consumed dichotomy are being challenged. In the contemporary world due to the breakdown of the joint family, increasing number of working women and increase of neo-local families - the traditional smellscape is undergoing a metamorphosis. The second significant transformation is that women, like men are also becoming consumers. As women and men are both earning members and are sometimes equal earners, so the consumer-consumed divide is breaking down. Men are not only sharing household responsibilities (cooking, washing clothes, shopping and so on) they are also preparing themselves with fragrance to be presentable to their female partners. Previously only female bodies were expected to be perfumed bodies and ideally a woman should wait for her partner with her scented appearance to be consumed by him while in case of the male smell - society was either silent or ignorant. Sometimes men did opt for perfume or other fragrances at intimacy but the masculine social ideal also allowed the men not to smell fragrance and sometimes to smell sweaty. Nevertheless in recent years the increasing number of male perfumes and cosmetics tell the tale. For example Fair and Lovely For Men, Fogg Deo for Men, Wild Stone, Old Spice etc. Male bodies are also becoming perfumed bodies. The consumer-consumed dichotomy is breaking down as both the sexes are consuming and are being consumed by each other. Although this contemporary trend cannot be generalized as there are lots of variations and still a huge number of people experience and conform to the gender stereotypes of olfaction but this social trend, particularly in urban areas is quite clear and it is diffusing surely. Thus olfactory research reveals gender stratification in society. Just as olfactory stereotype represent gender stereotypes, similarly, as the contemporary social trend suggests olfactory equality represents gender equality.

Olfactory Caste Hierarchy

In the traditional Indian Varna system each group has a specific occupation associated with specific types of materials and hence smells differently. Like the occupation smell also helps to construct group identity of a specific caste. Therefore the olfactory hierarchy and the caste hierarchy shape each other. This olfaction may be physical and actual but it is definitely social and moral. For example the people who deal with sandalwood, flowers, ghee, incense, aromatic goods are Brahmins - usually stand at the top of the caste hierarchy. They are the “holy” caste, pure and fragrant caste. They are believed to establish the direct connection with God and sometimes they are regarded as “equal to God” – “Brahmin Devta”.

In contrast people who professionally deal with human and animal excrements (for example cleaning toilets, carrying shit on their head) dead bodies, skin of dead animals are marginalized as “stinkers”. They are the untouchables.

The seriousness of the issue and the importance of smell is quite evident as Brahmins are not only not allowed to eat or drink some food or beverages, they are not allowed to smell them either. Although the degree may vary, but eating and smelling were both considered as sins in the Manusamhita. One set of sins include the following -

Making a Brahmin cry, smelling liquor or substances that should not be smelt, cheating and sexual intercourse with a man - tradition calls these sins that cause exclusion from caste (McHugh 2012: 26).

The significance of smell is articulated in the above lines as smelling of proscribed substances was put into equal footing to harming a Brahmin or cheating someone.

In fact the Tagore family is also considered a “Pirali Bamun” a lower status of Brahmin. One explanation holds the view that one of Rabindranath Tagore’s ancestry had smelled beef. This act of smelling resulted in the decline of the family in the caste hierarchy.

Thus certain foods, beverages and the groups who consume them are not only considered as untouchable but also unsmellable.

Between Brahmins and untouchables there are broadly three Varnas – Kshatriya, Baishya and Sudra. According to their occupation and olfaction they are posited in between the above mentioned two groups. These three groups – although they have lots of variations among them are usually

neither purely fragrant as Brahmins nor as foul or polluted as the untouchables.

Continuity and Change

কত হাজার হাজার শরীর
আমায় রোজ ঝুঁয়ে যাচ্ছে,
তাদের গন্ধ আমার নাকে মুখে গায়...

The traditional olfactory caste hierarchy is being challenged in the contemporary cosmopolitan urban life. You can neither avoid the smell nor the touch of your co-passenger in a crowded bus or train. In a traditional Indian village usually all the members know each other's caste identity but in a modern metropolis it is impossible to know the caste of one's co-passenger. Therefore a Brahmin will smell a Sudra or an untouchable unknowingly and no one will atone. However smell does have a close connection with occupation. The materials with which a person works daily can and do cover or mix with his own smell. Thus a toilet cleaner, a sweeper, a fisherman can be identified via smell and thus will receive some comments, stares and hence would be avoided or marginalized for olfactory reasons. Thus certain changes are definitely occurring particularly in large cities mainly due to "Civil inattention" and efforts of sanskritization by the lower castes in terms of smell but this is perhaps a recent social trend and a partial picture. As in many areas, still people are segregated in terms of caste and all other efforts for upward mobility may be in vain if the mission of olfactory transformation is not accomplished. This is evident in our everyday life as whenever we receive an unpleasant smell from an individual or a place or space, we tend to associate these with lower castes and would try to avoid in future, stigmatizing those as unsmellables.

Smell, space and the social

Just like caste or gender, social actors tend to classify space in terms of its smell. Let us take a restaurant for example. Along with the visual, tactile and gustatory perceptions, olfaction is also a significant way in perceiving a restaurant. If a restaurant smells of previous day's food, leftovers or the utensils, tables declare the previous day's menu cards, obviously via olfaction the restaurant will be classified as a "low rank" or "cheap". A *jhopri* or some of the roadside *dhabas* can be examples. While, if a restaurant has a clear smell, maybe a smell of disinfectant, fresh air or mild fragrance, moreover you are unable to know the previous day's meal and the dining

space is not occupied by kitchen smell then that could be ranked at the middle. Now speaking of upper tier the difference with the middle is subtle but identifiable as along with some aspects mentioned in the middle category an upper ranked restaurant would have a fragrant atmosphere. This scented ambience may include room fresheners, table may include flowers. Perhaps the most significant difference in terms of olfaction would be identified in the toilet. As the toilet in a middle ranked restaurant may smell of urine or strong disinfectant or a complex combination of the two. Sometimes it can also be stuffy. Thus entering into the toilet from the dining hall, it suddenly affects your impression while the toilet like the dining hall, in an upper ranked restaurant would also be fragrant, generally not include the smell of urine or strong disinfectant, but rather have a mild aroma. The ambience is fresh, which will enable to stay with a more pleasant impression. Viewing from the perspective of Goffman, in the lower ranked restaurant and to some extent the middle ranked restaurant along with the kitchen and other preparatory places, perhaps the toilet also becomes the part of the backstage while in case of the upper stratum the toilet is a part of the front stage. Thus smell reflects the hierarchy of the restaurants. Moreover sometimes the restaurant's smell also occupies the adjacent ambience and the neighborhood smell is also linked with it. Thus restaurants contribute to entire smellscape of the social space.

For example Victoria Henshaw records in *Urban Smellscapes* –

Those living in the area appeared to be more concerned with doorstep issues such as waste and litter, associating those with the neighborhood's food businesses. Participants contrasted front-of-house operations, the official face of the business with activities at the back.

She quotes one of her respondents in this context –

...one of them had been burning their cardboard...and there was tins and that...the back alley had been full of black bags and you couldn't get down it, it was completely full of 'em...all they're interested in is the front and it's about time that the environmental health brought the area down (Henshaw 2014: 97).

Smell and space and therefore the moral judgments are interlinked which can be traced in our everyday life. For example Park Circus Railway Station or the area adjacent to it, or Dhapa in Kolkata is often frowned upon and the citizens often try to avoid these places. The former includes tanneries and leather works while the latter is a vat which includes huge amount of garbage from the city daily. Social actors not only stigmatize these areas

for olfaction but often some of them pass moral judgments that ‘these areas are bad or full of lower class people’, etc. All these comments come on the basis of smell and there are more alleged or perceived judgments rather than actual. Thus here smell determined the standard or rank of the space as a space is morally constructed as “good” or “bad” in terms of olfaction.

Conclusion: Social, moral and olfactory constructs

We smell individuals, groups and social spaces not only through our biological nose but also via our social and moral nose. We smell classes, castes, genders, races, spaces, regions, occupations and religion. Segregation are made not just in terms of occupation but also in terms of Olfaction. People are as much stratified in terms of olfaction as they are socially. The social, moral and olfactory classifications are all so intertwined with each other that one definitely leads to the other and once these classifications are made then it becomes really difficult to determine which one is the cause and which are its effects.

“Lower castes and classes” are segregated socially and in this process smell is a crucial factor. The moral constructs along with these is perhaps the most dangerous components/factors as people, groups and social settings are marginalized not just in terms of real odor but perhaps more in terms of their perceived or alleged odors.

So as Synnott puts it ‘what smells good is good; what smells bad is bad’ – a social construct. But the story does not end here as in turn, ‘what is good smells good’ and ‘what is bad smells bad’ – a moral construct. Therefore it is not just an olfactory construction but many other social and moral aspects are associated with it. So truth, virtue, honesty, these are fragrant while evil, vice, impurity, dishonesty etc. are foul. Shakespeare made us aware that we, ‘think through our noses’ and so Hamlet sniffed out that, ‘Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.’ He again remarked: ‘I doubt some foul play: would the night were come! Till then sit still my soul: foul deeds will rise’ (Act I scene ii). On the other hand Keats also commented ‘Fragrance is truth, and truth fragrance.’ Thus, ‘the physical and the moral are united in odor’ (Synnott). Largey and Watson also dealt with this issue in their famous work, *The Sociology of Odors*. They referred to the British social psychologist Ronald Goldman (1969). He referred in his work, ‘a problem member’ of a youth club: ‘In personal terms ... Jim was always smelly and dirty and many teachers reported the obnoxious smell that came from him

during school hours. Very few people who dealt with him could dissent from the judgment that he was sly, vicious and totally unreliable.’ Here, Largey and Watson concluded, ‘in this case, Jim the individual stank physically and therefore morally.’

Along with the social constructions, Synnott significantly points out the story of moral construction. According to him social actors often identify and explain food, environment or other social actors in terms of their moral smell instead of their actual odors. So it is not and not only “what smells good is good” but also in turn “what is good smells good.” So he writes, ‘we may describe someone as smelling “divine” or “beautiful”, “lovely” or just a “plain good”’; yet all these adjectives are evaluations and moral judgments. Description is prescription. The aromas are converted from physical sensations to symbolic evaluations’ (Synnott 1991: 443).

This trio of social, moral and olfactory stigmatization creates insurmountable barriers and marginalizes groups. In my research I have found that 95 per cent of my respondents identify space, occupation, religious community, gender, caste or class in terms of their smell. Some identify Muslims with their garlic smell, the urbanites identifies the rural as smelling of mud, cow dung, manure etc. while the rural identifies them as smelling industrial and artificial. In this context Tarashankar Bandopadhyay records:

ঘুরল বনওয়ারী। ইন্টিশানের এলাকার মধ্যে ঢুকল। লম্বা – এই এখান থেকে সেখান পর্যন্ত চলে গিয়েছে সারি সারি ঘর। পাকা ঘর, পাকা মেঝে, সামনে খানিকটা উঠান, এক এক ঘরে এক এক সংসার; বেশ আছে। থাকবে না কেন? সায়েবসুবোর কারখানা তাদের ‘আশ্চর্যে’ আছে কিন্তু বড় ঘূপচি। পাকা ছাদ, পাকা দেওয়াল, পাকা মেঝে হলেও এর মধ্যে থাকতে হলে বনওয়ারির হাঁপ ধরে যেত। তাদের ঘর এর চেয়ে অনেক খারাপ, কিন্তু উঠানটি খোলা। তা ছাড়া এদের সংসারের ঘরদোরের গন্ধ যেন কেমন কেমন। এলেই নাকে লাগে। তাদের ঘরের গন্ধটির মধ্যে গোবর মাটির গন্ধ, গরুর গায়ের গন্ধ, ধানের গন্ধ, কাঠ-মুটে-পোড়ার গন্ধ, সারগাদার গন্ধ, পচাই মদের গন্ধ, বাড়ির আশপাশের বাবুরি তুলসী গাছের গন্ধ মিশে এক ভারি মিষ্টি প্রাণ-জুড়ানো গন্ধ। আর এখানকার গন্ধ আলাদা, ভারি কটু গন্ধ, ইঞ্জিনের ঝাড়া কয়লা আর জলে মিশে একটি ভাপানি তেজিয়ান গন্ধ এসে নাকে ঢাকে। ডাক্তারখানায় তেজী ওষুধের ছাড়া আর কোথাকারও গন্ধ এমন তেজী নয়।

Thus let me conclude with Simmel, ‘The social question is not an ethical one, but also a nasal question’ (Simmel 1908/2009: 577).

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Gujjars and the Electoral Politics in Rajasthan

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Dibakar Bera

***Abstract:** The politics of the BJP has so far been a politics of mobilization whether at the state or at the central level in the truest sense, and one can realize that most often than not the basis of this mobilization is religious sentiments that appeal to the minds of the majority. The issues of the dalits or the so called “picchre barg” also come to agenda as a part of this mobilization politics if it is Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. The Gujjar movement in Rajasthan had brought to the fore an electoral promise of the BJP to include the Gujjars in the list of the ST of the state that helped the BJP to corner the Congress in order to get the support of the Gujjars as such. The issue was apparently simple. The Gujjar community of the Rajasthan wants ST status to have the benefit of the policy of what is sometimes called as affirmative action. But the move of the Gujjars has been opposed by the Meenas. The Gujjars and the Meenas are the two antagonistic groups in Rajasthan. The Meenas are also numerically significant in Rajasthan and play a deciding role in electoral politics. The movement of the Gujjars for the ST status has become a matter of concern for the Meenas as they are worried of losing their near-monopoly over the reserved seats for government jobs. Thus the demand for compensatory justice has led to a fear competitive claim that compels the Meenas to oppose it by all possible ways. The present paper examines how this has made the whole issue more complicated for all the political parties in that state and focuses on the nature of caste politics in Rajasthan that revolved around the demands of the Gujjars. At last under tremendous pressure government has been forced to make reservations for them as Special Backward Class.*

Keywords: Gujjars, Jats, Meenas, ST, OBC, equality, justice, reservation.

The issue

What may be called a critical political impasse has not only paralysed time and again the state of Rajasthan but has raised an important question regarding the ethics of politics. Andre Beteille (2000: 275) in a different context wrote that in modern democratic societies ‘government and opposition speak in radically different voices but are seen, when the turn comes for exercising power, to be acting in remarkably same ways.’

The issue is apparently simple. The Gujjar community of Rajasthan wanted ST (Scheduled Tribe) status to have the benefit of the policy of affirmative action. This was not new, the Gujjars first made this demand in mid-1980s. The then Congress-led state government did not give much importance to it. The demand was again placed before the Asoke Gehlot-led Congress (I) ministry. The Congress turned down the demand once more. It is also true that the Gujjar movement, at that time, could not take a shape to create sufficient pressure on the government. One reason may be the fact that this movement suffered from the absence of an effective leader from that community (Rajalakshmi 2007).

In May 2007 the Gujjars emerged as a significant force under Kirori Singh Bainsla, the leader of Gujjar Arakshan Sangharsh Samiti, to press for the demand of their ST status in a very organized way, and their movement not only shuddered the BJP-led government of Rajasthan but also spread over Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. The internal organization of this movement, during this time, got consolidated and its leaders tried to percolate the simple and one-point agenda of the movement among the members of their community. Even the women of remote villages of Gujjar dominated districts of Rajasthan started believing that their condition would not improve unless they are granted the benefits meant for the scheduled tribes of the state. The example of the Meenas, a scheduled tribe, was also ready at their hands to make their demand credible and convince the fellow members of the community and others. The Gujjars believe that the Meenas have really been benefited from reservation policy. A true feeling of deprivation spilled over as the BJP government did not take any concrete measure, administrative or political, except forming Chopra committee¹ (even the report of this committee has gone against the Gujjars) to look after the validity of the demand. Moreover it tried to suppress the movement by police force that caused the death of a large number of movement supporters².

This was what may be called the first phase of the Gujjar movement. It had visibly four important aspects. Firstly, the caste sentiments of the Gujjars, who were previously a dispersed community, had been percolated in such a way that helped increase their in-group solidarity to a significant level. Secondly, as the Gujjars labeled the inaction of the government as a political perfidy, their strategic support to the BJP government had drastically eroded. Thirdly, the inter-caste rivalry between the Gujjars and the Meenas was transformed into a virtual caste war. And lastly, the brutal suppression of the movement by the “trigger-happy” police force of the state not only took the life of many but also created an instance of bad governance that has been condemned by all sections of the society. However what makes the comment of Beteille mentioned at the beginning of this article relevant is that in 2003 assembly election this BJP leadership criticized the earlier government for neglecting the long-standing demand of the Gujjars and promised to take action to include the name of the Gujjars in the list of ST had they come to power.

If this was the first phase of the movement, the second phase started in the last week of May 2008, just one year after its first phase, with the same demand and in same way of creating pressure on the government. To describe the severity of the movement *The Times of India*³ writes ‘[w]ith the toll crossing 38 in two days and scores of people in hospitals, the Army was called out.’ In several places the supporters blocked the railways and National Highways with the dead bodies of their comrades. Rajasthan, thus, was in serious political crisis and there was no sign of immediate way out.

The politics and the blunder

The alleged electoral promise of the present BJP leaders to include the name of the Gujjar, who are at present recognised as OBC in the state, before the assembly election of 2003, was a part of its electoral politics. The Gujjars originally backed the Congress (I) in the state; but the chemistry changed as soon as they felt betrayed by the Congress leadership. And the BJP played the right (?) card (Rajalakshmi 2007). Initially this support of the Gujjars not only helped the party come to the power but also created a pro-dalit image of the party. It was too transient however. To point out how the promise of the BJP has become a fishbone, we should look at a statement of a leader of the Gujjars:

If the BJP government does not do justice, the Gujjar vote will definitely not go to them. The Congress betrayed us; they paid the price. If we so decide, we can influence the electoral outcome of any political outfit in at least 42 constituencies. If political parties think our votes are no good, we will at least play a role in defeating such parties (Rajalakshmi 2007).

This statement was made just one year before the Gujjars started the second phase of their movement with new vigor almost paralyzing the normal life of the state. The initial reaction of the state administration was also feudal - use of force and other undemocratic methods to label the insurgency as the conspiracy of the criminals. Even the supply of drinking water and food was stopped or curtailed in some Gujjar dominated areas to upset the spirit of the movement. Report says that the death toll, mostly in police firing, in the first few days of this second phase of the movement, reached 38⁴.

Two important consequences of this brutal repression were clearly evident. Firstly, it indirectly contributed to the in-group solidarity of the Gujjars. Noticeably a large number of Gujjar women came out in the street. The participation of women in such a movement added a new dimension. Secondly, the Gujjars lost faith on the state government. So the face-saving announcement of a package of 282 crores for their development by the state government could do nothing to stop the movement⁵. Even the letter of the chief minister of Rajasthan, to the prime minister requesting him to explore the possibility of giving ST status to the Gujjars with 4 to 6 per cent reservation, was interpreted as “passing the buck” game.

The populist strategy of the BJP in 2003 election was a mistake. The demand of the Gujjars for ST status had been vehemently opposed by the Meenas, another powerful tribal community in the state. And the census data show that their population is the highest among all the scheduled tribes of the state, whose support was instrumental for the ruling party to retain power in the state. So the Meenas were considered as more important in electoral politics compared to the Gujjars. The movement of the Gujjars for the ST status had become a matter of concern for the Meenas as well since they were worried about losing their near-monopoly over the reserved seats in government jobs. Thus the demand for compensatory justice had made the Meenas apprehensive and they decided to oppose the movement of the Gujjars. The dynamics of inter-community rivalry shows that in the future the Gujjar-Meena antagonism may take the form of what Giri (2001: 267) calls ‘the annihilation of the other’ that, according to him, is the common trend of contemporary identitarian movements.

However the dilemma among the ranks of the BJP was clear: if they became sympathetic to the demands of the Gujjars they would surely face the threat from the Meenas. More important is the fact that this crisis made public the dissension even among the prominent BJP leaders regarding the way in which the Gujjar issue was dealt with, which had far reaching implications for the party in the state.

Quota panacea

In an article entitled 'Managing Multiplicity: The Insider-Outsider Duality' Yogesh Atal (2001) has raised a very important issue which bears relevance to our basic question regarding the effectiveness of quota to supplement the "policy of inclusion" as a part of compensatory justice. Atal says: '[t]he success of the programme of "positive discrimination" should be measured in terms of an increasingly decreasing list of those who are its beneficiaries. But if the opposite is the case, which is inherent in the negatively oriented policy of positive discrimination, then it must be changed' (ibid: 3464). And this negative orientation is evident not only in the demands and charters of the communities fighting for the inclusion of their names in the Schedule for some special privileges, but also in some contemporary social science discourses that want to show protectionism as the antidote to backwardness.

However the basic argument against any kind of reservation or what is called preferential treatment is related to the notion of "equality" itself on which our Constitution rests. If some persons, belonging to some so-called higher castes are debarred from certain positions, only for their caste affiliation and for no fault of theirs, it not only goes against the principle of equality but also may be treated as the violation of their rights in a secular and democratic country. Beteille (2000: 285), who never supports the policy of reservation, says '[t]he distribution of benefits and burdens according to community, caste and gender is fundamentally at odds with the idea of citizenship'. Unfortunately there is a kind of feeling even among some social scientists who believe that '[T]he aim of compensatory justice is to provide counter balancing benefits to those individuals who have been wrongfully injured in the past' (Rai 2002: 4309) and try to justify this policy. Nothing can be better if the leaders of such movements understand that mere reservation is not the solution to their problem of backwardness. Chandra Bhan Prasad (2007) has made a very interesting comment: 'the Rajasthan Gujjars are already in the Other Backward Classes list, yet they have not been able to benefit from the OBC quota'. And he raises the ultimate question 'Can the Adivasi status take the Gujjars forward?' The

Jats of Haryana, who are also moving in the same line as the Gujjars, should ask the same question to themselves.

Where is the end?

The Gujjar movement became extremely violent and the Gujjars compelled the state to remain cut off from the rest of the country for a long spell. The central leadership of the BJP had some talks with the movement leaders without involving the state BJP leaders but could not produce any positive outcome. The bemused state government tried to play a very common game of putting the ball in the central government's court, but it also failed to satisfy the aggressive Gujjars. And the ultimate result was a spell of political stalemate for which only the state BJP leaders were responsible.

The third phase of the movement started in December 2010, two year and six month after its second phase. The Gujjars placed the same demand in same way, creating pressure on the government. To describe the severity of the movement *The Indian Express*⁶ wrote, 'They jammed trains on Jaipur-Delhi and Mumbai – Delhi route. Unlike 2008 unrest, there was no violence in 2010'.

The fourth phase started in May 2015. A similar protest was organized and thousands of Gujjars blocked railways. After 10 days standoff, the Rajasthan government ultimately agreed to bring a new law to grant 5 percent reservation to the Gujjars.

Although after a long battle, pressure and counter pressure, the government has succumbed to the demand of the Gujjars, the problem of inter-community rivalry remains. Granting reservations may please the Gujjars but it would result an increasing sense of deprivation among the Meenas. Politics of mobilization, appeasing one group against the other may give electoral mileage but takes its tolls in the long run. In taking final decision to handle the recent on-going agitations of the Jats in Haryana with the similar demands, the government should take this into account.

Notes

1. The Chopra Committee simply recommended an "area approach" for their development but remained silent about the demand of the Gujjars for ST status. For obvious reasons the Gujjar leaders opposed it.

2. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has already demanded the resignation of Rajasthan chief minister for this.
3. See *The Times of India* 25 May 2008.
4. The actual number of deaths in this movement is not very clear till now. This is an approximate figure. And the number is increasing everyday.
5. *Ananda Bazar Patrika* 25 May 2008.
6. *The Indian Express* 29 December 2010.

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Scheduled Tribe Status and Competition for Public Sector Jobs: A Study in Kalimpong Area in Darjeeling

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***Abstract:** Government job plays an important role in empowering different communities particularly the Scheduled Tribe communities in their socio-economic fields. The Constitution of India through its various provisions [Article 15(A), 16(A) etc.] has reserved jobs for Scheduled Tribe Communities in various Central and State government institutions and concerns. Members of Scheduled Tribe communities are open to avail of the opportunities created by reservation in the job market. But it has been observed that even after more than six decades of the policy of reservation being in force all communities under ST category are not equally availing of the benefits of reservation because of their differential social and economic standing. The socio-economic background, outlook, educational status, location of residence, religious faiths etc. restrict different ST communities from attaining the Constitutional provisions uniformly. The already better off sections among the ST communities are in advantageous position as they attain more benefits compared to the ST communities that are economically and educationally worse off. The growth of population and inclusion of new communities under ST category have intensified the competition and widened inequality. The present paper attempts to find the status of major ST communities of Darjeeling in availing the public sector jobs. The empowerment of women among the different ST communities in specific and in proportion to the total female employees has also been investigated. Religion is seen to play an important role in attainment of education and therefore jobs. The present paper attempts to investigate the relation between education and employment among the different ST groups of the region.*

Keywords: Indian Constitution, Scheduled Tribe, reservation, government service, empowerment.

Introduction

Diversity - economic, social, cultural - is the essence of Indian union. The Constitution of India not only protects the innumerable communities that constitute India but also provides opportunities and safeguards for the weaker and downtrodden section of the society. The founders of Indian Constitution were aware of the historical injustice done on the backward classes and communities and introduced provisions of safeguard in the line of the policy of protective discrimination. Most of the tribes or *adivasis* have been categorized as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Constitution. Different tribal groups largely depend on nature for their livelihood. They are way behind the other communities in terms of education and control of productive resources. They are also subjected to various forms of exploitation and mal-treatment by the dominant and powerful sections of the society. The Constitution has used a two-fold strategy for the empowerment of the ST communities: firstly, provision of legal safeguards against discrimination and secondly, pro-active measures in the form of reservation both in the fields of education, job and representation in formal institutions of governance. The basic purpose of these measures is to guarantee proportional participation of members of tribal communities in public domain and decision making bodies. The Constitution also has made provisions to ensure that reservation policies are properly maintained and executed by the Centre, State governments and all allied bodies. It has been seen that more than 90 percent of the tribal workforce is employed in the private-informal sector, which is outside the jurisdiction of the constitutional provisions and where they have to compete with job seekers representing other categories.

Although the pro-active measures have brought some relief to the tribal youth in certain areas the benefits are not spread out equally among the members of all the tribes. The already better off sections of the tribes have cornered the fruits of reservation at the cost of the most backward sections among the tribes. The constitutional provisions therefore have failed to fulfill the aspirations of the needy. Even after more than six decades of independence there is wide-spread disparity among the tribal communities in terms of access to benefits offered under the policy of protective discrimination. The socio-economic background, approach to life, educational status, religious faith etc. restrict the different ST communities from availing of the Constitutional provisions uniformly. There is intense intra ST competition in government jobs. The growth of population and inclusion of many new communities under the ST category have made the competition even more intense.

Constitutional provisions

Article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Indian Constitution enabled both the State and Central Governments to reserve seats in public services for the members of the SC and ST communities, with a view to ensure equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Other articles also provide measures for the protection of the SC/ST communities.

Article 15(4) says: 'Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class or citizens, which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.'

Article 16(4 A) states: 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provisions for reservation in the matter of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of SCs and STs which in the opinion of the State are not adequately represented under the State' (Constitutional 77th Amendment Act, 1995).

Article 16 (4 B) states: 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty percent reservation on total number of vacancies of that year' (Constitutional 81st Amendment Act, 2000).

Article 46 says: 'The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the SC and ST, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.'

Beside the above Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination of any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, etc.; untouchability (Article 17); and forced labour (Article 23). It provides for specific representation through reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs in the Parliament (Article 330) and in the State Legislative Assemblies (Article 332), as well as, in Government and public sector jobs, in both the federal and state Governments (Articles 16(4), 330(4) and 335).

Status of STs in all India job market

The ST communities are spread differently across the states and UTs in India and the proportion of their engagement in different sectors is also not uniform. The North Eastern states taken together and in each state in this region the proportion of households with members having salaried job is more than any other region or state within the Indian union. Twenty one out of thirty six states and UTs have households with salaried jobs that account for more than the national average of 10.97%. The highest share of this category of households is in Mizoram (98.79%) followed by Lakshadweep (96.59%), Nagaland (93.91%) and Meghalaya (90.36%). One can find a greater concentration of tribal communities in the North Eastern states and the work participation rate in this region is much higher than the all-India average. In West Bengal only 7.21 percent households have members with salaried job which is significantly less than the all India average. The proportion of ST households with members having government jobs in West Bengal is 0.26% which is also much less than the national average of 0.48%.

Study area and methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from Kalimpong-I, one of the subdivisions of Darjeeling districts of West Bengal which is also one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-community districts of the state. The northern part of the district is hilly while the southern part, known as Tarai and Dooars, are the foothills and are mostly plain land covered with dense forest or tea plantation. Darjeeling district shares international borders with Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and Bangladesh as well as national boundary with Purnea district of Bihar, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur districts of West Bengal. This location has its special importance in having different central and state government offices in the district. As per 2011 census, the total population of Darjeeling district is 1846823 which accounts for 2.02 percent of the state population. The literacy rate of the district is 79.6 percent compared to the state's 76.3 percent.

No sector-wise detailed information on the employment in state and central government offices is available for the district of Darjeeling but one can use other sources to give some idea about occupational distribution of population of Darjeeling after independence. In spite of some irregularities and difficulties there is a trend of shift of occupation from primary to both secondary and tertiary sectors in Darjeeling. The negligible contribution of secondary sector in the district economy is a matter of great concern but

one can notice a significant shift of employment from primary to tertiary sector.

CD block-wise distribution of working population of Darjeeling district shows the comparative study of working population across the different types of working classes in 2001. CD block wise comparison of working population reveals that the majority of the workers in all the blocks particularly in Kalimpong I and II and Garubathan are linked with agriculture. The percentage of working population to total population of Kalimpong CD block I is 39.42 and the percentage of other workers to total workers is 28.75. In Kalimpong II, 39.97 percent of population is working population but the proportion engaged in other works is 23.33 percent. For Garubathan, 42.07 percent of population is working but their engagement in other works is 35.68 percent.

With the declaration of Tamang and Limbu as ST on 19.9.2003 the total number of notified Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal has increased from thirty eight to forty. Among them, the major tribes in the district of Darjeeling are: Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yalmo, Lepcha, Limbu (Subba) and Tamang. Numerically dominant among the tribes are Bhutia, Sherpa, Tibetan, and Yalmo. Most of the Tibetans and Bhutias use the same surname Bhutia and their naming style is also same. So we can club these two tribes into one category and thus we have six major tribes in Darjeeling district namely Lepcha, Limbu, (Subba), Tamang, Sherpa, Bhutia, and Yalmo.

In Darjeeling Hills the Tamangs are the largest among the ST communities followed by the Bhutia, Limbu and Lepcha. Thus after the inclusion of Tamangs and Limbus in the ST category the proportionate share for the other ST communities in the salaried job has changed. It is noteworthy that the literacy rate among all the ST communities of Darjeeling is higher (more than 70%) than the state average of 50.30%. The literacy rate has its direct impact on the job market. The proportions of main worker to total worker for all the tribes - Bhutia (73.74%), Tamang (72.52%) and Limbu (64.58%) and Lepcha (59.54%) - are more than state average of 57.86%. Among the main workers, the largest proportion are agricultural labourers (49.39%) followed by other workers (33.49%), cultivators (15.53%) and household industry (01.76%). But the nature of work participation among other tribes of Darjeeling is not same as that of the state. While Bhutia (75.95%), Limbu (68.08%) and Tamang (83.08%) participate more in other works the Lepcha work more as cultivator (42.52%). Availability of cultivable land might have helped the Lepcha to engage in farming;

engagement of Limbu (21.96%), Bhutia (15.94%) and Tamang (10.51%) are less in agriculture oriented activities.

We chose Kalimpong-I CD Block of Darjeeling district, West Bengal, as our study area. Kalimpong is primarily a rural hilly sub-division where except a few handicraft industries no other industries have ever developed. Unlike other parts of Darjeeling district even the tea and cinchona plantation have never been tried out in Kalimpong hills. May be, because of late addition of Kalimpong to Darjeeling district, tea planters took little interest in acquiring land for tea plantation; few tea estates are found in the south-eastern part of the sub-division in Garubathan block. Only a small part of Kalimpong-1 has been used for cinchona plantation but no factory for the production of final good out of cinchona has been developed in the block. The economy of the subdivision is primarily agriculture based. A large part of Kalimpong sub-division is covered with forest which is legally out of bound for the common people. Forest contributes a negligibly part of the economy also some local youth are employed as forest guards. Forest occupies a considerable proportion of total landed area of the sub-division where the total number of employees is 298 which is the highest among all the other sectors of the study area. It is 17.97 per cent of total employment in State Government services and 10.64 percent of total employment of Kalimpong-1.

We collected information from 162 offices and institutions covering 2801 employees during the period April 2013 and May 2014 in Kalimpong block-1. There are 5321 casual workers under GTA in Darjeeling district who are demanding for permanent status since 2007 and in 2011 they are brought under Pay Band category. We do not include employees under Pay Band category or casual workers in our study. We studied 11 central government employees, 37 state government employees, 87 primary school teachers, 17 High and Higher Secondary school teachers, 2 colleges teachers and 8 bank-insurance employees. We used a simple questionnaire and all information have been gathered from the high officials of the concerned office/school/college/bank and so on.

Distribution of employees according to tribal identity

We have divided the employees in six categories: state government employees, central government employees, state government sponsored primary school employees, state government sponsored secondary and higher secondary school employees, state government sponsored college

employees and bank and insurance employees in Kalimpong–1 block. We have chosen six ST communities in our study: Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang, Sherpa, Bhutia Yalmo and others. It has been seen that as high as 95.60% employees belong to these six ST communities and only 4.4 % represent other STs of the state of West Bengal. Out of 2801 employees in the study area the proportion of STs to the total employees is 30.85, which is four times higher than their entitlement under reservation. Within the STs all the six tribes do not have equal share of government and semi-government jobs.

In Kalimpong block-1 we have seen that Tamangs have the largest representation (34.38%) in government jobs followed by the Lepcha (24.07%), Bhutia (13.89%), Limbu (11.81%), Sherpa (10.53%) and Yalmo (0.93%). The proportion of employees corresponding to the total employee of the Block is also not uniform. The share of STs to the total employees is the highest for the Tamang (10.60%) followed by the Lepcha (7.43%), Bhutia (4.28%), Limbu (3.64%), Sherpa (3.25%) and Yalmo (0.29%). All STs together constitute 30.85% of total employees of the study area but individually only the Tamangs fulfill the reserved quota of 7.5%. The condition of the Yalmo tribe is pathetic as its members have not even one percent of total employment in the study area. Tamangs are the most advanced tribe in the study area but it may be noted that most of their members got the jobs much before they were included in the ST list in 2003. The representation of the Lepchas is close to the ST quota but all other tribes are far behind the quota. The proportion of population, level of education and training, economic base, living condition, educational standard of the parents, proximity to the educational institution etc. may be considered some of the causes behind uneven distribution of employees among the different ST population in Kalimpong-1.

The distribution of employees is also not equal across the different sectors in the study area. Tamang are the most advanced among the tribes have a share of 37.01% of state government jobs, 36.45% of the teaching jobs in state government sponsored primary schools and 31.25% of the teaching jobs in state government sponsored colleges. The representation of the Lepchas is the highest 33.33% in Central government jobs and 36.44% of teaching jobs in state government sponsored High and HS Schools. The share of the Bhutias is high in Bank and Insurance services (35.59). In all the sectors the presence of the Yalmo tribe is very negligible and their representation hovers around one percent. Beside the Tamangs, who have the largest representation (37.01%), in the state government jobs the other

tribes have an unequal share; the Lepchas (19.49%), Sherpa (13.78%), Limbu (12.40%), Bhutia (12.20%), other tribes (4.13%) and Yalmo (0.98%). The pattern of distribution of Central government employees is like this: Lepcha (33.93%), Tamang (23.21%), Bhutia (14.29%), Sherpa (12.50%), Limbu (8.93%), other tribes (3.57%), Yalmo (3.57%).

Among the employees in state government sponsored primary schools, the tribes have the following representation pattern: Tamang (36.45%), Lepcha (31.78%), Limbu (14.02%), Bhutia (12.15%), Sherpa (2.80%), and other tribes (2.80%). There is no representation of Yalmo tribe in the primary school service, college or bank and insurance sectors in the block. In the state government sponsored High and H/S Schools, the distribution of employees is like this: Lepcha (36.44%), Tamang (32.20%), Bhutia (11.86%), other tribes (9.32%), and Limbu (8.47%). Employees in state government sponsored colleges are limited within Tamang (31.25%), Lepcha (25.00%), Limbu (25.00%), Bhutia (12.50%), and other tribes (6.25%). In the bank and insurance sector we have found Bhutia (35.59%), Tamang (23.73%), Sherpa (12.95%), Lepcha (15.25%), and Limbu (8.47%). Both the Yalmo and other tribes remain unrepresented in this sector. The tribes are thus evidently unequally placed in terms of access to government and semi-government sectors of employment and one can also notice an uneven contest for jobs among the hill tribes in Kalimpong-1. We have also found that there are 20 different categories of employment where there is absolutely no entry of the jobseekers representing the tribes.

Intra-tribe distribution of employees according to gender

Taking the tribes separately we can see huge gender disparity in terms of participation in government and semi-government jobs. The male-female ratio is the highest among the Yalmo (1000:142) followed by Sherpa (1000:300), Limbu (1000:333), Tamang (1000:421), other tribes (1000:520), Lepcha (1000:540) and Bhutia (1000:622). The proportionate distribution of male among the total male employees in the study area is more among the Tamang (35.07%), Lepcha (22.65%), Limbu (12.75%), Bhutia (12.42%), Sherpa (11.74%), other tribes (4.19%) and Yalmo (1.17%). Almost same trend is found among the female employees: Tamang (32.84%), Lepcha (27.24%), Bhutia (17.16%), Limbu (9.70%), Sherpa (7.84%), other tribes (4.85%), and Yalmo (0.37%).

Among the women state government employees, 40.37% are Tamang followed by Lepcha (22.02%), Bhutia (15.60%), Sherpa (11.93%), Limbu

(7.43%) and other tribes (2.75%). But the picture is different in case of Central government employees where the Bhutia women constitute 33.33%, followed by the Lepcha (25.00%); all other tribes have almost equal share. Lepcha women with 41.46% representation dominate in Primary School service followed by Tamang (26.83%), Limbu (14.63%), Bhutia (12.12%) and other tribes (4.88%). In case of High School service the Tamang women have the largest representation with 35.94%, followed by the Lepcha (31.25%), Bhutia (14.06%), Limbu (9.38%) and other tribes (0.38%). The Lepcha and Tamang have equal share (30.00%) of the employees in the college followed by Limbu (20.00%), Bhutia and other tribes (10.00% each). In Bank and Insurance sector the Bhutia women dominate with a share of 31.25% of the total employment, followed by the Sherpa (21.88%), Lepcha and Tamang (both 18.75%), and Limbu (9.38%). It is seen that Lepcha women prefer school (teaching) jobs while the Bhutia women prefer jobs in the bank and insurance sector. There are at least nine different categories of employment which have no representation from the female members of any tribe.

Distribution of ST employees across the sectors

The ST employees constitute 30.85 percent of total employees of Kalimpong 1 which is nearly four times higher than their combined quota under reservation. The proportionate share remains around the mean value in case of state government (30.69%), Central government (27.32%) and High School (30.47%) but it is much less in case of college (19.51%) and much more in case of bank and insurance (40.14%). We have found that 58.80% of total ST employees are in the state government jobs followed by high school (13.66%), primary school (12.38%), bank and insurance (6.83%), central government (6.48%) and college service (1.85%). Clubbing all the state government and semi-state government sectors together the share of the six ST groups is 86.69% of the total employment in these sectors. Their representation in central government jobs is 6.48% and in bank and insurance is 6.83% as these sectors are dominated by the employees from the non-reserved categories.

Considering the percentage share of each tribe to total ST employees of Kalimpong block-1 we have seen that the Tamangs have the largest share of the total jobs occupied by the six ST communities with 34.38%, followed by the Lepcha (24.07%), Bhutia (13.89%), Limbu (11.81%), Sherpa (10.53%), other tribes (4.40%) and Yalmo (0.93%). It is seen that excepting the Tamangs, which have a share of 10.60% of the total jobs in the block,

no other tribe exceeds the reserved quota (for the STs) of 7.5% in government jobs. The Lepchas have a share of 7.43% while the Bhutias have 4.28%, followed by Limbu (3.64%), Sherpa (3.25%), other tribes and Yalmo (0.29%). Thus, the Tamangs are ahead of other ST communities while the 'other tribes' and the Yalmo have a very marginal presence in government and semi-government jobs. The Lepcha and Bhutia communities figure in the middle in terms of their access to jobs.

Looking at tribe-wise distribution pattern of employees we see that among the Lepchas 47.60% have jobs in the state government offices, 20.67% in high and HS schools, 16.35% in primary schools, 9.23% in central government offices, 4.33% in bank and insurance and only 1.92% in colleges. Among the Limbus the distribution pattern of employees is like this: state government (61.76%), primary school (14.71%), high school (9.80%), bank and insurance (4.90%), central government (4.90%), and college (3.92%). Tamang employees are absorbed mostly in the state government job (63.30%) followed by primary school (13.13%), high and HS school (12.79%), bank and insurance (4.71%), central government (4.38%) and college (1.68%). The Sherpa job-holders have the highest representation in state government jobs (76.92%), followed by bank and insurance (10.99%), central government (7.69%), primary school (3.30%), high and HS school (1.10%). The Sherpa remain unrepresented in College services. The Bhutia job holders are distributed like this: state government (51.67%), bank and insurance (17.50%), high and HS school (11.76%), primary school (10.03%), central government (6.67%), college (1.67%). Yalmos are mostly found in state government jobs (62.50%), central government jobs (25.00%) and in high and HS School (12.50%). Other tribes are found in state government jobs (55.26%), followed by high and HS school (28.95%), primary school (7.89%), central government (5.26%) and college (2.63%).

In all categories of job, Lepcha, Limbu, Tamang and Bhutia not only fulfill their respective reservation quota but in some cases their presence is three to four times more than the quota. On the other hand the presence of Sherpa, Yalmo and other tribes is minimal. The share of Lepcha to the total ST employees is highest in the category of teachers in high and HS schools (36.44%) followed by central government jobs (33.33%), primary school teachers (31.78%), college (25.00%), state government jobs (19.99%) and bank and insurance sector (15.25%). For the Limbu the distribution pattern of employees to the total ST employees is like this: college (25.00%), primary school (14.02%), state government (12.40%), central government (8.99%),

high and HS schools (8.47%), bank and insurance (8.47%). Tamangs are the most advanced among tribes in terms of high share of government and semi-government jobs. Their share of jobs held by the STs in the study area is like this: state government (37.01%), primary school (36.45%), high and HS school (32.20%), college (31.25%), bank and insurance (23.73%), central government (23.31%). Sherpas fulfill their reserved quota having a share of 16.90% of the jobs in bank and insurance, 13.78% of state government jobs, 12.50% of the central government jobs, but they have only 2.80% share of primary school jobs, and 0.85% of high and HS School jobs. The Bhutia have the largest share of jobs in bank and insurance (35.59%), followed by central government jobs (14.29%), college (12.50%), state government (12.20%), primary school (12.15%), high and HS school (11.86%). The Yaloms fails to fulfill their quota in all categories of job and remain unrepresented in primary school, college and bank insurance. Except in high and HS school where the share of other tribes is 9.32%, they fall short of their quota in all other categories of jobs.

Overall, the Lepcha are above the quota in two categories, namely, primary school (10.56%) and high and HS school (11.11%), the Tamangs exceed the quota in four categories like state government (11.34%), primary school (12.11%), high and HS school (9.82%) and bank and insurance (9.52%) and Bhutia in one category namely bank and insurance (14.29%). The remaining tribes have a share which is much less than their quota. Out of 42 entries only in seven categories (16.68%) the reservation quota has been fulfilled by the individual tribe across the types of jobs. Tribes not only fail to fulfill the reservation quota but remain unrepresented in five categories in their own homeland. The findings of the study clearly point to inter-tribal inequality in terms of access to the categories of jobs and in most cases the share of jobs of an individual tribe is much less than their reserved quota. This precisely means that the policy of reservation eludes justice and the principle of equality as the already advanced tribes corner the benefit at the cost of the most backward and more deserving tribes.

Conclusion

Tribes in India are not distributed equally all over the country and there are pockets of concentration of different tribes. Tribes are declared as ST state wise and the same tribe may not be able to avail the provisions of reservation uniformly across the states and union territories. Inequality among the tribes is noted in terms of access to jobs reserved for them across the states and regions. Socio-economic, political, historical factors

place different tribes differently with differential 'life chances'. In Darjeeling, as in other parts of the country, there exists inequality among the STs in terms of access to jobs under the reserved category. Inclusion of new communities under ST category has placed the economically and socially weaker tribal communities in a difficult situation as they are not equipped in terms of education, economy and skill, to compete with the relatively advanced ST communities for government jobs. In Kalimpong - I the new entrants (Tamang and Limbu) are better placed compared the conventional ST communities and therefore the former corner the job opportunities at the cost of the latter categories who deserve secure government jobs more than anybody else to combat poverty. Intra-tribal inequalities have also been noted in respect to categories of job, nature of job, gender and all other aspects among the ST communities in our study area.

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Forest Policy Induced Social Exclusion: A Case Study of Forest Villages of Buxa Tiger Reserve

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***Abstract:** Annexation of forest by creating reserves through various legislations and destruction of forest resulted in loss of livelihood and marginalization of the forest dependent communities. The communities (tribal and other traditional forest dweller) depend on forest for various needs such as shelter, livelihood, culture, etc. Conservation regime had denied them all, even today they do not have the rights on the land they till. Panchayati raj institution introduced in late 1990s in forest villages (forest dependent community) face various obstacles in carrying out land based development as the land belongs to forest department. The policy of protected area brought unemployment and deprivation in livelihood for forest villagers.*

The paper attempts to identify this multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing livelihood, education, health, dignity and voice in determining resource allocation. The concept of 'social exclusion' has been applied to understand this phenomenon, as it is both cause and consequence of poverty. 'Social exclusion' may be conceptualized from the different ways in which disadvantage operates to circumscribe the opportunities available in a society.

For the case study we have selected Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR) because this forest has witnessed virtually every forest policy and act. Secondly, this forest has relatively higher concentration of forest villages than other forests of North Bengal.

We may conclude that the forest dependent community or forest villagers historically had suffered worst kind of social exclusion. Commoditization of forest resources in colonial era and in independent India benefited the elite rulers, landed elites, industrialists, traders and planters. Our survey suggests that the prevailing situation in BTR in terms of functioning of panchayat, educational facilities, healthcare facilities and institution building is indicative of the worst kind of disadvantages over opportunities. A situation has emerged where peoples' livelihood is overshadowed by the so-called prerequisites of modern conservation ethos.

Keywords: annexation, reserve, livelihood, social exclusion, disadvantage, opportunities, forest - village.

Introduction

The paper is an offshoot of a broader research study on livelihood of forest communities. Relevant primary data on forest villages, collected through survey are incorporated in the paper. Primarily, it is an outcome of my studies of various scholarly books, journals, research papers and articles as well as various government documents relating to forest management policies and practices, social exclusion, history of deforestation, forest communities' livelihood options etc. I shall therefore use all those resources in this paper and present my own impression and observation. The area of the study is North Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR). I would try to focus on the history of alienation of forest villagers from their resource base, on the decline of voice in determining resource management and also on the institutional arrangements that were constituted at different point of times. The paper also examines the present status of forest villagers in terms of their health, education, functioning of *panchayat* and the latest legislative intervention in the form of Forest Rights Act 2006.

Why Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR)?

BTR has been selected as the study area because this forest has been covered by all forest Acts and policies; right from *commercial forestry* practices to the present day's protected *area management*. So, while analyzing the forest policy induced social exclusion the BTR becomes a ready reference for us. Secondly, this forest has relatively higher concentration of forest villages in North Bengal. Out of 168 officially declared forest villages, 37 are situated in BTR. Thirdly, BTR is a part of the flagship program of 'Project Tiger' in India.

Social exclusion

The term "social exclusion" became relevant in developmental discourse during closing decades of the 20th century in Europe. A period which witnessed rising unemployment and income inequalities, as also considerable economic and social dislocation as the countries sought to deal with the challenges of globalization on their labor markets, welfare nature of states and prevailing ideas about citizenship. Increasing attention to the usefulness of the concept in developing countries started after the social summit in 1994. Consequently, value addition to the concept made it a popular lexicon of development policy. The term social exclusion was coined by Rene Lenoir, who had prepared a list of socially excluded persons. This list of

socially excluded was significantly improved by Silver in 1995 (Lenoir and Silver 1995, quoted in Sen 2000)

Social exclusion may be conceptualized in the different ways in which disadvantage operates to overshadow the opportunities. Resource based thinking remained the focal point of economic theories. So far, the conceptualization of poverty within development studies hovered around income or expenditure shortfalls. Poverty is largely understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing income, assets, education, health, dignity and voices and therefore in economic terms. The poor within this concept are believed to have no say or little voice in determining resource allocations and institutional arrangements within a society because they are poor; it is rarely thought that they are poor because of lack of space in determining resource allocations and social arrangements (Kabeer n.d.). The phrase “social exclusion” is used to describe a situation, as also to focus on a process, which excludes individuals or groups from livelihoods and rights, thus depriving them of sources of well-being. Economists have recognized the two dimensions of poverty – material and non-material. Often it is observed that development practitioners find it easier to address the first dimension due to its tangible nature. A major non-material dimension of poverty may be narrated as the exclusion of the poor from participation in and access to opportunities and activities (Nayyar 2003).

The forest dwellers often confront forest policies which continuously encroach upon their existing opportunities to live a decent life, displace them from their resource base and make them irrelevant in their homestead. A look at the history of forest communities would unravel the various forms of forest policy induced social exclusions.

Forest villages

It is during late 19th century to early 20th century that the forest villages were established to execute the plan drawn out by Diettrich Brandis, the first IG of forest. Many scholars argue that the State had effectively used the mechanism of fire fighting in the process of annexation of forest. As the majority of forest communities of India were *Jhumias* i.e. shifting cultivators, who used to burn grasslands to get cultivable land and new grasses for cattle, the control of fire denied those people the right to continue with their traditional livelihood. This ultimately displaced people from their resource base. Some of the people who were once thrown out of the forest became the first settlers in the earliest forest villages, along with migrant laborers who were brought from other forest areas (Ghosh

2001). Sometimes old villages which existed even before the Indian Forest Act, 1865, were also declared as “forest villages” (Garg 2000).

Another type of forest village that emerged during the same period was “Taungya village”. These villagers were asked to fell and burn the forest and plant trees, in exchange, they were given some land to cultivate for a couple of years. After the plantation work is over, the villagers had to move to another place and had to follow the same process of slash – burn – plant. In this the villagers received remuneration in the form of a temporary right to cultivate the land for a short period of 2 to 4 years and some usufruct benefits like firewood and timber for house construction. They had to offer mandatory free labour (*begar*) of 90 days in the plantation (Public hearing in BTR 2005). Available studies of different activist groups suggest that there are approximately 7000 forest villages in the country today. But the concept of free compulsory labour i.e. *beggar* was abolished in late 1960s. In West Bengal, until 1969 forest villagers had to provide free compulsory labor for the forest department (Jha 2010).

Forest villages in North Bengal

The North Bengal’s *Dooars* (the land along the foothills of the Darjeeling and Bhutan Himalayas) was among the areas in India, where the earliest extensive work was done under the colonial forest management system (Bondhyopadhyay 2010). In the grasslands, and the forests, there were a few human settlements. Semi-nomadic groups like the Mech, Rava in plains and the Lepcha, Limbu, Rai and Dukpas (in the Hills) inhabited these settlements. All these communities practiced shifting agriculture and supplemented that with hunting/food-gathering (NESPON 2000). This changed with the introduction of fire control measures and clearing of the grasslands by the colonial forest department since 1880 (Ghosh 2001). The new type of forest was not suitable for the agricultural practices of *Jhumiya* communities. Moreover, the forests were also being reserved and brought under the newly created Forest Department within a short time. All these made the lives of forest dwellers vulnerable. Today North Bengal has 168 officially recognized forest villages (NESPON 2000).

Buxa forest to Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR)

In the year 1866 The Forest Department took over the forests of Buxa. The first reservation was made in 1879, after the enactment of the Indian Forest Act 1878. BTR was constituted as a tiger reserve in the Year 1983 in the then Jalpaiguri District (presently Alipurduar District) and became

the 15th Tiger Reserve of the Country. It is claimed that Collector of Jalpaiguri District carried out proceedings for settlement of rights and concessions under section 19 to 25 of Wildlife Protection Act and declared that no rights of anyone exists over the said forest. In 1992 an area of 117.10 km² of the 386.07 km² Sanctuary was notified as National Park under section 35(2) of Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Today, the total area of the Reserve is 760.87 km² of which 386.07 km² has been constituted as Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park and the balance 374.80 km² area as Reserved Forests and Other Protected Forests (www.buxatigerreserve.com). Before the declaration of Tiger Reserve, for many of the forest villagers in BTR employment in Forest Department (FD) was the most important scope of income. Other sources of livelihood along with subsistence level of agriculture were NTFP (non-timber forest produce) collection and sale. Besides these, a sizeable number of forest villagers were engaged in boulder lifting from the riverbeds, maintaining orange orchards and fuel wood sale to tea gardens and in adjoining markets. The declaration of “tiger reserve” put a legal ban on these economic activities (Sinha et al. 2002).

Pre colonial forest policies and social exclusion

The pre-colonial Indian society had a considerable degree of coherence and stability despite the fissures in society on the basis of class and caste. A tradition of prudence and a strong communal institution evolved which guaranteed the long term viability of system of production. The Mughals were unable or perhaps not interested in radically altering the existing patterns of resource use and the social fabrics in which they were weaved. (Gadgil M. 2000). The rulers of the Gupta and Mughal Empire were more interested in fertile agricultural lands, populous towns. Though the concept of reserve creation can be traced back to Maurya period, Kautilya advised to reserve the forests rich in fish, game and elephant. Elephant forest was of great importance, this was because elephant had permanent importance for army. There have been little discussions in the existing historiography regarding the effects of the resource extraction and creation of reserves on the livelihood of forest tribes. Migration from the resource bases might be the one way. Social exclusion of the forest tribes can be understood from the derogatory terms like *milakkha* or barbarians, *mlechajati* as reference to the forest tribes. Kautilya advised that in conquered territory the chieftain should be separated from his army and other people (Sen 2012). The process of dismantling their institutions of governance and resource use practices was part of a wider policy to establish control over newly conquered territories.

Mughal Empire heavily depended on the extension of cultivation. Peasants acquired more and more lands cutting down trees. Newly acquired lands were given a moratorium of revenue for the first few years. Elephant as tribute to the throne (*peshkash*) was most common in nature. Certain forests were made game reserves for the Emperor's hunting. Unlike the Elephant reserves of the Mauriya period Mughal's reserves were clearly mapped. Edward Terry, an English traveler and merchant found that though the reserves put certain restrictions but the concept of property rights over jungle was not absolute. Access to reserves was open but the kind of animals that were to be hunted by locals were regulated (Rangarajan 2012)

British forest policy and social exclusion

In the sixteenth century, India came into contact with Europe particularly Britain. At that time Europe was going through industrial revolution. The revolution brought a radical change in the pattern of resource use. Technologies of transforming resources from one form to other and transporting them to large distances enhanced the types of resource use in a big way. For example, wood and bamboo were used as domestic fuel, in the construction of shelters and for agricultural implements in a subsistence economy on a limited scale. But it could now be transformed into paper, could be used in running engines of ships and trains, resulting in a limitless use of wood.

When the colonial state asserted control over forest hitherto managed by community it represented (I) interference in the day-to-day life of the villagers, (II) radical change in the concept of property rights, (III) a shift in management resulted in a wholesale destruction of forest ecology (Gadgil 2000). Few examples of this destruction are: (i) the network of railway tracks increased from only 56 kms. in 1853 to over 51,650 km in 1910. The expansion of railroads in different parts of India had a deep impact on forests in many ways: (Oosthoek 2012). (ii) Hugh Cleghorn, the first Inspector General of Forests in India, (he shared the post with Brandish) in his address to the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society, in 1874 told timber resources in India were declining rapidly under the pressures of the high timber demand in the British Empire, local use for railroad construction and shipbuilding and also for its use in running ship and train engines (Stebbing 1922) (iii) During the World War I timber and bamboo were supplied to war zone for building bridges, buildings, ships etc. Annual export of timber during the war was approximately 1.7 million cubic feet (Gadgil 2000). Commercial extraction of timber in a huge scale started denuding the forest in great

speed resulting in loss of forest dwellers' livelihood. It also demanded hassle free extraction as a result creation of reserves got going. A strict regulation on the traditional use of the forest resources was a necessary condition for commercial timber production. The erstwhile right holders were given specific quantum of timber and fuel, while the sale or barter of the same was banned in Forest Act 1878.

Reserves – trade of forest resources and exclusion for forest dwellers

The historians described the reserves as lands either dedicated to producing timber or were constituted into open-access lands that suffered overuse and degradation. The reserved forest lands, taken over by the state merely 'amounted to confiscation, not conservation'. The FD viewed the needs of the forest people as burden, "biotic pressure". In fact several working plans of the FD termed man as the "enemies" of the forest. Some land was set aside as revenue wastelands for ecosystem people to meet their substantial and biomass needs. However, these people had no longer any rights in this land, only 'privileges' of using them, as a result these lands became no man's lands, over-used by everybody. (Guha 2000) By twentieth century some NTFP also figured in the list of revenue earning forest products. India became the only source for some NTFP such as resin, turpentine, tanning materials like Kath etc. Indian forest department became the sole supplier of timber in Middle East and to the allied forces in Persian Gulf during World War II. War need exposed the remotest forests of the Himalaya and western Ghat. The most accessible forests of Bombay region got felled to meet the demand of the war, margin of profit there in some cases rose to as high as 400% (Gadgil 2000). In this loot the question of forest dwellers' livelihood lost voice.

Choice of species and loss of forest dweller's livelihood

Priority of the FD in the colonial era was essentially commercial in nature. Different government committees asked for more and more revenue from forest. Revenue mainly comes from large timber forest, as a result of this the FD was forced to neglect shrubs and pasture land. Ironically these two types of land provide varieties of livelihoods to the forest dwellers. The species promoted by the colonial ruler were of very little use to rural population, whereas the species they replaced were extensively used by the locals for fuel, fodder, leaf manure and small timber. Much of the forest land was converted into tea, coffee and rubber plantations before 1864 i.e. before formation of FD. But FD was flooded with requisition for more

forest land for new plantation seven after 1864. Planters' lobby was extremely influential in the colonial administration. Moreover, development of road and railway connectivity to facilitate export of tea, coffee and rubber further increased felling. Plantation economy itself requires a high level of timber demand for fuel and packaging. Thus expansion of plantation induced shrinking in forest areas in multiple ways. This new economy engaged the erstwhile forest people as captive labor in these plantations (Gadgil 2000).

Abolition of community institution of managing forest

The community managed forest systems that once existed throughout India were systematically abolished during the 19th century. We know about these institutions (mainly their style of function) from the writings of the British foresters. For example, an officer posted in Garhwal Himalaya wrote in 1920s about customary restrictions on over-use of forest produce, maintenance of village grazing grounds, maintenance of fuel and fodder reserves etc. by the community (Guha 2000). Some ecologists mention that there was enough evidence of conservation by forest dependent communities in India. There were widespread network of forest patches conserved by traditional people marked as 'no-use' zones including sacred groves of Western Ghats, the North East, Western Himalayas etc. Many of these sites implemented social and religious injunction even on cutting of dead woods and picking up leaf litters (Kothari 1996).

The policy towards wildlife

It is noteworthy that today's conservation policy is heavily dependent on the concept of the pristine forest where no anthropogenic interferences are welcomed. Human presence is thought to be detrimental to wildlife; this understanding on many occasions is based on the presupposition that the forest dwellers are the reason for wildlife's extinction from the country.

British declared bounties for killing wild lives mainly carnivores during late 19th century, the purpose was to save the peasants. Over 20000 animals were killed annually for bounties in British India. From 1875 to 1925 over 80,000 tigers, more than 150,000 leopards and 2,00,000 wolves were killed. There is a possibility that the number of animals killed were more than this, because officials recorded those numbers for which they paid the bounty. The event of extra reward for killing females and cubs might have played catastrophic consequences. Often princely states invited the high officials

of the British Raj for sports. Rajkumar Sadul Sing of Bikaner had recorded all the hunts that he made in 25 years of his hunting career. His diary mentions, 50000 head of animals, among these were 33 tigers, and an Asiatic lion. Ramanuj Saran Shing Deo of Sarguja holds the all-time record of over 1100 tigers in his lifetime. The native rulers regarded the hunting as reaching into adulthood especially manhood. Even today many landed elites of central India follow the same ritual in their families (Rangarajan 2012). These examples are tip of the iceberg. There are countless such examples, which forced some of the species including tiger on the verge of extinction.

After independence sport became available to top officials and traders - newly built roads and big hydro projects brought the hitherto remote hill tops closer to these new hunters. Despite the creation of handful of sanctuaries and parks the overall ethos remained at the level of commercial forestry. In the IUCN (International Union of Conservation of Nature) meeting, 1969 in Delhi, a senior minister raised a question whether India can afford a loss of Rs. 30000 as foreign exchange that a foreign hunter spent on one tiger hunt. The prime target of the hunters - tiger, became the symbol of preservation of wildlife. Though, in 1968 alone, over fifty commercial hunting parties spent over Rs 20 lakhs in search of tiger. In many occasions GOI also advertised the country as haven for those with gun and fishing rod. Only a decade before the historic event of 1969, the famous American travel writer and hunter Jack Denton Scott visited India as a state guest to take the pleasure of hunting and publicize it abroad (Rangarajan 2012).

Today's conservationists skillfully hide this history of all out war against wild life. In a drama, one needs an antagonist, from whose ill motive something precious has to be saved. Forest dwellers have become the perfect antagonist to manage the stage. Their dependence on forest made it easier for people at large to believe their role to be real. Our concern is that this helps in formulating policies which alienate forest people from forest and for that matter from livelihood.

Independent India's forest policy and forest dweller's livelihood

Independence brought little change in forest dwellers' life, ironically the "concessions and privilege" enjoyed by them in British period were viewed as overtly generous in some quarters of policymakers. In fact, the 1952 National Forest Policy recommends for tightening of the 'concessions and privileges' provided to local forest dependent community (Poffenberger et. al.1996). The notion of a restructuring forest to maximize commercial gain

already strong in the colonial era got even stronger. The mono culture of commercially valuable trees were planted uprooting the natural vegetation, even many sanctuaries introduced commercial plantation to meet the demand of paper and pulp industries (Rangarajan 2012). An extensive commercial forestry operation continued till 1970 with little emphasis on regeneration. This destroyed the forest, its ecology and the forest dependent people's livelihood (Poffenberger 2001). According to available estimates the country had a tree cover of 40% of its land mass in 1894 by 1952 it dwindled down to 22%. Thus, showing an annual net deforestation of 0.18%, by 1980 country's forest cover went further down to 10%, measuring an annual deforestation of 0.4% which is much higher than in the colonial period. However, INSAT image of 1991 shows a forest cover of 13% in the country (Fernandes 1996). The zeal of industrialization after independence was so intense that forest resources were awarded to industrial houses at throw away prices. One such example may be cited here; in 1960s bamboos were supplied to industry at Rs.1.50/ton, when the prevailing market price was Rs.3000/ton (Guha 2000).

With the passing of the Wild Life Conservation Act, 1972 the concept of protected area (PA) management came into force. Once a forest is declared Protected Area (PA) i.e. wildlife sanctuary, national park etc. under the Act, everything in the forest becomes wildlife and hence need to be protected (1972 WLC Act). Several provisions of the said Act imposed restriction on collection of NTFP as well. Under the Act before declaring protected area a notification is done to register whatever rights local people have on that forest. However, the complex process of determining rights had restricted thousands of illiterate forest villagers from registering their rights to what-so-ever they had.

By 1980, planners were concerned with the shrinking forest cover and increasing demand for timber. Govt. brought Forest Conservation Act 1980 (FCA 1980). The Act emphasized on the controlling of logging operations, restricting conversion of forest land, and providing livelihood options to the local community. According to few studies, the act performed its first two duties considerably well but failed miserably in restoring communities' livelihood (Poffenberger 1996). Under the Act diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purpose requires 'approval of Central Govt'. This clause in many occasions has become a stumbling block for *panchayat* in forest villages to undertake land based development as the land officially belongs to the forest department. Cultivation of fruit bearing trees or medicinal plants also required 'prior approval of Central Govt.'. This clause might

have empowered the BTR authority to uproot the age-old orange orchards in 1998, situated in the forest villages of BTR hills.

Communities dependent on forest got some kind of relief when Central Government came up with a new forest policy in 1988 (National Forest Policy 1988). The policy admitted the necessity of involving forest communities in the management of forest and acknowledged their historical dependence on forest. The policy recommended Participatory Management or joint forest management (JFM) (Saxena 2003). Peoples' participation in forest management became a pertinent question as it highlights grassroots level democratization of resource management. It is worth mentioning that participatory approach reduced the cost of maintaining forest for FD. Some viewed that JFM is a result of forest people's prolonged struggle because the school of "scientific forest management" failed to keep the people away from forest. In this ground reality when it is seen that people themselves have started regenerating *sal* forest in south west Bengal. The FD grabbed the opportunity, the response has been, 'all else having failed, JFM' (Khatre 1996).

Emergence of new generation of conservationists in India

It took over two decades after independence for the new generation conservationists to come to the fore-front of policy making. The attitudinal shift in political leaders helped the situation to become conducive. A nationwide census on tiger population was conducted in 1972 and the figure was found to be at around 1800 much below the earlier estimates of 2500. The first count suggested more detailed proposal to conserve tiger in its natural state, the recommendation included (I) to select few sites having tiger's habitats- each with a core area of at least 300 sq. km., (the core area should be free from any kind of human intervention.) (II) A large surrounding of buffer zone would be created, where limited access of local peoples would be entertained. However, these areas will be repopulated by the growing numbers of tigers in the core area. The Project Tiger was launched in April 1973, at that time it was the largest wildlife conservation Project in the World. The concept of "do nothing" in the jungle to let nature take its own course through natural regeneration, came into being. (Rangarajan 2012) Eviction from forest and ban on forest resources became order of the day. In many cases the eviction or ban on resource use in protected areas has resulted in a negative way. For example the Keoladeo Ghana NP, Rajasthan, a World Heritage site is home to one of the most colorful birds in the world. From a sanctuary it was upgraded to a national

park in the year 1981. Until 1981 a large number of buffalos of the pastoralist communities around the park used to graze in the park's grassland. Local people used to collect firewood and fodder from the forest. In 1981, with the change of the status, grazing was banned. In the absence of the buffaloes two types of weeds covered the surface of the water bodies. These weeds were good fodder for buffaloes. The ecological impact was immediate; the diving birds find it impossible to dive into water, resulting in decrease in diversity in bird's variety (Seberwal et. el. 2000). There are countless examples of locals being removed from sanctuaries, national Parks. The ostensible reason always had been to save the ecosystem, to make the forest devoid of people.

Findings of the survey

Villages for the study were selected following stratified purposive sampling method based on forest Ranges, ethnic composition and geographical location. Finally, 12 villages were chosen making sample size 32.43% (12/37) of the 37 forest villages of BTR, distributed across 11 Beats and 8 Ranges. 8 villages were under the BTR (E) and 4 in BTR (W) division. After selecting the villages we interviewed the *panchayat* members with structured questionnaire. In order to make the sample representative of all the communities we had to select 8 villages from BTR east because BTR(E) is home to Mech, Ducpa, Rava, Santhali, Nepaly (tribes as well as upper caste) and mixed population. Administratively all the villages were in 2 blocks namely Kumargram and Kalchini of Alipurduar district.

We found 58.33% villages wherein the Gram-Samsad itself has 3 villages (either comprising 3 FVs or attached with revenue villages or TG) This creates a problem of absentee *panchayat* member for certain villages. Members also face an allegation of nepotism in favor of his/her own village. In the GP composition, the ratio between FV: RV plus TG is as low as 2.19:10 i.e. every GP has a ratio of members of 10 while FV's representative comprises only 2.19. FVs are minority in the GP's composition. Whoever wants to control the GP does not significantly have to depend on FVs. Surprisingly; there are 25% of FVs who are the only FV member in the GP. The prevailing unfavorable condition in the composition of the GP makes the forest villagers politically irrelevant. Their economic activities also get affected due to this, especially when a sizable work in rural Bengal is done through *panchayat*.

Question of NOC and forest village

Since the FVs are situated within the forest and the land belongs to FD, *panchayat* of FVs need an NOC to carry out land based development. This sometimes poses a stumbling block for the panchayats. However, the members having influence in the political parties do the works without an NOC or with a verbal permission from the Range Officer or DFO. We found that 13.67% and 45.27% of the total land based works undertaken were carried out without NOC or with a verbal permission from the FD. But, all works do not fall under this category as 41.04% of works undertaken required NOC and 35.58% of works got delayed due to lack of timely availability of NOC. Works like constructing new roads, repairing roads, constructing canals are of great importance in forest villagers' life. Every year these roads, canals are either rebuilt or repaired before monsoon, if the works get delayed the village remains almost unapproachable from block offices. We found that the works of this paramount importance got delayed due to lack of timely NOC in as much as 62.5%, 55.56% and 57.14% cases respectively. The situation suggests disadvantages operate to circumscribe facilities like health, education and livelihood, as many of the villages remain cut from the nearby towns due to bad or no roads.

Facilities on livestock rearing

Livestock provides forest villagers the much needed nutrition supplements and also adds considerably to their livelihood. So, to keep the live-stock free from diseases is important to them. We found four dominant types of diseases that trouble the livestock in BTR. Diseases like dysentery, 'foot & mouth' (a type of infection in foot and mouth) were found in 100% of villages. Septicemia (blood infection) and ear infection were found in 50% and 41.67% villages respectively.

We found that in 58.33% villages the doctors have visited once in a year and in 25% of villages the doctors did not turn up even once. We found that 58.67% of villages are 6-10 Km away from the nearest veterinary hospital and 25% of the villages are 11-15 Km away. We found 21-30 and 41-50 cattle died respectively in last one year in 16.67% villages each. The villages being small the cattle mortality rates seem to be very high. However, 25% of the villages registered no death of cattle in last one year. In this respect we must mention that FD arranges visit of veterinary doctors to FVs for controlling contaminating diseases that may spread to wildlife from domestic animals. The FD's focus mainly remains on Anthrax, but our study suggests it's a non-issue in forest village.

The implementation of Forest Right Act 2006 (The FRA, 2006)

The FRA 2006 apparently brought a radical change both in the century long underlying beliefs and theoretical understanding constructed on the supposition that accepting the rights of forest dwelling people eventually have ill-effect on sustainability of forest and wild life. This paradigm shift in the official approach and attitude of the Central Government is amply indicative in the following statement made in the first chapter of the said Act:

And whereas the forest rights on ancestral land and their habitat were not adequately recognized in the consolidation of the state forests during the colonial period as well as independent India resulting in historical injustice to the forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who are integral to the very survival and sustainability of the forest ecosystem...(FRA 2006: 1)

The important aspect in this context is that the Act brings a new institution called 'Gram Sabha' which means the village assembly of the adults. The Act visualizes Gram Sabha as the sole representative and authority to take decisions related to management of forest resources to the extent it has been bestowed on villagers as their rights. The *panchayat*'s role in the Act has been clearly defined in Section 3(1) of FRA Rules 2007 which states, 'The Gram Sabha shall be convened by the Gram Panchayat and in its first meeting it shall elect from amongst its members, a committee of not less than ten but not exceeding fifteen persons as members of the Forest Rights Committee,..'. With this legislative provision we can infer that *panchayat* member has certainly a vital role to play in Gram Sabha. Since the first meeting shall be called by the member we can presume he/she will have at least a rudimentary level of knowledge about the Act and its implementation status. We found that 41.67% of *panchayat* members have not heard of FRA 2006, though surprisingly 66.67% members know that the villagers will get land right. While enquiring about the rights other than land right we found 91.67% of members do not have any clue about the rights on NTFP. The Act stated that the Gram Sabha will manage and control their community forest resource; we found only 8.33% of members have that knowledge.

In West Bengal formal notification for implementation of the Forest Rights Act was issued on 17-03-2008. After a gap of nearly 7 years 50% of the *panchayat* members reported that the process of recording land rights are going on, one disturbing aspect of the findings is 33.33% *panchayat* members know nothing regarding the status of land right distribution.

Surprisingly, 66.67% members do not know whether GS is functional. The data suggest that the *panchayat* is indifferent regarding the FRA 2006, its implementation and the rights there on. An institution which is supposed to offer a legitimate voice to determine policies on forest resources for the betterment of forest as well as forest villagers seemed to have lost its path.

Conclusion

The major finding of the study is that the forest dependent community or forest villagers historically had suffered worst kind of social exclusion. This phenomenon has been acknowledged as “historical injustice” in Forest Rights Act 2006. It is amply clear that commoditization of the forest resources speeded up destruction of the same and also made the forest dwellers economically, socially and politically excluded. Commoditization of forest resources benefited the elite rulers, landed elites, industrialists, traders and planters. Today in the era of conservation, 47 Tiger Projects, more than 500 sanctuaries and national parks etc. are in place but they are primarily used as the means to social exclusion as they have successfully made the forest dwellers vulnerable by excluding them from their resource base, culture and institutions. A situation has emerged where peoples’ livelihood is overshadowed by the so-called prerequisites of modern conservation ethos phrased as ‘forest devoid of people’. However, the newly created conservation heavens should not be devoid of people. A new class of jeep borne safari riders has replaced the erstwhile beneficiaries. Nomenclature has changed but the class probably has remained the same.

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Changing Social Relations in a Metropolis: The Perception of the Middleclass Aged

Sinjini Roy

***Abstract:** In recent years urban middleclass families are experiencing rationalization of family size, rationalization of living arrangement and large-scale dispersal of younger members in search of livelihood opportunities. The question of sociological significance is that whether all these leave a disintegrating impact on relations in the family, on the kin-group or on the neighbourhood relations. The present paper, based on empirical findings, observes that the middleclass in an urban setting face a number of stresses but they understand the value of familial and social relations, and even neighbourhood relations, in order to thwart the potentially disintegrating social forces. In the face of dispersal of the lone child in a distant city, the aged couple fall back on each other, support each other with a great deal of empathy to combat the challenges of old-age.*

Keywords: social relations, familial relations, kinship relations, neighbourhood relations, conjugal relation, dispersal of family members, rationalization of family size.

Introduction

Changing social relations continue to be one of the central interests in sociology and social anthropology in India. The focus, however, has shifted from “break-down” of joint families, which had been the preoccupation of the urban family studies in the first three decades or so after independence, to the study of micro social spaces in terms of household rearrangements (Shah 1998), dispersal of family members, rationalization of family size, and most importantly, the impact of all these processes on changing family relations (Roy 2014). The present paper examines the changing family relations, kinship relations and neighbourhood relations in an urban middleclass setting, applying descriptive-phenomenological method. The relationships in the middleclass families in an urban setting like Salt Lake City of Kolkata are changing fast. Sometimes it results from multiple tensions. One such tension emanates from the conventional urge to uphold the familial values and hold all the members together, and the pragmatic tendency among the members to disperse to different palaces and relay

the relations on rational terms. The Weberian calculative rationalism seems to be silently creeping into the family and kinship relations in an urban setting. Although the extended family ties are retained in some cases, emotive elements have considerably been eroding from such relations. The neighbourhood and friendship circles have assumed much of the functions that were earlier performed by the kin groups. While rationalization of family size and dispersal of family members are ubiquitous, the bond and emotional interdependence among the members of nuclear families has been strong (Roy 2015). Away from each other, the family members make use of the modern communication system in order to keep in close touch and use new mechanisms of sustaining the care system. Untimely death of any member leaves a serious destabilizing impact on the others. However, the study shows that in the whole scheme of maintaining familial relationships, the female members exert strong “agency” (Roy 2015). There is also a growing sense of partnership in the husband-wife relationships, although many elements of patriarchy still work silently.

In this paper I have tried to look into the relationship between (a) the aged parents and their children, (b) the aged and their extended kin, (c) the aged and the neighbours and friends. The purpose of this study is to understand whether the children, extended kin and neighbours extend a strong support system to the aged or alternatively they do not feel the urge to help or support the aged in times of crisis. How strong is the relationship between the aged parents and their dispersed children? Do the children maintain strong bond with their parents even after dispersal or do the elements of Weberian calculative rationalism creep into the life of the children so much so that they no longer feel for their aged parents? What roles do the extended kin take when any crisis situation emerges in the life of the aged people? What is the role of neighbours and friends in such situations? Whether the neighbours and friends play a pivotal role in the life of the aged parents since their children and extended kin are busy with their own lives? These are some of the questions I have tried to address in this paper.

Field work

Data for the present paper have been collected through the anthropological method of intensive fieldwork done between early December 2013 and mid-April 2014 in the middleclass neighbourhoods (blocks) in Salt Lake City of Kolkata. I did a quick survey, with the help of a census schedule, of 54 households which had member/members above 60 years of age and interviewed 32 aged members from as many families to have an understanding of their changing social life. I did long interviews with the

help of an interview schedule, took field notes while meeting my informants in family/social gatherings and mini music sessions and had telephonic conversation with some of them. Urban middleclass has been chosen as the locale of the study because this class is widely taken as enlightened, educated and the “vanguard” of social change; it is in this class that Weberian rationalism is perceived to be evident (see Bendix 1951). The informants were all economically self-reliant and had served in high positions as teachers, bankers, government officials; many being politically active and sensitive, capable of reflecting on life and family relations and social issues. In documenting information (mostly qualitative) and writing the “text” I have followed the biographical/phenomenological method, where the respondents have been allowed to tell the story of their life and their versions have been presented in descriptive style without any analytical input or factual distortion, although I found it difficult to overcome the methodological problems associated with understanding and representation. For selecting the informants the technique of snowball sampling was used.

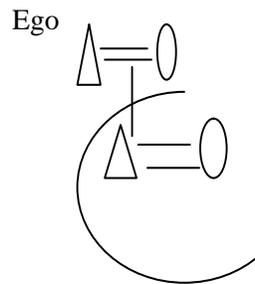
The relation between aged parents and their children

The relation between the aged parents and their children varies depending upon whether the children stay with their parents or away from them. Out of 54 in 27 (50%) cases the children live with their parents and in 24 (44.44%) cases the children live away from their parents; the remaining 3 (5.5%) of my respondents were childless.

Out of 54 respondents only two have said that they have very formal kind of relation with their children. In these two cases the children stay away from the aged parents. In these two cases, the children hardly call them or enquire about their health or daily activities. The children are busy with their own life so much so that they don't have time to visit their parents. Even in case of crisis, particularly the serious illness of any of the parents, the children cannot even manage to take leave from their office to visit their parents. Even if they come to visit their parents they remain so busy with their cell phone and laptop that the whole purpose of their visit becomes futile. Drawing from their experiences, the aged parents have given up all expectations from their children; they do not call their children in times of crisis. In cases where the aged people get negligible attention from their children, their friends and neighbours extend their hands of care and support to them. Here is an illustration.

Mr. J. Dutta, aged 76, a Hindu Kayestha, lives in his flat at DL-12/1 since 1999. Mr. Dutta has a son who now stays in his own apartment with his

wife. His son is restless and careerist and in the habit of changing his job frequently. In connection with his job he often goes abroad. Sometimes he joins a new job with posting in Hyderabad or Delhi. Mr. Dutta is unhappy at his son's frequent change of jobs. His son and daughter-in-law come to visit them only occasionally. Even when they come they are busy working on cell phone or laptop. Mr. Dutta sums up the point like this: 'Last month our daughter-in-law visited us once. During her two hour stay here she attended at least 15 calls from her office and friends. Same thing happens when our son comes. Whenever he comes he comes with his office work and laptop and he doesn't get time to chat with us in peace.'



Mr. Dutta's Family/Household

Both Mr. Dutta and his wife are keeping well and they do not have any serious ailment. They do not depend on their son or daughter-in-law for anything. Earlier whenever Mr. Dutta or his wife fell ill they used to inform their son, hoping that he would come to their help. But his son's response was cool as he had the habit of extending excuses for not coming. He came on a few occasions but his reluctance was all over his face. Now Mr. Dutta does not inform his son on occasions of small sickness, knowing well that his son would not come. He said: 'I do not know what I will do if I or my wife encounters any serious health problem. I am not sure if my son will come during that time. In the event of such a crisis I will have to depend on my neighbours, whom I trust more. Fortunately, we have not encountered any such crisis so far. As long as we are healthy and active it doesn't really matter whether our son takes care of us or not.' It is not that Mr. and Mrs. Dutta had a fight with their son or daughter-in-law. But too much focus on careerism has driven their son and daughter-in-law away. His son is lost in his own world, a world of "misplaced priorities", fully endorsed by his wife. Mr. Dutta understands the problem but prefers not to

open a dialogue to heal the emotional rupture. Despite all this Mr. Dutta longs for his son and daughter-in-law and loves spending time with them.

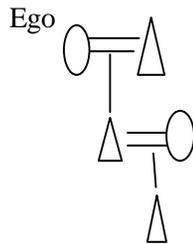
Mr. Dutta had a struggling middleclass upbringing. He taught in college and university and held high administrative positions. His wife also taught in a college. Mr. and Mrs. Dutta constitute their household while their son lives with his wife in a separate house in another part of Kolkata. Mr. and Mrs. Dutta wanted their only son to stay with them since the latter works in Kolkata and they have a big enough house to accommodate all but their son decided otherwise and lives a life of his choice disregarding his parents' wish. His selfish careerism has hurt his parents and the latter are pained to see that their son avoids them and does not take much care of them. Mr. Dutta is worried about the growing careerism in the younger generation which, he apprehends, would alienate them from all niceties of life and from parents and close relations. Mr. Dutta's is a typical case which demonstrates how Weberian calculative rationalism is creeping into the middleclass families, colonizing their psyche, taking over their value system while throwing the conventional family values, emotions, sentiments and care into wilderness (for details see Roy 2010: 153-178).

In Salt Lake, the aged parents who stay with their children generally maintain a very cordial relation and develop a very strong bond with them. The aged parents get enormous amount of love, care and support from their children. In most cases the children (and their spouses) work but they all do their part in the family. The sons do all kinds of shopping whereas the daughters help their aged mother in the kitchen. The children try to keep track of their parents' likings and concerns and buy things of their choice. When any of the aged parents falls sick the children sometimes take leave from the office and spend the whole day taking care of their parents. They take them to the doctors and bring medicines. All the members in the family play an important role, although not equal role, in matters of decision-making. The children discuss with their parents before taking an important decision in life. There is thus a great deal of collective participation and democratic spirit in the family. The aged parents do not depend on their children economically although the latter contribute a decent amount of money to the family.

Cases where the children are married, the daughter-in-law helps her mother-in-law in doing household activities and particularly in kitchen. The daughters-in-law who are working outside also help their mothers-in-law in performing household chores. Most of the aged who live with their children feel that their life is a complete, full of happiness. The aged people argue that they

get enormous amount of love, care and support from their children and all of them just pray that this happiness continues forever. It is not that their family is devoid of any kind of tension and quarrel. But this kind of quarrel or misunderstanding does not grow beyond control and family members sit together and talk to each other in order to sort out their problems and tensions.

Here is an account of a happy family. Mrs. A. Aich, 61, has been living in her own flat with her family at DL 221, Nonamati Cooperative, Salt Lake, Kolkata, for the last 13 years. She is Hindu by faith and Kayastha by caste. She lives with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and her four-month-old grandson – a standard joint family-cum-joint-household.



Mrs. Aich's family-cum-household

Mrs. Aich's son, an engineer, worked for Globesin for some years but now he works with IBM. In 2011 he got married. Mrs. Aich has no complaint about her son or daughter-in-law. Her son has always been well behaved and obedient. 'The only day he has given me pain was the day of delivery', said Mrs. Aich. Mrs. Aich's son has a four-month-old son and he can't even think of staying away from him for a day. Leaving for office in the morning he returns home by 7:30 p.m. Even if he has to stay for long hours in office he never forgets his responsibilities towards his family and particularly his parents. Sunday being holiday he loves staying home the whole day, spending time with family. When Mrs. Aich or her husband falls ill he takes leave from office and takes them to the doctor, and buys medicines. Last month Mr. Aich had a blackout while in the market close by. His son immediately took him to doctor, who had done an eco-cardiogram. The reports were normal. Mrs. Aich treats her daughter-in-law as her own daughter. She is very jolly, well behaved, loving and caring. She loves her and scolds her as well.

In decision making all the members in the family play an important part; everyone feels free to express his/her opinions. Her son and daughter-in-law discuss with their parents before taking an important decision. Thus

the family exhibits a great deal of collective participation and democratic spirit.

Mrs. Aich retired last year and her husband had retired two years ago. As both of them get pension they do not depend on their children economically. Mrs. Aich is very happy with her life and her family. She has got a caring and supportive husband, loving, obedient son and daughter-in-law. Her four-month-old grandson is the greatest attraction of her life. She lives her life happily and without any major tension. She only prays to god that she and her family live in happiness like this forever.

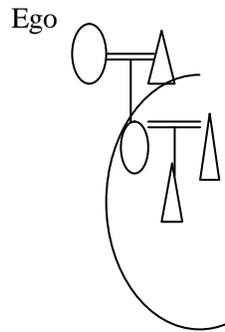
So in this kind of joint family the members preserve most of the family values (a sense of collective ownership of property, sharing of responsibilities, mutual care and love, everyone living for everyone else, complete liking and emotional interdependence, and so on) as we have found in the family of Mrs. Aich. A simple joint family is an “ideal” even in an urban setting, which is in consonance with the Indian family values and expectations – the retired aging couple, living with their son and son’s wife and a grandson/granddaughter.

The members of the patri-local joint family maintain a strong and trouble-free relation where life is largely family-oriented and child-centric. The aging ego fondly preserves happy memory of life she had in both family of orientation and family of procreation and the same is true of her daughter-in-law. The children are brought up with utmost care and are taught to uphold family values. The relations with the extended members of family of orientation and family of procreation appeared to have loosened primarily because of death and dispersal of the members. The relationship among the members of the family is very strong and the emotional interdependence among the family members is total.

Out of 54 respondents there are 24 cases where the children stay away from their aged parents. Barring two cases most of the aged in families where they live with their children maintain normal, cordial relation. Taking advantage of the modern communication system the children call their parents often and interact with them through e mail, skype and WhatsApp. When the aged parents fall sick the children immediately rush to them. They take them to the doctor, help them in going through all the tests, bring the necessary medicines while performing, at the same time, all the household responsibilities. The children who stay in other states usually visit their parents twice a year, particularly in summer and Diwali. Those who stay abroad try to visit their parents once a year, mostly in winters. The children

who stay away hardly play any role in decision making on petty matters. However, at times of taking decision on a serious matter the parents consult their children. The aged parents do not need financial support from their children. They live on pension and interests on their savings. They are covered by health insurance policy, which largely takes care of hospital charges. However in the time of crisis the children come up with every kind of moral and economic support.

Mrs. P. Sengupta, aged 80, a Hindu, Baidya by caste, lives with her 87 year old husband in their own house at DL - 86, Salt Lake. They have been living in this house for the last 27 years. It is a 1115 sq. ft. house with two bed rooms and a drawing room. Mrs. Sengupta has a daughter who lives in Mumbai with her family. She got married in 1990 and she has a son who is now studying M. Tech. in the USA.



Mrs. Sengupta's Family/Household

Mr. Sengupta got a plot in Salt Lake on government quota where the present house was constructed. In 1986 they moved into the present house. Their daughter did Masters in Economics from Rabindra Bharati University. Just after completing her Masters in 1990 she was married. After her marriage she went to her in-law's place in Garia. That time her son-in-law used to work in Ranchi. In 1991 her grandson was born. When her grandson was six-month-old her daughter did B. Ed. Her son-in-law keeps on changing his job. Now he works in a consultancy firm in Mumbai. And her daughter with MA and B. Ed. got a teaching job in an international school in Mumbai, where she lives with her husband and daughter.

Mrs. Sengupta's daughter comes to Kolkata twice a year on an average, normally during summer vacation and Diwali. Her daughter, son-in-law,

and grand-daughter love coming to Kolkata as they sustain strong emotional bond with their kin, who live in the city. When in Mumbai her daughter calls her every night. As both Mr. and Mrs. Sengupta are above 80 years of age their daughter keeps worrying about their health. Her daughter keeps on reminding her about the daily medicine. Earlier Mr. and Mrs. Sengupta used to visit their daughter once a year but now as Mr. Sengupta is not keeping well, and Mrs. Sengupta had a bypass surgery, they have restricted their movements. When Mrs. Sengupta had bypass surgery her daughter had come and stayed with them for about a month. She also came when Mrs. Sengupta had an accident in December 2012. Again when she had hernia operation her daughter came and stayed with her for about a month.

Everyone in this locality loves Mrs. Sengupta's daughter for her soft and caring nature. From her childhood she enjoyed her studies and Mr. and Mrs. Sengupta never had to prod her for it. Their daughter always wanted to be a teacher like her mother. The irony is that throughout her life she has been scared of mathematics but now she teaches mathematics in school. Both Mr. and Mrs. Sengupta are very happy at the way she cares for them. Despite living in Mumbai she takes all possible care for her parents. She, in fact, does more than what they expect of her.

Mr. Sengupta gets pension which is enough for two of them. Besides, they draw monthly interest on their savings. They also have health insurance and a health card (for being ex-employee of the Reserve Bank of India) with which they can avail free medical treatment.

Mrs. Sengupta enjoys near total authority in decision-making in the family; she decides the menu, pays her maids. Earlier she used to pay the bills herself, but after her accident she hires the services of a boy to pay her bills. Their maid does the shopping for daily necessities. As her husband is ailing and can't move without a stick, she has to do all the work by herself. On crucial family matters, however, she consults her husband and daughter.

Mrs. Sengupta is by and large happy with her life so far. She has got a wonderful daughter who loves her parents and takes good care of them. She has got a supportive husband who, because of her, had left his own family. She keeps worrying about her daughter and her family since they stay far. Now she just wants to remain healthy as far as possible and to live a peaceful life. She is 80 and her husband is 84 and both of them have age related problems. Nonetheless, "life", for her has been "a beautiful journey".

Another family that maintains good relations among its members is that of Mrs. J. Banerjee. Mrs. Banerjee, aged 78, a Hindu Brahmin has been

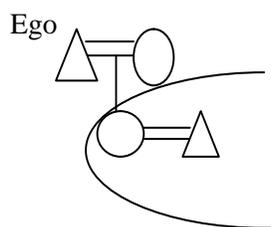
living alone in her own residence at EE- 121/5, Salt Lake since 2001. Her husband died a few years ago. Mrs. Banerjee has a daughter who was married in 1989 and now lives in other part of Salt Lake with her husband and son. Mrs. Banerjee's relation with her daughter is very strong and affable. She is her friend, philosopher and guide. She has always been a very obedient child. She has such a friendly nature that everyone in Howrah and Sharat Abasan love her. Now Mrs. Banerjee stays alone in this flat. Her daughter and son-in-law, who live not far, take all possible care. Her daughter comes to visit her twice or thrice in a week. She sends her driver who shops daily vegetables and grocery for Mrs. Banerjee. Besides she calls Mrs. Banerjee several times a day. Whenever she feels sick her daughter immediately comes and stays with her. After Mr. Banerjee's death her daughter asked Mrs. Banerjee to stay with them. But Mrs. Banerjee didn't want to leave this flat. Her daughter shares everything with her and takes suggestion on her family matters. Mrs. Banerjee is active and likes to do all her work alone. She doesn't need anyone's help unless in crisis but she enjoys the care her daughter and son-in-law take of her. Her daughter has always been a very supportive, caring and loving. She doesn't expect anything more from her daughter because she understands that she has to manage her own family, has to look after her mother-in-law who is also very old. Her mother-in-law doesn't have a daughter and treats her like her own daughter. Her husband is physically challenged so she has to do a number of works which her husband cannot do. Mrs. Banerjee is very happy at the way she handles her responsibilities at her in-laws' place. Once her mother-in-law had carbuncle and a nurse was employed for dressing. One day that nurse didn't turn up and her daughter did the dressing with the efficiency of a trained nurse. She is also a trained dancer. She has learnt Kathhak, Bharatnatyam and performed on many occasions. But after her marriage she has developed some gynecological problems and because of that she had to give up dancing. She has a dance school where she is one of the instructors.

The two cases we have presented in this section demonstrate that while dispersal is an inevitable part of urban middleclass families it does not necessarily impact upon the family care system adversely; the parents and the child miss each other badly and keep close contact using modern communication technology; the daughter rushes in to be by the side of the parents when the latter are in crisis and the parents long for their dispersed children.

The conjugal relation between the aged parents after the dispersal of their children

One interesting question that results from the dispersal of the children is whether the conjugal relation between aged parents gets strengthened. All the 24 respondents whose children stay away have informed that their relation with their spouse has been strengthened and have taken an interesting turn. Since the aged parents' life rotates around their children their tensions, anxieties, expectations are common. The parents have shared the dreams and responsibilities all these years in up-bringing their children. Now that the children are grown up, settled in life and away from them, the latter get enough space and time to rediscover themselves and redefine the conjugal relation. In the absence of their children their interdependence grows and they rediscover the value of each other in their life; the emotional interdependence helps the aged couple understand each other better and act in each other's support. The respondents have said that their conjugal relation has become more important as their interdependence has grown. Now that they are retired from job or business they spend most of their time together; their mutual dependence has grown as they are now prone to frequent illness, and their emotional bond is stronger than ever before. Most of the male respondents have said that they help their spouses in the household works, even in kitchen.

Mr. A. K. Biswas lives with his wife in his own house since 1982. It is 1500 sq. ft. house which has three bed rooms, one study room and a drawing room. Mr. Biswas has a daughter who is freelance artist and now lives in Delhi with her husband, also an artist.



Mr. Biswas's household

Mr. A. K. Biswas, has said that he spends a lot of time in the kitchen; although they have a cook he helps his wife in cutting the vegetables and washing them. His wife was diagnosed with cancer and had to go through a long course of chemo therapy. That is why Mr. Biswas does not want his wife to take the pressure of the household chores. He helps her in all household works.

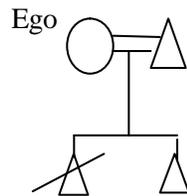
For understanding how the relationship between the aged spouses grows stronger one has to study their everyday life and discover the warmth of their love and care in small gifts they exchange, in the way they chat with humour over a cup of tea in the morning and evening, the way they enjoy television programmes; the way they enjoy their occasional outings, participate in the religious and social festivals and programmes and extend moral support in times of crisis. In their everyday relation they pull each other's legs, often participate in fake quarrels and exchange humours. They share the moments of joy and despair; participate in gardening, in re-designing the interior and so on. From my interaction with the aged I have gathered that dispersal of younger members gives them enough space to rediscover their love which perhaps was hidden in the wears and tears and the stress of shouldering everyday life responsibilities. The rediscovered or redefined love that cements the conjugal relation in this late age is no longer based on Freudian libido but more on "pity" or compassion (as explained by Rousseau, 2008). We sociologists and social anthropologists often tend to ignore these micro aspects of social-psychology of everyday life behaviour, which, I think, bears immense importance in understanding human relations, of which conjugal relationship is one.

The relationship of the aged respondents with their neighbours

The relationship of the aged respondents with their neighbours is generally cordial. Out of 54 respondents, 48 (88.89%) maintain a very warm relation with their neighbours. It is not that the aged respondents visit their neighbors too often, but whenever they meet, in the market or in the street, they exchange regards and wish each other well. On the occasion on Lakshmi puja, Saraswati puja, birthday or wedding anniversary they visit each other's place. Besides whenever the aged respondents face any trouble related to their flat/building they seek help from their neighbors. The neighbors occasionally visit each other's place for chatting. The respondents along with their neighbors participate in various cultural programs in their locality (Block) during Durga puja, Poila Baishakh, Saraswati Puja, and Rabindra Jayanti. They also celebrate the festival of colors (holi) together. Most of the aged respondents said that although they do not visit their neighbor's place frequently at the time of crisis they get enormous help and support from them. Many of the respondents have said that the role that should have been played by their children is now played by the neighbors. For many of them their neighbors have become members of their own family. This relation of togetherness fills up the vacuum in the life of the aged

which has been shaped after the dispersal of their children or demise of the spouse.

Mrs. K. Chatterjee (aged 62), a Hindu Brahmin, has been living in her own flat (DL 224) with her husband and son since 1998. Mrs. Chatterjee had two sons. Her elder son committed suicide in 2012. Her unmarried younger son works with a Bank. Now Mrs. Chatterjee lives in her flat with her husband and her younger son.



Mrs. Chatterjee's household

Her elder son was a good student but after graduation he discontinued his study. He was passionate about music and formed a band called *Prithibi* of which he was the lead guitarist. The band earned a good name within a couple of months. Her son was showered with love and respect by the young generation of music lovers. He started giving guitar tuition to the young learners at home. His band started doing shows in Kolkata and its suburbs. Every Sunday students used to come from far and near to attend his classes. He used to earn more than what his brother is earning now as a bank manager. He was very well behaved and full of life but was very introvert. He did not like to share his own problems with anyone, even not with his family members. In December 2012, five days before his marriage day, he committed suicide. No one, even in family, knows the reason.

After this incident Mrs. Chatterjee's life seems to have come to a halt. Even today she is struggling to overcome the trauma. Another shock came last year, when her husband was diagnosed having throat cancer. After a surgery he got free of cancer but with his damaged vocal cord he cannot speak any more. After her elder son's death she was so traumatized; stopped talking to anyone for months. All day long she used to sit in her son's room and cry. Worried about her Mr. Chatterjee and their younger son persuaded her to resume music tuition. They knew that music and interaction with her students would have some healing effect. After long persuasion she resumed her practice sessions and music tuition classes.

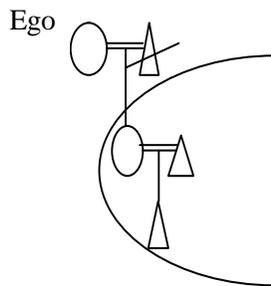
Mrs. Chatterjee maintains a warm relation with her neighbours. For the initial couple of years after they moved to Salt Lake in 1998 they did not know much about their neighbours. But ever since she became a member

of DL Block Cultural Committee the intimacy with her neighbours grew. Because of her “cultural capital” (to use Pierre Bourdieu’s phrase) she soon took a lead role in organizing the community cultural programmes. She had to plan the programme, select the performers, train them and perform as an artist. She did this year after year. After her son’s death everyone in this block came to console her. But, she had withdrawn from all the community activities. Everyone in the neighbourhood loves her so much that they keep inviting her for all community programmes. For two-three weeks after her son’s death her neighbours sent prepared food for breakfast, lunch and dinner for three of them. She was overwhelmed with the kind of support their neighbours had extended.

The relationship of the aged respondents with the extended kin

Out of 54 respondents, 51 (94.44%) have claimed that they maintain a kind of affable relation with their relatives and extended kin. They maintain a good contact with the aged respondents over phone. As most of their kin are busy with their own life and family they hardly get time to visit each other. However they keep on enquiring about their health over phone. During festivals like Durga Puja, Poila Baisakh they visit each other’s place. On family occasions like marriage or birthdays or whenever there is a family get together the aged respondents meet their relatives and extended kin. Most of the aged informed me that at the time of crisis they received help and support from their kinsmen. In order to comprehend the relationship of the aged respondents with their relatives and extended kin we can cite a few case studies.

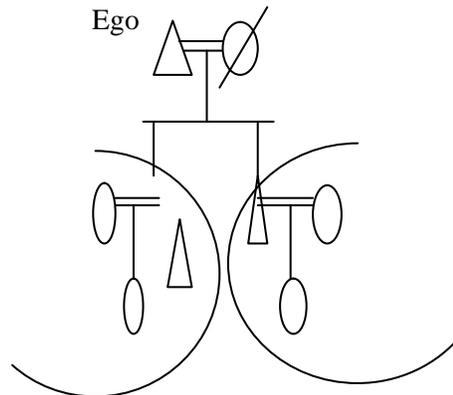
Mrs. Gita Banerjee, aged 78, a Hindu Brahmin lives alone in her own residence at EE- 121/5, Salt Lake. She has been living in this flat since 2001. Her husband died a few years back. Mrs. Banerjee has a daughter who was married in 1989 and now lives in another part of Salt Lake with her husband and son.



Mrs. Banerjee’s family/household

Mrs. Banerjee maintains a strong bond with her relatives particularly with those of her own family, all her brothers and sisters, who are scattered in the city. Her relatives visit her occasionally and maintain contact over phone. She also calls them frequently. On social occasions she meets her relatives. Last month, she attended a function on the occasion of her younger brother's grandson's *upanayana*, where she met all her siblings and their family members. She also maintains contact with her-in-laws. Her sisters-in-law sometimes come to see her. She hasn't faced any serious crisis for which she had to take help from her relatives but when her husband died they all came and stood by her.

Mr. Nimai Chand Gupta, a 69 year old man, Vaidya by caste, has been living in his own house at BJ-192 Salt Lake since 1987 alone. It is 1200sq. ft. two storied house. Mr. Gupta has two sons; both of whom live in the USA. Mr. Gupta's wife died in 2004. There is a domestic help, who takes care of Mr. Gupta, stays in the house the whole day.



Mr. Gupta's family/ household diagram

Mr. Gupta is financially independent, in good health and active. He doesn't really need anyone to take care of him. But when he falls sick he feels scared. The thought of long illness scares him. He knows that it would not be possible for his sons to come back leaving their jobs and stay with him. He thus wants to die without suffering much. He would not want his sons to come to India just because he is alone here. As long as he is healthy he doesn't have any problem. Both his sons and his daughters-in-law take as much care as possible living away from home. He is happy with whatever they do for him. He genuinely feels that his sons and daughters-in-law love him and care for him.

Mr. Gupta is in regular contact with his siblings, particularly with his brothers and elder sister. His elder brother and his wife have died. His siblings do not visit each other frequently but maintain contact over phone. During Durga puja or on family occasions they meet each other. In the time of crisis he gets help from all his siblings. In 2004 when his wife died all of them had come and stood by him with their support. His elder sister stayed with him for months. Although he maintains a very strong relation with his siblings he does not have a strong and emotional bond with his nephews and nieces. When he was a child, he along with his brothers, often visited his uncles and aunts who used to stay miles away from their place. But now because of advancement in technology relatives do not visit each other's place often. Be it *bijoya dhashami* or *poila baishakh* people send their good wishes over phone or through emails. Mr. Gupta's nephews and nieces hardly visit his place and they do not even call him as they are busy with their studies and career preparations. He gets to see them only on any family occasion and refresh the memory that he has relations with them.

Conclusion

The present paper is indicative of the changes taking place in the micro locales of urban middleclass families. We can trace the continuation of an ideal joint family that preserves all family values on the one hand and a rationalized (both in terms of size and relations) family with selfish careerism overshadowing family values and responsibilities on the other. In-between these two extremes there are families that experience dispersal of its younger members, but they take all possible care in maintaining a strong bond among the members. Since the family locales and the micro social space are unique in each family it is always difficult to identify a common and uniform pattern of change in urban middleclass families. A study on a larger universe would give us a clearer picture. Interestingly one can notice a strong urge among the members, aged or young, to preserve family values and protect the otherwise flagging family relations and even extended kinship relations, both affinal and consanguinal. The solidity and functionality of relations among the extended kin has definitely weakened; one can notice the difference between the members of parents' generation (many of whom grew up in joint or large families) and children's' generation (who grow up mostly in small and nuclear families) in terms of the differential values they attach to kinship relations. With downsizing and nuclearization the family bonds have cemented and the emotional, not material, interdependence among the members has become total. The incidents like untimely and

sudden death, tension in conjugal life or in other relations leave a serious destabilizing effect on the life of the members.

When dispersal of family members has become a fact of urban life the members (both the parents and children) have geared up to accept it and face its consequences. Besides taking mental preparation to face the dispersal they widely make use of modern communication system, modern gadgets to keep close contact with their children who stay far. Even in crisis time the children living at a faraway place rush to be with their parents. The parents and relatives draw a great deal of pride from the achievements of their children and of the trips they make to the places where they live.

The urban middleclass families can access standard services (hospitals, child-rearing, bill payment, delegation of domestic work to domestic help) with ease because of their access to information and affluence. The neighbourhood communities (bloc/ward committees and housing cooperatives) have made a dent into the space earlier occupied by the kinship network. The key decisions are taken at the nuclear-family level, not even at the extended family level, although the extended kin occasionally meet on family events (marriage, *sradh*, *annoprashan*, *upanayan*, birthday party, and so on). This observation does not corroborate the view of sociologists like Desai (1956) and Shah (1991) that despite dispersal of family members and splitting of family into smaller households the “spirit of joint family” is retained as the key decisions are taken at the larger family level rather than at the level of a nuclear household. How closely the kinship relations would be maintained depends largely on the micro-circumstances in the family of orientation. The relations are valued when the members grew up together, lived in the same house and shared the same hearth for a considerable period, had a great deal of mutual love and care, and had no major bad blood on sharing of property or responsibility. In the generation of the elderly members there are some sincere efforts to sustain kinship relations. In a situation where the members are dispersed, but there is no material or emotional/spiritual dependence, the relations are reduced to something of only symbolic value and the occasional interaction that they maintain stem from normative obligations.

The aged in Salt Lake fall back on their neighbours for support when their kin and child/children are away. But the neighbourhood relationship may not be as unproblematic as a few case studies would depict. All their neighbours do not necessarily constitute the “neighbours”. The aged are careful in avoiding some neighbours, do not even maintain a formal talking term, which nursing relationship with other neighbours with great care. Old

friendship, the experience of working in the same office, ideological liking, and reading of the neighbours in terms of existential experience might be the factors that determine the relationship among the neighbours.

The most significant finding of the study is that with their children away and “successful” in their life the aged couple live with a shared gratification that they have done their job (responsibilities) well and it is time to sit face to face and rediscover the finer aspects of conjugal life, which were unexplored thus far and rediscover the love, care, passion and compassion in their relationship. The aged now rightly realise that conjugal relation is perhaps the most trustworthy of all relations and the surviving members realise it the most when their spouses are gone. It is the mutual “pity” for each other’s sufferings and care that cements the conjugal bond in this late age. They share their tensions, anxiety about their dispersed children with each other. They help each other in the household work and also take care of each other’s health. In the time of crisis they also act as a support system to each other. After the dispersal of the children the aged parents get so much time to spend with each other and they rediscover their relationship. It is this conjugal relation which gives them strength and courage to fight the most difficult and adverse moments of life.

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Culture, Politics and Identities: Debating the idea of Indian Nationalism

Vandana Kumari

***Abstract:** India, like all other societies, has always experienced changes within social structure and of the structure. In both colonial and post colonial periods, India has experienced rapid changes and transformation in the sphere of identity formation in terms of caste, language, religion and region and so on. Hugely diverse populations that India was had to put up a united fight in freedom movement and even in post-colonial India the debates on identity, cultural autonomy, and on top of all nationalism have not subsided. The question of Indian nationalism has been debated by the stalwarts of India's intellectual tradition like Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Ambedkar and Savarkar. In this paper an attempt has been made to revisit the nationalism debate in India.*

Keywords: nation, nationalism, colonization, identity politics and culture.

Introduction

We all feel revered towards India - a great respect, a feeling of patriotism, collective sentiments, a kind of solidarity and what Ashish Nandy conceptualises as 'emotions of homo-psychologicus feeling of togetherness', a kind of representation. The term "nation" represents itself through traditional value system, religiosity, its chasteness, purity and most importantly it is perceived as the product of indigenization. We all know that 'change is the unchanging law of nature' and everything has been changing according to the changing social structure and the changing political patterns. India is known for its rigid and traditionally rooted practices as in caste system, which is followed by the principles of purity and pollution and belief on *karma* system. These all are regulated by the script of *manusmriti* and well conceptualised by Dumont as religion is the ideology of social stratification based on purity and pollution related to the legitimised belief system of the four Varnas, believed to have originated from the bodily parts of Lord Brahma. There were other evil practices also found in relation to the status of women like *sati*, Bal Vivah (child marriage) and so many brutal practices. These practices of the past reveal the unequal power

structure where a vast population belongs to the “culture of silence”. Our social leaders always strive to get rid of all sorts of limited thinking that prompts these anti-social practices.

India has always experienced changes within social structure and of the structure. In both colonial and post-colonial periods India has experienced rapid changes and transformation of identity formation in the socio-cultural and political spheres. The Indians variedly identify themselves with different dimensions of religion, region, language and class while on the other hand Indian social structure in pre-colonial India was governed by the ideology of religion and the Varna system. The colonial government of India started collecting facts and figures regarding population, religion, language and caste for the sake of smooth administration. Colonization of India was not just a matter of governing the country but there was an inherent economic logic of maintaining the industrialisation in England and the accumulation of profit to which the social scientists recognise as colonial mode of production¹ (Desai 1948: 23). First, they came with the purpose of establishing a colony or a market in India which was to facilitate speedy industrialization of England. There are three units of production i.e. land, labour and capital; the British wanted to accumulate capital by making profit through purchasing low cost of materials plus low investment on labour and made full advantage of huge colonial market for their products.

Later, the colonisers made efforts to restructure the whole of the Indian society through new policies, laws, centralization of power, education policies, new languages of governance, bureaucracies, taxation systems, and land tenure laws that deeply influenced all aspects (social, economic and political) of people’s life (Desai 1948). The British wanted to spread the language of modernity in the form of English education through new classes and by changing the traditional mode of production in India for their own profit. They came with new ideas in economic (production for industrialisation), societal (Western influences and Western value system) and political fields.

At the cultural level, the introduction of Christianity created a new culture, life style and societal value system. These introduction of new elements in traditional India resulted social change as both traditional and modernity were encountering each other and created a dialectical relationship between the conservative forces and forces of change (Mukerji 1965). With the introduction of new agrarian policies and programme the Varna and Jajmani system were replaced by feudal system (relationship between landlord and tenant). The commercialisation of agriculture in British India was a point

of shift to new agrarian social order with a new rural social system. Concepts such as caste may retain salience in new colonial structures, but they are inevitably transformed at the same time. Notwithstanding the significant changes in the colonial era the traditional institutions like Varna system, Jajmani system and religious value system continued to play a key role in the social life of the people. They continued alongside the emerging the relation between landlord and tenant, emerging classes like the educated middle class and the industrial proletariat. India experienced the introduction of new and modern means of transport, communication and education system. The emergence of class identity signaled the advent of modernity which conflicted with traditional identities.

The Marxist intellectuals like Desai (1948), Mukerji (1965) have studied social change in India in terms of class relations and class consciousness and in the light of a dialectical conflict between Indian cultural value systems and the Western culture. Desai (1948) follows the Marxist constructs like “class in itself” and “class for itself” to interpret the dynamics of social change in India. Desai also explains the usefulness of the Weberian notion of class and class formation on the basis of skill and market opportunities. The introduction of English education in colonial India was done with the purpose to recruit the Indians into the administration of the British government in India. In Desai’s conceptualisation Western education in Indian society has created a new Indian middle classes which doesn’t have any relationship with wealth but with the production of a new knowledge system. This newly emerged Indian middle classes in urban India defeated the colonial agenda and contributed immensely for concretization of a national consciousness for the nationalist movement against the British. Thus, in Desai’s view, the British can be credited for producing a secular identity for the Indians, which is distinct from religion-based identity. Using Habermas’s terminology (1962), one can say it was like a public sphere for Indians in their life world. The Western education gave a new perspective to view the world in terms of awareness to develop the nation. Due to this education, the Indians became aware about the colonial reality. It was the formative period of renaissance and enlightenment in Indian society. The 1857 revolt first saw an articulate expression of Indian nationalism and the sense of National identity. The 19th century saw the emergence of Bengal renaissance, which found expression in so many movements, including the anti-colonial movement. The social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar came forward and debated the means to destroy social evils like child-marriage, inequality, gender discrimination and so on. On the other hand, Gandhi, Nehru and

Ambedkar came forward with their theses on issues like freedom, strong government, democracy, political and individual rights and duties, constitutions etc. The developments in Ashis Nandy's phrase can be termed "homo-psychologicus", meaning a national identity against the British ruler.

The famous Marxologist D. P. Mukerji (1965) has conceptualised the process of change in Indian society in terms of a dialectical conflict between the established traditional value systems and the alien cultural value of western society. He was deeply interested in understanding the nature and meaning of Indian social reality rooted in the Indian tradition while emphasizing on the changing process due to many external factors. He said that due to the external factors Indian tradition or "parampara" are also changing. He conceptualised that the Indian tradition and modernity are the two bipolar concepts and the conflict is the cultural power where domination of one cultural value is backed by the degree of resistance of that culture. He mentioned very significantly, that there has always been a dialectical relationship between India's tradition and modernity, British colonialism and nationalism and individual and collectiveness. Although Mukerji did not emphasize on identity as such his analysis of culture, power and resistance is a combination which can be conceptualised as an identity with an ethics of cultural value system. In this context there can be two identity systems; one is the traditional identity of Indian society based on the notion of Hindu category of mind and another is western identity based on the ideas of economic rationality and the notion of methodological individualism.

Idea of nation and nationalism

The idea of nationalism has been hotly debated by the stalwarts of India's intellectual tradition like Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Ambedkar and Savarkar. In the years leading to independence they viewed India from different points of view.

Rabindranath Tagore can be aptly described as a poet and writer of decolonization, who wrote extensively on the "nation" and nationalist issues, although he rejected the idea of nationalism proposed by the leaders like, Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Gandhi and the leaders of Indian National Congress.

The homogeneous and mono-cultural view of the nation was unacceptable to Tagore and he proposed a self-reflexive national identity. His idea of nationalism 'was a distinctive civilizational concept of universalism embedded

in the tolerance encoded in various traditional ways of life in a highly diverse, plural society'. Tagore's imagination of Indian nation was articulated in his novel *Gora*³ which talks about the Indian nation beyond the caste, creed, religion, races, regions etc. At the same time the novel has as its backdrop the period after the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, a period of rising discontent against oppressive British rule. Nationalism and the idea of freedom fired the imagination of Indians across social classes. It was these 'stirrings of national consciousness towards the end of the last century' that 'created the historical and social setting for *Gora*.'

Gora, the patriot, abhors the inter-mixing of castes, classes, religions and races. Gora in this novel said: 'today all the castes of Bharat are my caste, whatever everybody eats is my food. It was as if I carried around with me some invisible gap of separation, which I could not cross, Because of this there was a great void in my mind' (*Gora*: 476). At the end of the novel Gora asks to be taught the mantra of 'that deity who belongs to all – Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Brahma – the doors of whose temple are never closed to any person of any caste or race – the deity not only of the Hindus but of Bharatvarsha' (*ibid*: 470). Through this novel he visions the making of India or nation, which transcends all social inequalities and deep rooted problems in the social stratification. Tagore's *Gora* is an articulation of his faith in universal humanism, an anti-thesis of nation and nationalism, which thrive on narrow and unnecessary divisions. In *Gora* Tagore dwells on the civilizational aspect of nationalism, where he talks about a multi – cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like India.

According to Tagore, India is a civilizational or an oceanic flow of cultures and traditions. For him India is like a gigantic machine that homogenizes, and negates differences. In his poem, *Mukti* i.e. deliverance, Tagore says:

*Deliverance is not for me in renunciation,
I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds
of delight.
No, I will never shut the door of my senses,
The delights of sight and hearing and touch
will bear thy delight.
Yes, all my illusions will burn into illuminations of joy,
And all my desires ripen into fruits of love.”
In the sonnet, Mayabad, i.e. cult of illusions, he says:
“Alas, my cheerless country,
Donning the worn-out garment of decrepitude,*

*Loaded with the burden of wisdom,
You imagine you have seen through the fraud
Of creation.*

In his poems and the national anthem *Jana Gana Mana* Tagore expresses his views on Indian nation. Tagore did not believe in indiscriminate veneration of traditions, but stood for unshackling of reason by opening up the doors of society. He wrote in *Ancient Treasures* (1892): 'If we are to build up a nation, we must, with all due respect and regret, cast aside the load of the venerable rock-like tradition, which is suffocating our humanity, our strength and our manly independence'.

Mahatma Gandhi's idea of nationalism seems relatively simple to comprehend. He wanted an independent Indian nation state and freedom from British colonial rule. His idea of nationalism was not based on shallow ethnic or religious communalism. He was grounded on his notion of *Swaraj*-enlightened self-control and self-development leading to harmony and tolerance among all communities in India. His concept of nationhood is not merely based on the territorial extent of its sovereignty; it is the national sentiments and expressions which encompasses the Indian ancient history. Gandhi's idea on nation and nationalism was based on the *Satyagrah* and non-violent movement and for that matter he motivated people to boycott foreign materials and to use *charkha*, *khadi* and all indigenous handmade things which are at the same time pure and expression of human labour and creativity. According to him, a nation should be based on 'sarva dharma sambhava', where each and every group of people can serve their religion as they wish, where all religions would get an equal status without any discrimination. Gandhi's view of nation is based on functional perspective, through which he wanted to see the nation in harmony with the whole. Like diverse religions the Varna system would also be the integral parts of a coherent whole, the nation. Both parts (fragments) and the structure (the whole) are important to make harmony and peace. Gandhi wanted to vision a nation which should be based on Hindu- Muslim unity and peace. He wrote:

Hindustan belongs to all those who are born and bred here and who have no other country to look to. Therefore, it belongs to Parsis, Beni Israelis, to Indian Christians, Muslims and other non-Hindus as much as to Hindus. Free India will be no Hindu raj, it will be Indian raj based not on the majority of any religious sect or community, but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion. I can conceive of a mixed majority putting the Hindus in a minority. They would be elected for their record of

service and merits. Religion is a personal matter, which should have no place in politics (Gandhi 1947: 277-278).

I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion that is to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Muslim, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another (ibid: 257).

I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it. The State would look after your secular welfare, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern (ibid: 278)

His idea of nationalism is more oriented towards "spiritual politics" or "dialogic religiosity" oriented secularism. The combination of religion, ethics and politics in Gandhi has been largely acclaimed as unique and a sign of Indianness.

Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of nation is based on "atheistic secularism", which is different from Gandhi's version of spiritual politics. For Nehru the modern secular ideal had originated in the West and crystallized as a world-view under the impetus provided by three major forces of the modern age - Religious Reformation, Industrialization and the Democratic Revolution. Even though certain cultural ingredients of secularism lie deep in certain aspects of Indian historical tradition, India's introduction to the ideal of modern secularism was the result of the Western impact. Apart from this, the secularization process also received stimulus from the Indian religious reformation pioneered by Swami Vivekananda, Maulana A. K. Azad and many others. Further, the secular idea gathered momentum from the historical compulsions and necessities of India's struggle against colonialism and from her efforts to evolve as a unified national identity out of its multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual diversities. When Nehru was in the jail of Ahmedabad fort, he articulated his view of Indian nation in his writings, which were published as *Discovery of India*. He thought Indian nation beyond the caste system and religious values, which are essentially divisive. His idea of modern nation would evolve through modernization, industrialisation, alongside India's emergence as an economically and technologically advanced country.

According to Nehru nation should be based on secularism because India has so many faiths, which cannot be the foundation of a united nation. He believed that religion can have a function since it can bring peace to our soul but it cannot be the foundation of a modern secular society. His dream

modern nation should be democratic, which should uphold the universal principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. Nehru was an apostle of humanity, peace and amity and his idea of national integration and communal harmony constituted the spirit of post-colonial nation building. Nehru laid the foundation of independent India on the pillars of democracy, socialism, secularism and peaceful co-existence. He thought of India as a whole and always insisted that the people should think of the country's problems in a national perspective. Speaking about nationalism Nehru said: 'Nationalism does not mean Hindu nationalism, Muslim nationalism or Sikh nationalism. As soon as you speak of Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, you do not speak for India' (Nehru 1955: 374-380).

Speaking at Trichur in December 1955, Nehru pointed out that:

We have before us lessons of history. We have seen how repeatedly in spite of our many virtues and our great abilities we have fallen in the race of nations, and because of this lack of unity among us the entire community of India has been separated into castes and creeds which do not pull together. Therefore, I lay stress everywhere on the unity of India and on our need to fight communalism, provincialism, separatism and casteism (*The Hindu*, Nov. 12, 2002).

He cautioned the Indians against divisive forces saying:

We must be on our guard against the disruptive tendencies in the country which raise their heads whenever an occasion offers itself. Among these tendencies are some which come under the name of communalism — politics under some religious garb, one religious group being incited to hate another religious group (Ibid 2002).

B. R. Ambedkar's notion of nationalism and his understanding of the Indian national movement are quite different from that of other leaders whom we have discussed. Ambedkar's vision of nationalism was rooted in the caste system. He had a dream to see India as caste free society with no more exploitation, a society based on true equality. His main agenda, along with freedom from colonial rule was annihilation of untouchability. Nationalism according to Ambedkar, should counter both internal oppression and external domination. He wanted equality and civil rights for those who are for centuries deprived of all opportunities for social and economic mobility. Indian society, in Ambedkar's view, was a system that never allowed equality and fraternity, the principles that are essential for a democratic form of government, to grow. He wanted constitutional safeguards for the oppressed classes. Nationalism, in Ambedkar vision, is of the spirit of dignity

both for the people and for the country. He had profound feeling for the poor and untouchables which induced him to fight against denial of basic human rights.

To Ambedkar, freedom of a country cannot be distinguished from freedom of its people; freedom would bear no meaning unless there is freedom for the oppressed. For him, nationalism means expression of inner unity of a people and it is a process of social assimilation. Therefore, irrespective of caste, colour and creed, nationalism gets perfect harmony if social brotherhood of men prevails everywhere within a nation. He emphasized on fighting casteism, linguistic division, communalism and separatism because he was of the opinion that these social evils fragment the people into small social units which are against the spirit of nationalism. He believed in revolution for the betterment of the society and safeguards for the down trodden. He believed that all problems are rooted in the structure only so good nation is possible only if the existed rigid structure is destroyed (Ray and Ray 2011)

Savarkar, widely known as the author of Hindu nationalism, refused to accept the theory of Aryan invasion of the subcontinent, and stated that the ancient land of “Sindhu” comprised the entire subcontinent. He argued that the sense of nationality was already present four thousand years ago in the “Vedic Nation” as a cultural self-consciousness that took root through the development and refinement of a common language, Sanskrit, and a common body of philosophy and ritual practices (ibid: 87). He claimed that “Hindustan” had been the preferred name for India through millennia (ibid. 82). For Savarkar, idea of nation had to be for Hindus also as he looked it through the geographic and territorial ground. By saying that Hindu land is the holy land he particularly emphasize on the majority religious group of Hindus because they have built on the powerful base of sacred geographies/territory, which gives the identity of the people. His ideology of Hindutva was narrow and he was talking about the conflation of *janambhoomi* (mother land) and *punyabhoomi* (holy land). Savarkar’s main concern was to define the two main coordinates of the Indian nation, its territoriality and its culture.

Another striking feature of Savarkar’s thought was the simultaneous influence of Fichte’s idea of the “internal border,” that is, the internalized individualization of nationhood. Hindutva, for him, is essentially a question of subjective feelings, loyalty, individual patriotism, a “will to nationhood” (Hansen 1999: 78). Savarkar argued that the ultimate criterion for being a Hindu was the definition of a “holy land” (*pitrubhoomi*), which is the

geographical location of the sacred shrines and myths of one's religion. "Hindu" denoted all those whose religion has grown "out of the soil of India"—Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and the multiple Hindu sects, the Hindu Dharma.

Then soon after independence the Indian political leaders decided to peruse four self-stipulated goals: (1) to achieve an improved standard of living through higher rates of growth, (2) to establish a functional political democracy, (3) to achieve social equality through social re-engineering and (4) to make a quick transition in making government the servant of the people rather than being its master. The long existing tradition-bounded institutional practices of caste as a systematic social stratification and the ideology of colonialism have left their legacy that often interrupts India's progress to achieving its immediate goals.

The decline of Nehruvian ideals in post-colonial India allows reinterpretation of modern state as something fragmented into the micro-level socio-political identities. The Indian nationalism from the late colonialism till the Nehruvian regime was a state-centric nation building project in which emphasis was on national unity which would transcend political consciousness of diversified identities.

The Indian politics and governance, political socialisation and voting behaviour have fundamentally changed in the post-liberalisation period. The role of media, the intervention of youth with global imagination of nation and the neo-liberal capitalism have reordered the Indian way of governance. In sum, the dynamics of politics, governance and citizens' political behaviour in post-independent India is a clear cut reflection of a journey from a national consciousness to fragmented identity formation. This change is a product of the socio-economic changes and the development of new micro level political discourses which largely impact upon the nature of government formation and the process of political socialisation.

Notes

1. The term *mode of production* derives from the work of Karl Marx (1818–1883), and the concept has played a significant role in subsequent Marxist theory. Mode of production refers to the varied ways that human beings collectively produce the means of subsistence in order to survive and enhance social being. Marx believed that human history could be characterized by the dominant modes of production. In this

sense the term refers to a specific economic system, where he mentioned about relation and forces of production. (Elster, Jon 1986). Regarding the colonial mode of production, Bipan Chandra tried to relate this concept from the feudal mode of production, where there was the relationship between landlord and tenet (in the colonial period, those zamindar who were performing the role of father with the relationship of lower caste group as son, they transformed into landlord and tenant. This previous relationship was called the Asiatic mode of production which is stagnant in the history) and that relationship was purely based on what Marx says exploitation

2. The concept of Bharatvarsha is a key concept in *Gora*. It is more than a geographical area. It is identified with faith, religion, tradition, customs and all manner of indigenous values and ideas. Bharatvarsha is a mystical “entity” that encompasses time itself, appropriating ‘the distant past and the even farther future, while weaving a particular thread in a particular pattern in the vast destiny of mankind.’ (*Gora* 135)

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Body Image: Women in Jewellery Advertisement

Sylvia Raha

***Abstract:** The perspective of this article is to consider how media is utilizing the bodily attraction of women to cater the eyes of the viewers and the consumers, especially in the jewellery industry. They are dealing with the most powerful force of this universe, i.e the sensual attraction of humans. In one hand these ads are making the female audience to correlate them with the gorgeous beautiful models, to be like them, but on the other hand these ads are just exploiting the body image of women in a way. It objectifies women's body. For jewellery advertisement women are generally produced and reproduced as decorative pieces where the image of a women turns into a 'sign' but this 'sign' is not the real sign of that particular women rather it creates simulation among the consumers. Women try to wear jewellery for all parts of the body in order to catch men's attention on them. This paper reviews that how the body images of women in jewellery advertisement plays a crucial role in influencing consumer's social interaction and how the modern society is dominated by the mediated image created by the mass media and/or Patriarchy. This paper also includes four case studies of renowned jewellery brands, and how they have incorporated sensual elements in their ads through women body and how body image is reflected in the ads.*

Keywords: body image, women models, patriarchy, advertisement industry, commodification, ideal body, sexuality.

Introduction

In this 21st century women are gradually occupying a prominent position in the advertisement industry, as a mark of participation in outdoor activities, thereby challenging the patriarchal domination. The world of advertisement, which is growing fast alongside the spread of consumer culture, offers wide-range of employment opportunity to the women in general and attractive younger women in particular. It is generally believed that work participation of women makes them economically self-reliant and brings them higher social status. The women are playing an increasingly significant role in all advertisement industry and working as models, endorsing all kinds of products such as 'general products, women products and the products

for men uses' (Vani 2010: 173). They have become a cultural image in representing themselves in every professional field. The professional field can range from residential work to the world of beauty. The young women engage themselves in advertisements thus turning their body-beauty-personality as a human resource, if not as commodity. The women's body thus 'becomes a key site of political, cultural, social and economic intervention' (Hancock et.al. 2000: 1). One can also notice cultural legitimacy in production of body-beauty in the advertisement world, which is looked into as a means of empowerment and a new way of life.

The process of appropriating women image in advertisement is based on an idea of "ideal body image", which is a social construct in a given point in time and in a given social space. This ideal body (physical appearance and beauty) of women is reproduced in the mass media in a given time, but it can change with changing time and context. Women imagine themselves in the light of the media projected "ideal body", which works like a "discourse" that manifestly influence the women who are in advertisements and on the women in general, even those who do not feature and not even think of featuring in advertisements. The appeal of the fetish called "ideal body" is so deep and grand to cover the self-image of women, and men's sense of "beautiful women", which is directly linked to sexuality.

Conceptualizing body image

Sociology of body is principally concerned with the symbols and meaning of the physical aspects of human behaviour and actions in society. Body image of woman is always shaped, reshaped and "deconstructed" by socio-cultural factors which define how individuals, groups or collectivities view women in terms of colour-complexion, height, weight, shape, legs, hair, eyes, smile, size and so on. The selection of women models for advertisement would depend on whether they come close to the 'beautiful' body thus conceived because a model can be sensuous and can work on the mind of the consumers only if they fit into their perception of beauty. The classical positivist sociologists explain *body* in terms of physical appearances but the post-structuralists, feminists, phenomenologists argue that '...body no longer remains fixed in essence. The changes it undergoes are no longer regarded as wholly dependent on natural philosophical process...' (Hancock et.al. 2000: 3). Anthony Synnott says:

The body social is many thing: the prime symbol of the self, but also of the society; it is something we have, yet also what we are; it is both the subject and object at the same time; it is individual and personal, as unique as a

finger print or oudourplume, yet it is also common to all humanity.... The body is both an individual creation, physically and phenomenologically, and a cultural product; it is personal, and also state property (Waskul and Vannini 2002).

When a woman enters the advertisement industry she is represented as sex object; she finds a place in the glamour world exposing her beauty and thus gains a self-identity. According to Berger, 'Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at...' in this way woman 'became trapped in a male gaze' (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 354). Advertisement produces subjective body image in an objective form. And when the body is objectified, the image of a woman turns into a "sign", which is not the real sign of that particular women rather it creates simulation among the consumers. From this perspective 'body of an object cannot be separated from the body as a subject...' (Waskul and Van der Riet 2002).

Body signifies the women as an object to be gazed by both men and women. Women gaze does a subjective analysis of their body in the light of "ideal concept of female body" whereas men gaze the image as a sexual objects. Charles Horton Cooley's concept "looking glass-self" explains that the embodiment of "self" is reproduced and replicated into one's imagination of her own self and how other observe the image of a "self" thus created. This imaginary perspective plays an important role for the advertisement models or the brand ambassadors of any jewellery production house or any other commodity. Such self-feelings of looking good or bad, depend on how the consumers perceive them as an object. Women's body image in an advertisement sometimes gives them a satisfaction and honour, when their own "self" resembles "other self" (i.e. how consumers perceive body image of women in advertisement); and if it does not resemble the woman may be ashamed of her own self image created in advertisement. Thus Cooley's concept of self in "looking glass-self" represents "body image" in a perspective where the objective-body becomes subjective-body. The embodiment of the body image of women in advertisement is produced, reproduced, sustained and transformed from object-body to subject-body in the social field.

Goffman, in his work 'Territories of the self', has explained that the body signifies 'identity, social order, and emotional order and in a manner that is personal and communal, private and political, confidential and public all at once' (Waskul and Vannini 2002). Thus women's body image in advertisements gives a new identity publicly as well as in private sphere of their life. Jewellery is very intimate and inseparable material object for

women's everyday life. While playing a part in jewellery advertisement women emotionally get involved with the jewellery since it symbolizes their sense of beauty. Thus the role in jewellery advertisement is pre-ordained to women because women wear jewellery more than men; and the beauty of her body flourishes with its use. This explains that the advertisers look only for the body image of women in jewellery advertisement because jewellery constructs an image of an authority for women. Side by side, as body image of women in advertisement is associated with the body shape and size even sexuality also becomes consumer-oriented (www.mediaandwomen.org). The beautification regime thus determines not only relations between men and women but also the relations of women to themselves (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 354).

In Marxist cultural theory, much emphasis is laid on the production and consumption of the cultural artifacts where material objects are the central things of aesthetics. In this fashion the cultural products like jewellery promoted through advertisements in television, news papers, magazines, hoardings, and brochures reproduce societal sense of aesthetics, which is artificial (fetish). So the "art" of designing jewellery and advertisement is not a "pure" aesthetic realm rather it represents the producer and commercial actors (Nayar 2013: 143).

Turner has explained that the body must be understood as something socially constructed. He argues that human body is now regulated, trained, disciplined in line with the dominant social norms or standards which not only help construct the "discourse of beauty" but also regulate the self reproduction; the emphasis is on "self-preservation and self-maintenance" or "care of the self". Young women are more concerned with their physical appearance prior to marriage as they wear all types of jewellery in different part of the body which fits into 'women-self-image' and the socially constructed image of a bride, which transcends class and caste barriers. This women-self-image is associated with the physical appearance throughout their lives (Turner 1984).

Thus in jewellery advertisement women are obsessed with the beauty care regime - weight reduction, dieting, and looking sensuous. They make all efforts to improve their appearances in order to look beautiful and attractive. Women try to wear jewellery for all parts of the body in order to catch men's attention. Thus the body image of women presented and reproduced in jewellery advertisement leaves a huge appeal not only on women's self image but also on the men who have a big role in decisions relating to

jeweller purchase. Advertisers usually recruit slim, beautiful, fair, clean face and young women for company advertisements, because that fits into the socially shared image of beautiful women. Therefore, these body images of women in advertisement play a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviour. This post modern society is a space which allows the dominance of mediated image created by the mass media.

Women's Body Image in Jewellery Advertisement

Media plays a significant role in shaping self-image. It objectifies women's body. The use of women models in advertisements is rooted in consumerism. For jewellery advertisement women are generally produced and reproduced as decorative pieces. The contents of the advertisement includes how to choose jewellery, what type of jewellery is perfect for what kind of occasions or how with ornaments would make women's body beautiful, smart and graceful. Here are some illustrations.

Below is the collage of few jewellery advertisements featuring Bollywood strars in traditional dress and ornaments that give them gorgeous looks, enough to leave an impact on the consumers. These actresses in jewellery advertisements easily grab the attention of the viewers or consumers before a catchy slogan completes the advertisement.



Figure 1: Bollywood Actress right from Sridevi to Susmita Sen adorned in Traditional Jewellery

The femininity of the jewellery products are portrayed only for women. Advertisers prefer the popular actresses since they add extra value to attract the consumers more than any unknown model. The women in such attires become the role model and leave an impact on the psyche of the consumers.

I have chosen four ads which show the beauty of a woman and the representation of her body in jewellery ads.

Tanishq - Tanishq's latest ad (*Figure 2*) has de-constructed the regular concept of beauty where with the jewellery an average looking dark-skin woman is turning into a beautiful bride. This ad features a woman as bride having a dusky complexion, flat nose with an average physical feature, not "beautiful" measured in the standard of "ideal beauty" i.e. fair skinned, virgin bride, slim body size and so on.



Figure 2: Tanishq Wedding Jewellery



Figure 3: Remarrying of single mother

The ad in figure 3 is path-breaking. It celebrates the idea of remarriage of a woman with a daughter, which is not yet "normal" even in metropolitan culture. This notion of remarriage is still read as an exception rather than a rule. This ad also challenges the conventional body image of a bride and the idea of "virginity" as essential qualification for marriage. Our society is obsessed with perfect marriage where marriage can occur only once but with the changing time, women are getting chance for remarriage. When widow or divorced women are going for remarriage they prefer registry marriage rather than religious-ritual marriage. Hence this ad redefines our cultural perception for marriage and remarriage. Tanishq ads perhaps target two types of consumers - women with an average physical appearance and single mother.

This ad reveals that the women who feel insecure or miserable about their looks can be made "beautiful" with appropriate use of jewellery. Here, the subjective "self" of women in advertisement has been objectified by the advertisers conveying that an average looking woman can be made attractive only when she has adorned herself with the jewellery; this boosts the confidence of the woman in presenting herself in the beauty market and in social life where slim and fair looking body is considered beautiful and attractive.

The commodity, the jewellery and the brand name together add status to the women, the brides, good looking, average looking, once married, nothing matters much. Jewellery and the social value it carries impact upon the women in two ways, first, it changes their self image from being average looking to good looking and second, they are now presentable and acceptable in society. An image thus created overshadows the natural beauty. The elegance of the jewellery, its exchange values (the price) and the matter uses (gold, platinum, diamond) and the brand name together creates a mystic value to the ornaments which leaves inward and outward impacts. In this whole process *mediated image* largely endorsed by the society leaves a constraining effect on the body image and presentation of self of the women in the light of use of jewellery.

Kalyan Jewellers - The advertisement shows bollywood actress Ashwariya Rai Bachhan floating like an angel in paradise by wearing a golden silk dress. The play of golden colour light rays adds a minimalistic background to focus the model and her dress to symbolise the “golden colour of the Gold”, supporting the the “purity claim” of the product. The golden colour of her dress adds extra glamour to this advertisement (*Figure 4*).



Figure 4: The Touch of Gold in Dress



Figure 5: Dress made up of Golden Bangles

It also grabs the attention of the viewers and the potential consumers. In the advertisement the golden silk transforms into bangle dress which is made up of gold. The *bangles* are shown to be made up of pure gold. The bangles look to be expensive and of high-quality. The message is that after wearing gold bangles female body will become gorgeous and precious as gold (*Figure 5*). It adds status value to the women representing a sense of

superiority and elegance. The ads not only catches the attention of the viewer but also gives the women a feel of looking gorgeous. Here the model is looking straight, having a grin on her face and the body posture symbolises confidence and pleasure of covering her body with “enough bangles...” as the tag line symbolises.

MP Jewellers - In most of the ads, MP Jewellers tries to highlight the upper body part of women. In the Figure 6 and 7 it is visualized that both the models have adorned their bare shoulder with the necklace instead of wearing it on the front of the neck; and their sideways glance of the face enhances sex appeal. Side by side, it exposes the vulnerability of the neck which symbolizes the flirtatious behaviour. Thus, in advertising the jewellery, advertisers use women body to a plan in order to glorify the jewellery.



Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

I am the Reason ????

An exposed neck is a form of submission and is aggressively flirtatious (Figure 8) and the tag line of these ads “I’m the reason” shows what? Flirtatious nature or sex appeal!

Again, the length of the model’s exposed neck in *Figure 6 and 8* shows women’s trust and willingness to submit to men. It can easily catch men’s eyes because it defines beauty and youthfulness of young women. Tossing of earring on the back of her neck in Figure 5 with a tilted head to the side also attracts the viewer’s attention. Avoidance of clothing (*Figures 6 and 7*) helps to avoid distraction of the viewers with the clothes rather than the jewellery. Thus the image of the jewellery products became the main attraction in this advertisement.

4. Anjali Jewellers - One of the most renowned jewellery house in West Bengal is Anjali Jewellers; it draws popularity because of its low weight designer jewellery. The advertiser choose the models having typical Bengali physical appearance such as having almond eyes, broad face, and typical Bengali skin colour (light yellow, brown and black).

The way the advertisers have adorned the model with jewellery, makeup and dress in respective occasions has represented the traditional style of adorning jewellery on Bengali women's body; and the red 'tip' on the forehead symbolizes the Bengali culture. *Figure 9* shows yet another transforming trend of bringing into lime light the image of the dark complexion models into the ad industry. Anjali jewelers have revolutionized the outlook of the Indian consumers, which is primarily a land of "fairness cream". They have challenged the Eurocentric definition of an Indian and localized (Bengali in the present case) one, which in turn is culturally rooted. While drawing home the point that their jewellery is the beauty statement they can connect with Bengali sentiment and culture quite easily. They have been the pioneers in introducing the dark models in the jewellery ads and they are doing it since 2010.



Figure 9: Goddess like feel with the Jewellery

Figure 10 highlights the traditional way of wearing Bengali Saree without blouse. The bare shoulder and neck are covered with the typical Bengali style jewellery which is hanging over the breasts; and the naked right hand of the model refocuses the consumer's attention with the armlet. The model sitting postures shows the forwardly placed upper body portion to bring into notice the adorned jewellery.



Figure 10: Traditional yet seductive



Figure 11: Classical and Contemporary Jewellery

Here we see a very tricky use of the body to merge the traditional outlook with the glamorous jewellery which makes a cultural connection between the Bengali consumers and the jewellery in the advertisement. Now it is not so uncommon to see tan as trend in jewellery industry. Again in *Figure 11*, one can find representation of two different trends, the classical Bengali tradition and the Bengali modern style of the young generations to target two different generations of consumers. It is also recognition of the cohabitation of two contrasting trends, classical and modern, as we find in the sphere of culture. Here the model in red *saree* with the golden jewellery

symbolizes the elite classical Bengali culture and on the other side there is a modern young girl wearing ornaments of contemporary design. The body posture of both the models are different the left model is pointing her 'tip' with her finger which signifies "loyalty to tradition or husband"; and the model wearing silver jewellery reflects the power of a young women; and the jewellery design is so trendy and easy to wear; a perfect combination to attract younger consumers.

Conclusion

In all the above advertisements, women's body is used primarily to promote jewellery in line with the ideology of consumerism, whose appeal is so overwhelming, across the classes and social groups, within the overall frame of patriarchal discourse. The image and the representation of women in the advertisement reinforce an ideology, which deconstructs the popular belief that they are trying to construct women identity as independent, self-sufficient, strong and courageous. The modern women, as in jewellery advertisements, live in fantasies and obsession for looking beautiful, which is counted as a "resource". Neither the women who feature in the advertisements nor the women in larger society in general are free of this consumerist discourse. Both the models and the corporate houses now understand the value not only of the beautiful figure as a whole but also the different body parts like neck, space below the collar bone, cleavage, bare shoulder, skin colour, wrist, fingers, nose, ear and so on. After all, the capital has the power to commodify almost everything.

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Source of the Images

Figure1:http://www.pinkvilla.com/files/imagecache/ContentPreview/Downloads8_1.jpg

Figure 2: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/tanishq-makes-a-point/article5297558.ece>

Figure3:<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/tanishq-new-advertisement-on-remarriage/1/320581.html>

Figure4:http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/09/16/aishwarya-rai-kalyan-jewellers_n_3934011.html

Figure5:<http://www.pinkvilla.com/entertainmenttags/kalyan-jewellers/aishwarya-raibachchan-kalyan-jewellers>

Figure 6 and 8: <http://www.mpjewellers.com/home/index.php>

Figure 7: MP\tumblr_n7d7vtzmY41rj5wj0o1_1280.jpgFormat

Figure8:<http://satyakighosh.tumblr.com/post/89154321391/2013-mpj-brand-campaign-1-client-mp-jewellers>

Figure9:<https://www.facebook.com/anjalijewellerskolkata/photos/pb.1488933574661737.-2207520000.1452785255./1582321645322929/?type=3&theater>

Figure 10: <https://fbcdn-photos-b-a.akamaihd.net>

Figure11:<https://www.facebook.com/anjalijewellerskolkata/photos/pb.1488933574661737.-2207520000.1452785249./1688578271363932/>

The Migrant Nepalis in Balurghat: An Account of Adaptation and Change¹

Kumar Chhetri

***Abstract:** The present paper is a brief descriptive account of the Nepalis in a cluster in of Balurghat town, the district town of South Dinajpur district. The Nepali households have migrated from various places in different historical periods in connection with their jobs and livelihoods. They have been living in an alienated kind of social situation, far from their own population and places of origin for generations. A long course of association and interactions with local Bengali speaking neighbours have left a permanent mark on their way of life or culture. The main observation of the paper is that despite accepting and adjusting with many cultural practices of the local dominant community the migrant Nepalis have retained their distinct cultural identity.*

Keywords: Nepali community, migration, adaptation, cultural continuity, culture change.

Introduction

Purpose of the present paper is to discuss socio-cultural continuity and change experienced by the Nepali community living in Balurghat. The families had migrated to Balurghat in different periods in connection with their jobs in military, police and other allied services. Though the Nepalis are generally known as the hill people in West Bengal there are several Nepali settlements/Busties outside Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai, inhabited by the retired military and other allied professionals mostly around the military and police lines like Suesgate Nepali Para (Balurghat), Khalashi Patti (Coach-Bihar), Police line (Jalpaiguri), Salua (West Medinipur) and others. It has been one of the patterns of Nepali migration almost throught India and many parts of the European countries as well (Kumari 1999; Gellner 2013). In the recent past they kept migrating from one place to another particularly after the discovery of the “martial race thesis” by the British which opened up job opportunities in military and other allied services and after their retirement continue to live in settlements in many parts of the country (Gellner 2013). Suesgate Nepali Para or Nepali Busty of Balurghat where the present study was carried out is the outcome of such process;

this is a settlement mostly of the retired policemen. This settlement is located close to Balurghat police headquarters, Baro Ragunathpur Mouza of Balurghat block in the district of Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal. It is a small hamlet of the migrant Nepali population in a town where the Bengalis constitute an overwhelming majority.

Although, there are several works available on the Nepalis of Darjeeling hills and its surrounding areas since colonial days (O'Malley 1907; Gellner 2013; Pradhan 1981; Subba 1989; Sarkar 2010-2011), there is hardly any account of any firsthand study on the Nepalis who live far from their place of origin.

When a group of people migrate from one environment or place to another it faces the problem of adaptation in the new environment. In its adjustment in the new environment it undergoes changes in its cultural and social conditions. A migrant community may accept some of the socio-cultural traits of the numerically dominant community but 'this does not necessarily lead to the creation of a fully homogeneous socio-cultural setup; that is why the "breakdown thesis" or the "melting pot" metaphor does not hold well for the study of social change (Chhetri 1987: 241). The migrants always adapt and modify their socio-economic and cultural life in order to build a normal communication channel with the locals so that life becomes easier in the new setting. They also tend to create a small cultural world of their own through residential segregation, thus well acquainted with a well-knit community life and neighbourhood ties among them' (Nair 1978).

The present paper argues that adaptation is a two way process which involves interaction between the in-migrants and host society, although the pressure of adaptation is much less among host community. The present paper also argues that though the migrant community may adopt the socio-cultural elements of the host society in totality they do not melt into the dominant culture. Some of the questions that the present paper addresses are: what were the reasons of their migration to Balurghat? In what respect Nepalis adopted or adjusted in the new environment? What are the changes that have taken place in their socio-cultural institutions? How do they identify themselves with their native place?

Nepali/Gorkha Community

Nepalis are a group of people who share a common language namely Nepali. The word Nepali signifies multiple connotations like language, community, and nationality (Pradhan 1987). The Indians of Nepali origin are called

Indian Nepalis (Sinha 2009). The Indian Nepalis are also popularly known as the Indian Gorkhas. The Nepalis are synonymously known as the hill community² in West Bengal. They are numerically dominant in the hill region of Darjeeling district and their ethnographic boundaries have been extended up to Siliguri, Terai, Dooars and clusters of urban hamlets almost throughout North Bengal.

The Nepali society is heterogeneous in nature and divided into number of castes and sub-castes. The word Nepali or Gorkha is an umbrella term for several endogamous groups and castes or *jatis* that constitute to form a linguistic community. This community can be broadly categorized into *Tagadhary* and *Matawali*. Tagadhary literally means the “sacred thread wearer” and traditionally they do not drink or use alcohol in their rituals. They are regarded as the clean caste in Nepali caste hierarchy. The Bahuns (Brahmins) occupy the topmost position followed by the Kshatriyas like Chhetris (warriors) and Thakuris (aristocrats). Bahuns are further divided into *Jharra Bahun* who traditionally perform rituals and *Jaisey Bahuns*, the astrologers. Among them also there are certain restrictions in terms of caste occupation and marriage etc. The Jharra Bahuns consider themselves superior to the Jaishis. Matwali are those endogamous groups who traditionally use locally prepared alcohol called *Rakshi* or *Jaanr* in their ceremonies and rituals. It literary mean the “alcohol users” or “alcohol consumers”. The *Newar* (businessman), *Gurung* (Shepherds), *Tamang* (horse traders/cavaliers), *Rai*, *Limboo*, *Yakkha*, *Mukhia*, *Mangar*, *Thami* (agriculturists), *Sherpa* (potters and potato growers), *Bhujel* (beaten rice makers/ palanquin bearers), *Jogi* (ascetics) and others belong to *Matawali* group.

The lower strata of the Nepali caste hierarchy are occupied by the Indo-Aryan origin/stock scheduled castes or dalits like *Sunar* (goldsmith) *Kami* (ironsmith), *Damai* (tailor and musician) and *Sarki* (cobbler) and they are commonly referred to as *kalo Matwali* (Pradhan 1987; Singh 2010; Subba 1989; Subedi 2010). Most of the high and low caste Nepalis had migrated from India to Nepal during the Muslim invasion. All these endogamous groups or *jatis* are further divided into different clans and sub-clans, for instance, *Karki* is one of the sub-castes of the Chhetris who are further divided into *Mudula Karki*, *Sutar Karki* and *Lama Karki* and each of these sub-castes have further divisions.

One can notice difference among the Nepali speaking populations in terms of their religious affiliations. The Tagadharis and scheduled castes are basically Hindu while the Tamangs, Sherpas, a section of Newars and

Gurungs follow Buddhism. A large section of the Nepalis in Darjeeling and Sikkim are Christian. All other endogamous Nepalis are basically Hindu³ and some of them also follow their traditional religious beliefs and practices like shamanism, naturalism, animism and ancestor worship. All endogamous groups and castes possess their own way of life relating to birth and death ceremonies, marriage practices, folk songs and dance, myths and folklores, food habits and attires. Each and every group has its own dialect but Nepali language⁴ has been the lingua-franca of all ethnic groups. There are numerous festivals, big or small, celebrated by the Nepalis like *Dashain* (Durga Puja), *Tihar* (Dipawali), *Pahilo Baisakh* (Nepali New Year), *Chaita Dashain* (celebrated in the month of *Chait*), *Maghey Sankranti* (which is commonly known as *Makkar Sankranti*), *Guru Puja* (worshipping of the guru or teacher), *Sansari Puja* (worshipping of nature), *Lho-char* (new year of Tamangs, Gurungs and Sherpas). *Khukuri* is the most important religious and traditional weapon of the Nepalis. The traditional foods of the Nepalis are *Salroti* (a ring shaped, spongy, pretzel-like bread), *Gundruk* (a non-salted, fermented and sun-dried leafy vegetables), *Kinema* (a traditional fermented soybean food), *Senki* (non-salted fermented radish taproot), *Makai-ko-bhat* (edible dish prepared from the flour of maize), *Chhurpi* (prepared from milk), *Mohi* (buttermilk), *Dahi* (traditional curd), *Dhero* (porridge-like Nepali food), *Masu* (meat), *Rakshi* (locally prepared beverage), *Jaanr* (alcohol made of grains) etc. Culturally these foods have a great significance and are traditionally important in different festivals and ceremonies (Liwang 2006; Tamang 2009).

Indian Nepalis/Gorkhas

India and Nepal share a socio-cultural and religious proximity since time immemorial. In pre-colonial India the Nepalese had migrated to Munger (land of Mughals) and *Lahure* (Lahore) for their recruitment in the army of King Ranjit Singh (Golay 2009), although it became a significant phenomenon after the treaty of Saugoli of 1815-16 in British army. The most important forces of Nepali migration throughout the world in general and South East Asia in particular has been at the same time economic and social, which were supported by the factors like establishment of tea and cinchona industry in Darjeeling, operation of the upper castes in Nepal, recruitment of the Nepalis in military and other allied services of the British India, opportunities to work as coolies and others (O'Malley 1907; Gellner 2013; Dutt 1981). Abolition of the *Kipat* (communal ownership of land particularly among the Kiratis) by the Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana was one of the

most important push factors behind their migration particularly to Darjeeling-Sikkim and North-east India. The British engineers encouraged Nepali migration and their settlements through 'official sponsorship' particularly in North-East India, Sikkim-Darjeeling, Bhutan and Burma and they have been 'contributing in the economic development of the region' (Dutt 1981; Devi 2007; Parajuly 1995) but the Kiratas of Nepali group were believed to be the earliest inhabitants of North-East India (Devi 2007: 3005). The Nepalis also entered into the various tracts of North-East India as the grazes and cultivators (Nath 2006; Sapkota 2009). Thus, the Nepalese are found almost throughout India but they are generally concentrated in clusters of villages in different parts of North-East, Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and in much smaller numbers in metropolises like Kolkata, New Delhi and Mumbai (Subba 2003; Kumari 1999). Subba (2014) categorized Nepalese in North east India into three types. Firstly, those naturalized citizen of the country living in this land for more than 200 years or so. Second category is constituted of those seasonal migrants from Nepal into the different parts of India for their livelihood. In the third category are those small numbers of Nepalese who hold the citizenship of both the countries. So, one cannot consider all the 'Nepalis in India as a diaspora community' as David Gellner (2013: 136-50) has done because they are not homogeneous in terms of their belongingness, nationality etc. Thus, we cannot consider the first category of Nepalis as diaspora because they have been living in India since many generations and many of them have lost connection with their places of origin, but the second and third categories constitute diaspora since they maintain strong links with Nepal (Subba 2014). Thus, the present study is on a group of Nepalese who belong to the first category.

Nepalis in Balurghat: Migration and Ethnic Consolidation

A migrant population prefers to live together in enclaves with fellow members of the community, who share similar language, place of origin and history, since by doing this they feel socially and culturally secure. The "ethnic goods components" create the possibilities of living in culturally similar areas (Epstein and Gang 2010). The Nepalese, in the present case, also did the same. Although they had migrated from various places and in different points of time, it was their community affinity which united them into a single neighbourhood. Rai Bahadur Chhetri, after his retirement from Balurghat police headquarters, constructed a house at Suesgate with the help of his colleague Narayan Sarkar and encouraged his friends to settle

down in the same area in the 1970s. At present there are around 35 Nepali households, a large majority of them are retired from Balurghat police headquarter, in Suesgate Nepali Para. Many temporary Nepali residents, who work in the police headquarters, also live in this area as tenants. The locality was earlier known as Suesgate due to presence of a small dam on the river named *Atrayi* and later it has been named Suesgate Nepali Para or Nepali Busty due to the emergence of the Nepali settlement.

Table 1: Socio-economic Background of the Nepalis

Sl No.	Caste/ Community	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1	General (Chhetri, Majhi)	22	20	42	50.60
2	OBC (Rai, Mangar)	04	06	10	12.05
3	Schedule Tribe (Tamang)	05	07	12	14.46
4	Schedule Caste (Darjee)	Nil	03	03	03.62
5	Others*	7	09	16	19.27
	Total	38	45	83	100

Source: field, *4 non-Nepali families having marital relation with the Nepalis

The present work is based on 15 days in-depth study of 20 households in which 4 households are non-Nepali [Das, Mardi, Oraon and Singh] having marital relationship with the Nepalis. Households belonging to the general caste/category constitute of 50.60 per cent of the total households, Other Backward Classes (OBC) constitute 12.05 per cent, scheduled tribes constitute 14.46 per cent and the share of scheduled caste households is only 03.62 per. Most of the Nepali households are small in size. 70 per cent of the total population comprises single unit of family (nuclear family) in which 15 per cent are sub-nuclear families, 25 per cent are supplemented nuclear families and 30 per cent of the total households are joint families. Except three households, which are extremely poor, all others are of middleclass background. They have toilet, bathroom, bicycle, fan, gas and their own house. None of the families owned agricultural land but few families are dependent on animal husbandry; they sell milk and milk products. All the families are dependent on secondary and tertiary sectors occupations. Many of the elderly people draw pensions but younger generations are employed in both public and private sectors. The traditional occupations of the Nepalis have changed in course of their migration in the new environment.

Case study 1

Sushma Chhetri, 87 years old widow and daughter of a retired policeman, who was born and brought-up at Calcutta, stated that in 1960s her husband, a police by profession, was transferred to Hilley from Calcutta and later retired from Balurghat police headquarters. After retirement her husband constructed a house at Suesgate Nepali Para with the help of Rai Bahadur Chhetri. They have been living in this area for more than 20 years alongside other Nepali neighbours. Mrs. Chhetri has three sons and two daughters. Her two sons are serving in the West Bengal Police, one is posted at Raiganj while the other at Coach-Bihar. They occasionally visit their home. Mrs. Chhetri's two sons-in laws are employed in the Indian army. All the members of her family are very fluent in their mother tongue and Bengal. Her children and grand-children have studied in Bengali medium schools and colleges and some of them are studying in English medium school in Kurseong. Mrs. Chhetri's son and other relatives particularly from Jalpaiguri police line, Kurseong and Raiganj visit her during important festivals. They love this place very much and are well acquainted with their non-Nepali neighbours.

Case study 2

Anirban Chhetri, 40 years, is a policeman. The son of a government official, Mr. Chhetri, who was born and brought up at Balurghat old Nepali Busty (near Balurghat bus stand), said that in his childhood he saw many Nepali youth working as police, home guard, and private security professionals, living there. Some of them were the permanent settlers but many, after retirement, left Balurghat for Siliguri and other areas which have greater concentration of the Nepalis. His fathers' friend Rai Bahadur Chhetri encouraged and helped them to construct a house at Suesgate Nepali busty. His family had 10 members including his Oraon (non-Nepali) wife and widow mother. Their maternal relatives from Darjeeling hills make occasional visits during the special festivals and family occasions. His family celebrates both Nepali and Bengali festivals and possess some of the Nepali traditional ornaments, vessels and weapon (Khukuri). His sons and daughter understand Nepali but cannot express their emotions in their mother tongue. The medium of communication in the family is both Bengali and Nepali. His mother loves Darjeeling where she was born and brought up and loves visiting the place. His family loves Balurghat and they do not want to leave the place.

Case study 3

Rajesh Chand Thakuri, 70 year old man, stated that during the British rule there was a police headquarters at Rangpur (Bangladesh) where many Nepalis were serving. After independence they were transferred to different parts of India particularly to Calcutta, Hilly and Gangarampur. He was born in Rangpur (Bangladesh) where his father was serving in the armed force. He served in the West Bengal Police and retired from Balurghat like his father. Since, it was not possible for him to return back either to Rangpur (Bangladesh) or his paternal house (Nepal) he decided to construct a house in Ves Para nearby Nepali busty. There are few families with similar life history as Rajesh Chand Thakuri. His son got married with Namita Darjee at Suesgate Nepali para whose parents had migrated from Rambhi in Kalimpong Sub-division of Darjeeling.

Case study 4

There are persons like Tshering Tamang who make local alcohol (*chullu*), which is the only source of earning in the family. He was born and brought up at Gangarampur and later migrated to Nepali busty in Balurghat. His father was a policeman from Darjeeling. He is very comfortable with his non-Nepali (a Bengali with Nepali mother) wife, who is fluent in Nepali and is familiar with many Nepali cultural traditions. Her only daughter got married with a Bengali policeman. The medium of communication in the family is both Nepali and Bengali. They celebrate both Nepali and Bengali festivals. There are several families bearing same life history as his son who works as a driver at Balurghat police headquarter on casual basis. His paternal family members live in Makaibari tea estate, near Kurseong, which they visit during the Lho-char almost every year.

Case study 5

Phulmaya Mangar, 70 year old widow was born and brought up at Hasimara (Dooars region of Jalpaiguri district) and migrated to Balurghat with her husband many years ago. All of her four sons except one, who is no more, and the only daughter had married with non-Nepalis and have settled down at Das Para, near Nepali busty. Her sons' families celebrate all the Bengali festivals and they do not have much idea of Nepali culture and tradition. Mrs. Mangar wants to visit her home at Hasimara but she does not have money for the trips. One of her daughter-in-law, who is widow, is the only earning member her household (the other sons have set up their own households after marriage), and her grand-daughter studies in a Bengali

medium school. She lives in a rented house. Her sons and grand-children are totally detached from Nepali language, culture and tradition.

Case study 6

Satna Thapa, daughter of a policeman, was born and brought up at Raiganj police line. She married Kartik Oraon (Sarkar), constable at Balurghat police station when her father was posted there. Her only son married a Nepali girl from Kalimpong; she had come to Balurghat to work in a beauty parlor. Her family follows more Nepali culture and tradition. Her Oraon husband and all her family members are well acquainted with the Nepali language, culture and tradition. They also possess some of the traditional ornaments and vessels of both the communities. Her paternal grand-father had come from Nepal to work as private security guard in Raiganj where her father was born. Her father was a policeman who retired when he was posted at Balurghat and settled in the same colony with his non-Nepali second wife.

Case study 7

Like Sudip Subba there are many third generation Nepalis who are totally detached from Nepali culture and tradition. Though many of them can understand Nepali they cannot express their emotion in Nepali language. Their level of acceptance of Bengali culture is very high. Most of them studied in Bengal medium schools and some of them work as casual workers in Balurghat police station. At the micro level, they can be categorized into two sub-groups. First, those who have adapted local culture and traditional and they are on the verge of cultural assimilation. Secondly, there are those who have adapted local culture but consciously resist assimilation. The younger members are undergoing a transformation in their socio-cultural and religious life in general and identity in particular.

Year of Migration and birth place of the 1st generation Nepalis in Balurghat

It has been found that 6 households (40 per cent) living in the Busti have no idea about history of their migration to Balurghat. Among the others, 2 households (13.33 per cent) had migrated in the 1950s (not at the present place), 6 households (40 per cent) of the total households migrated during in the 1970s and remaining one household (6.67 per cent) during 1980s. About the place of origin 5 (33.31 per cent) of the informants were born in different parts of Darjeeling hills, 3 (20 per cent) in Bangladesh, 2 (13.34 per cent) each in Coach Bihar and Nepal, 1 (6.67 per cent) each at Raiganj,

Kolkata and Hasimara. It is very interesting to note that almost all the Nepali households are related to each other either by consanguinal or affinal relations and many of them have their relatives in Balurghat but outside the colony. At the micro level, the Nepalis of Balurghat can be categorized into the old settlers and new settlers. The levels of adaptation among the old settlers have been much higher than that among the new ones.

What these case studies transpire?

The above case studies show that most of the Nepalis settled in Nepali busty are retired police personnel and despite variations in their places of origin and periods of migration it is their linguistic and cultural commonness that make them a single neighbourhood. Their sense of community is limited to the Nepali speaking families and their fellow friends in police line. Their cultural difference with the locals also reinforces their Nepali identity. However, the Nepali households do not live in isolation; they maintain cordial and good relations with the members of other communities, who constitute their neighbours. Living in the Busti for many years the Nepalis have undergone many social and cultural changes in terms of marriage practices, language, food habits, death and birth ceremonies, dress pattern and cultural and religious life because of their detachment from the mainland Nepali⁵ society. Changes have also been noticed among the Nepalis living in Darjeeling and Sikkim where they are distinctly inclined towards Western culture. However in Balurghat they are more inclined towards pan Indian culture and tradition.

The principle of community or caste endogamy is loosely followed by the Nepalis here. The presence of a small number of Nepalis force them to look for brides and grooms often outside their own community. The Nepalis however practice *gotro* exogamy. The inter-caste and inter-community marriages are frequent but there is general preference for Nepali brides and grooms. The marriage between Sukanya Darjee (Nepali Scheduled caste) and Rahul Thakuri (Nepali high caste) was an arranged one and the latter's father accepted the marriage saying "*Nepaliva, vai alcha ne*" (being Nepali is acceptable). The inter-community marriages generally have also been well accepted. There were however cases when inter-community marriages were opposed by the members of Nepali high castes. Sradha Chhetri, mother of 2 sons married Ajit Mardi, a Santhal, and the Nepalis in the locality refused to accept this marriage. After marriage Sradha's relationship with the family has been totally cut-off. Caste has been noticed as a significant factor in case of inter-community marriage. Most of the inter-community marriages have been found among the intermediate castes

of both the communities like Tamang, Majhi, Manger with Das, Sarkar and tribes through elopement. There was no involvement of upper caste Bengalis in the inter-community marriages with the Nepalis.

Intra and inter-community marital relationship

Among the 70 married couples, 56 per cent have intra-community connubial relationship (within Nepalis such as, Rai, Chhetri, Mangers, Thapa and others) and rest 44 per cent have inter-community marriage relationship. Among the 20 inter-community marriages, 60 percent of the Nepalis have chosen their partners from the tribal communities, 33 percent from the Bengalis and rest 7 per cent from the Punjabis. Intra-group marriage has been considered more valuable and prestigious than inter-community marriage. Nearly 45 per cent of the total Nepali households have at least one non-Nepali daughter-in-law

Changes in language practices

Changes have been witnessed in the manner of speaking Nepali language by the Nepalis of Balurghat. Though the first generation Nepalis are much fluent in their mother tongue the later generation has adopted Bengali as the medium of communication and learning. The way of speaking of their mother tongue has been influenced by Bengali, the language of the dominant community. The Nepali children are sent either in Bengali or English medium schools. For them there is no scope of learning Nepali language. The medium of communication at home, houses can be both Bengali and Nepali. Certain endogamous groups in Nepali society like Majhi, Rai, Tamang, Thapa and others have their own dialects but none of them knew their respective dialects. Whether the members of future generation will speak or write in Nepali is a matter of speculation. Although Nepali language is losing its significance among the young generations it is still popular among the Nepali elderly persons and even the non-Nepali policemen. My study shows that excepting the illiterates and infants, cent percent of the Nepalis can speak, read and write Bengali language while 87 percent of them can only speak, and 24 percent can write and read their own mother tongue, Nepali.

Socio-religious and cultural practices

The socio-religious and cultural life of Nepalis in Balurghat has been influenced by the Bengali culture traits due to their detachment from the main land Nepali culture and tradition. Religious and other ceremonies are now performed by the non-Nepali priest. The unavailability of Buddhist monks has been a major problem for the Tamangs. However for funeral

rites they prefer to bring monks from Salugara (Siliguri) and Darjeeling hills. The worshipping of *Goddess Kali*, *Tulshi* (holy basil plant), *Chanchala Kali Puja* (village feast), *Durga Puja*, *Saraswati Puja*, which are an integral part of Bengali Hindu religious culture are now done by the Nepalis as well. Most of the Nepali youth are the members of Bell Tala Park Puja Samity and take active part with their non-Nepali neighbors in organizing community ceremonies and festivals, although they continue to organize their traditional festivals like Dashain and Tihar. They celebrate only the important Nepali festivals like Tika, *Bhai Tika*, *Lakshmi Puja*, *Dausi* and *Bhailo* (a kind of customary singing and dancing similar to carol of the Christians). The other traditional festivals and rituals seem to have disappeared from their cultural life. The younger generation is largely unaware of the traditional meaning and significance of these festivals. There are few Nepalis who do not celebrate Dashain and Tihar but follow all the major Bengali festivals. Thus, in course of their adaptation in the new environment the Nepalis have lost of the elements of their own culture and adopted some cultural traits of the dominant Hindu Bengali neighbours. The traditional typical food habit of the Nepalis comprising *bhat-dal-tarkari-achar* (rice-legume soup-curry-pickle) has been partially modified; they now generally take rice, fish and other Bengali dishes cooked in a Bengali style. The traditional dress pattern has also been lost in course of their adjustment in the new society.

Some Reflections from the Field

The presence of *dhaja* or *lungder* in some houses indicates the continuation of Buddhist tradition and culture. The unavailability of the Buddhist Monks has been a major problem for the Tamangs in performing their religious rites and rituals. However; they still continue with their tradition by bringing Monks from Siliguri (Plains of Darjeeling district) which is about 300 kms away from the Balurghat. Worshipping of Goddess Kali has been accepted by the Nepalis in this Busti, although it is not a part of mainland Nepali culture. The Nepalis have constructed a Kali temple (*Kalibari*) in their locality where they worship the goddess every day.

The construction of a rest-shade (*Choutara*) in the Busti, by one Bhagimaya Darjee in the name of her deceased husband Dhankishor Darjee who was originally from Mungpoo (Darjeeling), indicates continuation of Nepali/hill culture. However, the language that has been used to write the name of donor and the deceased person is Bengali. The Nepalis believe that the construction of *Choutara* by family members gives peace to the deceased person's soul. It has a greater significance in the life of hill people because

they have to walk a long distance in their everyday life as these are places where a tiring traveler can take rest and refresh. According to an oral tradition it was the Majhi (Fishing) community among the Nepalis which used to practice this tradition but later other groups also have adopted it.

Conclusion

A community or a social group is socially defined by its language, religion, ancestry, life style, tradition and a common culture which pass from one generation to the next through the process of socialization, enculturation and performance. However, it may not be always possible for a small community living away from their place of origin and in the midst of a different yet dominant community to maintain the purity and distinctiveness of its tradition and culture. The problem of adaptation and adjustment in new environment has been one of the major problems for the migrant community. The continuous process of interaction and adjustment in new environment with the members of the host society has brought about some changes in their socio-cultural system and there have been some modifications in the social and cultural life of the Nepalis. The significance of Nepali language and culture has been decreasing particularly among the young generation although the older generation sticks to its language and culture. There are a few Nepali families which are on the verge of amalgamation into Bengali culture but they are recognized as Nepali by their neighbours no matter whether they speak Nepali language or not or follows Nepali tradition or not. Community background has been a strong indicator behind their recognition and identity in the locality. Most of the Nepalis in Nepali busty are related to each other either by consanguinal or affinal ties. Although they have adopted some of the socio-cultural traits like food habits, dress pattern, language etc. of the host society, most of them maintain their own community identity and celebrate major Nepali festivals like Dashain, Tihar and others. This is because of their residential segregation into one colony and it is the most important factor behind simulation of their culture. They are economically integrated into the host society. However, from the community perspective they constitute a sub-system with a distinct culture and identity within the grand system. Thus, it can be said that the Nepalis of Balurghat have adopted the cultural and traditional elements of the host society but in totality they still maintained some kind of distinctiveness of their own community identity.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at UGC-SAP sponsored national seminar on 'Backwardness, Development and Communities in North Bengal', organized by the Department of Sociology, North Bengal University, on 26-27th March 2015. I am indebted to my teachers and friends in the department of Sociology, NBU for their guidance, valuable comments and moral support.
- 2 The 'mainland Nepali population' indicates Nepalis of Darjeeling district and its contiguous areas of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar district of Northern North Bengal, India. They constitute numerically and socio-culturally a dominant position in the region. Darjeeling hill is well known for the socio-cultural, political and literary development of the Nepalis in India. I personally consider Darjeeling as the *kipat* of the Indian Nepalis. During my field work also many respondents were taking Darjeeling as their frame of reference by saying "*yo jaghata Darjeeling jasto chaina*" (This place is not like Darjeeling).
- 3 Since inception Darjeeling is cosmopolitan in nature and it is also the homeland of several hill communities like Bhutias, Lepchas, Tibetans and the people of plain origins like Marwari, Bihari, Bengali and others.
- 4 The Nepali language was known by various names in different historical periods like *khash Kura*, *Gorkha Vasha*, *Paharia* and *Parbathya vasha*. This language is regarded as one of the National languages under the 8th scheduled of the Indian constitution in 1992 and it is the official language of the hill region of Darjeeling district, West Bengal and Sikkim (Karkidoli 1993).
- 5 The Nepali society witnessed a revivalist movement in Darjeeling hills, Dooars and Sikkim particularly after 1990s. They are demanding for the Scheduled Tribe status under the Indian union. Most of them have started practicing their traditional non-Hindu believes and practices. It is very interesting to know that most of the intermediary castes have started giving-up the traditional Hindu festivals like Dashain and Tihar including Hindu religion.

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Significance of “*thar*” in the Social Structure of the *Khambu Rais*: Some Observations

Smriti Rai

Abstract: *Although Khambu Rais of Darjeeling have now absorbed different mainstream religions/practices we have very little information on what originally constituted their culture/tradition. The Khambu Rais are commonly understood to be a single group but an examination of their past would reveal that innumerable sub-groups known as thars constitute what we know as Khambu Rais. This paper examines the diversity and commonality found among the Khambu Rais on the basis of their social structure. An attempt to understand the complex nature and functioning of the thars can also illuminate cultural aspects of the Khambu society of the Darjeeling hills.*

Keywords: social structure, kinship, clans, lineage, tribal groups, culture.

Introduction

Rai tradition relates that the first of the ancestral Kirati entered Nepal's eastern hills through the Barakhshetra gorge of the Kosi Valley, the natural gateway into the region through the Mahabharat Range, which separates the hilly hinterland from the plains. According to the story they were three brothers, Khambuho, Menho and Meratup. Once through the gorge the brothers separated, each taking his respective followers, and set out independently, as they penetrated up the different river valleys, such as the Sun Kosi, Dudh Kosi and Arun Kosi. Most Rais in the Middle Kirat claim descent from Khambuho, and, in fact, Middle Kirat is known as Khambuan; but some, such as Chamlinge and Sampang are thought to be descendents of Meratup and others descendents of Menho.

This is one version of the story/myth of the *Khambu* ancestors. Similar versions of story depict the origin of other *Khambu* clans and groups. But one thing the story tries to tell here is that *Khambus* as a group are the descendants of the brothers who in course of time diverted to different directions thus creating diverse clans and sub-clans in the process. The term *Khambu* is the derivative of the word *Khambek*, meaning land, *Khambungwa* meaning “the first man” and *Khamwapu* meaning the “sons

of the soil”. Similarly the term *Kham* in the *Bantawa* language of the *Rais*, which also means “land”, denotes that the word *Khambu* would mean “landlords” (Subba 1999).

Clan structure

The popular sayings in Nepali like “*jati rai tyeti kura*” (there are as much *rai* dialects as there are *rais*) and “*Dus Rai, Das Bhasa: Ek chula*” (there are a number of *rais* and numerous *rai* languages but the commonality lies in their culture) ascertain the diversity within the single *Khambu Rai* group on the basis of clans, which forms the basis of similar other differences as well. Among the *Kirati* groups *Khambu Rais* have their unique features by which they are divided into numerous discrete local groups, having almost similar social structure and who share distinctive *Rai* cultural features. The sub-groups exhibit marked social and cultural variations (Mcdougal 1979).

The *Khambu Rais* are not a homogeneous group but conglomerate of tribes or clans (*thar*). *Rai* includes a number of *thar* segments which is again further sub-divided into *pachha* (lineage) and *samait*. To discuss about the creation of the *khambu* clans is almost impossible in present context as Sir Eden Vansittart (1896) has said: ‘to get a full and correct list of *Rai* tribes and clans would, I believe, be impossible, as numbers of fresh clans are continually being added. Any peculiarity of manner, speech or habit is apt to give a nickname, which becomes a clan. The fact of living in any particular district, or marriage into any particular clan, often causes the creation of fresh clans.’ Although a good number of efforts have been made by different scholars to give the exact number of *Khambu Rai* clan divisions the findings of one scholar hardly matches that of another scholar. The number of *Rai* clans widely differs in the accounts of different scholars. Thus, Campbell (1840), for example, proposed a list of 28 sub-groups, Hodgson(1858) compiled a list of 17, Sir Herbert Risley (1891/1981) estimated *Rai* clans and kindred to be around 57, Vansittart (1896) put the figure to 45 and John Morris (1993/1933) listed down 73 *Rai* clans (including *Yakkha*). In the records of the KKRSS (*Kirati khambu Rai Sanskritik Sansthan 2004*) there is mention of around 37 *Rai* clans.

The divergence of clans among the *Khambus Rai* is one of the important structural components that have its persistence till date. Each *Khambu Rai* clan has its own oral history or story/myth to support their clan origin as well the social norms associated with the clan. A sense of being

Khambus/Rais as one group is diluted when it comes to different clans and the associated language, rituals and ancestors. Even the exact number of clans, which work like sub-groups, are not known. The kinship structure of a Rai *clan* is like a loosely structured system of hierarchically arranged agnatic descent groups. The members of a given unit at any level claim common agnatic decent and common ancestors, although not every individual member has a clear idea about all this. Often clans are grouped into branches, branches into sub-tribes and sub-tribes into tribes (McDougal Charles 1979). That is the reason why for the *Khambus* both the clan and lineage have separate words i.e. *thar* and *pachha* respectively (Subba 1999). One can examine, as an illustration, how *Bantawa* clan of *Khambu Rai* is structured with its sub-groups.

The sub-groups of *Bantawa* clan are as follows:

Amchoke, Desamum, Khamle, Packhole, Baralamcha, Dilungpa, Kumara, Ruchibo Banu, Baralung, Dungmali, Logum, Rungmangcha, Bungchen, Harimana, Mongpang, Sutuna, Bungchi, Butangpyer, Nacha, Tanglukwa, Darpali, Kaung, Newang, Kowa, Dikupa, Makera, Samsong, Bilpali, Hangchen, Lungum, Samewa, Aripang, Dibet, Kemyung, Pungcheh Ang, Bokhim, Babak, Diem, Kimdin, Rahadung, Chinamkhole, Katonjeli, Nacharing, Rajalim, and Hankim.

According to Subba (2001) *Khambu* is a community/group/tribe and *Bantawa*, *Chamling*, *Khaling*, *Kulung*, *Thulung*, *Sangpang*, *Nechali*, etc are clans and *Tamangchha*, *Thimra*, *Morokha* and *Wadiri* denote lineages. But clans like *Ishara*, *Khamtu*, *Charghare*, *Kangmang* are sometimes written as *thar* and at other times as *Pachha*. Thus the boundary between clan and lineage is not rigid or fixed in their society (Subba 2001). Another interesting aspect of *Rai* clan structure is the presence of *Samait* (represents brother and sister together as ancestors). Thus even if *thar* or *pachha* is different, the individuals may belong to the same *samait*, which is an exogamous group and they have to observe mourning in case of death of one of the *samait* members. The *Bantawa* clan of *Khambu Rai* has different *samait* for male and female members. For the male members there are two *samait* but for the females there are four.

<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Changcha	Chenkhama, Bungkhama
Natcha	Chimitma, Changkhama

Samait is a ritual name and has its connotations of honorific ancestral title. This name is important in ritual for the purpose of recognition by the ancestors so that respect is given to the original order, thereby strengthening it (Hardman 2000). Thus for *Khambu Rai*, even if the *thar* and *pachha* are the same, *samait* of the individual members and their families can be different. Speaking about other processes through which the *Khambu* clans increased in number over time is through clan-fission i.e., splitting of the one of the proto-clan; dispersal and separation and immigration to a new locality and adoption of *Khambu* clan names. For example, *Chinamokhole* clan of the *khambus* derived its name from *Chinam* which is a place in Bhojpur in *Majh Kirant*. So the people of *Chinam* became *Chinamokhole*.

Marriage rules

Most of the clans, however localized, consist of several lineages which are agnatically related. Line of patrilineal descent or patrilineal clan is conceived as “bone” (it defines whom a person cannot marry). Marriage rules allow “breaking the bone” and division of the clan by marriage between members of the same clan only after seventh generation. When two lineages of the same clan have reached a depth of seven generation a marriage is allowed between them. If this opportunity is missed marriage again becomes forbidden between segments of the clan. A marriage would be considered incestuous in any generation before the seventh and any generation following. Thus the importance of the notion of bones provides a basis for a marriage rule for the *Khambus* (Hardman 2000). Again, a *khambu* should not marry any woman of his mother’s natal clan within three generations i.e. only in the fourth generation such marriages are permissible. If any union occurs before the third generation it is classified as *dudh-phora* meaning “to break the milk”. Again marriage is allowed with “*pani chal jat*” (caste above the polluted one) and usually such marriages in which a daughter is given or daughter-in law is received from has to be announced (give a *bagdatta*) that from today a lady of this *thar* (clan), *pachha* and *samait* does not belong to this family or in case of daughter-in-law is approved as member of a particular family she is accepted to this *thar*, *pachha* and *samait* respectively. Marriage is prohibited (and regarded as incestuous) among blood relatives/cousins among the *Khambu Rai*; such marriages, if at all take place, are termed *Chitaki* (marriage between brother and sister) and *Pataki* (marriage between sons and daughter of two sisters).

Pachha (lineage)

The origin of the *pachha* (sub-groups) is shrouded in myths/folk-tales. The tales of the sub-groups (*pachha*) of the *Bantawa* clan of the *Khambu Rai* would go like this.

The ancestors of the Newahang had come to the Kirat Pradesh from the coastal region of India and settled there. One of the descendants of that lineage at some point of time became a “hang” (king). In Khambu dialect “newa” means sea and khambu words often ends with “pa”; thus the word “newapa” is formed. Again they used to be a kingly (hang) group once, thus originated a word Newahang. They are a sub-group (*Pachha*) of Bantawa clan of Khambu rai and they exist till today.

Similar stories are found for other clans of *Khambu Rai*. The story about the origin of sub-groups (*Pachha*) of *Sorong thar* (clan) is like this.

The ancestral father of the Sorong clan died all of a sudden after having four sons. A widow mother brought them up. As their mother was hard-working, their family was self-sufficient. All the four brothers grew-up, but grew very selfish. The eldest one was greedy and once with a plea to make honey in a cliff, he commanded them a task to perform, thinking of pushing them from a cliff but was unsuccessful. The second-eldest (*maila*) brother was of the same nature. He too had similar bad intention. Once he brought some poisonous-roots (*Bis-tarul*) from the jungle and asked the mother to prepare “jar” (a home-made alcohol prepared with millet, wheat). With an intention to kill all the family members he added that root in that drink and pretended to drink while the rest drank and died. The youngest brother drank less and was unconscious for a while. Since the second-eldest brother was a fraud, he was known as “ramthang soreng” and since the youngest brother survived after a suffering he was known as “khekdang soreng”. Later the descendents of these two brothers were known by similar sub-group (*pachha*) names.

Similar story follows about the *Sanhone* clan(*thar*):

The ancestor of Sanhone was blamed to be a wizard and driven out of the community with the help of the villagers by one *mangpa* (shaman) who disliked him. Sanhone managed to cross Arun river, but while running in the jungle to save his life nothing remained in his body. He was naked and could not go to the village. While staying there in hiding he was about to die of thirst and hunger; by chance he met a group of fisherman who provided him clothes and took him to their village. While staying in that village he got

married to a lady and had two sons, Subhara and Nathika. Thus two sub-groups (*pachha*), namely, Subhara Sanhone and Nathika Sanhone, emerged out of one Sanhone clan.

Similar myths and stories follow each and every *Khambu* clan-groups as well as sub-groups (*Pachha*). A mention like ‘*nau lakh Kirat*’ (nine lakh *Kirat*) ascertains their large numbers and divergence in terms of clan and sub-clan groupings.

Language

Thus *Khambu Rai* are a form of a disparate collection of small tribal groups with marked linguistic variation. The clan-based distinction has its bearing in the variation of *Khambu Rai* language. Each *thar* of the *khambu rai* is believed to have its own dialect. Grierson (1909) has counted 18 speech forms, which, in most cases, are mutually unintelligible. Schlemmer (2010) reports 22 *Rai* languages based on the official census. According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1951) among others, *Rai* language have a pronominalised (resembling or functioning as a pronoun, having an Austric/Kol influence) which strongly indicates earliest migratory waves of these people compared to other Tibeto-Burmans whose language are non-pronominalised. Taking into account the differences Kirat Rai Bhasa Tatha Sahitya Parisad (*Kirat rai* language or literary body) has grouped *Rai* languages in the name of the tributaries of *Saptakosi* river under four division like *Sunkosi* groups (*Jerung, Wambule, Tilung, Chamling, etc.*); *Dudhkosi* groups (*Khaling, Thulung, Kulung, Bahing, Nachhring, Sotang, Kowi, Dumi, Sampang, etc.*); *Arunkhola* groups (*Yamphu, Lohorung, Mewahang, Bunglawa, Bantawa, Dungmali, Chitang, Chiling, lingkhim, Fangduwali, Mugali*); and *Tomarkhola* group (*Belharey and Athpaharia*). Now about twenty-six languages (or dialects) are believed to have survived. Although today it is the *Bantawa* language that has its popularity among the *Khambus* as it is regarded simple, widely used and known by most *Khambu Rais*. Regarding the script of the *Khambus* it was the *Sirijanga* script which was regarded by the *Khambus* as theirs but when *Limbus* claimed that *sirijanga* script belongs to them, *Sumhang script* at present is used/regarded as *Khambu* script.

Kirat Mundhum

Mundhum (prayers in verse, which are handed down from generation to generation orally) act as a pattern or model in which different *Khambu*

Rai groups, define their kinship relations. It is a part of the *Kiranti* way of life. It contains knowledge about the ancestral past and a means to maintain a past in the present. Thus an ancestral past becomes an intrinsic and ever-living part of the present, acting as a constant reminder of consciousness about the past, morality and correct order of nature and society, a correct form of relations which have to be respected. The ultimate strength, support and protection of their society and the individuals within it are seen as coming from the primeval past, from the original beings and ancestors, their lore and traditions, and from the intermediate power that was invested in the natural order of the world. It is the *mundhum* which distinguishes one *kiranti* tribe from other *kiranti* and non-*kiranti* tribes and also links them to other *kiranti* groups. *Mundhum* gives each tribe (and sub-tribe) the necessary cultural identity and unity. It is one of the key ways in which each tribe maintains its boundaries and experiences and expresses its own distinctiveness in relation to the other groups. In particular it sets each tribe apart from the Hindu groups and places them closer to those who share many of the same traditions and concepts (Hardman 2000).

Kul-puja/Pitri-puja (Ancestor worship)

In the absence of any written record of the *Khambu* rites and rituals their knowledge is preserved in the form of “*thuthuri ved*” (words passed on orally) which is known to the *mangpas/mangmas* (shamans) of the *Khambu Rai*. They claim to have preserved their ancestral traditions and cultures. *Khambus* who are divided into various *thar* (clan) and *Pachha* have their clan-specific rites and rituals but give equal importance to them. Thus “*dus rai, ek Chula*” (ten rais, one hearth) is the spirit followed by all Rai clans despite having differences in language and rituals. One can find in every *khambu* household an ‘ancestral-hearth’ (*samkha/suptulung*) made of three stone which symbolizes their common faith/belief. In the month of *Mangsire* (November-December) with the ripening of paddy (*dhan*), millet (*kodo*), ginger (*aduaa*), etc., the *Khambu Rais* perform their *Kul-puja* or *pitra-puja* (ancestor worship). The three stones that make the *Chula* are known by many names like *Sitlung* or *bada/sawalung* (male stone), *mitlung* or *chhekulung* (female stone) and *rumilung* or *taralung* (witness stone). Hearth of the *Khambus* where their ancestors are believed to be present are generally worshiped twice (in June-July and November-December) every year. Some Rai clans, however, worship their ancestor once a year in *Mangsire* (November-December). The *Khambus* perform all their rites and all religio-cultural practices at this fireplace, which

is sacred; an exemption of which is believed to result in death in the family, pain-hardships, disease and other kinds of sufferings. The Rai’s perform these traditional practices with great deal of care and involvement.

Among the *Khambu Rais* there is a tradition of not eating anything new (*nuangi*) - fruits, cereals, etc. without offering it to the ancestors through a ritual. The items required to perform their *kul-puja* varies according to clan. After the worship is over a feather of a fowl is burnt to make powder, which is mixed with rice, meat and ginger. The thing thus produced is the *Prasad* which is offered to the ancestor/god. The *Prasad*, which is popularly known as “*wachippa*” among the *Khambus* is distributed only among the *Rais*.

Sakela & Sakewa (Festivals)

The festivals *Sakewa/ubhauri* (festival in the month of *jyest*) performed for good crop and *Sakela/udhauri* (festival in the month of *bhadra*), a thanks giving ceremony during harvesting period ascertain that the *Khambu Rais* are nature worshippers. During these festivals the *Khambus* perform ritual dance on two occasions – *Udhauri* (March- April) and *Ubhauri* (November-December). These two performances are the important markers of *Khambu* culture. These dances are usually performed depending on the agricultural calendar by man and woman in group (sometimes simply by woman). They dance in a circle, accompanied by cymbals (*jhaympta*) and drums (*dhol*), where dancers usually mime agricultural acts. These dances are performed to ensure agricultural prosperity by pleasing the ancestors and the land. One can notice some changes in the dance forms. Earlier there used to be blood sacrifice, and use of alcoholic drinks, which are no longer found. The continuation of the dance forms demonstrates as feeling of togetherness and a symbol of community solidarity (Schlemmer 2003/2004: 135).

Mangpas/Mangmas (Shamans)

The presence of religious functionaries known as *mangpas/mangmas* (shamans) itself is an interesting aspect of *Khambu* culture although their number could be very small. The Shamans serve the community members and they are in great demand throughout the year. To be a *mangpa* is the result of a divine selection. Anyone who receives the blessings of the ‘*deuta*’ or deity becomes a *mangpa*. It is believed that the deity (*deuta*) takes over

complete charge of the man's body and is entirely responsible for the instructions and recantations spoken by the *mangpa*, who is regarded merely as a human vehicle through which the spirits works. A process of acquiring knowledge and becoming a *mangpa* requires a *guru* (guide). The life of the *Khambus* revolves around these shamans who are believed to have special power to communicate with the spirits or the ancestors and use their instructions for human good. Consultation with the so called *mangpa* is a must whenever there are unwelcome incidents of illness or misfortune in *Khambu* family. Risley notes '*Rais* are compassed about by a multitude of nameless evil spirits, who require peculiar management in warding off their caprice. To appease and propitiate these is the special function of the *bijuwa* (shaman), a class of wandering mendicants peculiar to Sikkim and the Eastern part of Nepal' (Risley 1891). Among the *Khambus* the services of their *mangpa* is demanded on all occasions from birth to death.

Birth rituals

The birth of a child in a *Khambu* family is a ritualistic occasion which involves maintenance of certain do's and don'ts. The birth of a *Khambu* child generally takes place in the paternal house, except sometimes in the maternal house usually referred to as '*choowakhim*'. The birth of a new child in *Khambu Rai* family is termed as *Hangcha pukma*. The time it is known that the lady in a family has conceived she is put under a lot of restrictions, like not to give any bad news to her, not to say anything that might give her a tension, not to allow her to go to a place of accident, not to allow her to participate in any inauspicious programme, not to allow her to see a dead body, not even that of an animal, and so on. The reason for imposing these prohibitions lies in the belief that anything "bad" communicated to the mother can have an adverse effect on the baby in the womb. The shared belief is that anything that impact upon the mother is likely to have its influence on the mental and physical development of a child. Thus, a child must get a healthy environment before birth to be born healthy. This shows the far-sightedness of the *Khambu* predecessors.

One or two month before the birth of a child a kind of ceremony (*Chankhi*) is done for the protection of womb and the health of mother and child with the help of the *Mangpa* and *nachhong*. The house where the baby is born is called *Chankhi* and is regarded as polluted. In this regard the family members, relatives and neighbours follow certain restrictions.

- i. The family members of the house where the child is born should not pluck anything like flowers and fruits nor should they work in the field till the day of name-giving ceremony (*Nawran*).
- ii. The hearth of that family is regarded as polluted thus for all the male members of that family an arrangement is made to cook food in a separate place. The food prepared for the mother of a new born (*Chayangkuma*) is not shared with any other members of the family.
- iii. Male members of any other household maintain a distance from the said house (*Sutak-pareko*) and avoid visits and any meal cooked in that house.
- iv. A female member of Khambu Rai is not allowed to give birth to a child in her family of orientation.
- v. After the food which is to be eaten by mother (*Chayangkuma*) is ready that food is put on two bananas leaves - one on the front side other on the backside. This is done with the belief that those women who might have died at such a stage might expect the food and if one eats without following this practice might suffer from problems.

Death rituals

The role of *mangpa* (shaman) is important and a must in performing the rituals concerned with death. The *Khambu Rais* mostly bury the dead but cremation is also practiced. A burial ceremony is usually performed by a religious head (priest). Mourning is observed by the nearest kinsmen of the deceased, who abstain from eating salt, oil, meat, etc. for five days in case of male and three days in case of female. After the mourning on the fourth and the sixth day in case of female and male death respectively a purification ceremony is performed through various rituals. On the same evening of the day of purification, a *mangpa* (shaman) conducts an elaborate rite called "*chinta*". On this occasion the soul of the dead is called by the *mangpa* who is asked about its unfulfilled desires or reasons for his/her death in case of unnatural death. The dialogue between the soul and the priest sometimes continues for long hours and all the relatives and other elderly persons present also persuade the soul along with the *mangpa* in different ways so that it agrees to go and reside in their respective places.

Dance forms of the Khambus and their dieties

The *Khambu* festival is generally celebrated through the performance of the popular “*silli* dance” along with their own *khambu* songs, dance-steps and musical instruments. This dance form depicts life cycles of birds and animals, or cultivation process. There are variants of *silli* like “*bali hang silli*” (story associated with it of *bali hang* king), “*bhuruwa silli*”, “*chasum silli*” and so on.

Despite being nature worshipper the *Khambu Rais* prefer to be known as the descendants of “*sumnima*” and “*paruhang*” who are regarded as their supreme (primeaval) dieties. They also worship a few natural agents like *Khoklihangma* the forest goddess, *Samkha* the hearth god, *Lelemma* the snake god, *Wairing* the hunter god, *Baktuncha* a hearth god, who is worshipped after the harvest (November-December) and is popularly known as *mangsire*. *Homkumang* is the supreme god of energy and *Satnanchiko* (snake god) is the affinal deity worshipped inside the house. *Chawamang*, the river god, *Helamang*, the monkey god, *Samkimang*, the dog god are worshipped with great enthusiasm along with *pitri puja* or ancestor worship. All these dieties are propitiated with the sacrifice of blood in order to avoid being subjected to different kinds of sicknesses.

Conclusion

The shared discourses of communities and their culture which prompt self perception and cultural practices change over time. The structural and cultural patterns that we gather about the *Khambu Rais* by analyzing the folk-tales, which are still preserved verbally, give an idea of the distinctive clans of this ethnic community and how the clan-based cultures are practiced. The *khambus* of the past are still identifiable but many of the traditional practices have undergone changes with the passage of time. Clan and language distinctive of various sub-groups could still be identified although there is a gradual fading out of this distinctiveness.

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Marxian Class Analysis in the Indian Political Context

Saikat Roy

Abstract: *Karl Marx in none of his writings has given a definition of “class”, a subject that has been widely discussed and used in social sciences. However, from his writings we can draw an understanding of not only “class” but also of what is known as “class model” of social analysis. The paper argues that an economic interpretation of class is “reductionist” because Marx has put enough emphasis on the social and political sides of class theory. The paper has also dealt with the problems associated with the application of the theory in interpreting the Indian economic, social and political order.*

Keywords: class, mode of production, class relations, non-class models of mobilization, trade unions, modernism.

Introduction

Marxist theory of class is based on certain basic principles. The basic assumption of Marxist argument is that the character of a society is determined by its mode of production. The modern industrial societies are based on the capitalist mode of production, which is fundamentally different from the earlier feudal mode of production. Secondly, the major classes in the capitalistic mode of production are - the bourgeoisie or the owning class that controls the forces of production like land, labour, capital, industry and so on. The other numerically dominant class is the proletariat, a class that does not control the forces of production. The proletariat survives by selling its labour power to the bourgeoisie, which the latter use for the production of surplus value, which, in turn, is accumulated as profit. In between these two major classes there are many intermediary or “middle” classes. The middle class consists of petty bourgeoisie and managerial class, intellectual medical persons and so on.

It is important to note at this point that by the time Marx had written *The German Ideology* (1932) and *Capital* Vol. 1 (1867), he had neither defined “class”, nor had he worked out how the concept was to be explained, despite the fact that he had isolated the principle of class formation at

different stages of historical and social development and had identified at least three distinct periods where classes had formed.

The conceptualization of social classes by Marx thus goes back as far as his early writings and can be found in works such as *The German Ideology* (1845), *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), *The 1844 Manuscripts* (1844) and *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847). If we consider the notion of class from Marxian concept of social relations, we can find class and class relations as the name for a certain type of structured social relation that is found within the field of the economy and the relations of subordination¹ that arise from it.

A class by Marxist definition is a group of people having similar position in class relations. Class relations in Marxist terms involve control of forces of production by different groups and the relations they enter into a production system. Marx argues that it is development that leads to the emergence of social classes; as soon as a society is able to produce more material goods than the bare minimum needed to survive, classes emerge. Lenin gave the following definition:

[classes are] large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are group of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy (Lenin 1971: 486).

This is a comprehensive definition of class in Marxist perception. According to this definition, classes are determined by both the social relations of production, and the control over the forces of production. The organization of labour is such that either the controllers of the forces of production themselves work with the tools and raw materials, or people separated from control do it². Marx once said that, a class should be united by a fellow feeling and a similar approach to life since the members undergo

¹ One of the first discussions of the relations of subordination in the context of nineteenth century economics is found in Marx's Preface in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Progress Publishers, 1970, pp. 19-22.

² See, 'Marxism and social class' by Jim Johnston and David P. Dolowitz in Andrew Gamble, David Marsh and Tony Tant edited *Marxism and Social Science*, 1999, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, p.132.

similar kind of social and political experiences. A class will also maintain uniformity in political action, since its role in the history of class struggle is defined. The bourgeoisie and proletariat are tied to each other by a relation of explanation. The proletariats generate surplus value for the bourgeoisie.

Class in Marxist interpretation is very much a political category. Participation in production relations and the resulting experiences would make them class conscious, which in turn would drive them to class struggle. Politically the bourgeoisie controls the power and the state for maintaining the existing exploitative class relations. The bourgeoisie make laws and frame political institutions to maintain its hegemony over property rights, society and culture. The proletariats, on the other hand, engage in political action to overthrow the bourgeoisie from power and take control of the means of production. The ultimate aim of class struggle is to destroy the capitalist mode of production and to establish a socialist society based on collective ownership of means of production. Marx attaches great importance to the organization of the proletariat into trade unions, gaining political power, compelling legislative recognition of their rights and interests, and above all, keeping up wages of collective bargaining, which could be achieved within a frame of bourgeois democracy. Karl Marx had predicted that the advance capitalist societies of the West would experience extreme class polarization and intense class struggle.

Marxian class analysis

In order to conceptualize class more explicitly, it will be useful to focus at a concept Marx used frequently in his work which he referred to as the 'system of social relations'³. Initially, the term social relations is used in social theory to refer to the set of social connections which arise between individuals when they engage in structured interchanges with society, but in the main these types of social relations arise within the production process carried on within the economy when we produce our livelihoods⁴ The

³ Most of the characteristics of social classes stated here can be found in *The Communist Manifesto* and the *Poverty of Philosophy*. An additional definition of class can be found in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* which states: 'In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them into hostile contrast with the latter, they form a class'.

⁴ For a discussion of the interconnections in social relations between bosses and workers see Marx, 'Wage Labour and Capital,' in R.C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1978, pp.203-17.

concept of social relations therefore identifies two immediate principles referring to society and social history. First, it refers to the system of social relations individuals enter into principally for purposes of production, which are always the immediate result of the social and economic necessity which acts on them. These social relations always reflect a set of definite connections with other individuals with whom they must relate, and it is always within the system of social relations that social activity takes place. Second, the concept refers to the way in which the system of social relations entered into by individuals always structure the conditions under which the various social interchanges with society take place, and this structure often manifests itself in the form of dominant and subordinate class relations which are exemplified in the relations between bosses and workers, landlords and tenants and producers and consumers. Sometimes, these relations are called “structured oppositions” in that the individuals who occupy the class positions within these relations are opposed to each other (Bourdieu: 1988, 1-34).

Marx tried to systematize class relations by noting that each of the individuals within the class relationship had different ranks, different powers and different privileges and gradations. Marx conceived of class relations in the form of structured oppositions where the individuals within the class relations had different and opposing interests. He thought that class relations are largely structured and even defined by the roles individuals play in economic production, and to this extent he looked at how different societies tend to structure the way in which individuals enter into class relations and the different degrees of coercion and force that existed within these relations (Morrison: 2012, 57).

Marxian class analysis in Indian context

Social scientists have debated the applicability of Marxist class theory to the Indian situation. Marx himself was sceptical about India. He considered India as a part of “Asiatic mode of production” based on its stagnant, immobile production relations. In Marx’s analysis the British rule in India was a positive step, because it introduced some kind of dynamism in otherwise immobile Indian society. The British rule revolutionised the land tenure system, helped destroy the caste based *jojmani* relation and speeded up the process of industrialization. In the later part of British rule, there was a steady march towards capitalist mode of production. The British also introduced in the first half twentieth century some democratic reforms

which facilitated formation of trade unions and working class movement. The British rule in India thus intensified the conflict between capitalist mode of production and feudal mode of production. However Marx did not spell out how and when socialist revolution will take shape in India.

The Indian working class has had a somewhat different historical origin than that of its Western counterparts. In most of the Western societies the origin of the industrial proletariat is traced to the town-dwellers-the artisans and other social groups of the town economy⁵. But the Indian industrial working class originated mostly from the rural poor and the subalterns, the dalits, who had to migrate to the cities in search of work. They were never free of the spell of caste system and strong attachment to the feudal order of the village society⁶. Caste and other forms of ethnic consciousness has been the main deterrent to class formation in India all these years. The situation has not changed much even when India in on the path of rapid industrialization.

In the post independence period scholars have debated the efficacy of the class model in understanding Indian society. In the industrial urban sector there has been a clear formation of the capitalist mode of production. The trade unions are there which have tried to organise the workers along class line. The trade unions like All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and the Centre of Trade Union Congress (CITU), which adhere to Marxist ideology, want the workers to be a revolutionary force. The other trade unions like Indian national Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and the Hind Majdur Sangh (HMS), however, want reconciliation between the classes; they are not, in any sense, against the capitalist system. Studies by the historians and sociologists have found that the Indian workers strongly maintained their caste, religions and linguistic identities. Despite being part of the working class the workers are divided as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and so on. They strongly identify themselves with their castes as well. This strong attachment to these primordial identities in the urban industrial context affects the emergence of class consciousness and class

⁵ For this, see Solomon, M. Schwarz, *Labour in the Soviet Union* (1951), p. 1. The nature of the social origins of the industrial proletariat in Britain explains why the lead in labour organization there was taken, not by the new types of workers coming from the country-side, but the older established craftsmen. (For this, see Hammonds, *The Town Labourer*). In Scandinavia the social origins of the working class and the prevalence of guilds created an organic connection between trade unions and medieval guilds.

⁶ see G. K. Sharma, *Labour movement in India* (1982), p.13.

unity. In a study on the industrial workers in Kanpur, Chitra Joshi has shown how a strong working class movement of the early decades of twentieth century got split with the rise of communalism in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s (Joshi: 1985). This is one of the main factors that raise doubts about the efficacy of class model to the analysis of Indian situation.

In the agricultural sector also social the social scientists have debated, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, whether the mode of production is “semi-feudal”, pre-capitalist or capitalist. In different states of India follow different land tenure systems. The land reform programmes have not been implemented in a uniform manner all over India. As a result, agrarian class relations, modernization of agriculture, commercialization of agriculture vary from state to state. In certain parts of India, particularly Panjab and Haryana, a kind of capitalist production relations can be found. Other features like investment of capital, use of modern technology, market-oriented selection of crops confirm the rise of capitalist mode of production in these states, which have seen no land reforms. But the situation in most other parts of the country is quite different. The confused and complicated nature of mode of production in agriculture also raises doubt about the applicability of class model.

Finally, if we examine the patterns of mobilization and growth of political parties, we clearly see that the communist parties are facing a clear stagnation; they are not growing in terms of support base. On the other hand Indian politics and political parties thrive by exploiting non-class identities such as religion, caste, language and religion. This also suggests that Indian politics primarily operates on pre-modern and primordial identities. In the post-colonial India the Indian National Congress had a long run in power but there has been challenges from North-East India, from Southern India and even from the North and West one can see the rise of regional politics, ethnic politics, secessionist movements, language-based sub-nationalism, *dalit* politics, which pose serious challenge to building a modern secular state. This line of mobilisation of the masses clearly comes in the way to class-based politics led by an alliance of the working class, the progressive section of middleclass and the small peasants. The regional political parties, which operate on ethnic line cash in on regional issues and demands, now pose serious challenge to national political parties. The ethnic identities essentially work as a counter force to class identity and class consciousness.

Conclusion

A careful reading of Marxist writings on class helps in understanding that “class” cannot be understood only on economic terms because it has socio-cultural and political implications. The class model has differential application in different countries and in different socio-economic-cultural contexts. While it could have serious relevance for the capitalist West it cannot be equally helpful in understanding a society like India where there are serious problems in defining the mode of production and where the non-class factors like caste, religion, language, and region are the identity markers of the people which also form the dominant base of political mobilization. In this paper I have tried to locate the Marxian class analysis in India from economic, religious and political perspective. We have to wait and see if a broad-based alliance of the *dalit* (which combines caste-based oppression and class-based exploitation) and working class emerges in Indian politics in near future.

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Nuances of Social Relations in Everyday Life

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Abstract: There are complex and critical and also unconscious nuances of social relations which cannot be captured by conventional anthropological terms such as HW, BZ, FM, FS, MD and so on. The micro sociological theoretical tradition tells us to go deeper into the mind, self and the social ambience to get to the strategies individuals deploy in managing their relations and in presentation of self and in management of impression in the public, in both the front stage and back stage.

By applying the autobiographical reflexive method the author of the present paper explores the close and proximate relations and the relations that are not so intimate in the family, in the extended kinship network, people in the friendship network, and the “significant others” who leave a lasting impact on the shaping up of a self. It highlights the tensions and stresses in the relations and the strategies the actors deploy in maintaining the relations in a “desired way”. The paper also discusses the core and the periphery of social relations and explains the logic behind locating the social relations in terms of priorities.

Methodologically the paper argues that language is a highly inadequate means to capture the complexity of thoughts about even more complex social relations, yet the social scientists apply strategies of descriptive and interpretative phenomenology in order to construct narratives on social relations from the participants’ points of view.

Keywords: self, relations, boundaries in social relations, impression management.

Introduction

Going by the existing theoretical standards, social relations can be taken as both structurally (determined by the conventions or institutions) and subjectively determined by the individual agency. In the structural approach,

social conventions, backed by power, would always want to typify the relations in set patterns in a hegemonic fashion, not allowing the individuals in the relations any autonomy to reinterpret and redefine the relations, deviating from the set patterns. The structural approach fails to acknowledge the fact that there is an active mind in the individual interpreting and reinterpreting all information in a new and critical light and there could be a “rebel” in all individual active to redefine the social relations and the world around her/him. There is also a third angle to the problem which is rooted in a wide mental space called unconscious, which both the structure and the subject try to conquer yet fail to conquer since the penetration of both these forces could be partial at the most. While responding to these “compulsive forces” the individual or the subject is under stress and it responds by drawing and redrawing boundaries in social relations, defining and redefining “I” or “we” and “they” and the “other” or whatever social situations they encounter. This drawing and redrawing of boundaries are partially a social act (collective) along the line of social conventions and partially an individual act since the agency in the subject gets a space to act autonomously, consciously and unconsciously, displaying a universal urge to maintain the distinctiveness of the self.

Methodology

Each social relation has a time-space and cultural-mental-practical context, which evolves with changing times. Therefore every relation in perception is relative, subjective and temporal. Only the participating subjects in a particular social relation can reflexively and phenomenologically draw an account of such relations. The external researchers/ observers have to depend on the mediated versions of social relations given to them by the participants in social relations (or the actors), which may not be “authentic”. Again, the understanding of two persons involved in a particular relation can be substantially different as they approach their relation from two different levels of cognition and even two subjective-cultural standpoints.

The Marxist idea of praxis (the existence-consciousness-action axis), structuralism, structuration theory, symbolic interactionism and reflexive methods can provide us with the methodological foundation to approaching the micro-sociology of social relations. Marx has outlined the dialectical and circular relation between the given body of ideological knowledge (or social conventions) (1), the experiences (where the actor is dialectically engaged with the conventions and lived experiences) (2), consciousness

drawn on the basis of the dialectics between these two forces (3), and action (4) ('Theses on Feuerbach' and *For Marx* by Althusser 1969). All these four components of knowledge formation and social action are dynamic as they keep changing with changing time and space and the key to this dynamics is the ever thinking and acting individual, operating at the subjective as well as collective levels. In the Marxist method cognition and action, at the individual and collective levels, cannot be separated. The Marxist method has been subjected to criticism for its class-determined holistic man, which does not talk much about the individual and her/his creative agency. The post-structuralist and post-modernist thinkers reject all forms of foundationalism, meta-narratives and over emphasis on the one-dimensional modernist man (and woman). Structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1984) has made an effort to strike a balance between the idea of given hegemonic structure and methodological individualism arguing that there could be a sense of structure which is not the given structure but a cognitive frame drawn out of the dialectics between conventions and lived experiences (something close to Bourdeau's idea of *habitus*). Bourdeau's (1990) "reflexivity" has placed in focus the process of cognition, which is essentially a subjective act (echo of Weber) which can be elevated to the level of "inter-subjective construct" (and echo of Durkheim 1895 and Schutz 1967).

The reality of social relations is that much as they find reflection in the consciousness of the participating actors, although with all its limitations. Therefore, introspection or reflexive method is the only method (which help construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the perception of "truth") that would be useful in unfolding the layers and complexities of social relations we live in, where one can uphold the sovereignty of experience, both in terms of descriptive and interpretative phenomenology. The problem in this method is that in following the autobiographical tract there is a possibility of being personal thus making "objectivist distancing" impossible. One can also risk being strategic and not being frank and honest enough with his/her narrative for salvaging the image or impression in public. The idea that has prompted this otherwise unconventional paper is that sociologists largely talk about others drawing from secondary sources while they are shy of exploring the treasure of their own "unmediated" experiences which could be the source of more authentic social narratives.

Evolution of social relations

All social relations evolve since the individuals participate in a relation are thinking, creative, dialogical agencies and the relation passes through

changing times and spaces. I would examine how some of my family relations have evolved over the years drawing from the way they have been recorded in my conscious, vigilant mind.

My parents: I do not remember moving round the village streets riding on my father's shoulder nor a moment in my father's lap or a moment from my early childhood of being cared and loved by my father. He was a dreaded primary school headmaster, beating me up left and right, every morning and evening whenever I sat down to study. Continuous thrashing day after day guided me to draw a self image of being absolutely worthless; it took all my confidence away, and loaded me with inferiority complex, and I started making silly mistakes, already suffering from forgetfulness, crazy for love and care. But I was not all that worthless. I was an average looking boy who had some virtues as well – good in mathematics and ranked among the top students in the early primary classes, good in village sports, good in swimming, good in climbing trees; a kind-hearted boy ready to help starving people and people in distress, a boy who used to sob profusely reading story books and novels. It was a matter of shock that my father did not notice any of the virtues in me. The torture and a sense of injustice rose to such an extent that I often thought life would have so beautiful had my father not been there. His frustration with me has remained a mystery, largely un-decoded.

However, this version of my father, which my tender mind had captured, turned out to be one-sided as I grew up. My mother told me that once, in my early childhood, I was about to die of chronic diarrhea and my father called a specialist doctor from the town and saved me spending beyond his means. On another occasion, I had meningitis and the doctors had given up hope of saving me. I was on and off with my consciousness and saw my father along with other members of my family crying. I saw my father being happy and appreciative when I started topping my class in class IX-XI stage, and then in college and university. He was one of the happiest persons around when I got admission for my M. Phil. – PhD. in Delhi School of Economics or when I received the C'wealth Post-Doctoral Fellowship. He was ecstatic when I got my teaching job, my first job, in the university. He was the one who backed my inter-religious marriage and was happy to see his granddaughter. He kept concerned about me because I lived away from him for many months first in England and then in Australia. My Australia visit in 2003 scared him a lot and I have gathered from my family members that he kept saying something wrong might have happened to me. He was desperate to talk to me but we did not have a telephone in

our Raiganj house. Because of such worries he had a cerebral attack in his sleep and had his lower part paralyzed. He was bed-ridden for about six months before crossing over on 15 January 2004. In the last months of his life he always wanted me, along with his other children, to be by his side and longed for my physical warmth. My family and professional obligations kept me away from him. Because of the “childhood” distance, which lingered for many years, I never felt easy touching him, massaging his head, hands or legs. He demanded the company of all his children and dear ones in his otherwise lonely bed room. After his death I had one of his photos laminated and kept in my drawing room for a couple of months but I felt terribly uneasy looking at his eyes. I felt, he was saying to me ‘you have not done enough for me’. As a means to avoid the uneasiness I gave away the photo to my elder brother, who has been one of his dearest children. A sense of regret of being shying away from him haunts me even years after he has crossed over.

Despite having studied only up to class III, my mother was an enlightened, caring, soft, and kind person. When I starved of my father’s love my mother doubled her love and affection for me to make up for my father’s hostile treatment. I was a part of her body for nine months, and then attached to her body for many months in my neo-natal and post natal stages and even when I was a boy I was close to her body and mind; she was the most loving person around. I used to cry with my mother when she suffered labour pain at the time of birth of my younger siblings (I remember at least two such occasions). During our worst days when we were fighting poverty and starvation I used to stand by my mother, helping her buying things cheap from the market, collecting firewood from the trees in our backyard, helping her doing domestic chores, sending her money on regular basis since I started earning (right from my fellowship days in early 1980s), being with her whenever she needed me. On the occasions of her ailments I massaged her head and legs. I always loved her company and shared all my personal problems with her being sure that she would stand by me. She loved being with me in my rented house close to university or in my university quarters for days and months. She loved my wife and daughter with equal intensity and always wanted to see me happy. After her departure in March 2012 I had her photo laminated and kept it in my drawing room and I draw inspiration looking at kind eyes every morning and every evening. I miss her badly although I have a full family to care for; I cannot forget her for a moment. I remember her with great fondness and admiration. Many of her qualities, particularly the one to help the needy, have strongly survived in me.

Wife: I fell in love with one of my students the very first day I saw her and she subsequently became my wife. She was not so stunning to be fallen for at the first sight but her sweet, caring, simple nature which had its overwhelming presence on her face and in her appearance carried me away. We have been in conjugal relation for the last 29 years and our relationship has become stronger and closer to total every passing year. While her surrender to me and love for me is total I have tried to be a caring husband all through, although, I doubt, my surrender to her has not been total. I have looked beyond her once although, fortunately, I did not progress much. In these years I have seen her as passionate wife, caring wife, a good friend ever present with her counsel at times of my personal crisis; she has been there with me with all her kindness and forgiveness when I committed mistakes. The phases in our relation and transformations have been distinct - from mad lovers, to loving-caring couple, to responsible parents and finally to caring aging friends. The last phase which we are presently in is most interesting and enjoyable. With aging, health worries are increasing and so is our interdependence; we have become more caring now than ever before. Ailments on either side make us more compassionate. I feel helpless in crisis but she comes forward to take me out of crisis. I take her as the last straw knowing full well that and she will never desert me even when everybody else might hide in comfort. She probably thinks the same way about me. The relation has turned jocular and we pull each other's legs all day long and express our mutual love through fake quarrels. Unlike me she has been less expressive all through but these days when I go out for a few days alone she misses me badly often saying 'I see darkness without you'. The raw passion is long gone but we care for each other with great sense of "pity" and compassion (Rousseau 2008). It has been something like good by Mr. Freud, welcome Mr. Rousseau. Now that our daughter lives away we have rediscovered our love and friendship and our everyday life is full of jokes and demonstration of how much we care for each other. I have become home-sick and love spending time with her. I realize this attachment for her particularly when I live away from her for weeks and months.

Daughter: Our daughter, now 26 years, is our only child. Because of constant prodding from my mother my wife and I briefly thought of having a second child, a son preferably, but my wife backtracked. She was not ready to go through the ordeal of bearing and rearing a child second time and we soon dropped the idea. Our daughter was already 9-10 years that time and she had stamped her complete authority over her parents. We thought, sharing parental love with another child would depress her and we

were not prepared to see her in any kind of mental stress. We would also have felt awkward sharing our love and care.

Both of us (me and my wife) are tender in heart and brought our daughter up with utmost care and love. We hardly ever scolded her or thrashed her. I have cautioned my wife many a times thinking that her careless or insensitive use of words might leave her hurt. Once in her late primary level I gave her a mild slap, losing cool, while helping her solve mathematics and I cried afterwards and cursed me for my act; it took days to restore the relation to normal smiling order. My daughter had serious ailments on two occasions. Sad and nervous I was feeling empty; it was like end of the world for me. I cried many a times and being in tension I picked up hypertension and blood sugar. In seeing her suffer and taking her to doctors and medical tests I felt the same emptiness, as if death was fast approaching me. A feeling of nothingness grasped me and I suffered from both physical and intellectual immobility.

Now she is grown up, teaching in a college, she has a fully grown persona. She understands her duties and responsibilities; always ready to stand by her parents and near and dear ones and friends. She is sensitive to the sufferings of the people around her and ready to help them out in her limited capacity. She has never given us trouble nor did anything to embarrass us. We feel proud at her achievements and happy to be her parents. On a selfish note it appears that we live for her alone. Our daughter-all life has seen us withdrawing to our selfish core to a large extent. This had an alienating effect on us particularly in terms of our relations with close kin outside our nuclear family.

Siblings: We are three brothers and five sisters, all married, and well-settled in life with their respective families. We grew up in a healthy family ambience exchanging care and love and at the same time quarreling, exchanging slaps and blows, and fighting over sharing of food and dress and yet sharing the same bed for many years in our childhood. As we were growing up we were given separate beds and rooms thus creating a physical distance. There was competition among us trying to outperform one another in school and board examinations and establish ourselves as the star or hero in the family and neighbourhood. Then there was a long phase of dispersal, starting with our sisters; they were married out one by one and the brothers too dispersed because they had different work places. The break in physical proximity over the years freed everyone from the everyday care and mutual responsibilities. The economic interdependence is no more and everybody is busy with their life and respective families and varied

problems. We do not usually seek help from each other when in problems. Now each of my siblings has the closer ones to care for and to be concerned about (e.g., the members of their own family). We still live on our memories of being together for so many years, sharing our sufferings, problems and moments of joy and achievements. Once in a while we call each other and gather in family functions and rites. Sometimes we do not see each other for months and years. We get sad to hear a bad news about any one of us. We still exchange festive gifts to remind ourselves about our relations. But the warmth has largely faded and also faded the functionality of the siblings. We are happy when somebody's child is doing well but unconcerned if their children are not doing so well. We are no longer indispensable for one another; nobody is going to breakdown when we start crossing over. The relation with the children of my siblings is not as strong as with the siblings and the relation and the attachment among the cousins and their children (the next generation) is even thinner.

Other kin: The blood relations two or three generation back have dispersed to faraway places and there is near complete absence of regular contacts. I have my father's younger sister and her family in my parental village in present Bangladesh with whom we have lost all contacts. Earlier, some 20 years back, we used to write to them postcards and inlands informing about the important incidents and occasions like birth, death, marriage and so on but the practice has discontinued; our relations too have stopped writing to us almost around the same time. The incidents that infuse happiness and sadness are not exchanged or shared. We also have blood relations who live not too far, even within 10 minutes walk. We have our FFBSs and their families within the district and in the neighbouring district. We have our MB's and BZ's families, also in the neighbouring district. But the relations, interactions, mutual visits, even emotional attachments have thinned out with the progress of time. The children of our blood relations do not even know each other and having no emotional bondage.

The "significant" others

We come in contact with so many people directly or indirectly in different phases of our life and most of them go "un-noticed" but some of them, may be very few, leave a lasting impact with their affection, love and care or with their ideas and I call them the "significant others"; they help shape our personality to a significant extent. They are the unsung heroes of our lives. I honestly feel that I have in me many of the ideas and attributes of my parents (like our approach to things that matter in our everyday life like,

caste, religion, friends, people who surround us, politics, social problems, superstitions, and many other things); I carry the legacy and pass it on to the next generation (our own child, niece and nephew, students and so on). Besides, I had my one grandfather (my father's youngest uncle), my father's sister, one of my mother's sister) and some of my friends, teachers, my idols (the world famous thinkers), who collectively contribute to the shaping of what I am. It's not that that I am always conscious of their influence but I strongly feel their presence in my perceptions and actions. It's not that I follow them blindly; I am, in fact, in an endless dialogue with them in shaping and reshaping myself; the formation of self is thus an endless process.

Concluding observations

The conventional way of framing and expressing social relations as HW, FM, FS, MD, or BZ and so on in social anthropology or sociology does not express the uniqueness and micro-social aspects of social relations. Relations can be studied only applying phenomenological-reflexive method (and not the structural method of Radcliffe-Brown 1940) since in social relations experiences of the participants, which are bound to vary, reign supreme, although the influence of "conventions" (socially structured forms which are at the same time legitimized by culture) and "language" cannot be totally ruled out.

Since we are dealing with our private space the account of the relations could be under-expressed, mediated to suit a particular image as a part of impression management strategy. This is a methodological problem which is difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

Every relationship is unique as they are dynamic; a lot of creativity and dialogue go into building and evolving a social relation. The traditions and the dialogical and dialectical participation contribute to the evolution of the social relations. The conventional consciousness, practical consciousness and the unconscious guide social relations while practical consciousness and may be the unconscious together bring about changes in the patterns.

Theoretically, the subjective understanding (Weber 1949), impression management (Goffman 1956), the idea of agency (Giddens 1984) the *habitus* (Bourdeu 1990), *sociological imagination* (Mills 1959) could be handy in drawing a sociological understanding of social relations.

So far as the boundaries are concerned, I or me constitute the irreducible core; in the second layer closest to the core is the nuclear family usually consisting of child/children and wife. In the third layer there are brothers

and their children; in the fourth layer there are my sisters and in the sixth layer are the children of the sisters. The altruistic attachment in the core-relations is likely to have a thinning effect on the relations in the outer layers. There is a possibility that some from the outer layer would find a place in the core while someone from the core would only have a peripheral presence, depending on the cultural time and space and how practical consciousness responds to the relational situation.

Why this selective proximity and distancing is difficult to explain. However, the principle of physical and mental proximity, the principle of reciprocity, the principle of quality, the principle of deficiency, and the unconscious could come handy in explaining the relational puzzle.

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