

Volume 8

ISSN: 2348-6538

March 2021

A Peer-reviewed National Journal

SOCIAL TRENDS

Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University



সমানো মন্ত্র: সমিতি: সমানী

University of North Bengal

Accredited by NAAC with Grade A

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Website: www.socialtrendsnbu.in

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Editor's Note: Need for an anti-spitting Abhiyan

Following its elevation to power in 2014 the BJP-controlled central government launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Mission) throughout the country to revolutionize the defecation and sanitation habits of the millions, who live in rural and urban areas. The Prime Minister of India launched the programme on 2nd October 2014, the birth day of Mahatma Gandhi, using the Father of the Nation's glasses as the icon. The Indian States have followed the central government initiative, although under different names, and implemented the programme as their own project. A recent report on the website of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, claims that all the States and UTs of India have already achieved 70-100 per cent of the target in the mission (<https://sbm.gov.in/sbmReport/home.aspx> accessed on 08.08.2021 at 9AM). Millions of rupees have already been pumped into the project, which undeniably has a mass appeal and, therefore, a vote appeal. This is one of the many essential yet populist policies that the neo-liberal State has embarked upon to hide the negative impacts of the system on the masses, especially the poor. If successful, this will go a long way to revolutionize the sanitation habit of the people in India. The provision of sanitary toilets to the people, however, does not solve the problem automatically; the real issue is to sustain the campaign and bring about habitual transformation of permanent nature, hence a cultural transformation.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan takes the traditional India to cross-roads, putting millions in a dilemma on whether really to cross the road and accept modernity and science in hygiene. To be successful the programme requires (1) a massive adjuvant infrastructure support, especially provision for running water, (2) a transfer of knowledge of maintenance of such toilets, (3) a massive paradigm or habitual shift, and (4) engaging people actively in the campaign. Making provision for running water in houses in the remote villages and making people change their age-old perceptions and practices are the most challenging of all tasks and without which the multi-million-rupee project is bound to fall through.

It is not the sanitation only that will make Bharat *swachh*. We need to work on some other areas like (1) safe drinking water for all, (2) hand and body hygiene, (3) food hygiene, (4) habit of wearing clean clothes, (5) complete

eradication of the habit of spitting in the public space, (6) cleanliness of the home premises and the public places and so on.

Of all these, spitting in public places is the ugliest and dirtiest of all the bad habits, which is practised by people, irrespective of age, caste, gender, class or level of education. The people would spit in hospital rooms, corridors of institutional and official buildings, inside the lifts in stations, and even in airports wash room corners, on the roads and lanes in the market place, on college and university campuses. In other words, they are the merciless compulsive sputters, who do not care for others, neither in normal times, nor in the abnormal time of pandemic. For the non-sputters, who care for public hygiene and adhere to civic values it is an everyday existential problem; they confront it helplessly with a great deal of irritation while on morning-evening walk, on travel by public or hired transport, while marketing or visiting offices, banks, ... everywhere.

For the compulsive sputters, spitting in public places does not create any civic or ethical crisis; they just do it habitually, completely shutting down their order of morality. Why is it so? The reasons could be (1) they have never received any lesson on public hygiene at any stage of their socialization, (2) a section of the sputters are addicts in *gutkah*, *khaini*, and *jarda* and pan, which gives them uncontrollable sensation for spitting, and (3) a complete lack of care for others. This practice, reproduced socially, leaves a gushing effect on the general populace. The justification goes like "everybody is doing it, why not me". There is no mechanism to check these "criminals", who pollute public hygiene and public space. I think, with an anti-spitting programme in place, this bad habit can be checked in family, in elementary schools (and ICDS centers) and in public institutions and offices. I would suggest that a programme on public health and hygiene should be an integral part of the primary school curriculum everywhere in the country. The already adults, however, could rid themselves of this bad habit by attending a few orientation programmes, while picking up the habit of self questioning and self regulation and, if necessary, through institutional monitoring. This is one place where systemic surveillance would not carry a bad undertone.

Unfortunately, the administrators of the institutions and public space seem to be passable with this social evil; they do not use their imagination or power to check this irritating habit. I once proposed, in one of the faculty council meetings, to one of the (ex)Vice-Chancellors of our university that we must undertake a programme, making a set of rules with punitive measures and launching an awareness campaign, to check this menace on

our beautiful campus. I offered my services to the campaign as well. But, neither the Vice-Chancellor nor any of my colleagues present at the meeting showed any interest in the proposal. This could be an indication that some of the social vices continue because there is certain degree of collective tolerance for them.

A new culture of hygiene based on science, however, involves peoples' access to economic capital, level of cultural capital, discourses on aesthetics (or will to good life) they adhere to and a sense of care for others. For a socio-political-economic order, which promotes individualization (courtesy Ulrich Beck² and Zygmunt Buman³) and moral pathology (Paulo Freiri¹) and runs on pre-scientific beliefs while spreading cultural pollution through private vigilant gangs, it is almost impossible to enforce a culture of public hygiene based on science, modernity and the ethic of collective wellbeing.

Prof. Sanjay K. Roy
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North Bengal University
9th August 2021

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Decoding the Anglo-Indian Woman: Discourses on Rape and Victimhood

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Abstract: *The Anglo-Indian community is recognized as a racial and linguistic minority in India. It also is recognized as a marginal community. This community has a history of over five hundred years and is a part of Indian polity with nominated representatives in the state legislatures and Parliament. An incident of rape popularly known as 'Park Street Rape Case' occurred on February 6, 2012 in Kolkata. The survivor an Anglo-Indian woman, Suzette Jordan, later died on 13 March 2015 due to meningitis. The incident created an uproar in the media because the state government had pointed towards the incident as a 'minor case' where the victim was labelled as a prostitute. This paper will highlight how the woman of a marginal community was socially harassed by the state, common people and on the social media from the time of incident and even after her death. It will especially highlight on the after currents on social media after Suzette died a natural death. The paper will use opinions posted on the social media on the issue as the bulk of the data with media reports on print and internet versions. The paper will argue how a woman of a marginal community was a victim to multilayered marginalization in the process.*

Keywords: Anglo-Indian women, Anglo-Indian community, Anglo-Indian community in post-colonial Kolkata, Marginalized communities in India.

Introduction

Men are regarded aggressors and initiators and women are regarded the gate-keepers and limiters in the ritual of sex. It means men are supposed to press for sex and women are supposed to resist. In such a ritual the line

between rape and seduction becomes blurred. Rape is by definition forcing sex on others yet there are some men who report that they have forced or coerced a woman but have not raped her. A woman may also say that she was coerced or forced into sex was not raped (Koss 1988; Lisak and Miller 2002; Kahn et al. 2003). Further there may be a significant number of people who apparently feel that a man is justified in forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse if she had sex with him before (Shotland and Goodstein 1992) or behaved in certain ways such as allowing him to pay for meals and entertainment or 'leading him on' and then changing her mind (Bostwick and DeLucia 1992; Emmers-Sommer and Allen 1999). In a cultural context where men are thought to need and desire sex whereas women are entitled to resist sexual activity unless they have been forceful from the start, the stage is set for a high rate of rapes of women by men (Lips 2015). A good example of radical feminist analysis of rape can be found in the writings of Catherine A. MacKinnon. She argues that in the type of society we live in, sexuality is "a social construct of male power: defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive of the meaning of gender. [...] Male and female are created through the eroticization of dominance and submission. The man/woman difference and the dominance/submission dynamics define each other (MacKinnon 1989: 113). Sexuality is permeated through and through by gender inequality and male dominance of women. This is true not only of some, but of all sex: from "normal" intercourse to prostitution and pornography to sexual harassment and rape.

MacKinnon invites us to compare the reports of rape victims with women's reports of sex and with the way pornography portrays sex, and claims that they all look very much alike. In view of this, it is difficult to sustain the usual distinctions between the normal and the pathological and between violence and sex. And rape must be acknowledged as "indigenous, not exceptional, to women's social condition" (p. 172). MacKinnon rejects the argument that rape is not really about sex but about violence, as it "fails to answer the rather obvious question, if it is violence not sex, why didn't he just hit her?" (p. 134). The truth of the matter is that rape is inherently both. The argument merely "makes it possible for rape to be opposed by those who would save sexuality from the rapists while leaving the sexual fundamentals of male dominance intact" (p. 135). The liberal takes the presence or absence of consent as the difference between legitimate sexual intercourse and rape. That would be quite appropriate, if the social conditions in which a woman gives or refuses consent were those of equality of power and freedom of choice. But the actual condition in which sex is negotiated in our society is not at all like that; the far-reaching gender inequality and

the domination of women by men in all areas of social life vitiate any consent that may be given. Much too often, perhaps even typically, women engage in sex they do not want. They are made to do so in all kinds of ways, ranging from actual violence to various types of explicit or implicit coercion to economic considerations or psychological pressures and needs. MacKinnon's illustrations include having sex "as a means to male approval; male approval translates into nearly all social goods" (p. 147), "acquiescence [to sex], the despairing response to hopelessly unequal odds" (p. 168), coercion "by something other than battery, something like economics, may be even something like love" (MacKinnon 1987: 88), as well as the following: "... We continue to stigmatize the women who claim rape as having experienced a deviant violation and allow the rest of us to go through life feeling violated but thinking we have never been raped, when there were a great many times when we, too, have had sex and did not want it" (pp. 88-89). In view of all this, the very idea of consent is no longer helpful nor, indeed, meaningful. Accordingly, MacKinnon proposes that "rape should be defined as sex by compulsion of which physical force is one form. Lack of consent is redundant and should not be a separate element of the crime" (MacKinnon 1989: 245). However, we are not told just what is to count as compulsion. In view of her examples quoted above, it seems to be a very wide notion – wide enough to imply that whenever a woman has sex with a man that she does not want for its own sake, but engages in it for some extrinsic reason, she is coerced, and therefore also raped. Let us discuss Suzette's case in the light of this argument.

The Incident: Trailing and Now

Suzette Jordan died at a private nursing home for illness on 13 March 2015. She was an ordinary Anglo-Indian woman who could never make to the headlines in regional and national newspapers. She was in the news because she was a survivor. Suzette a mother of two young girls, separated from her husband lived in a single room apartment in Kolkata. On February 6, 2012, she was raped by five men on a moving car at gunpoint. Till a year she was anonymous and referred in the media as the 'Park Street Rape case' – a case that created a furor in the media because of some comments from the ministers and politicians in power. The chief minister called it an orchestrated incident to malign the government. One of her cabinet colleagues and a minister of sports questioned Suzette's integrity as a woman and a mother visiting a nightclub and staying out of home for late hours. Another woman Member of Parliament of the ruling party said that the

incident was a deal gone askew between the woman and her clients. The then Police Commissioner also commented that this incident was a campaign to malign the police and the government. In contrast to these comments which out rightly questioned why the woman had been so free in choosing what she liked and wanted, Kolkata's first woman joint commissioner of police (crime) said 'something had occurred'. Two days after she cracked the case she and Joint Commissioner of Police (Headquarters) had to rush to the state secretariat to 'clarify' their stand. The Joint Commissioner told media after the meeting that 'Several newspapers have been reporting that I have been working on the case as an individual going against my organization. This is absolutely false. I have been successful only because of my team. This is not my individual success... The investigation is still on and we are yet to arrest more accused persons. But more than the probe, my personal life has become important for the media which I feel very disturbed about. I wanted to clarify this' (IANS, April 4, 2012, updated 20:17 IST). She was later transferred to the post of Deputy Inspector General of Police (Training), Barrackpore, considered a garage posting for an Indian Police Service Officer till now entrusted with solving complex crime cases in the metropolis.

On the evening of 9 February after three days of the incident Suzette went to the Park Street Police station to write a complaint. The policemen laughed at her and asked how she could be sure that it was an act of rape. The station's officer-in-charge pointedly asked what positions the rapists had taken to rape her. As the police men listened to the story they asked each other if they too were going for a drink that night. They laughed and looking lewdly at Suzette said, 'Who knows, we could get lucky tonight.' (*How do you survive being named 'The Park Street Rape Victim'?* by Shriya Mohan, Grist Media- Wednesday, 3, July 2013 viewed on 10 December 2015). Finally, she could register her case after two hours of questioning. On February 10, Suzette got a call from the Park Street police station that she had to get a court order for a medical examination. As there were no doctors available on the date and day after she was asked to come on February 14, eight days after the rape. On February 14, Suzette had to stand naked in front of four women (three doctors and an assistant). They poked and prodded her. She felt 'degraded, deeply humiliated' (Ibid). The doctors after examining her said she was lucky as she was fair and the marks could still be seen after a week. So it was finally proved that there were injury marks to her private body parts. Her rape was officially recognized and registered.

After collecting a copy of the FIR she told her story to a journalist working with a Bengali newspaper. The reactions from the chief minister and members of the ruling party, police commissioner were after reports of it were published. Suzette was saddened by such comments. She said, ‘the government blamed me for making the issue political and for all the frenzy it generated... But I never blamed anyone. I just wanted justice... it wasn’t just me who suffered... it was my sister, my brother, my dad who were discriminated against because of me.’ (Ibid)

On 18 June she decided to join a rally organized by a network of women’s rights organization called Maitree to protest the recent incidents of rape. It was the first time that a rape victim would appear in public gathering claiming her identity as a person denied her rights. Suzette said, ‘I was sick of being called ‘Park Street’. I realized that I can’t fight behind a mask. I had to make the point that we have nothing to be ashamed of. Society should be ashamed to make rape victims feel a stigma. Me? The ‘*Park Street Rape Victim*’ (Italics own)? Bullshit! I’m a mother, I’m a daughter, I’m a sister. People depend on me and love me!’ (Ibid)

After nine months had passed after Suzette’s death the three accused were sentenced for three years of imprisonment and a fine. In these nine months many incidents, comments surfaced giving this incident a critical movement. This paper is centered on the comments and incidents that led to multiple layered marginalization of the woman concerned rendering a window to the situation in which women of this marginalized community live in the state.

Patriarchy, Marginalization and furthering of the multiple layers

The Anglo-Indian community is a recognized minority in India and a marginal community. The Anglo Indians are “Western” or at least European in their self-proclaimed orientation insofar as the basic features of their culture are concerned. Their mother tongue is English, their religion is Christian, they dress like the Europeans and their family organization, food habit and general lifestyle bear the hallmarks of a “Western” cultural heritage. There is abundant evidence to suggest that they cultivate habits which bear close semblance to British social and cultural life but no substantial evidence to suggest that they share intimately and extensively the cultural life of the Indian people (with the possible exceptions of the Indian Christians with whom they share the common bond of religion and the Parsees and Armenians with whom they share the western way of social living).

Throughout their historical existence in India, they showed indifference towards Indian culture, history, and politics. They made very little effort to understand the religious and philosophical systems of India. There are very few Anglo-Indians who take the trouble to learn an Indian language. In the past they mainly interacted with English-speaking Indians and Europeans. At present they make a reluctant effort to understand and learn the local language because it is mandatory in schools and is sometimes required for jobs. Most Anglo-Indians have limited understanding of Indian art, music, and dance and take no interest in Indian literature. Most of them know less about the legendary personalities of India than about folk heroes of England and Europe. The Anglo-Indians are loath to wear Indian clothes. Members, who do so, often face harsh criticism. However, it should be mentioned that some women adopt the sari for special occasions and for jobs where it is mandatory. Anglo-Indians have a fondness for the Indian curries but they consider eating without cutlery unacceptable. The traditional Indian joint family has never been adopted by the Anglo-Indians who have stuck to the nuclear family as their sole kinship organization. The extended joint Indian family stands in sharp contrast to the more nuclear Anglo-Indian family. The Anglo-Indians completely reject the Hindu caste system. A degree of acculturation has no doubt occurred but the position of the Anglo-Indian community is still best perceived as peripheral to mainstream Indian culture (Gist 1960: 365-7).

Historically, the British rulers had kept the Anglo-Indians at a distance from themselves in matters of social intimacy. The former did not accept Anglo-Indians as marital partners although Anglo-Indian women were accepted in unconventional (non-marital) relationships. There are however a few instances of intermarriage between British men and Anglo-Indian women. This shows that the line of separation drawn was porous allowing undesirable crossings. There are also a few instances where the Anglo-Indians and the British worked together. One can think of the Christian missions and the people they served, of the British teachers in Anglo-Indian schools, and of the church where the pastor did not discriminate amongst his flock.

However, the Anglo-Indians *did* receive to some extent a preferential treatment from the colonial administrators in matters of certain professions and this gave them an economic edge over the other Indians. From this advantageous position they often viewed other Indians as humans of an inferior order (Ibid: 368). They constructed stereotypes of the Indians as dirty, lazy, corrupt, inefficient, backward and superstitious. Such

stereotypical images still prevail. But what is interesting here is that the Anglo-Indians themselves, scorned by the British, remained at the margins of British social life. The British looked down upon the Anglo-Indians who, in contrast, looked up to the British as their beneficiaries. The privileged position of the Anglo-Indians and their protected occupational position was often a source of irritation for other Indians who found it difficult to accept with equanimity what they considered unfair competition from persons whom they had come to regard as aliens. Once the British left, these protected jobs were increasingly opened up to competition. With the complete removal of job security by the 1960s, the Anglo-Indians, so long accustomed to job protection, found it difficult to obtain positions that would enable them to maintain their traditional way of life. Unemployment gradually reared its head and the economic position of the community languished.

In their writings, Anglo-Indian authors often sketch an image of the Anglo-Indian as one who lacks adaptability in post-independence India: this individual can neither give up her/his bias for the British way of life nor merge with the dominant Indian community. Wallace found that “freshness and breadth of vision” to be “almost entirely lacking”. The other features according to him “are social inferiority, over-sensitiveness, lack of confidence, independence or industry, precociousness in the young and immaturity in the older members” (1930: 6). Maher considers the essential elements of Anglo-Indian character to be “loyalty, devotion to duty, sportsmanship, generosity, physical courage, and discipline, obedience to authority, hospitality, a love for orderliness and a sense of responsibility concerning work tasks” (Maher 1962: 79-82). Frank Anthony’s observations in contrast are about the “extraordinary beauty of Anglo-Indian women, the sporting prowess of the members of the community, their valour in times of military crisis, their contribution in building the colonial infrastructure of India”. But he also points out the split psychology of the community, its alleged social exclusiveness and overwhelming community arrogance towards fellow Indians (1969: i-vi). Such wide-ranging sentiments probably provide the necessary counterpoint to the overemphasized stereotypical images described by other non-Anglo-Indian writers (Lahiri 1990).

Like the women of any community and culture, Anglo-Indian women live within the patriarchal structure of their community but what makes them different from others is that they face multiple layers of patriarchal domination: one within their own community and the other from the outer world. In this case, the demands and expectations of the multiple patriarchal structures faced by Anglo-Indian women intersect and overlap at points as

well as have distinct qualities. Thereby, the multiple structures are analytically distinct but in reality may be confronted as a single patriarchal structure by the subject. The women of the community are subject to all the layers of patriarchal domination at the same time and their responses to all these layers are different. For example, they may mutely accept the patriarchal structure of their community on the one hand but, on the other, they may harbour cynical reservations for the patriarchal structures of the outer world (in this case, that of India). All these patriarchies reinforce and reproduce masculinity and gendered power relations where the women may act as agents of patriarchal demands on other women. Let me first consider what the expectations of these multiple structures are among Anglo-Indian women and then take into consideration how they respond to these differing expectations.

The Anglo-Indian community is patrilineal. Though patrilineality does not automatically impose patriarchy, historically the recognition of the mother's contribution was absent in the early period of the community's development. This implies a male bias from the very outset. There are innumerable birth records and baptism records of the Anglo-Indians (then known as Eurasians) which do not show the name of the mother of the child. Scholars have identified these absentee mothers to be of Indian origin whose names were not recognized. Moreover, these Indian mothers were not recognized by their caste members either because they had defied their caste patriarchy and bore children of a *bidharmi* (heretic) and that too of a *feringee* (Eurasian). These women laid the foundation for the community but were derecognized by the same community. In later years, the women born to the community emerged as a subordinated group within the community with low status and stereotypical identity.

The status of the Eurasian or Anglo-Indian women was considered low from the inception of the community. It remained so in comparison to that of the European women who lived in India during the same time. As marriage of British officials with Eurasian women was discouraged from the nineteenth century, any emotional or sexual liaison with European men seldom matured into something of legal standing. So there are innumerable histories of Anglo-Indian men and women who were born out of wedlock as illegitimate children. These children automatically had a status lower to that of the children of legitimate parents from any community in India. There was rampant physical abuse of Eurasian women. In the journals published in the 1870s, wife-beating, female drunkenness, desertion by husband, poverty, squalor and high female mortality were recurrent themes

(Sen 2005). *The Calcutta Review* published between 1860 and 1890 show that the barrack wife (an appellation for a Eurasian wife) remained as a peripheral/ marginal figure in the discourse of colonial rule in India (Ibid). The following excerpt demonstrates the case clearly:

Despite a fairly large presence, poorer whites (barrack wives, especially) remained more or less peripheral to the discourse of Anglo-India— the obvious reason being that their presence arguably threatened to undermine colonial hierarchies of race and class...Indeed their erasure from the consciousness of the community was so completely effected that in the 1850s Lady Canning could express her naïve ignorance of any “poor people, except very dark half-castes or natives (Ibid).

The above quote of Lady Canning implies two things: first, that the poverty-stricken Eurasian population was marginal; and second, they were identified as natives of India. As such, there was an inherent class bias against these women. The position of the Eurasian woman before this period was no better. *The Calcutta Review* illustrates that the poorer white women (read the Eurasians) who existed in the margins of the society were considered socially inferior to such an extent that they were socially degraded more than the women of the other communities in India. The articles in this journal expressed the fear that these women were devoid of the “self-respect which even native women may feel”.¹ The status of the Eurasian women compared to that of native women was such that the former were treated and identified as nothing more than concubines. Moreover, child marriage was a frequent practice as well among Eurasians. Young girls were married off to much older men. This was followed by early motherhood. *The Calcutta Review* illustrates the story of a 14-year-old girl who was frequently beaten by her old husband because she played marbles with boys of her age (Sen 2005). The following excerpt also illustrates the pitiful condition of Eurasian women in the late nineteenth century India.

...indeed in 1871 *The Friend of India* admitted to such a replication of the ‘native’ practice of ‘child marriage’ among the poorer whites and went on to locate it as deep-rooted class problem that was prevalent even among the working classes in metropolitan England: “There is the same difficulty in Manchester and our manufacturing towns generally. Poor little lassies, mere children, are commonly enough mothers” (Ibid).

The nineteenth century brought about distinct changes in the way the community bestowed low status on its women. In the nineteenth century, especially after the Suez Canal opened, English ships brought regular cargoes of venturesome beauties bent on matrimony, growing into a social phenomenon called the “Fishing Fleet” (Neville 2004: 27). The captain of the ship and other well-known ladies arranged parties where the candidates would sit as if they were on exhibition and the eligible bachelors would rush there to try their luck (Ibid). “In such situations some Anglo-Indian girls were accomplished flirts. As long as the girl made a suitable catch in the end, flirting was accepted as a pleasant activity except when the girl overdid it” (Ibid: 29). In the nineteenth century, then, the Anglo-Indian women were considered nothing better than “wives and mothers”. The way Anglo-Indian women were depicted in the nineteenth century and afterwards bear testimony to the fact that the women were considered no more than commodity within the community: objects to be seen and appreciated. Moorhouse describes Anglo-Indian women not only as the saddest result of British imperialism but also, and paradoxically, as very good-looking – “as though the chemical processes of assorted generations had compensated the outcaste by gradually purging her line of all coarseness until total refinement was reached (Moorhouse 1983: 189).” Hyam also identifies Anglo-Indian women as outstandingly beautiful (Hyam 1990: 16-17)). Many Anglo-Indian writers, especially Frank Anthony, have expended quite a number of lines on the beauty of Anglo-Indian women. Anthony, for example, not only praised Anglo-Indian beauties but also condemned “penny shovelling exercises in near pornography that sexualize them” (Anthony 1969: ii-iii & xi). The recognition of their beauty carried no parallel respect for their personhood. The Anglo-Indian women were considered “wax dolls without a mind” but capable nevertheless of “looking frighteningly unhappy or demons driven by heady but volatile essence of sensuality with no body” (Chaudhari 1965: 260-61). Such identities were imposed upon the Anglo-Indian women by the men of their community. This shows the patriarchal nature of the community, which commoditised the women as mindless beauties who had brought shame to the community. Such stereotypes continue to exist for the Anglo-Indian women. The men and women of the community alike still consider the beauty of Anglo-Indian girls to be their boon and bane.

My fieldwork (Sen 2017) among the women of the community resulted two related observations. When I introduced myself to the men of the community as a researcher on Anglo-Indian women, most of them thought it to be a trivial project. To them, these women had no minds. When I

approached the women to discuss “their issues”, they were unwilling to do so. They thought their brothers, husbands or fathers were better equipped to discuss *their* matters since they knew so little. So, the women did not think they could answer the questions on their own. They relied on the male members who had already anticipated such incapability on the part of the Anglo-Indian women. The patriarchy of their community identifies women as objects, as bodies without minds. As “wax dolls” their opinions were worthless not only to the men of the community but also to the women themselves.

The arrival of the British women in India marked a change in the relations and the context in which the community lived. The presence of the British wives and mothers in India—known as *memsahibs*—had provoked racial antagonism between the rulers and the ruled. The reference group for the Anglo-Indian women was these European women. Yet, it was these British women who acted as the chief agents for the imposition of the British imperial-patriarchal domination on the Anglo-Indian women. For example, during the years of the mutiny, the conflict was the most severe on the domestic front (Blunt 2005: 26). The women of the community were not dishonoured but were made to feel their servitude (Kaye 1876: 354).

Unlike the Indian Christians, the European ancestry of the Anglo-Indian community led to an emphasis on some cultural markers, such as language, dress and eating habits. Middle-class Anglo-Indian women employed Indian cooks and servants and had their meals on tables and with cutlery rather than with their hands, much in the fashion of the British *memsahibs*. Though the Anglo-Indian cuisine was different from the English, the Anglo-Indians were always specific to point out that their way of cooking and dining was clearly distinct from the Indian. Though the Anglo-Indian homes were of a lower status and poorer than the British elite in India, their upbringing and lifestyle reflected a masculine middle-class imperial heritage aligned to the British rather than to Indian norms of domesticity (Gaikwad 1967: 15). This represents a clear inclination towards the powerful paternal ancestry and a disregard for an Indian maternal ancestry. The imperialist domination was never a burden for the Anglo-Indians because the community always hoped that they would be eventually recognized by the British as one of them. In contrast, they were antagonistic to the Indians. One of the excerpts from the response of an Anglo-Indian subject in Gaikwad’s research on the community reveals that the greatest pride of the Anglo-Indian resides in the fact that they were descendants of Europeans and that there is nothing that the Anglo-Indian deplors more than his dark skin. An Anglo-Indian would give everything in the world to marry his daughter off to

some lowly, despicable European who would ill-treat her perpetually than marry her to a fellow Anglo-Indian. The respondent of the study also expressed his great disdain for the Indians whom the community treats with contempt (Gaikwad 1967). Such outbursts show that they experienced the entire gamut of social pressures - to be a British in the eyes of the British, to be an Indian to be able to live in India and also to be an Anglo-Indian - but they responded to these sets of expectations differently.

The women had accepted the patriarchal domination of their community as well as the British patriarchal domination, but had cynical reservations against Indian patriarchy. Perhaps this adulatory attitude towards British life and the completely opposite attitude towards Indian men and women made Anglo-Indian girls seek a better status by marrying European men and becoming a “lady” in the eyes of others. For example, it was (and is) common that Anglo-Indian women suddenly changed when an Englishman took notice of her. She forgot that her parents were dark-skinned. Instantly India became this horrid place and Indians the most ill-mannered, untrustworthy and dirty people on earth (Hicks 1940). Hicks comments that for the Englishman the Anglo-Indian girl is prepared to sacrifice “everything” and in this way she invokes a spectre of interracial sex and illegitimacy. She is then perceived as more licentious than other European and Indian women (Blunt 2005: 69). This popularly held image of the debauch Anglo-Indian girl is discussed in Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt’s article on self-images of the Anglo-Indian community where she comments on the “stereotypical image of lax morality of Anglo-Indian women” in the minds of the Indians (1992-93: 223). On the one hand, the Anglo-Indian girl she portrays strives to forge a link with the British rulers by imitating whatever the latter did. On the other hand, she actively distanced herself from the native (Indian) culture to prove that her ways of life and standards were not only different but also distinct from the other Indian women. The attempts at distancing themselves from Indian social mores, nationalist patriarchy, or to be more precise, the ideology of nationalist domesticity had an impact on the daily lives and social arrangements of Anglo-Indian women. Alison Blunt points out, “Anglo-Indian women and homes were positioned within wider discourses of *both* imperial *and* nationalist domesticity.” She argues that in case of these women, their roles as home-makers were “both manifested and erased by their dual identification with Britain as fatherland and India as motherland (Blunt 2005: 24).”

Indian patriarchy deplores the social habits of the Anglo-Indian girls and the ‘freedom’ they enjoy. Anglo-Indian girls like to dance, go to balls, use

cosmetics, wear European clothes— none of which conform to Hindu or Muslim society's notion of becoming feminine modesty and propriety. Let me consider some cases. In the film 'Mahanagar' by Satyajit Ray, the heroine— a middle class Bengali wife from a joint family— joins a company as a salesgirl and befriends an Anglo-Indian colleague. This girl had also come to work to sustain her family as had the Bengali woman. But what distinguished her were a lipstick and a sunglasses that she carried in her purse. The Anglo-Indian girl offers her lipstick to the Bengali protagonist and it occurs to the latter that putting on the lipstick would help her impress her customers. The interesting part is that the Bengali wife removes her make-up before she enters home. This shows the difference between the Bengali middleclass sensibility about costumes and makeup in the late 1960s and that of the Anglo-Indians.

The Anglo-Indian women projected themselves as more emancipated and westernized than their Bengali counterparts not only in the way they dressed but also as working girls. From the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Indian women worked outside home. Most of the women were educated and had technical training. During the Second World War, many Anglo-Indian women served as members of the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India) {henceforth WAC (I)} and featured prominently in promotional photographs of the W. A. C. (I) (Blunt 2005: 60-62). Frank Anthony noted that the contribution of Anglo-Indian women in the War was more than all the women of all communities in India put together (Anthony 1946: 4). The Anglo-Indian women of pre-independence India were employed as secretaries, typists, clerks, and teachers long before the Bengali middleclass women dared to take a similar step. This contrast made the Anglo-Indian woman more visible in public. Their struggle to sustain life had begun much earlier and this was against the Bengali middleclass patriarchal norm.

The word "tash" often used as slang for Indian Christians and especially Anglo-Indians is another example of the disdain other Indians have for Anglo-Indian women. This word has a deeper connotation in Bengali language with reference to Sukumar Roy's notion of a cow who was a "tash". It cynically symbolized how Anglo-Indians, though born and brought up in India, looked up appreciatively to anything that was European. Instead of eating grass as cows usually do, the *tashgoru* craved for candles and soups made of soap water. The cow is a Eurasian clerk in ill-fitting western clothes who is represented as having a weak constitution and as a possessor of low class values and an easy virtue (Ibid: 39, 125, 150-51). Since it was the Anglo-Indian woman who served predominantly as a clerk, the poem

goes to show how Anglo-Indian women were (and still are) imagined as low class and unacceptable in public. They were despised by the Indian society which upheld the moral virtues of *satitva* (chastity) and *matritva* (motherhood) and celebrated the ethicized femininity of the *pativrata* (devoted wife) and *sati-savitri* (a chaste wife of mythological sanctity). The Bengali middle class of the time was full of anxieties about imminent westernization of the woman and the domestic sphere. The ideal woman of the Bengali middleclass household was therefore in sharp and direct contrast to the already westernized Anglo-Indian woman. The Anglo-Indian women also responded to the dominant societal stereotyping. For example, Isolde, an Anglo-Indian girl in Laura Roychowdhury's book 'The Jadu House', expresses her pain for being an Anglo-Indian. She felt that the actress (who played the role of an Anglo-Indian unwed mother in the Hindi film 'Julie') could not get work after this film because she played an Anglo-Indian girl on screen and candidly performed the role of an unmarried mother. She could not escape the scandal of illegitimate motherhood and Isolde thought, that as Anglo-Indian girls, they had to suffer shame as well (Ibid: 48).

The Bengali middle-class women before independence seldom ventured out unless forced by financial crisis or, in rare cases, when they were educated and desired independence. Though the situation at present has changed for the Bengali women, it has remained quite the same for the Anglo-Indian women. They are still yoked to the responsibility of the family and are not free to follow their own goals. Moreover, the presence of the Anglo-Indian girl in the public domain was anathema to the Bengali middle class conservative sensibilities right until the twentieth century. The two incompatible modes of social orientation deepened the difference between the Bengali and the Anglo-Indian woman. The dual patriarchy of Hindu Brahminical provenance on the one hand and of Anglo-Indian provenance on the other bore down on the Anglo-Indian women simultaneously. The Brahminical patriarchy of the Hindu-Bengali kind eschewed everything *mlechha* (European) or which did not conform to Hindu prescriptions. Therefore, the Europeanized Anglo-Indian lifestyle and especially the way the women of the community behaved were against the patriarchal norm of the Hindus.

Moreover, the pro-British role of the Anglo-Indians in British India also fuelled a deep antagonism against the community. This feeling was (and is) so deep that the Bengali middle class (still) harbours hostile sentiments in expressions such as 'tash' and 'feringhee'. The Anglo-Indians retaliate by

using slangs such as ‘bong’ for Bengalis. They feel that there is a deep prejudice against the Anglo-Indian girl in the Bengali mind. That is why Bengali families are loath to accept Anglo-Indian girls as wives. They also think that it is due to such parochial and scornful attitude of the Bengalis towards them, that the Anglo-Indians have become so inward-looking and insular. My fieldwork data (Sen 2017) also suggest that Anglo-Indian men are more open to intercommunity marriages than Anglo-Indian women. Perhaps this corroborates the idea that Anglo-Indian women in particular were forced to draw more distinct boundaries of ‘we’ and ‘they’ to ward off the patriarchal domination of the Indian society.

This is not to suggest that only Anglo-Indian men have cultural features distinct from that of their women. The Anglo-Indian women are distinct from the women of other communities in India in their dress, language, employment status, and other cultural markers such as their affinity towards their schools, etc. But what make them distinct from the men of the community are the multiple patriarchies they face. However, the quantum of Hindu aggression faced by the Anglo-Indian women is not necessarily greater than that faced by the Anglo-Indian men. What is crucial here is the depiction of how Anglo-Indian women have been subjugated to multiple layers of patriarchal domination within their community. She faces the non-Anglo-Indian man as a male with his universal masculine expectations and additionally as a member of a different community expressing a set of patriarchal expectations different from that of her own community. These women are already marginal as members of an ethnic minority group, the Anglo-Indians. Yet, their subjection to the multiple patriarchies marginalises them further even within their own community, that is, they are a minority among the minority group of Anglo-Indians. They are doubly marginal, doubly *minoritised*. Their response to the society is framed within this multiple-patriarchal setup.

Suzette, Patriarchy, Marginality and Comments after Death

In the social media after her death there was a furor. Many Anglo-Indian men and few women of the community started to exchange their views on the incident after three years the incident had taken place and after Suzette had died.² There was no such upsurge among the members of the community when the incident took place and during the phase when Suzette was struggling to fight for her rights. This shows how escapist the members of the community are. The men like Michael Robertson, Asley Tyrone Ridge-

Cook were compassionate of the case but women started to voice their unease much later and ended their concern by thanking the men for being compassionate. It was only one man, Max Galstaun who sided with Suzzette in her journey for seeking justice (self-proclaimed in various posts). These men were silent when the incident took place and there were no official declaration of support or criticism of the government or the parties involved from the All India Anglo-Indian Association (the President-in-chief from Kolkata), the official mouthpiece of the community; nor from any non-government voluntary organizations working for the members of the community. Everyone understood the incident had political, cultural and social dimensions but all highlighted that the episode as another incident where an Anglo-Indian woman was at the centre. There were few to voice their concerns and take a decision to take a side. The marginal character of the community were expressed in its vulnerabilities, their fearfulness, lack of forthrightness that is in their self-restraint to voice a concern. Even there were no voice to express unease at the situation from the Christian *bethren* in the city. The Christians who comprise only 2.3 percent of the Indian population of which the Anglo-Indian are only five percent, always feel prejudiced of their minority status in society. It is true that there have been incidents of violence against the members of the minority community but is it not by default that an Anglo-Indian woman was victim in the incident?⁵ It could have been any woman in her place! She was never considered by any Anglo-Indian commentators to be an Indian citizen or a woman. Rather her identity that they highlighted was that of an Anglo-Indian woman. This labeling of the incident emphasizes the prejudiced *minoritized* self-understanding status-consciousness of the members of the community. Even if there are no reason or statistics to believe that there have been such incidents very often in the city of Kolkata with women of the community still the community-sentiment was strong while decoding the incident in social media. This shows their vulnerability which was not reflected in Suzzette's way of seeking justice. She had come out to disclose her identity and never used her Anglo-Indian status to claim her victimhood rather she sought her rights as a citizen and a woman. She fought for justice on her own will. She had the agency to question her victimhood and reclaimed her identity from an anonymous rape victim to a woman with an identity. If we consider a comparison between Nirbhaya³ and Suzzette, both gang rape victims in the same year we might find a strange dimension to it. While Nirbhaya was transformed into a larger than life icon who died defending her honour (if we can call it so!), Suzzette was criticized, humiliated in various comments made in the public. Flavia Agnes⁴

writes that while Nirbhaya is an incident that can be referred to and Suzette cannot is because Suzette chose to disclose her identity and tell her story of violence against her. She points to our patriarchal culture which despises survivors and honour-victims. 'The same old stereotypes get whipped up time and again. The good and the bad, the dividing lines are clearly drawn...In order to deserve our support, the victims must be without a blotch. They must die defending their honour. They must be larger than life, so we can honour and venerate them. We hate those who survive to tell their tales of violations' (Ibid). Patriarchy thus thrives and continues to label who should be revered and who should not, be it an Anglo-Indian or a Dalit or a high caste: women continue to be victims of force, oppression and brutality.

Notes

1. *The Calcutta Review*, Nos. 4-7, 1845.
2. All the comments are posted on the Facebook pages of eminent Anglo-Indians, domiciled and of the Diaspora.
3. The name given for anonymity to 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder case involved a rape and fatal assault that that occurred on 16 December 2012 in Munirka, a neighbourhood in South Delhi. The incident took place when Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old female physiotherapy intern, was beaten, gang-raped, and tortured in a private bus in which she was travelling with her male friend.
4. <https://www.cpiml.net/liberation/2015/04/why-india-loves-nirbhaya-hates-suzette> (retrieved on 13 March 2021 at 17 hours).
5. The Christian minority community unleashed an angry voice only when the gang rape of the nun of the Syro-Malankara Catholic clan took place in 2015. We heard a strong voice of protest only after repeated cases against the community.

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Education, Elites and Public Sphere: Exploring Inequality and Change in Bikaner

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Abstract: *This paper aims to examine the contemporary dynamics of the educational field and its relation with the wider public sphere in Bikaner town of Rajasthan. Existing researches have focused on educational development mainly in rural areas and hence there is a lack of such research in urban contexts. This study looks at how this relationship between the education field and the public sphere is mediated by the status and role of elites in such urban locations. The initial growth of educational institutions in princely towns corresponds to the social and economic changes happening in the city. The institutionalization of public education in the post-independence period contest and complicate the relation between elites, public sphere, and education. This study, based on empirical research, shows that elites tended to control the public sphere in colonial Rajasthan and it is only with public education in the post-independence period that this sphere has acquired a democratic character. Besides, it would also examine the position of the field of education in the larger field of power of Bikaner town to map the changes in the elite structure as well. It concerns with position and role of traditional elites in the changing educational field and to what extent they can shape and control the dynamics of the contemporary public sphere in Bikaner's context.*

Keywords: Elites, social reproduction, public sphere, educational field, social closure.

Introduction

It was a broad consensus among the political class in the post-independence period that establishing modern educational institutions would aid in

promoting new libertarian values and create an educated workforce. The key words during the post-independent period politics were 'planning', 'self-reliance', 'democratic space', and 'nation-building'. Translated into policy decisions, this collective national dream meant to build modern educational institutions like Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and dams, science centres and so on. Similarly, educational institutions were aimed to create a democratic public sphere where individuals could participate with free will and dignified social identities. These institutions were laid upon the ideal of social mobility for marginal social groups. Political scientist Sisson has argued in his work on political formation in Rajasthan that political parties and voluntary associations helped in contributing to the democratic public sphere in feudal Rajasthan. In the Indian context, the education system, established after independence, has been an important field for the creation of the public sphere as well as the reproduction of cultural privileges (Kumar 1985). With the opening of educational institutions many social groups gained social and cultural capital which was earlier unavailable to them. Post - 1990s neoliberal policies had its impact on the education system in India. With the broader transformation in information technology and communication, the onset of social media and privatization of various institutions, education as a field began to be perceived differently and to achieve different objectives. Instead of self-reliance and educating Indian citizens, the state and market had shifted its aim to open itself to foreign capital and gradual initiation of disinvestment policies. With the aid from the World Bank, foreign universities started opening their campuses across various cities in India. It is in this period we start hearing the narrative of the failure of government schools, their infrastructural unpreparedness, absenteeism of students and teachers and overall decline. This also provided both material and cultural contexts for the directing middle classes and masses ideologically towards the new model of privatization of education. It laid the ground for perspectival hegemony and superiority of private capital and simultaneous crisis in public education. We saw the changes in the education structure with the coming of Right to education, private universities bill, budgetary cuts for education, especially for higher education as the state seems to be focused only on primary education. This paper takes a closer look at deliberative popular terrain to examine the relationship between educational development, elite structure, and the public sphere in Rajasthan.

The case of Rajasthan is important to understand this link between the education system, the public sphere, and the power structure. The state of Rajasthan was formed after the merger of 22 principalities and chiefdoms

in different stages. Very few states gave any attention to the development of modern education institutions and even fewer made any sincere attempt to improve the social condition of their citizens. Thus, the general picture of Rajasthan at the time of independence was of 'backward economy', 'hierarchical society', 'feudal polity' and that of low in educational prospects. The legacy of Rajput kinship-led princely rule had deep influences in the establishment of several modern institutions. Even with the emergence of western - educated middle class in central India, no such major change was noticed in the case of Rajasthan. Particularly interesting is the development of the education system to analyze social changes in the Rajasthan society i.e. in the context of women education, attempts by marginalized social groups to gain literacy and socio-political empowerment (Ramachandran 2001). The pace of education development had also altered the erstwhile political environment of subservience and patronage - based on the princely and feudal rule to a more market - based structure of politics and economic worldview. This paper analyses the social changes of the elite structure by taking education as a domain of the public sphere.

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on theoretical insights on concepts such as 'field of power' and 'public sphere'. In order to understand process of social inequality and reproduction of power relations, it is instructive to look into these conceptual formulations while engaging empirically. Studies on the field of power and education have differed (Khan 2012) in raising questions regarding the unit of the power structure of modern societies, either the focus is on individual control of resources (inspired by Weber) or at structural relations of domination (Marx). The existing scholarship on elite studies has debated that whether to define 'elites' in terms of *individuals'* control over resources or *positions* within the power structure (Khan 2012: 362, emphasis added). These conventional approaches were challenged by Bourdieu in his analysis of elite schools as key institutions in the field of power (Bourdieu 1996). Bourdieu claims that social inequalities are legitimated by the educational credentials held by those in dominant positions (Bourdieu 1996). This enables higher elites to maintain their dominant position in society. Also important to understand that the entry of low caste persons into the education system would make the system look more representative and hence would decrease the chances of any systematic revolts. Pierre Bourdieu's sociology helps us in understanding the role of social resources to convert educational credentials into the class position and vice-versa.

With this question in mind, Bourdieu shifted his focus, in the context of French society, on the way the dominant class reproduces itself. While classical elite theorists, pluralists debated on the nature of elite, typology, etc., Bourdieu was concerned with what resources (Bourdieu's term is 'capital') these dominant classes employ to strengthen their position in the 'field of power' (Bourdieu 1996). 'Capital' for Bourdieu means actual or possible resources which can be classified into three major forms (economic capital, cultural capital and social capital) and each can be converted into other forms depending on the respective field. These different forms of capital, in turn, provide different forms of power. Similarly, by 'field' Bourdieu means 'a network, configurations of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97). Thus, these 'objective relations' between positions are determined by the structure of distribution of capital among various agents and institutions which decide their access to different powers and profits (ibid.) Bourdieu's differentiation of 'field' based on different 'forms of capital' and the processes of maximizing calls for a more nuanced understanding of diversified power structure (Bourdieu 1996). His field approach argues for an objective understanding of relations of domination. In his work on *The State Nobility*, Bourdieu defines 'field of power' as 'a field of forces structurally determined by the state of the relations of power among different forms of capital' (Bourdieu 1996:264).

Thus, the *field of power* is a space where 'agents' and 'institutions' compete with their different capitals (economic, social and cultural) for the dominant positions within the fields (ibid). It is not just about the struggle for controlling the maximum amount of capital but importantly also to influence and 'determine the relative value of the different forms of power that can be wielded in the different fields' (ibid: 265). Bourdieu makes it very clear that the struggle is also about monopolizing the '*dominant principle of domination*' (ibid, emphasis original). In other words, within the field of power, various agents struggle to occupy a dominant position both objectively and symbolically. Bourdieu observes that the structural 'differentiation and autonomization' are crucial processes within which fields diversify and along with fields the forms of capital (Bourdieu 1996: 265). Therefore, the comparative understanding of the logics of respective subfields aids in developing the overall picture of the fields of power. It also aids in challenging the tendency of soft-functionalism prevalent in mainstream discourses of education. This objective understanding is related to the symbolic value (not conscious) that leads to acts of social discrimination, which are systematically invisible to the naked eye.

To relate the above discussion broadly dealing with Bourdieu's framework of approaching inequality, capital and structural differentiation of societies, with public sphere can be interesting. The question raised by Jurgen Habermas on the other hand is related to the social and political conditions for the making of democratic culture. His theory of public sphere deals with the historical possibility, in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, of an institutional space where individuals engage in rational-critical debate with each other without bringing in their respective social and economic statuses into the scene (Habermas 1989). His theory of public sphere has to do with normative aspects as well as actual history. In this way Habermas actually extends his arguments on modernity by describing the public sphere as an autonomous realm of political reasoning and discussion (Habermas 1989). Conceptually then, he demarcates the public sphere as a distinct arena from state and economy which gets conflated as one in many popular theorizations (for more details see Calhoun 1996). Based on this brief description this paper takes the case of education field in Bikaner city of Rajasthan to raise questions related to elites, public sphere and field of power.

Methodology of the Study

This paper draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'field of power' and Habermas's popular conception of public sphere. While field of power would allow comprehending the structural linkages of different sectors of society i.e. economy, polity, academy, culture, and art in a given town or city. The 'public sphere' would help us in understanding how education sphere remains embedded in wider field of power and manages to gain semi-autonomy with the emergence of democratic politics. Bourdieu's concept of the field of power also helps us to understanding the contemporary nature and character of the public sphere in Rajasthan. Bourdieu's work on different and interconnected fields and dimensions of capital has been empirically operationalized to capture approach the diversity of elites and different 'fields of power' (both individuals and their institutions). The city was divided into three main domains of power, economic, political and socio-cultural, and from each domain, 35 individuals were identified based on the positional (e.g. whether they hold any position in institution or organization) and reputational (what is the perception of other individuals about them) parameters. For this chapter, field data related to the education domain has been utilized. After the mapping of the field, data collection included – archival work from Rajasthan State Archives-Bikaner, government reports

on education, semi-structured interviews with academic elites located in college, university and school; and social histories of institutions.

The Context of Educational Development in Rajasthan

Historically speaking there are no written records that show that any kind of public education was encouraged under the Rajput rule in Rajasthan, then called 'Rajputana'. There are mentions of several poets and bards in the court who recited the acts and deeds of their respective rulers and mainly emphasized the genealogies of the princely rulers. These poets & bards were patronized and appreciated by rulers for their literary pursuits. The archival records tell us that in the Rajasthan then the temples, *gurukuls*, and *pathshalas* run by Brahmins and Jains were the only places for some kind of religious education in different parts of the state. Again, these places were open to their respective caste members.

With the onset of Mughals in India, separate schools for Hindus and Muslims began to be established, with teaching Hindi-Sanskrit and Urdu respectively. These were known as 'Pathshalas' and 'Madarsas'. Ajmer, for instance, was known for being a centre of Muslim education and learning. During the Mughal rule, several schools were established in Ajmer for spreading Islamic education (*dargah schools*) and teachings through Persian languages. It is this form of teachings along with caste and religious education reserved mainly for Brahmins and Baniyas that was known as indigenous education when Britishers entered into treaties with Rajput rulers in 1818 (Jain 1996). Princely rulers founded several schools in their respective states and cities; Brahmins were mostly appointed as teachers. These schools were revived and modernized during the British paramountcy in Rajputana. With the introduction of English education by East India Company, various changes occurred in the educational field in Rajasthan. On the one hand, education gradually became open for all the social groups instead of traditional upper castes, it also brought modern values of equality, scientific temper and appropriate channel to modern professions such as teaching and judiciary. Christian missionaries played their part in spreading English education in the state of Rajasthan. After the signing of the treaty the region which came under direct British rule, Ajmer-Merwara became the first such location where Britishers established modern educational institutions. The first modern school was opened at Ajmer in May 1819 by Jabez Carey, a Baptist missionary (Powlett 1874).

Table 1: Indigenous Schools in 19th century Rajasthan

District	Schools	Number of students
Ajmer	99	1434
Alwar	101	1351
Jaipur	110	2598
Jodhpur	94	2426
Merwar	14	272

Source: Rajasthan State Gazetteer, Vol. IV (Govt. of Rajasthan 1996: 195)

Apart from Britishers and princely rulers, some other private business and cultural groups had also established educational institutions in Rajasthan. One of the early such institutions was Arya Samaj Educational Society in Ajmer founded in 1883. Initially established as a school financed by this society, later it was converted into D.A.V. College. Similarly, in Pilani the Birla Educational Trust started a school in 1901 and it contributed immensely to the education for the larger society. Lately, even this school became Birla post-graduate and Engineering College. It has successfully developed a network of various institutions and has been the foremost educational institution in the state of Rajasthan. In other words, before the 1850's there were no major organized efforts to establish educational institutions in the various states. Private interests led by Brahmins, Marwaris, and Christian missionaries were the few groups who could lay the foundation. Even though these institutions were located in big states and the smaller states lacked that infrastructure to invest in the field of education. One can identify three broad levels through which social groups have engaged with education in Rajasthan's recent past.

First is the princely engagement for their children to educate with modern education with the establishment of modern schools and colleges i.e. Mayo College in Ajmer, Maharaja College & Maharani College in Jaipur. The origin of Mayo College, one of the oldest Public Schools in the country, dates back to 1869, when Col F K M Walter, the Political Agent of the Bharatpur Agency recommended a school in India (Powlett, 1874). In 1870, Lord Mayo, the then Viceroy and Governor - General, came to Ajmer, wherein a Darbar, before the Chiefs of the ruling Princes of Rajputana, he expressed his desire to set up a 'Raj Kumar College' in Ajmer, "devoted exclusively to the education of the sons of Chiefs, Princes and leading Thakurs." It is interesting to point out that several generations of the descendants of many presents at that Darbar have since continued to study

at Mayo College. The College was opened in October 1875, with Sir Oliver St. John as the first Principal and one boy, Maharaja Mangal Singh of Alwar. In the year 1875, Richard Bourke, 6th Earl of Mayo, founded the school. The Main Building was completed in 1885. Some of the greatest changes in the school were brought about by Mr. Stow who was the Principal from 1931-1943 (Sehgal 1972). In the same year, the Viceroy ceased to be the President of the General Council. This body was in the future presided over by a ruling Prince elected by the council (ibid.). It also helped the princely rulers to organize their states with the modern administration and specialized bureaucracy. Thus, even though they had formed several assemblies in their respective states, the overall control remained in the hands of Maharajas. It is through these elite educational institutions that the upper class could gain access to modern professions and also reorganize and reproduce their domination.

The second level is regarding the engagement of communities and social groups in Rajasthan with the educational institutions. It began primarily during the nationalist movement. Western - educated leaders took the command to mobilize people against the princely autocratic rules. With the spread of modern education and the emergence of modern professions like education, law, medicine, a new social sphere, and economic structure was in the making, which could lay the grounds for the middle class to be born. Most of the beneficiaries of the western education came primarily from the Hindu upper castes males i.e. Brahmins, Baniyas.

Thirdly, with the process of independence and merger of various principalities into the union of Rajasthan, a structure of public education, with government schools and colleges (even though limited mainly to elites and middle classes) was established. The establishment of schools and colleges by the Government of Rajasthan for educating the masses increased the literacy rates, even though the rates remain very low in comparison with other Indian states. These educational institutions also became an important aspect for the public sphere. For instance, Kota has become a major hub of engineering and medical education in Rajasthan. Similarly, many erstwhile agrarian communities and several Scheduled Tribes population have gained social mobility through education and entered into government employment.

With the paradigm shift towards the privatization and neoliberal policies, the state has also changed its engagement with the education system. It is no surprise as to what has been proposed under the new model called PPP (Public-Private Partnership) and in the name of creating new schools, literally called 'model schools', many of the government schools have been

shut down¹. Finally, my aim in this chapter is to look broadly at two levels, the scenario at the state level and in Bikaner's specific context, where the regional structures of domination become visible.

Education in Contemporary Rajasthan: A Brief overview

The backwardness of Rajasthan in access to basic education and water resources has been narrated over and over again in the last 50 years. Almost any discussion on educational access and educational backwardness of Rajasthan invariably begins (and often unfortunately ends) with stories of unequal access, the persistence of caste prejudices and the situation of women and girls. These snapshots of the situation on the ground are often used to argue for more investment in the education of lower caste girls and boys. It has been also used to make a case for privately funded institutes of education in Rajasthan. In spite of its considerable progress in the last 50 years especially in providing primary schools within one to three km radius. Yet, it remains one of the most difficult regions of India to ensure universal access to basic education. Even though the government of Rajasthan has also come up with schemes like *Shiksha Aapke Dwar* 2001 (Education at your door) which aims to achieve primary education levels across all the districts, the actual attainment has been quite low. The crisis in education is especially apparent in the four BIMARU states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh – with 445.1 million of India's 1.2 billion population and some of the lowest literacy rates in the country, according to Census 2011. Bihar had a literacy rate of 61.8%, Rajasthan of 67.1%, Uttar Pradesh of 67.7% and Madhya Pradesh a rate of 70.6% in 2011, lower than the all-India average of 74%. Kerala has a literacy rate of 94%, the highest in the country. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate was 66.11 percent in Rajasthan, out of which the male literacy rate was 79.19 & and the female literacy rate was the country's lowest at 52.12 %. While in 2001 census, the literacy rate in Rajasthan stood at 60.41 percent of which the male and the female were 75.70 percent and 43.85 percent literate respectively. Likewise, the state also lags behind many other states in teachers' education and medical education.

Table 1 shows the low rates of literacy in the state of Rajasthan, even though there has been an increase in the average rates, it is quite slower in the case of females. Both in urban and rural areas the rates were extremely low. Over the years with the establishment of various schools and colleges, the network of education has improved in Rajasthan. By the end of 2001,

Rajasthan had more than 65,000 government schools and over 17,000 Rajiv Gandhi *pathshalas*.

Table 2: Growth of Literacy in Rajasthan, 1901-2011 (in percentage)

Year	Male	Female	Total
1901	06.42	00.21	03.47
1911	06.24	00.30	03.41
1921	05.78	00.42	03.25
1931	07.01	00.60	03.96
1941	09.36	01.16	05.46
1951	13.09	02.51	08.50
1961	23.71	05.84	18.12
1971	28.74	08.46	22.57
1981	36.30	11.42	30.11
1991	54.99	20.44	38.55
2001	75.70	43.90	60.41
2011	79.20	52.10	66.11

Source: Census of India 2011

The provisional data of Census 2011 for Rajasthan shows that the districts of Churu and Barmer experienced negative growth in literacy. While Churu's literacy rate has fallen from 67.59% to 67.46%, Barmer reported a much higher drop from 58.99% to 57.49%. Jalore had the lowest literacy rate in the state at 55.58%. The highest male literacy was reported in Jhunjhunu district at 87.88% followed by Kota (87.65%) and Jaipur (87.27%). Pratapgarh reported the lowest male literacy at 70.13%. Of the 33 districts, only 12 managed to register the male literacy rate above the state average of 80.51%. Kota, country's coaching hub, registered the highest female literacy rate at 66.32% followed by Jaipur (64.33%) and Jhunjhunu (61.15%) while Jalore scored the lowest with 38.73%. In 2001, the national literacy rate was 64.83 percent while that of Rajasthan was 60.41%. In 2011, the state fared below expectations with the average literacy rate of 67.06 percent compared to the national average of 74.04 percent. Again in the case of the male literacy rate, the state was ahead of the national average in 2001 by 0.44 percent, but in 2011, it fell short of the national average by 1.63%. Kota was the sole district to register a higher literacy rate at 77.48%. Even though the urban-rural gap in literacy rates

have decreased from 27.3% in 2002 to 24.9% in 2011, the rural literacy rate in Rajasthan is still quite low at 61.44 % in comparison to the urban regions, 79.68 percent.

Table 3: Literacy Rates in Major Cities of Rajasthan

City	Literacy Rate
Jaipur (M. Corp)	83.33
Jodhpur (UA)	80.19
Kota (M. Corp)	82.80
Bikaner (M. Corp)	79.29
Ajmer (UA)	86.37
Udaipur (UA)	89.52
Bhilwara (M CI)	82.20
Alwar (UA)	85.29
Ganganagar (UA)	82.06
Sikar (UA)	75.73

Source: Census of India 2011

Also interesting to note is the regional disparities in literacy rates in Rajasthan. For instance, districts closer to national capital region i.e. Alwar, Jaipur, Jhunjunu and Sikar (except Kota) have much higher literacy rates (above 70%) than districts located on the India's border with Pakistan i.e. Jaisalmer, Barmer, Jalor and Sirohi and few southern districts bordering Gujarat (literacy rates less than 60%).

Table 4: Educational Institutions in Rajasthan, 2011-12

Institutions	Number
Primary & Pre-Primary Schools	49642
Upper Primary	40602
Senior Secondary & Secondary	24127
Colleges	1422
State Universities	17
Deemed Universities	08
Private Universities	14

Source: Basic Statistics Rajasthan, 2013; UGC Lists of recognized Universities

Education and Public Sphere in Bikaner

Historically speaking, education was traditionally imparted mainly through religious institutions (by priestly class) and schools were established by mercantile communities for commercial training. The purpose of these community and caste specific educational institutions in Rajasthan was to train one's own younger generation for the future instead of democratic dialogue and developing critical rationality. The progress of modern educational institutions is quite slow in the case of Bikaner as compared to other ex-princely states like Jaipur, Jodhpur, Ajmer, etc. As mentioned earlier the education remained the preserve of elites in Bikaner. Hence the education was not primarily the arena for laying the foundation of the public sphere in Habermasian sense. Political mobilizations and the domain of electoral politics opened the space for the interaction among different sets of caste and social groups. The efforts to create an education system that could cater to the needs of all the social groups are primarily of the early nineteenth century period. During the colonial period, many public schools were opened for the educational training to create a bureaucratic class. A Hindi and Urdu school was started at Bikaner in 1872. In 1883, the Darbar Primary School was opened. Darbar School hardly catered to the needs of non-princely castes and lower caste groups. The number of state schools in Bikaner state was 29 in 1887, 43 in 1911 and 60 in 1918. The state has passed the Compulsory Primary Education Act as early as 1928. With the coming of this Act, public schools were bound to welcome students from various social groups. The cost of institutional arrangement was divided between the Bikaner government and the municipality. The following are the important figures of education in Bikaner state.

Table 5: Educational Institutions in the Princely State of Bikaner

Year	No. of State Schools	No. of Teachers	No. of Students	Expenditure (Rs.)
1897-98	29	49	1606	18125
1911-12	43	96	3056	62040
1918-19	60	169	3512	84299
1920-21	74	205	5238	14162
1925-26	71	211	4795	138735
1930-31	108	328	7701	241537
1935-36	122	386	9361	292357

Source: *Rajasthan District Gazetteers*, Bikaner 1972, p. 342.

Not just these state schools, there was an upsurge in private schools as well in Bikaner state during the 1940s. It is in the 1920s that Educational Directorate was established in Bikaner by the princely government. In this context, Dungar College and BJSR Jain College gain popularity as they actively became the destination of the political elites of the city. During the course of the fieldwork, it was reported by several respondents who had studied in these colleges and who described the social history of these institutions. These accounts of educational development also tell us about the scope and nature of the public sphere in Bikaner's society. Education struggled to become the principal socio-spatial site for political negotiations and mostly remained a preserve of the elites and middle classes. Interestingly the education sphere in Bikaner continued to be an aspirational space for wider sections of the society. Schools and colleges became the sphere for the news, talks, opinions, careers and so on. Due to the structural connections of school and college administration with the wider government institutions, it became the sphere where some of the democratic processes were configured.

Dungar Government College, Bikaner

The government Dungar College of Bikaner in its childhood was known as *The Darbar School*. It was started in 1837 by the then ruler of Bikaner State, Dungar Singh. After his demise, his brother Ganga Singh elevated the Darbar School to Dungar Memorial College on 25 September 1912. College - level teaching started in 1928. In the year 1937 degree classes started in the college and in the same year the school was separated from the college with the name of *Sardul School*. In July 1940, intermediate Science Faculty started with Physics and Chemistry subjects. In 1942, Degree level Science, law classes and post - graduate Departments of Hindi, Sanskrit, English, History, and Economics were opened. In the year 1951, there were only five post-graduate colleges in Rajasthan. Dungar College was one of them. In 1962, the college shifted from Sardul school premises to its present building. Postgraduate teaching in physics and Chemistry started in the same year. In 1970, classes in Zoology, Botany and law faculty were started. The college enjoyed the privilege of being the only college of Rajasthan, where postgraduate studies in law being pursued. The college extended its academic growth with postgraduate teaching in Geography, Sociology, Economics, Geology, and Urdu departments. From 1988-1995 the college was given the status of an autonomous college. In the session 1996-97, the commerce faculty was

started in the college. The conversation with a senior faculty from this college provides a synoptic view of the changes that have happened in the functioning of the college. According to one such respondent, Dungar College has been the centre of town politics since its inception. All the major politicians of the town had their schooling from Sardul School of the old city and graduation from Dungar College. In the last two-three decades, the social composition of the college students and faculties has changed drastically. Due to the growing social awareness and social transformation in the countryside, many of the backward castes have started entering such educational institutions. As one of my respondents² opines, who is a senior lecturer in Dungar college, 'this college present-day form has been dominated by Jat students and also Jat teachers and has become the hotbed of the caste conflict between Jats and other upper castes'. This statement also reflects the larger issue of how far educational institutions could contribute towards the representation of traditionally backward groups. Bikaner's experience of government colleges shows that more than these normative aspects, the educational sphere represents these issues of local caste relations and power equations.

BJS Rampuria Jain College, Bikaner

The prestigious institution B.J.S.R. Jain College was established in 1934, just 13 years before the independence. Initially, it was founded as a middle school at Dauji Road, in the heart of the city by Late Sh. Bahadur Mal Jaskaran Sidhkaran within one year of its beginning the institute was promoted to high school. In 1945 it was again raised to Intermediate College. In 1937, the institute was converted to Degree College. It is one of the prominent institutions in the private sector. In fact, many of the present - day politicians and government officers working in Bikaner and other places in Rajasthan have studied in this college. BJSR Jain College is one of the key educational institutions for the upper caste Hindu (Brahmins, Baniyas) families. BJSR college today has opened its several branches for management studies and engineering studies across the town.

The above description of the two elite educational institutions of Bikaner also provides a brief idea about the characteristics of the educational sphere of the town. The larger context of the ecology and climate has also shaped the growth of certain educational institutions in Bikaner. For instance, the establishment of Indira Gandhi Canal Project (1987) provided new life to the people of this region. With the increase in agricultural productivity, demography has also changed in this region.

Educational Field, Elite Politics and Public Sphere

Elite educational institutions are key sites to understand the relationship between education and power (Bourdieu 1996). According to him, critical analysis of elite schools can help us in understating the dynamics of the reproduction and symbolic recognition of the elites. Moving beyond the relevance of different forms of capital to convert one's privilege into different realms, this chapter has shown the sheer dynamics of the educational system itself as constituted by a larger field of power.

With the establishment of a public education system in the post-independence period, Bikaner has seen the growth of modern schools in both the private and public sectors. More importantly, the growth of different educational institutions also reflects the changing nature of power in the town. In the colonial period and post-independence period the stronghold of schools established by princely elites continued. These schools remained the centre of attraction for education in the region. In the case of Bikaner, Sardul School, Court School, etc. were the key places for elites to send their children. In the course of fieldwork, it was found that the families of today's political elites used to send their children to the schools established by princely rulers i.e. B. D. Kalla, Virendra Beniwal, Dilip Joshi, Ashok Acharya to name a few. The dominant narrative of the teachers and administrators of elite educational institutions in Bikaner is the decline of the educational atmosphere in government educational institutions. There are various explanations for this decline as discussed by my respondents. According to many college teachers, this decline is linked to the growing popularity of private colleges in Bikaner, such as BJS Rampuria College, Binani College, Institute of Business Management, Damani College, Tanveer Malawat College of Nursing, etc. With the growth of the population in new town portions, several groups from neighboring suburbs have been approaching private colleges. This development along with a declining public image of government institutions, (as sites of dominant caste group bullying, local violence among Jats and Rajputs, absenteeism of teaching staff, etc.) the town has challenged the elite position of Dungar College. As a whole, these local developments provide some hint to understand the changing nature of the public sphere in Bikaner. Bikaner's public sphere has experienced an increased significance of administrative and private corporate logic. Educational institutions have gradually ceased to be the independent spaces of deliberation within civil society. Corporate logic instead of welfare approach has provided a new impetus to the business communities of the town to further open new educational institutions to

cater to the increasing demand for private schooling. Another significant narrative is the transformation of politics of Bikaner, into old city (old established business elites) and new city (migrant groups, professionals) with the two portions of city representing power claims of different social groups in the town. Thirdly it was argued by my respondents, that due to the rising social and educational consciousness among lower castes, the Dungar College has been a key educational centre for such communities and therefore upper castes avoid socializing their children in such institutions.

As discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, the organic link between the educational field and the struggles of power provides a window to understand the social formation public sphere. Bikaner's educational field bears this relation very positively. The field of education in Bikaner has experienced the journey from being restricted to the princely elite and business families in the 17th and 18th centuries. Education was seen as a prominent space for structuring modern relations among different classes and castes. Elite dominance in Bikaner was challenged with the opening of public sphere with entry of educated members of non-privileged groups. The schools catered to different needs and purposes of these private groups. In a sixteenth and seventeenth century, education was a private resource for these elite groups. The nineteenth century social and political transformation brought to Bikaner the public education system which was fought for by several social groups. Along with the democratic upheavals, the shift in education from private resources to public institutional systems also initiated the formation of democratic public sphere. It also led to the formation of the middle class in the town and shaped the class structure of the region. Many communities gained access to such educational institutions and education acquired a public character. In contemporary times with the growing private educational institutions in Bikaner can be seen as a return to the private mode of education. This time the shift has both the ideological backing and structural organization within the democratic setup. This recent change can be interpreted as a shift of public sphere from its basis in democratic rational debate to mere negotiation. With the growing interference of corporate elite in public sphere via education as weakened the democratic potential of the public sphere and restructured it as staged nexus between elite groups and bureaucracy.

At the cost of blurring the specificities of historical change, these movements can be characterized in three ways. The broad paradigm of education and politics in Bikaner can be said to have transformed from '*private to private via public*'. In the first instance, private refers to the colonial and pre-

colonial period when the education was reserved only for princely elites. In the second usage of private, it means post - liberalization period in which increasing private education has become a norm and it induces class inequalities. While the 'public sphere' referred to the establishment of a democratic state in Bikaner during 1950s when education acquired a public character for the masses, with the contemporary trend of privatization the public sphere has been dominated by corporate logic. Hence with the privatization of education once again, the elite groups, both in politics and business, gain upper hand in their access to education and the public sphere lose its democratic deliberation. This contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities in general and class inequalities in particular.

Conclusion

The structure of the educational field explains certain interesting insights to understand the unequal distribution of social resources. Access to education more often than not depends upon the social location of individuals and communities. In case of Rajasthan, historically speaking the elites have controlled cultural capital and with the establishment of modern educational institutions, their domination expanded too. Due to their hegemony over public sphere in post-independence period, their agenda has been to utilize educational capital to reproduce their control over field of power. This chapter, based on the empirical research has looked at how this relationship has developed historically with the institutionalization of education. The initial growth of educational institutions in colonial centers like Ajmer corresponds positively to the democratization of politics and entry of non-privileged communities and groups into education and public sphere. Secondly, it tries to understand the position of the field of education in the larger field of power. As the data suggests, educational opportunities also provide channels to enter the administrative services and employment in the private sector. This mobility potential of education is severely restricted by the initiation of neoliberal economic policies after the 1990s. This study has captured the historical development of education and struggles of elite groups and the changing nature of the public sphere. Habermas had hinted about the 'refeudalization of public sphere' when bourgeoisie interests dominate it (Habermas 1989), in Indian context, maybe we can refer to it as 'neo-liberalization' of public sphere where welfarist capabilities are constantly weakened with ever growing hegemony of financial elites.

This paper argues that field of education has a close association with the elite power in Rajasthan and with the increasing class inequalities it is becoming the preserve of the privileged few and hence acquiring the form of elite dominated public sphere with lower middle classes and poor excluded from it. With the privatization of education at all levels, the nature of public sphere as public arena' open for all groups to engage in democratic interaction is undermined and exhibits the tendency of 'privatization/ neoliberalization of public sphere' too. This trend corresponds to the growing corporate control over economic policies and political process in India. Further research must be conducted to understand the cultural environment of these educational institutions, their curricula and stakes they have in the larger public sphere. It is especially important since the recent renewed interest in 'researching up' has shown how the choice of some elite schooling for the advantage of one's children is related in meaningful ways to the disadvantage of others. Thus, we need more ethnographic studies to map whom goes to the elite educational institutions, how do they get in, and what are the implications of this new educational system for developing a rational, normative public sphere.

Notes

1. This has been done from 2004 onwards where the argument is that primary education is deeply inefficient in government schools with fewer teachers in classrooms, therefore the call for 'school rationalization'.
2. Interview conducted with Shyam Sundar Jyani, on 21 September 2016 at his residence.

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3

Of Xenotransplantation and Animal Futures: Science-Market Conviviality and the Engineering of Hope

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Abstract: *The active, optimistic involvement of xenoengineering companies in the lucrative business of producing transgenic pigs as sources of xeno-organs for solving the shortage of transplantable human organs, the ethical problems involved in inflicting pain on animals in such xenoexperiments and the financial unviability of such alternatives for public use, calls for critical, sociological attention. Financial investments and market projections are inherent to the forces that enable and give direction to scientific innovations like xenotransplantation. The mutual show of trust between the technoscience experts and financial investors in the xenotransplants venture shows how convivial science and market are in the hopeful venture of seeking solution to organ crisis through production of genetically engineered pigs which are human compatible, and are variously called “galsafe” pigs or “perv free” piglets. These are hybrids and attractive commodities to be sold on the market, which xenoengineering companies produce to gain control of human biological future. Yet in these hopeful anthropocentric, humanist ventures the troubling question of fate of the animals in xenoexperiments and the hybrids-the cloned pigs, from which xeno-organs will be harvested for transplantation, is reluctantly set aside.*

Keywords: Xenotransplantation, xenoengineering, xenoexperiments, xeno-organs, market, technoscience, conviviality, hope, hybrids, life.

Prolegomenon: Xenoexperiments! A Controversy and the Problematic

In May 2000, *Uncaged Campaigns*, a British animal rights activist group came up with series of leaked documents that testified to the involvement

of *Imutran*, a xenotransplants engineering company in Britain, in transplanting pig organs in monkeys and baboons for experimental trial. The documents revealed that from 1990s till 2000, over 420 monkeys and 50 baboons had succumbed to death as result of the trials of *Imutran*. The average duration of survival of such animals under trial was barely 13 days. The *Uncaged Campaigns* put up the documents on the web along with a special report on xenotransplantation¹-induced animal violence titled “Diaries of Despair”, trying to draw attention of the British government to the urgent need to stop xenoexperiments² and set up a committee to conduct enquiry into the matter. According to the *Frontline* report³ which made this controversy public, *Imutran* manipulated the context which led to the removal of the documents from the web on grounds of confidentiality and breach of copyright. However, by that time, the incident had already gained public attention via widespread media coverage, generating panic about violence against animals. The *British Daily Express* came up with an article in September 2000⁴, revealing the misinformation produced by *Imutran* about its achievements in the field. *Imutran*’s defense was however that the animals did not suffer as result of the trials. *Imutran* also managed to get a court order issued so that circulation of content pertaining to its involvement in violence against animals is forbidden.⁵

The *Daily Express* report particularly focused on a baboon by the label x201M which was one of the targets of xenotransplantation trials carried out by *Imutran*. According to the report, baboon x201M’s heart was removed and the heart of a genetically engineered pig was implanted in its place. The baboon allegedly survived for thirty-nine days in that condition. *Imutran* published a paper in the *Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation* showcasing its success in cross-species transplantation using the instance of baboon x201M, and claimed that the baboon remained agile, with the transgenic pig heart fitted to its body. The *Daily Express* however contradicted the claim by bringing to light that *Imutran*’s own log records reflected contradictory details - that baboon X201M suffered from severe weakness as outcome of the xeno-procedure. By the time the baboon passed away, the pig heart had become thrice the size of the baboon as result of inflammation possibly.⁶ Dan Lyon of *Uncaged Campaigns* narrated the notoriety of the incident to *Daily Express* emphasizing on what had exactly happened to the poor baboon. Here I quote Dan Lyon from an interview to the *Daily Express* correspondent⁷:

One of the most unfortunate animals had a piglet heart transplanted into his neck. It was a particularly disturbing example, I think, because for several days he was holding the heart. It was swollen. It was seeping

blood; it was seeping pus as a result of the infections that often occur in the wound site. He suffered from body tremors, vomiting, diarrhea. And the animal just sat there. *I think living hell is really the only sort of real way you can get close to describing what it must be like to have been that animal in that situation.* (Emphasis mine)

In the same interview when Dan Lyons was asked whether such experiments are justified or not, to which he said that such acts can never be justified for they involve “deliberate infliction of pain, suffering and death on someone else.” Lyons particularly spoke against animal trial for he believed that any success in human organ transplantation can be made only by recourse to human trial. In contrast to xeno-organs, human organs, Lyons stated are far safer and reliable means to handle organ failure and transplantation, rather than, in his own words, “incarcerating an animal, cutting it up, and killing it, and then transplanting the non-human organ into a human being.” Because xeno-organs are commercial products engineered by companies, he argued, the profit-making imperative inevitably makes its way into the enterprise.⁸

The xeno-researchers interviewed by the *Frontline* however had their own defense in favour of animal trials. For instance, Robert Michler, the chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the *Ohio State University Medical Center*, someone directly involved in transplanting the piglet heart in baboon X201M’s body, said that it is impossible to proceed with xenotransplantation without conducting animal experiments first. For any therapy to be applied to humans, Michler stated, its efficacy and safety should be tested on the animals first. Michler explicitly prioritized human life over the animals, which for him are the means to human ends and their welfare concerns only derivative. In fact he blatantly said: “Human life is what I am designed to help and it’s something that I understand in a very intimate way.”⁹

In the same *Frontline* report, Alan H. Berger, Executive Director of *Animal Protection Institute* and member of the *Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Xenotransplantation*, while discussing the financial viability of xenotransplantation exclaimed that when the question is about spending money for healthcare, the priority should be the benefit of society at large. Because xenotransplantation is way expensive and only a privileged few could have access to it, Berger stated that it is not worth spending healthcare funds in this domain. Rather the same amount of money could be used to improve health conditions in general, aiming to prevent illness rather than curing them *pre-factum*. From consumer point of view, Berger said that xenotransplantation costs would be “astronomical”, amounting to \$20 billion a year, according to a 1996 estimate provided by the *Institute of Medicine*.

Berger further observed that if the industry is so expensive, offering xenotransplantation would mean that the cost has to be borne by the government and private medical insurances, which in turn would result in additional burden for the government and increase in premium of private medical insurances. As regards projection of price of xeno-organs, Berger stated that such organs would be “frighteningly” expensive, ranging between \$10,000 to \$50,000 dollars. The complete xenotransplants package would be between \$125,000 to \$450,000 dollars.¹⁰

But, why do I begin this particular controversy? I do this because in many ways it introduces the reader to a host of complex issues of which I seek to engage the active involvement of xenoengineering companies in the lucrative business of producing *transgenic* pigs¹¹ or xeno-organs¹², the ethical problems involved in inflicting pain on animals in xenoexperiments and the financially unviable cost of such alternatives for public use, and so on. The controversy and its aftermath calls for critical attention not only because of the claims and counter-claims pertaining to it, but also owing to the larger issues such an instance raise by way of putting into flux the whole of idea of biology and by pointing to the fact that we are at a moment of history of biology where biology is constituted more of what it *could be*, rather than what it is. Biology emanates from the foundational schism between humans and animals, man and nature and so on (Franklin 2007) These schisms may continue to hold conceptual relevance in disciplines but in practice biology today is more concerned with complex hybrids (Lock 2009, 2001; Haraway 2004; Latour 1993) rather than pure essences. The study of *transgenesis*¹³ therefore brings us face-to-face with processes that have put life and vital processes at the brink of hybridization, through what Sarah Franklin (1997) as identified as unprecedented “biological control”, hoping for better life (also see Rose 2007; Foucault 1973) and rehabilitative animal futures. This compels me to ask two questions: What sustains the hope (as enabling factors) associated with these illusions? What imperatives propel the attempts to realize these hopes?

To answer these questions, I look at a xenoengineering company as a case for analyzing how financial investments and market projections are inherent to the forces that give direction to scientific innovations like xenotransplantation. I pursue a critical analysis of various press releases of the company, as way of tracking its history and the present by way of their achievement-claims about xenoengineering feats and market collaborations via the voices of the techno-scientific-cum-managerial experts. Such press releases constitute a discursive space, in and through

which I track the conviviality between the scientific claims and market promises of xenotransplantation, and the mutual show of trust between the techno-science experts and the financial investors in the xenotransplants venture. Grappling this conviviality becomes relevant against enunciations like that of Alan H. Berger¹⁴ who pose questions relating to the financial viability of xenotransplants technology and its highly classist character, or the *Uncaged Campaigns* in the Britain, which brings under public scrutiny the violent experiments of xenoengineering companies, thriving on the rhetoric of fostering human life (Foucault 1980), while engaging in deductive attitude towards animals.

Xenoengineering and New Biological Futures: Case Study of Revivacor

*Revivacor*¹⁵ is a Virginia-based bio-engineering and pharmaceutical company that emerged as a “spin-out”¹⁶ from U.K.-based PPL Therapeutics,¹⁷ one which engineered the cloned sheep Dolly. *Revivacor* aims at, as declared in their website, “curing human diseases through regenerative medicine.” As a bio-engineering company *Revivacor* aims to offer “superior-quality, high-volume, alternative tissue source as a solution for the critical shortage of human-compatible tissues, cells and organs” through the creation of genetically engineered pigs—an approach which derives from the cloning technology of PPL Therapeutics. The pigs so engineered by *Revivacor* are to be used as viable substitutes to human kidney and heart for a longer duration of support, and human liver for a short span of time.

Towards this end, *Revivacor* has successfully engineered pigs, whose organs and tissues are resistant to human “immune response to cross-species transplantation” which is also known as *hyperacute rejection*¹⁸—the rejection of foreign organ or tissue or cell by the human immune response system. What demarcates pigs from humans is that they have sugar called the *galactosyltransferase*¹⁹ (popularly known as “Gal” in the biomedical parlance) on their cell surface. This trait is foreign to human bodies and the possibility of rejection of such cells loom large when transplanted into human bodies as their introduction triggers severe immune response. To avert this, the strategy of *Revivacor* has been to genetically engineer pigs in which the “Gal” has been inactivated or “knocked out”²⁰ rendering them safe for transplantation in human bodies.²¹

But that’s not all – the inactivation of “Gal”, though the most important clinically speaking to achieve pig-to-human xenotransplantation, there are

other enzymes too that may trigger human immune response. To meet that end, *Revivacor* has introduced via genetic engineering a human gene in the pig system to generate a protein called CD64²² which dilutes human immune response. *Revivacor*'s strategy of inactivating the "Gal" gene and generating the human protein in pig cells in the production of genetically engineered pigs, with the aim to launch successful pig-to-human xeno-transplantation derive from purportedly successful pig heart transplantation experiments in primates, which enhanced the survival of the latter by more than six months. The integrated inactivation of "Gal" gene and generation of CD64 protein approach to pig-to-human organ transplantation has the potential to reduce, the cost and side effects of immunosuppression²³ in *allograft transplantation*.^{24 25}

This is a brief introduction to *Revivacor*. Next in order is an analysis of various press releases of the company between 1998 and 2010 which help us trace the timeline of its achievements-claims, through the voice of the technoscientific-cum-managerial experts who have run the company during this period.

In January 23, 1998, Dr. David Ayares, then the Chief Operating Officer and Vice President of Research of PPL Therapeutics (then *Revivacor* was yet to emerge), announced the birth of the first calf, using the same technique of cloning, scientifically known as "somatic cell nuclear transfer",²⁶ through which Dolly and Polly were genetically engineered by the PPL. The calf was named "Mr. Jefferson" because it was born on the President's Day in the State of Virginia. Dr. Julian Cooper, another Chief Operating Officer at the PPL, hailed the birth of the calf as "an important step towards using transgenic cattle to produce large quantities of cost effective therapeutics quickly." But he was quick to add that "Mr. Jefferson" was not *transgenic* cattle *per se*, but was engineered through "nuclear transfer",²⁷ which has the potential to introduce minute genetic changes and modifications toward developing less costly treatments for various diseases.²⁸ "Mr. Jefferson" was soon to be obscured from scientific and public imagination, by newer clonal achievements. Just within two years, in March 14, 2000, there was a press release on the part of, once again, Dr. Ayares, then Vice President of Research and Development and Dr. Ron James, the Managing Director of the PPL Therapeutics, that on March 5, 2000, they have achieved "a major step towards successful production of xeno organs for human use" via the production of five cloned piglets using adult cells through cloning. Evidently proud of the achievement, as it marks a significant "step" ahead, Dr. Ayares and Dr. James emphatically claim:²⁹

The successful cloning of these pigs is a major step in achieving PPL's xenograft objectives. It opens the door for making modified pigs whose organs and cells can be transplanted into humans; the only near term solution to solving the world wide organ shortage crisis. Pigs are preferred species for xenotransplantation on scientific and ethical grounds. Clinical trials could start in as little as four years and analysts believe the market could be world \$6 billion for solid organs alone, with as much again possible for cellular therapies, e.g. transplantable cells that produce insulin for treatment of diabetes.

Trying to explain why this was path-breaking compared to genetic engineering of Dolly or "Mr. Jefferson", Dr. Ayares and Dr. James further claim, foregrounding how the "intractable" has been overcome through their technique:³⁰

Nuclear transfer in pigs has proved to be more difficult than for other livestock ... because pig reproductive biology is inherently more intractable ...

Then they go on to suggest that the method used for producing Dolly was different from the method that has been deployed to produce the five female piglets, which involved many new, "inventive" steps for which the PPL personnel have applied for patents. Funding in part came from the National Institute for Standards and Technology, under the Government of United States. In face of the "intractability" of porcine reproductive biology that Dr. Ayares and Dr. James foreground, which is also a way of positing that it is no mean an achievement, they argue that the objective that brought them the NIST funding was that of "knocking-out" a specific pig gene and that PPL was empirically able to achieve that end by inactivating the "alpha 1-3 gal transferase".³¹ Dr. Alan Colman, the Research Director at PPL claims in the press release:³²

... PPL has built up the technical expertise and intellectual property to be the first to produce the type of pig which should become the industry standard for xenotransplantation – a pig that lack the alpha 1-3 gal transferase gene.

Dr. Ayares adds in the same press release that initially they thought only three or four fetuses would survive but to their "surprise" even the fifth one started developing. Showcasing the "challenging" achievement of the PPL personnel, Dr. Ayares states:³³

Solving nuclear transfer in pigs was quite a challenge, so our ultimate challenge was all the more rewarding. This was a great team effort by all at PPL.

According to Dr. Ayares, the pig xenograft produced by PPL team has substantially reduced the risk of four types of already known *graft rejection*³⁴ and the researchers at PPL are on their way to, apart from the “Gal knock-out” they have already achieved, add new genes in pigs cell in order to make them resistant to two or three more causes of *graft rejection*. The press release also states that they are hopeful that the modified pig cells will “tolerize” the recipient and rule out rejection.³⁵ The attempt to “tolerize” the recipient in the PPL framework works through acts which de-porcine and renders human the cloned pigs and also at the same time, although in a lesser degree, re-humanizes the recipient after a new porcine framework.

Dr. James, the Managing Director of PPL seemed confident and hopeful about the biomedical and scientific, and the market promises of the latest technique they have devised which “knock-outs” genes and adds new ones as part of the same project, to facilitate unhindered xenograft transplantation in humans. Dr. James says:³⁶

We are unaware of any other group that has as comprehensive an approach to xenotransplantation as PPL. All the known technical hurdles have been overcome.... An end to the chronic organ shortage is now in sight.... We are now looking at various ways to fund our xenograft program, including discussion with potential market partners.

This is all about the project that PPL Therapeutics and its scientific-managerial apparatus had in their mind when they embarked upon the project of producing cloned pigs, and the project culminated in success when in January 2, 2002, PPL’s press release declared the world’s first production of genetically “knocked-out” pigs – engineered through the process of “nuclear transfer” combined with PPL’s own patented technology of *gene targeting*³⁷ This, according to PPL, is a “key milestone ... in the area of xenotransplantation.”³⁸ Emphasizing why market players should invest in PPL Therapeutics, the press release proposes to have a “spin-out” partner that will co-function with PPL to carry forward and generate returns from PPL’s achievements in the field of xenotransplantation. And given PPL’s demonstration of its own achievements in the field, the release seemed hopeful that companies will be willing to co-function and co-fund its unprecedented, promising research initiatives. They were hopeful that clinical trials will begin soon, as the market analysis projects that xenografted solid organs would have a market worth \$5 million in the near future. The market for PPL’s products is projected as lucrative, which is why Dr. Ayares

convincingly says in this release, alluding to the market potential of pigs which are less porcine and more close to humans:³⁹

The birth of these pigs is a milestone in our xenograft program and should spark renewed vigour from both the scientific and investment communities.

Dr. James, the then Director of PPL adds as a gesture of trying to publicize PPL's scientific breakthrough through open invitation to market partners and investors as basis of marching ahead collectively towards further revolutions in the field of biomedicine. Dr. James says:⁴⁰

Today's announcement is a natural breakpoint for PPL to spin out the valuable technology it has developed thus far. ... finding a third party at this particular time to take forward this very exciting area of science, which addresses major markets, will ensure that PPL's shareholders gain maximum value, while protecting the Company's limited cash resources needed to bring its lead product, reAACT, to market as quickly as possible.

Dr. Colman, the Research Director of PPL also emphasizes on the potential of their xenotransplantation program to "revolutionize the transplant industry."⁴¹ This revolutionary potential of the xenotransplants industry is associated with the achievement of biological conditions which can facilitate reproduction among cloned pigs – the necessary means for generating "animal capital" (Franklin 2007) through reproduction. This press release was basically meant to announce the birth of female piglets, which marks the realization of half a step towards future breeding of such pigs.⁴²

In April 1, 2002, the PPL declared the birth of male "knock-out pigs" which marks the beginning of an era of production of genetically engineered pigs through the reproduction of male and female "knock-out" pigs.⁴³ In August 22, 2002, Dr Ayares, the then continuing Chief Operating Officer and Dr. Geoff Cook, then the Chief Executive Officer of PPL Therapeutics confirmed in a press release that they have created doubly "knocked-out" pigs in which the pig sugar or "Gal" genes have been "doubly" deleted. They confidently declare that:⁴⁴

Because both copies of the gene have been inactivated, tissues from these pigs have been shown to be completely devoid of pig sugar that causes hyperacute rejection to take place.

Unprecedented scientific achievements of PPL generated confidence and the confirmed reproducibility of cloned pigs created possibilities of market ventures involving takeovers and acquisitions. After a year, when PPL therapeutics has been renamed as *Revivicor*, as result of the "spin-out" of

the former, an urgent press release on July 8, 2003, self-declared itself as a leading global enterprise producing “therapeutic products” for xenotransplantation.⁴⁵ In June 9, 2005, they declared that they have purchased the intellectual property (IP) rights and the tangible assets of an Australia-based xenotransplantation company named *XenoTrans Ltd.* (XTL). Elaborating the scientific promise and commercial profitability of the acquisition as step towards production of porcine biological equivalences for human use, Dr. Ayares says in the urgent release:⁴⁶

The acquisition of the XTL assets, combined with our IP and expertise in pig cloning technology positions Revivicor well for successful commercialization of a variety of therapeutic products derived from pigs... providing a solution for the adequate supply of equivalent human tissues.

The support for market expansion through investment and funding does not only come from the private players but also from the U.S. government, which also facilitates the market for porcine biological equivalences. In another immediate press release in November 3, 2010, Revivicor declared it is one among the few fortunate companies to receive federal grants under the *Qualifying Therapeutic Discovery Project*, under the aegis of the *Life Sciences Committee, NewVa Corridor Technology Council*.⁴⁷ These federal grants were made available in the form of a “tax credit program” as part of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010* with aim to provide fillip to the biotechnological and pharmaceutical companies which produce unique medicines and introduce competitiveness in life and biomedical sciences in the United States. Applauding Revivicor’s selection for federal grant, Dr. Ayares says in the release:⁴⁸

As a small biotech company with limited resources, in this economic climate, programs like QTDP are essential to move technology forward at a competitive pace.

A study of the press releases of *Revivicor*, during 2003 to 2005, shows that the company was receiving grants and purchasing intellectual property licenses from other companies – indicating its active market presence. In July 8, 2003, Revivicor prestigiously declared that it has received a substantial grant of \$1.9 million, the third one in line, under the *Advanced Technology Program of National Institute of Standards and Technologies*, under the United States Department of Commerce for developing “perv free”⁴⁹ xenografts. This project aimed to produce xenografts that do not have the “pervs” – the *pig endogenous retroviruses*,⁵⁰ which will generate public acceptance of xenotransplantation. The release however notes that there is no evidence which show that “pervs” can affect humans, but owing to

wider “theoretical” belief that there is a risk of transmission of pig virus via xenografts, research is much needed.⁵¹

Another big announcement came in November 16, 2004 which declared *Revivacor*’s acquisition of rights via licensing to use *Geron Corporation*’s “nuclear transfer technology” to produce xenografts for human transplantation as well as for therapeutic use. In return of the acquisition of licensing rights, *Geron Corporation* will receive “equity interest” and “royalty” from *Revivacor*’s continuing and future ventures. Dr. Ayares reaction to these lucrative market interactions, in his own words:⁵²

These licenses involve an important milestone in the implementation of *Revivacor*’s business strategy.

Dr. David J. Earp, the chief patent counsel and senior Vice-President of Business Development of *Geron Corporation* said in response, which is symbolic of the science-market conviviality production of cloned pigs generates:⁵³

Geron has granted a number of licenses for this technology to companies that are positioned to be leaders in their fields. We are pleased that these licenses to our technology will help enable *Revivacor*’s product development and commercialization plans.

Apart from the mutual show of confidence and trust between marker partners in scientific research, there is also a disclaimer in the same press release regarding the optimistic claims made in the press release. There is a caveat that potential investors are made aware of the risks that are involved in such ventures. Both confidence and risks relating to the market are voiced in the press releases, but nonetheless scientific confidence gets over-represented viz-a-viz the market risks. But that’s no denial of risk either. Rather acceptance of risk, however subtle, brings to the fore how deeply such ventures are steeped in market ideology.

Wrapping Up! Porcine Futures and the ‘Others’ of Hope

Not only *Revivacor*, there are other xenoengineering companies like *eGenesis*,⁵⁴ whose scientific and managerial-cum-administrative team makes every possible effort to let the world know about their achievements. The media also takes great interest in these unprecedented, futuristic contributions. In a newspaper article entitled ‘Why Pig Organs Could Be the Future of Transplants’⁵⁵ published in *Time*, in February 15, 2018, the author talks about how engendering human tissues in a laboratory setting is

no longer a fiction. With the advent of new genetic engineering technology such as CRISPR,⁵⁶ manipulation of human tissues has become a scientific fact. The newspaper report also states in a positive tone of evaluation that that while some find such development disconcerting, these are “not as Frankensteinian as it seems.” A *New York Times* report⁵⁷ published in May, 24, 2018, states that researchers are “mindful that there may be ethical concerns But ... the importance of savings human lives is worth the ethical risk....” Another newspaper report that speaks of CRISPR and *eGenesis* in a very positive light is a *Guardian* report⁵⁸ published in April 3, 2019. The report quotes William Westlin, Executive Vice President for Research and Development, *eGenesis*, who foregrounds the spectacular character of xenotransplants and the biomedical urgency to apply them by saying:⁵⁹

I think this is a magical point in the field of [animal transplants]. It is no longer a question of if. It’s just a question of when.

Elaborating how the promise of endless supply of organs and other biological materials from the pigs is no longer a distant dream, the newspaper report quotes Dr. David Cooper, who co-directs the xenotransplantation programme at University of Alabama, Birmingham:⁶⁰

Transplant-ready pigs could do far more than just provide organs. Eventually, they could be used to produce the islet cells – clusters of hormone-producing pancreatic cells – needed by people with diabetes. Pig blood could be used to give transfusions to trauma patients and people with chronic diseases like sickle cell anemia, who often develop antibodies against human blood cells because they have had so many transfusions. Even dopamine producing cells could be made by pigs, and transplanted into patients with Parkinson’s diseases.

Deeply convinced of the benefits of CRISPR technology and *eGenesis* contribution in this respect, Dr. Cooper further says:⁶¹

It’ll revolutionize medicine when it comes in. ... You would have these organs available whenever you want them.... If somebody’s had a heart attack, you could take their heart out and put a pig heart in on that spot. There is huge potential here.

There is constant emphasis on the spectacular promises and magical achievements of CRISPR and *eGenesis*’s deployment of it to achieve successful xenotransplantation in the media articulations presented above. But that’s not all; the *Guardian* report also takes into account that there is great resistance to the “road ahead” through the intervention of animal rights activists. Researchers are sometimes apprehensive about how the

society will receive or accept xenotransplantation, even if they save human lives. They do not make public the location of their labs for fear of animal welfare activists is what the *Guardian* report states. Speaking in a positive tone, Dr. Cooper convincingly says that his desperately ill patients would be happy to get a pig organ as long as it works. In response to the opposition and negativity it has generated, Dr. Cooper says, “When it hits you personally and you are going to die, I think your attitude changes.”⁶² This argument of Dr. Cooper is continuous with an apparently different, adventurous *eGenesis* slogan, “We are empowered. We are entrepreneurial.”⁶³ The *eGenesis* xenotransplantation program is projected as an empowering in that it helps humans take control of their destiny and CRISPR makes it achievable, but it is human inhibition unless at the throes of a crisis like organ failure or unnecessary animal rights’ group resistance that smothers such empowering, life-fostering moves. Dr. Cooper thinks that the opposition to these developments is undermining the public utility of these technologies towards greater good.⁶⁴

A close look at *Revivicor* and *eGenesis* invites us to reflect on the nature of relation that obtains between financial investments and market projections on the one hand and scientific innovation and research on the other. Press releases I have used as *texts* for analysis unequivocally point to the fact scientific initiatives are essentially business-like, and scientists are entrepreneurs of hope. Scientific innovation requires financial investment and market involvement, without which scientific research and practice would rather be too limited in terms of nature and scale. The hope-full, promising products scientific research and practice has to offer also offers a lucrative market for investment. This results in collaborations, conviviality, and strengthening of market forces by mutual participation in procuring, buying and acquiring of licenses and patents. And with this is involved a kind of organizational posturing on the part of techno-scientific-cum-managerial apparatus of xenoengineering companies, which tendentiously foreground the unprecedented “control” contemporary genetic engineering in general and xenoengineering in particular has come to achieve and exercise on the so-called “intractability” of biology, thereby facilitating a transition to a new tractable biology and therefore new porcine futures. Xenoengineering business and its scientific apparatus plays around with what Franklin (2007) calls the “plasticity” of biology. This playing around with the “plastic” biology in the discourses of *Revivicor* and *eGenesis*, unfolds in the form of “Gal” inactivation or “perv knock-outs” in the cloned pigs, or production of “Galsafe” pigs or “perv free” piglets, leading to the engendering of hybrids, which embody the promise of porcine futures.

Scientific practitioners and financial investors become aspiring market partners in this play of producing hybrids for better futures, seeking to achieve “revolutionary” goals, eulogizing and supporting each other through public show of mutual trust and concerted action.

The “plastic” biology that is at the centre of all machinations involved herein, is no longer simply the biology of DNAs, genes and cells, although the imaginaries simulated by the discursive enunciations indicate that research and investment initiatives relating to xenoengineering have the DNAs, genes and cells at the centre of their discourses as concrete materialities, my point is that their discourses thrive more at the level of the magical rather than purely material, for they constantly invoke images of magic and spectacle to explain what they have achieved or can achieve in future. Language has a significant role in pushing the cellular materiality to the level of the magical. Xenoengineering offers an animal solution to organ scarcity – which in turn helps imagining an animal or porcine future to be more specific. The power that biomedical sciences exercise over life, aiming to foster it, render it productive is reflected in the control such power exercises and the intervention such control necessitates. At the centre of such control is the hope for a better biological future. However, the hope xenoengineering offers to the humanity, concomitantly has pain, physical harm and violence in the animal register, something which is disavowed in the anthropocentric-scientific register of things. Even in face of opposition from animal rights activists, xenoengineering thrives, for a utilitarian science presumes the higher moral worth of humans viz-a-viz animals-the other of the human. Moreover, the animals xenoengineering companies produce are hybrids, which are not pure essences. In the vocabulary of xenoengineering scientists and industrialists, they are “galsafe” pigs or “perv free” piglets. They have attractive names, for they are lucrative commodities to be traded or sold on the market.

Evelyn Fox Keller (2000) emphasizes on the power of words in science for they enable communication with the larger public and function as instrument of persuasion. If the hybrids enable science communicate with and persuade the scientific public, the market and society at large of the promises of xenotransplantation, they are able to do so only because inherent to the persuasion is the logic of hope. Persuasion via hybrids becomes meaningful only because they operate within an anthropocentric discourse of hope for better life at present and in future through the animal route. This is more than evident in the discourses of *Revivicor* and the *eGenesis*. The troubling question of fate of the animals in xenoexperiments and the hybrids-the

cloned animals, from which xeno-organs will be harvested, is however reluctantly set aside in these hopeful discourses of xenoengineering companies.

Notes

1. Xenotransplantation is the transplantation of organs across species barrier. If animal organs are transplanted in human bodies, then that would be a case of xenotransplantation. Xenotransplantation aims to solve the shortage of transplantable human organs as the only solution to human organ failure by offering animal alternatives.
2. Xenoexperiments are experiments where organs are transplanted across species barrier. The transplantation of a cloned piglet's heart in the body of baboon X201M is a case of xenoexperiment.
3. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/organfarm/>
4. A summary of the report is available in the *Frontline* report.
5. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/organfarm/rights/controversy.html>
6. Ibid.
7. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/organfarm/interviews/lyons.html>
8. Ibid.
9. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/organfarm/rights/views.html>
10. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/organfarm/interviews/berger.html>
11. Transgenic pigs are genetically modified pigs with foreign gene inserted in their bodies.
12. Xeno-organs are organs produced through genetic and xenoengineering.
13. Transgenesis is a process of genetic modification through insertion of foreign gene in the genome.
14. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/organfarm/interviews/berger.html>
15. <https://www.revivicor.com/about.html>
16. A spin-out is basically a process of corporate realignment.
17. It is the biotechnology company that produced the cloned sheep, Dolly.
18. Hyperacute rejection is rejection of graft within twenty-four hours of transplantation due to violent immunological reaction.

19. These are enzymes that act as a xenoantigen and triggers hyperacute rejection in pig-to-human transplantation.
20. Knock out is common expression in genetic engineering parlance, for inactivation or removal.
21. <https://www.revivicor.com/technology.html>
22. CD64 is a glycoprotein.
23. Immunesuppression is the suppression of body's internal immune system.
24. Allotransplantation is the scientific term for human-to-human organ transplantation.
25. <https://www.revivicor.com/technology.html>
26. Somatic cell nuclear transfer or SCNT is a strategy for producing an embryo using a body cell and an egg cell.
27. Same as SCNT.
28. <https://www.revivicor.com/MrJefferson.htm>
29. <https://www.revivicor.com/clonedpigsrelease.htm>
30. Ibid.
31. These are pig enzymes which hasten rejection of xenografts by humans.
32. <https://www.revivicor.com/clonedpigsrelease.htm>
33. Ibid.
34. Graft Rejection is the rejection of transplant by the immune system of the recipient body.
35. <https://www.revivicor.com/clonedpigsrelease.htm>
36. Ibid.
37. Gene targeting is the strategy of altering gene or sequence at a particular location.
38. <https://www.revivicor.com/KOrelease.htm>
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. <https://www.revivicor.com/MaleKOrelease.htm>
44. <https://www.revivicor.com/PPLDKOPigRelease.html>
45. Ibid.
46. <https://www.revivicor.com/XTL%20Revivicor%20press%20Release%20final.htm>
47. <https://www.revivicor.com/NCTC%20Press%20Release.pdf>
48. Ibid.

49. Perv free refers to a condition devoid of pig endogenous retroviruses.
50. Pig endogenous retroviruses are a specific type of retrovirus in pig genome transferred through inheritance.
51. <https://www.revivicor.com/pressrelease8july2003.htm>
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53. <https://www.revivicor.com/Revivicor%20Geron%20License%20Agreement%20Press%20Release.htm>
54. <https://www.egenesisbio.com/>
55. <https://time.com/5159889/why-pig-organs-could-be-the-future-of-transplants/>
56. CRISPR stands for clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats. It is a genome-editing technology.
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Rituals and Adolescent Practices in Schools of Kolkata

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Abstract: *Extracurricular activities (ECA), as formulated and administered by the school authorities, either have strong mandates of the state and its higher education agencies or are catapulted by the socio-cultural demands nurtured by the market in terms of 'high-value' education. This leads to a varied experience in terms of what is enumerated and what is practiced. An eschewed observance in terms of grandeur can be seen across different types of schools. Interestingly the constant feature that cuts across all these variations is a larger belief system supporting these celebrations, guided by some grand moral imperative and parallel cultural adaptations based on their indigenous institutional affiliations. Above all, a process of ritualization is at play in all these ceremonies, often oscillating and at times overlapping between the religious and the secular.*

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, adolescence, culture, religious education, secular practices, rituals, collective effervescence.

Introduction

Moving through a field that narrates events and experiences in the lives of adolescent girls and boys within the schools, I have taken up keen interest in the activities that encompass their learning beyond the prescribed curriculum. The field has opened up a fresh discourse on learning vis-à-vis training (socialization verses social control), and this thin line of differentiation seems to get fainter as I move deeper into the fine corners and extend my discursive field, both institutionally and in public discourse. Extracurricular activities (ECA) as formulated and administered by the school authorities, either have strong mandates of the state and its higher education agencies or are catapulted by the socio-cultural demands nurtured by the market in terms of 'high-value' education. This leads to a varied experience in terms

of what is enumerated and what is practiced. The exploration, thus begins at this disjuncture, upholding nuances and lacunae in the declared list of ECA, their adoption, and ultimate experiential disposition. All the schools that I visited had a well elucidated and fixed record of activities that they conducted throughout their academic year, which included celebration of Independence Day, Gandhi Jayanti, events to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Foundation Day of the school, Teachers Day and Annual Sports day among others. However, all these events and the celebrations do not remain uniform across schools. An eschewed observance in terms of grandeur can be seen across different types of schools, namely, the private schools, missionary schools, missionary state-funded schools and public state-sponsored schools. Interestingly the constant feature that cuts across all these variations is a larger belief system supporting these celebrations, guided by some grand moral imperative and parallel cultural adaptations based on their indigenous institutional affiliations. Above all, a process of ritualization is at play in all these ceremonies, often oscillating and at times overlapping between the religious and the secular. Thus, an attempt has been made in this paper to understand this journey between the religious and secular in the lives of the adolescents as experienced through the celebrations at school.

Site of research

School -1

There are a few accounts which I shall use to elucidate the above stated observations made in two schools. One is at an annual function of United Missionary School, located in Bhowanipore area of South Kolkata. This school was set up in 1832 by London Missionary Society to provide education to the children of lower and middle income group residents of the city. Later on it came under the jurisdiction of Diocese of Calcutta and was funded by the Government of West Bengal. Being a Christian minority institution it wasn't a surprise to see their annual function being held at St. Paul's Cathedral of Kolkata, but the practices and programs performed were quite interesting for an annual day commemoration. The program began with a prayer song by the girls of the sixth and seventh grade. They had assembled closer to the altar facing the audience/ worshippers seated on the chairs placed on both sides of the aisle moving up to the bema where the cross is ritually located. The song necessarily had reference to god and admonitions in his name. A verse from the song had very interesting

reference to the 'lord' as a friend, making some common acquaintance to and finding a real life presence for his form. The verse reads like this:

Praise to the lord, who doth prosper
thy work and defend thee.
Surely his goodness and mercy
here daily attend thee;
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
If with his love he be friend thee.

All the girls were dressed in checked skirts and white tops with a bow tied to their neck almost like uniform, but that wasn't their regular school uniform. These were dresses specially designed for the annual day program by the school authorities and were kept away to be only handed down to the girls every year for such special occasions and celebrations. Dressed in this ritual attire within the ritualized environment of the church, the girls after the prayer song organized a ceremonial procession singing a hymn in praise of the lord, the school and the institutional custodian i.e. the Diocese church. The procession was led by three girls, one (Sudeshna Mukherjee of class 11) carrying the 7 feet long wooden cross in her hand, other (Piyali Das of class 10) carried the school flag and third (Anjali Barman of class 12) the ritual lamp set on the edge of a long pole covered by a Belgian glass case. The girls lined up in neat que, maintaining equal distance and keeping measured steps. They displayed a patient gait and a solemn as well as calm expression on their faces. All seem to be perfectly coordinated and an act of practice evoked in absolute synchrony with this 'pious' occasion. These girls were followed by the choir and then by the teachers, who were also dressed in a coordinated costume i.e., white saree with red border, having Batik motives that are intrinsically a cultural marker of local Bengali textile worn on any such auspicious occasion. At the end followed the management of the school, which included the Principal, Diocese's priests, priest of Cathedral Church and Calcutta's Bishop of Diocese (Paritosh Canning Nag). After the procession the teachers' choir had a song recital (a Rabindra sangeet), the chorus of which reads like: "jogot jurey, udaar surey anando gaan baajey" (across the world echoes the music of happiness). The musical rendition was enhanced with the playing of piano in the background. There was complete silence and a sense of dedication and emotional exaltation in every musical offering, as they were well rehearsed and deployed melodious modulations based on classical compositions. The ambience therefore within the high-raised ceilings of

the church with soft light seeping through the painted glass windows was definitely one that soothed the senses. Appropriately set to awake the spirit into collective practice of rituals, elevating oneself to a state of profound elation and making peaceful accommodation of the others in a trustworthy association.

The program moved gradually into thanks giving session and commemorating the contributions of the school and the missionaries towards girl's education in last 187 years. A prayer service was carried out where verses from the bible were read out in Bengali and later on wishes were also made, and blessings were asked for. One of the teachers named Pratima Das read these messages aloud and the rest of the audience while nodding to her each service message uttered Amen. It was almost an orchestration of any Catholic prayer service with all its discipline and dedication. One very intriguing wish that is worthy of mention here reads like this:

Amader desher neta der jonno prarthana kori, bisheshoto mahamanna rashtryopati, Shri Ramnath kobind, pradhan mantri Shri Narendra Damodar Das Modi. Paschim Banger maha manyo rajjopal, Shri Jagadeep Dhankar ebong onnanno rajyer rajjopaal gon, lok sabha o Rajya Sabhar Mantri gon o Paschim Bangyaer Manoniya Mukkho Mantri Shrimati Mamata Bandopadhyay. Amader Bishop Maha Acharjya Paritosh Canning, onnanno Bhisop, Purohit o Netri banger sujyoggo parichalonaar jonno amra prarthona kori. Prabhu tomar kripay.

(We pray for the politicians and leaders of our nation, our President Ramnath kobind, Prime minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal's governor Jagadeep Dhankar, we pray for all our lok sabha and rajya sabha ministers, West Bengal's chief minister Mamata Bandopadhyay and for all priests and bishops so that they can diligently carry out their duties.)

In chorus: "Amader Prarthona sraon koro." (Lord, hear our prayer)

Finally, the Bishop delivers a speech to draw relevance of the annual day function of the school. He reminds the audience, which includes teachers, students and their parents, about how the united missionaries have provided service to the people of Kolkata. He says, "ja India bhabte pareni, ta church onek khetre bhebeche" (what India could not think, the church did in many instance). And immediately he mentions how they have never gone ahead to



Source: United Missionary Girls High school. Annual day celebration at St. Paul's Cathedral

baptize a single child in this school. He further adds, though it is a Bengali medium school as far as curriculum deliberations are concerned, the school encourages the learning and speaking of English through such activities so that the girls can cope with the needs of the present society. He reiterates “we are after all here to glorify Bengali, so no matter how much we draw teachings from bible, the purpose remains to impart the morals necessary for a good life and one of the most significant of them all remains the attitude for sacrifice.” He insists sacrifice in personal life can instill discipline and help attain success, which in turn will benefit the immediate family and then the larger nation and society with one’s selfless deeds.

School – 2

I happen to visit another school that had organized a fest on the eve of Druga Puja. The National High School located on Sarat Bose Road was observing ‘Navaratri’ within the premises of the school. National High School was established in 1913 as an Anglo Tamil School. The school functions under the aegis of N. R. Iyer Memorial Education Society. The school entrance wall had a banner that read: “Now in its 104th year the school aims to provide a comprehensive & value based education to its pupils at an affordable cost. The focus is on creating conscientious and responsible future citizens.” As I entered the venue I was enthralled by the decoration all over. The entrance was adorned with garlands, paper collage, streamers and glow lights, setting the mood perfectly for celebrations. However, the school had a very narrow home-like entrance and the decorations matched that of the informal set-up of a traditional three-storied house with an open courtyard in the center of the building. Surprisingly the architectural details of the school were very unlike a formal school, with rooms as large as bed rooms and verandahs overlooking an open space where all the cultural programs were being conducted. As I moved further I was taken to the very first room where the ‘Golu’ was decorated. ‘Golu’ happens to be a wooden structure consisting of a flight of nine steps and each set of three steps displaying idols of Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswati and Durga, respectively. This is a ritual decoration practiced across South India during Navaratri. The Principal of the school mentioned to me that this

arrangement of 'Golu' is a ritual in all Brahmin household of Tamils. The students had gathered around the 'golu' and few were making designs on the floor for Rangoli, while others setting up the lamp. There was a neat coordination among the girls performing all these activities, which might not be a learnt behavior for all of them or a common ritual back home.

The students had displayed their paintings and other crafts upholding the popular myths and parables relating to Durga and the mythological belief in the victory of the good over the evil. Here too I find adolescent girls dressed in white and red border sarees and boys in white kurta pajama echoing the symbolic meaning of the same. Among many paintings, one stood out for



Source: Painting by Yana Shai, student of Class X

both its artistic value and the agency concerned in making of it. The painting represented a woman smeared in vermilion as part of the 'baron' ritual of the goddess on the 10th day of the Navaratri (i.e., Dashami) before the idol is taken away for immersion. The painting was made by a Buddhist girl named Yana Shai of class X. In this exhibition-cum-fest organized by the school I also found several parents coming along with their wards to view the display. One such parent was Sakhia Raza Begum, the mother of a class VII boy who was being accompanied by her son to every room and all the stalls put up to view the visual narrative created by the students about the festival. She said, "I have lived

in Topisa for last 40 years and have seen Durga Puja being celebrated across the city, but these small stories that are there behind this puja is something I am seeing in this school". On being asked how she is finding it, she replied: "the kids love to participate in these events and activities and insist that we come and see too, I also feel nice as there is something new for me. Besides, seeing the excitement among the kids make me happy". After having word with her I moved into the open courtyard along with her for the cultural program arranged by the students. The program began with a sloka in Sanskrit glorifying the goddess Durga, followed by a 'Dandiya' dance a typical practice of western India. The girls dressed in traditional ghagra and choli were striking wooden sticks in a synchronous fashion, while moving in circular pattern to the rhythm of the drum being played by a boy of class XI. This boy named Ashok Soren came from a tribal

community. His father had moved to Kolkata from Purulia with a job in the post office of Kolkata almost 20 years back. The boy seemed to be quite proficient in playing the drums that he had learnt as a part of his extracurricular engagement with school band and NCC (National Credit Corps). The program was summed up with the arrival of the President of the school Mr. S Radhakrishnan, who carried out the ritual lamp lighting ceremony in front of the Golu and offered his prayers to the God.

There was another very interesting section in the school especially significant for the day, it was the last room filled with food stalls at the extreme end of the building. Students had cooked varied kind of delicacies back home and had brought it for sale. Food items ranged from fries, cakes to 'Firni'. However, there were no non-vegetarian items on offer as it was not permitted by the school authorities for the day. The girl who was selling a bowl of 'Firni' was Asifa Khatun of class XI. She had asked her mother



Source: Silver Point School Exhibition.

to prepare the same for this occasion and insisted me to have a serving for rupees 10. She told me that she enjoys participating every year in the Navaratri celebrations as it gives her an opportunity to enjoy with her friends which she would miss back home on these days. Another boy named Tejandra Singh had put up a soft drinks stall. This Sikh boy's father is employed with Uber as a driver and also owns a shop. He carried these soft drinks from the shop and made concoctions of varied kinds to sell in the fest. He narrated how he and his brother, who also passed out from this school, every year come to the school on Navaratri and feels elated being part of every event. All the above

celebrations and the inter-

twined rituals observed were not mere mimicking acts that they carried from the home to the school. Rather they seem to have learnt, explored and unlearned many through these practices within the school set up. The implications and ramifications could be varied and contestable, but whatever be it, a new pattern of organizing behavior among the adolescent can be traced, even if it be highly ritualistic. Thus we shall move forward to understanding the nuances of observing ritual practices in the next section

to locate the meaning and relevance of the same in the lives of the adolescents.

The implications of observing ‘observable’ practices

Locating rituals and finding a system of meaning reinstating or opposing an abstract belief pattern confronts us with the thought-action dichotomy continuously. The conceptual blueprints and mental constructs of beliefs, myths and symbols emerge to inspire activities, while they aren't activities themselves. Rituals often end up being perceived as thoughtless, habitual and mimetic acts, having secondary and mere physical expression to prior logical ideas. Therefore, Edward Shils says “beliefs could exist without rituals; rituals, however, could not exist without beliefs.” (Shils 1968: 736.) Yet despite the secondary nature of rituals, it plays a kind of functional-structural mechanism to reintegrate thought-action dichotomy of rituals. Durkheim in his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* introduces rituals as the means through which a community generates, experiences and confirms the beliefs and ideals as real. (Bell 2009: 20). A dialectic mediation occurs between the subjective individual condition and the communal order through collective representations as generated and appropriated by actors in practice of the ritual. Thus rituals become means through which both the perception and behavior of the individual is socially appropriated. Beside, a further extension could be seen where ritual possibly becomes an expression of communal unity in opposition to the constraints and competition. Ritual offers a creative ‘antistructure’ that produces acts and forms of action in opposition to the hierarchies, traditional forms and given social order (Turner 1982: 82). This dichotomy of thought and action that could be understood better with the lens of a dialectical mediation between the two leads to ‘homologisation’ of the ritual ‘observer’ and the ritual ‘actor’, however keeping an implicit opposition between the conceptual and dispositional categories alive.

Moving along this dichotomy and dialectic invocation, I turn to the discursive field that I have been part of and begin to perceive of a culture that gets produced, reproduced and reformulated through meanings assigned by practice of rituals in a fresh context. The school premises remain a sub context within a larger context of plural exchanges and innovations, and also a supra contextual unit reiterating meanings of the varied cultural symbols while gaining new meanings through practice of culture. The students, teachers and the institutional agents come with their respective indigenous religious faith and beliefs, and thus their cognitive and dispositional

aspects for ritual performances. Here at the school they confront varied set of other religious belief and thus their corresponding rituals. Often they engage in performance of these not so 'native' rituals, generating possibly a new meaning or transposing the meaning generated through their experiences at school on their earlier ones to give way to a common chain of explanation for cultural phenomena. Thus the cultural life in performance projects a distinction between ethos (moral and aesthetics aspect of culture, and people's attitude towards their world and themselves) and worldview (cognitive aspects of culture, people's comprehensive idea of existence)(Greetz 1973: 89, 98). Clifford Greetz suggests that rituals perse as ceremonial, dramatized, material enactment of a system of symbols reflect the moods and motivations as well as the general conceptions of order of things that men formulate to meet and reinforce. Therefore, rituals "not only are models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it" (Greetz 1973: 114). Here comes the third dimension of the detached observer or the researcher of any ritual performance, rendering a shift in the object of analysis from ritual thought to performances that merge conceptual forms with practical dispositions (one arising out of needs of a particular time and space). The participant in a ritual act experiences an integration of their own conceptual framework and dispositional imperatives, and thus observer here gets the cultural vantage point to think over and make meaning of the 'meaningfulness' in the ritual act. This I believe guides me through in contextualizing rituals in a school set up that cuts across varied belief systems to fuse into a ritual action that necessarily upholds a single thought-action/conceptual-dispositional dialectics. For instance, the observance of the prayer service in the case 1 school consists of participants who come with their respective religious belief system but while carrying out the rituals at the church they give rise to a fresh meaning of rituals by converging the continuous thought across religions about any such pious practices with actions specific to the church. Here I make the methodological journey into engaging myself with 'practice' so that I can move back and forth between the theoretical explanations of religious structures and practicing of the same in the given context.

The theories of ritual and their methodological underpinnings ultimately turn our focus to the performance of ritual action. This emphasis on practice undoubtedly is a position that helps in transcending the methodological divide between collectivism-individualism, objectivism-subjectivism and often the abstraction-empiricism. Embarking upon a study of rituals in a non-religious set up like school, performance study becomes very significant in terms of the ceremonial activities of the micro institutions and the macro social

festivals that impinge upon them. Thus rituals that are enacted in the social cosmos by specific communities seem to be replicated and at times transformed within the school premises, but the traces to the larger practices continue to affirm itself with both expressive and instrumental ends in its folds. Thus there could be no denying that the institutional formality and regularization of rituals in their closed set up open up ways for symbolic, communicative and expressive transmission of collective messages to others as to oneself, and also fulfill the instrumental goals of 'social catharsis'¹ or social resistance via rituals. Practice in these terms remains an irreducible term for human activity, individual or collective, and entails essential features. Firstly, it is situational, having influences of other situations but not mere effect of those determining situations. In fact, on a deeper analysis of the ceremonial and festive events of the schools I see the influences of the other situations coming to exist only through the activities conducted by the schools and at times an extension of them (structural influences). Secondly, practice is necessarily strategic and seeks to maximize advantages. The practical adoption of ways by the adolescent and their instructors (teachers, school authorities and parents) to observe and fulfill the symbolic and instrumental functions of rituals gives way to a logic of economy, which might not be always stated or inscribed in its initiation. Practice, therefore turn out to be a constant play of contextually most precise schemes - as Bourdieu says, "The intentionless invention of regulated improvisations." (Bourdieu 1977: 79). Taking it forward from this embeddedness of practice in context and thereby its tactful innovation with respect to time, we can encounter rituals emitting overlapping in indeterminate and equivocal conditions. The school moving into the church for celebrating its foundation day program, commemorating the glory of its institution, while organizing rituals intrinsic to the faith and spirit of the church simultaneously, leads to misconceptions about the limits and constraints of the practice. But these misconceptions are important cues for tracing the blurry line between the secular-religious, sacred-profane in its real life dynamics. Therefore, as we recognize these features of 'practice'², the force of negotiations and motivational agency brings forth the third feature, i.e. practice as a social drama reproducing or reconfiguring the vision of social order. The dynamics of the ritual practices and observation of same invites one into peering through the ideological formulations, its discharge and circumvention in a vital institution for 'man-making' like the school. Thus the science of practice as understood by Bourdieu and invoked through a dialectical method of conceptualizing and enacting offers an object of analysis (i.e. practice/

ritual), which is dialectic in nature and thereby the method is constituted in the object itself.

Controlling, ritualizing and adolescents' embodied selves

Ritualization³ as a way of acting makes some activities more privileged, therefore distinguished from others. Various culturally specific strategies emerge to assign ritual status to some actions, thus distinguishing the sacred from the profane. Such ritualization process gives way to mechanisms for social control and thus accepted modes of and models for social relations. In both the schools the rituals ordered everything into a hierarchy. Including the space, conduct and relationships. The adolescent girls and boys who come with a set of beliefs and ritualized experiences from their homes, confronted a new set of rituals and an extension of the same at times at the school. But whether new or replication, the hierarchies of control seem to remain pertinent. The primary ritual of holding the prayer service or placing the Golu in school 1 and school 2, respectively, having priests or headman (necessarily a Brahmin) of the community to conduct the acts most sacred is the reinforcement of such ritual hierarchies. The social relations are therefore structured based on the culture of rituals that emerge around the notion of sacred. However, the rituals find a situational twist to itself and adopt certain improvisation, if not radical innovations. The carrying of the cross by Sudeshna Mukherjee of class 11 and the Lamp by Anjali Burman of the same class reveals the engagement of adolescents from other faith into acts that are ritually symbolic for dissolving boundaries of a religious community. Thus rituals demand an exactness of gestures and a sense of sincerity to be enacted in a particular time and place, providing an authoritative model of control for the performers. Adolescents become very crucial agents in such participations as it transmits through and into them a moral code via structures of 'invisible control'⁴. Hence ritualization is also concerned with nurturing of the body within a structured space around fixed rituals. And this whole process happens silently under the symbolic acts of rituals.

Bodily symbolism that rituals create by demanding purification, decoration and disposition qualify the body as a social object. Thus the adolescent girls being dressed in clothes specifically designed for the ritualistic ceremonies at the church, their ordering themselves in a clear and defined pattern and maintaining a slow gait as well as wearing a solemn expression on their faces while walking down the aisle with the cross, their dressing up in ritual

costume of a 'Dandiya' dance, decorating their bodies and transforming into Krishna or Durga; all turns them into embodiments of social experiences. Thus the construction of cultural reality permeates the all pervasiveness of the body, which in turn gives way to bodily experiences that make meaning of the social. Mark Johnson (1987) claims that "the indispensable forms of imagination" that emerges from bodily experience profoundly affect human reasoning. Thus the rituals and its corresponding belief systems are embodied and predisposed through the bodies of the adolescent boys and girls, creating meaning of the ritual by engaging and internalizing them via the body. The girl carrying the cross in the church when asked about her understanding of the sacredness of the act she was carrying out within the church, she replied: "I do not touch the 'tahnkur er ashon' or perform any of the ritually pure acts without taking a bath or during my menstrual cycle, so while I'm here at the church I do keep in mind that the altar where Jesus stands is a pabitra (pure) space and the cross is an object representing God." A practice that gives way to a normative frame for behaving in a certain way also inculcates values that travel across faith and particularistic belief systems. Ideas about manifestation and organization of the body is fed by ritual experiences in the formative stages of adolescence when the body is already under major physiological changes, impacting the social transformations thereafter. Therefore, the experiences that make up 'social body' in turn prepares the body for further ritualistic activities across life, making the social come alive in varied cultural drama. Irving Goffman (1962) examined this molding of the body and production of a memory device in turn that organize society based on cultural principles. The boys who dress up and represent themselves as Lord Krishna in the 'Dandiya' dance have an embodied realization of the mythico-ritual practices around "lord Krishna" and therefore go ahead to make meaning of the associated patterns of cultural and social beliefs emerging therein. Thus Bourdieu writes, that it is through the 'Practical mastery' that the ritualized body develops a sense of rituals within a structured and structuring environment (Bourdieu 1977: 91). The creation of a ritualized space within the school premises or moving into a ritually classified space for celebration of a belief system (in this case, both, religious and secular) often produces experiences that impress upon the bodies of the participants, at times reinstating the collective order and power of the community that he or she is born into as well as the ones they move into in their lifetime. "It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and structured space, one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the em-bodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the

world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world”(Bourdieu 1977: 89). In fact, in both the schools the girls and boys develop an agency even within the controls of the ritual structure and make negotiations between the strict hierarchical binaries of sacred-profane, purity-pollution, inside-outside and others. The creation of a situational, thus a temporal ritualized environment that weaves within its fold all institutional demands of the host, makes room for ritualized agents as well to create and recreate rituals in a plurality of beliefs. These beliefs are reproduced, reinstated and often reinvented through the embodied ritualistic practices of the adolescents in an alternative site of socialization i.e. the school and give way to multiple cultural interpretation of their expanding social world. The adolescent with their yet unresolved definition of the bodily existences, find this interlocution between the body and the ritual practices as a fresh platform to socially assign meaning to the varied statuses and roles that lay before them.

Collective performances and ‘effervescence’ in adolescence

Exuberance in ceremonies and celebrations are integral to all situations, ritually marking possibly all events of a life cycle. But there are rituals which might not be always performed with a classified purpose to fulfil or any universal meaning to make. Such are rituals that emerge out of a group’s interactional dynamics. Within the schools and in their celebrations a heightened emotional expression with regards to their allegiance to the school, the authorities and the institution’s religious custodians could be constantly observed. The prayers or the songs were soaked in gratitude and total admonition of all. Students, teachers and parents in collective spirit participated in each and every event abiding by all the necessary schemes that the rituals invited within the ritualized space of the church. There was profound cohesion and synchrony in whatever they did. The collective experience not only showed undeterred acceptance of all symbolic representations but also inculcated strong affectual bonding. Reassertion of the larger value system and coherence in its interpretation as well as adoption helped the adolescent socialize into a culture that accommodates new meanings for many of their old ritual experiences and qualifies older meanings through fresh experiences of the same. The formal authoritarian structure of the institution is no way compromised but a kind of informal break away within the same structures are facilitated to ascertain the embedded values and at times bring in normative forces to give it a cross-cultural significance for the budding minds. Victor Turner, the British Anthropologist, rightly elucidates how rituals concomitantly allows structuring

of value in a community while accommodating cathartic functions and at times provide safety valves through periodic injunctions in form of antistructure or redemptive practices. He says, “Norms and values, on the one hand, become saturated with emotion, while the gross and basic emotions become ennobled through contact with values. The irksomeness of moral constraint is transformed into the love of virtue” (Turner 1967: 30). At times ritualization through various modes of celebrations gives birth to habits of negotiation, adjustment and therefore acceptance of the unfamiliar. The adolescent confronts contrast in meaning of the rituals in external display and within oneself upon thoughtful reflections, as during the glorification of ‘their’ God vis-à-vis ‘My’ God and their ceremonies in contrast to my ceremonies. But all seem to dilute, if not diverge, in the moments of entertaining performances through music and dance that are organized with high vigor and vitality by all. The psychosocial dimension of the ritual often impacts the adolescent in a way to impress their minds with experiences that are both pleasurable and antidotal for aggressive impulses. It can be debated that the ritual exercises control the adolescences’ affective state to repress actions and expressions or at least mold them into socially desired and uncontested ones. However, I’m making no attempt to not recognize this molding or repressive thesis, but only trying to uphold the communication of positive values through ritual performances that often integrates the adolescent with the universe of other values that make life meaningful for them.

When such ceremonial gathering and celebrations gives rise to a strong multicultural experience within a cross cultural context like a school, it becomes a source of affectual collective memory that harbors a uniform and unifying moral order. “What is true of practices is true of beliefs. The state of effervescence in which the assembled faithful find themselves is translated outwardly by exuberant motions that are not easily subordinated to ends that are defined too strictly. They escape, partly without destination, displaying themselves merely for the sake of displaying themselves, and taking pleasure in what amount to games.” (Durkheim 1912: 385) Thus the energetic and vibrant adolescents are motivated by strong bonds of friendship in a milieu of ‘collective effervescence’, entering into close relations with each other and working together in making of ‘rangoli’, decoration of the ritual space, initiating collective ferment in musical deliberations, rejoicing in dance recital, organizing group lunch or simply dressing up in their respective ethnic costumes to uphold the communal feeling while endorsing the festive spirit. Durkheim writes in *The Elementary Forms*: “when we find ourselves at the heart of an assembly animated by a common passion,

we become capable of sentiments and actions of which we are not capable when reduced to our own efforts” (Durkheim 1912: 209-211). He thus mentions of ‘creative’ and ‘re-creative’ functions of rituals and ceremonies, where to maintain the re-creative attribute often parties (economic or political) come together to refurbish their faith by representing and contrasting them in common. Thus the common bonds made and the dissimilar practices identified builds a scheme in the collective memory that more or less offers an ideological and moral grooming, cutting across ritual practices of varied religious and ethnic factions. Therefore, reverence for the almighty in ritual offering, authoritarian control and universal love for the other are few of the common motivations that find common grounds in all religious and secular rituals of the school. Thereby emerges a culture of bonhomie unique to the adolescent lives in practicing these rituals at school. The peer network gets solidified through such ritual celebrations and promotes secular accommodation and subversive use of these traditional-religious rituals of the institutions of school and society at large. Though the institutions of knowledge production and citizenship training might have their designated pedagogic prescriptions of disciplining through such rituals, the spillover effect of such emotionally engaging activities are quite evident in the behavior of adolescents. In Gore’s words, the “regimes of truth” may provide a very useful tool for analyzing pedagogical discourse defining pedagogy as the process of knowledge production embedded with disciplinary powers. “These powers function through technologies of the self, making strategies for self-disciplining via techniques and practices that adolescent students absorb unconsciously to mold themselves and others. These technologies of the self are enacted socially as much as they are at the “site of the body; eyes, hands, mouth, movement”. Therefore, we can say that “pedagogies may produce particular political regimes of the body” and such “technologies of the bodily self can also be understood as manifestations of the internal (mental) self – how people identify themselves.” (Gore 1993: 60)

When does the Secular sneaks in adolescent experience ?

There is however no denying of the reproducing ideology of schooling and its pedagogic indulgence in practices of control. Several thinkers like Durkheim (1961), Althusser (1971) Bourdieu (1978) and Bernstein (1996) who have highlighted the socializing function of schooling in making moral beings and at times to the extent of manipulating the individual consciousness and controlling them ideologically. Pierre Bourdieu has always perceived

school as the repository and nurturer of culture, an institution to provide sacredness to culture and thereby reproducing it as a marker of distinction. Basil Bernstein (1977), in his explanation of pedagogic discourse, throws light upon state and its regulatory mechanisms for framing educational codes to perpetuate control. In view of these positions one can reflect upon the contestations that have always arisen regarding religious instructions in Indian missionary schools. Christian missionaries have made a remarkable presence as far as education is concerned. But inevitably there has been the thesis of indoctrination into the faith of the religious Christian community both in research and popular ontological deliberations on education. Often these have transpired through the populace with varied explanations, mostly in the tone of religious intrusion and control. “Apart from turning communalism, defined as the ‘antagonistic mobilization of one religious community against another’ (Ludden 1996: 1), into a perennial problem, the majoritarian ‘cultural nationalism’ has resulted in contestations over every issue involving religion, including education” (Jayaram 2015: 296). The Christian educational institutions invariably impart religious instructions to their Christian students by offering special classes to read verses from bible and invite them to special prayer mass. “The non-Christian students are offered a veiled and less objectionable form of religious instructions, euphemistically called ‘moral education’” (Jayaram 2015: 301).

However, while looking at the schooling process through the lens of programs and practices that lie outside the curriculum one surely finds similar traces of training the ‘subject’, but there can also be no denying that these activities provide scope for innovation and escape from the clutches of the structuring processes. However, parallel to this thesis of control and indoctrination, there grew the resistance thesis through works of scholars like Henry A. Giroux (1994), recognizing the agency of the students in their learning processes and making of selves. Thus the reflective and critical voices of the subjects of the system of school education often lies beyond the textbook. It would be a mistake to find these voices anywhere else other than the domain of extracurricular activities where both the educators and the learners are at equal play in fulfilling the herculean task of training. Krishna Kumar says that the students’ experience of the truth through textbooks are underplayed by experiences of the same outside of texts and he quotes Ayesha Jayal on reproductive inabilities of textbooks: “The gems of wisdom contained in textbooks rarely survive the writing of the exam. But with help from state-controlled media, the lessons learned at school and college serve as the alphabet and the grammar that makes psyches literate in the idioms of national ideology” (Kumar 2001:65). Thus

the rituals observed at both the schools mentioned above, with their high dosage of religious innuendo, also lie at perils of subjective interpretation and contextual maneuvering to unravel many unintended implications and ground breaking functionalities.

The ritual practices and the misrecognition of its aims in education often open up the field for varied interpretation and debates over its utility. The festival organized for Navaratri within the school offered students non-religious ways to express themselves through display of their painting, setting up stalls to sell their ethnic foods and uphold their cultural distinctiveness by decorating oneself in their ethnic dresses as well as exchanging their cultural excesses in forms of dance and music. Interestingly there were certain cross-overs too, with cases like the Buddhist girl making a portrait of a woman smeared in vermillion. The girl being a Buddhist possibly has no religious offering in mind while sketching this image. But surely she grew some strong attachment with the festivities that she has been observing over years. Thus the ritual practices of playing with Vermillion before the emersion of the goddess has had enduring and gratifying impression on her mind about a woman and her coming of age. Secondly, the myth and its interpretation of the win of good over evil runs across time and space much like any mythology does, only having transformed in its objective representation to become more relevant, ensuring its survival. The girl too has been wrapped by the greater narratives of a cultural tradition and made way for local practices of little traditions to continue the reciprocal exchanges between the two beyond the religious confinements. Thirdly, the leisurely moments of her life offers her the creative space to reimagine the goddess and her multiple interpretations, both religious and secular. The interface between the two (religious-secular) is something that the girl learns through her creative moorings in a culturally liberating space. Thus the woman next to the goddess and the 'popular' imaginings around celebration of woman power gets reiterated into the scope of popular culture, feeding a parallel market-mediated idea about the celebration. The adolescent girl being a potent customer of the mass-mediated products doesn't escape these daunting ideals. She learns many things secular while being planted temporarily into a context of religious rituals, while being at a risk of picking up few religious misgivings under the garb of secular.

Here I would like to focus on the secular practices and its emerging meanings, moving away from the constitutional state-religion dissociative definition. Hindu Nationalism seem to have overshadowed any discussion of religion in India and problematized the communal politics and conflicting

identities in that light. Though they still remain pertinent, in view of state's ideological apparatus (Althusser 1971) operating in its full swing to manipulate the masses on divisive principles, the inter-religious or pluralistic pledges made in everyday lives of co-habitation are of equal significance. Thus the ceremonial ritual performances and the celebrations circumscribing it in both the schools brings forth instances like Arifa khatun, who puts up a firmi stall to be a part of the event and Sakia Raza Begum, who sees her presence at the feast as a good platform for making meaningful engagement with her son in his multi-cultural grooming. In fact, Anjali Barman's (the lamp bearer of the church) statement has been very intriguing; she says, "Ishwar to ek, tai ami to bari te sondhey di aar ekhane lamp ta niye jaachi. Aar amay teacher ra khub pochondo korey, ami school er sob kichu tei onkso grohon kori" (God is one, so I worship him at home as I worship him here. Besides, I am quite liked by the teachers and therefore participate in all activities of the school). Her faith and ideas of spirituality seems to cut across the ritualistic observance of two different religions. Reservations do remain about her statement being a document of media-generated faith, thus a popular rhetoric. But the fact that it has coaxed her to act in certain way hints at the larger imperatives of religious negotiations. These instances help delineate secular in two modes of operation: firstly, the non-religious or non-communal beliefs that arise out of our routine yet non-habitual actions of everyday. Secondly, a universal ethic emerging from rituals that guide one's understanding and therefore engagement with any ritual expression of other religiosities. The second being more foundational for a pluralistic cultural milieu in any society at a given point of time. Based on these two micro approaches towards secular, I have found adolescent girls and boys exhibiting 'scalar religiosities'⁵(Copeman and Quack 2019: 48-54) whereby they display relative and scaling affiliations in terms of the boundaries of their respective religious belief and practices. A significant pattern of behavior upholding such secular religiosities may also tell tale about the identity-class nexus that is at play. The students of both the schools were from lower middle class families having good exposure to popular discourses on secularism and religion generated through media and the market. Thus, 'religious pluralism is the normal condition in which religious subjectivities are formed, nudging to look into 'how religious diversity occurs at different scales of social life' (Das 2014: 82).

However, the prayers loaded with wishes to keep the leader of the country and state in good health; the Bishop's mention of their missionary goals to uplift the society, the women of Bengal and Bengali as a cultural community in the presence of the counsellor of the ward where the school is located -

makes me skeptical about completely abandoning the state-religion hegemony in appropriating our cultural adaptations. The use of Church's premises for an annual function of the school and then glorification of an anti-conversion bearing in the institutional policy diverts one's attention to 'not-so secular' ideologies in circulation. The preeminence of ritual practices with respect to ethnic and religious affiliations of the governing bodies of the schools hint at the dominance of a particular faith in an 'ideally' secular institution. Extending the argument forward a similar narrative from an ethnographic account of a Delhi-based school operating under the aegis of a reformist Hindu philosophy -The Arya Samaj - can come to my support. Meenakshi Thapan in a special article, refers to a 'havan' being organized in this school every month as a part of the institutions ritual practices. "The symbolic value of the 'havan' varies in the multiplicity of students' articulations about its practice and their relation to it. It is part of tradition but it also has a practical place in their everyday lives. Attendance at the 'havan' is valued by students for its perceived therapeutic qualities more than its religious significance in the life of an individual or the community. It is however seen as being constituted by the Hindu dharma and therefore belongs clearly to a particular tradition that is eulogized as it is experienced as providing a way to release tensions and enabling concentration and reflection on school work. Citizenship education, in practice, apart from the theoretical lessons that students learn in civics classes, is about a particular religion that is routinized into the curriculum through regular practice. While the 'havan' has certain significance in the lives of students, classroom interaction among peers in fact tends to play down the very purpose for which students want to participate in the 'havan'" (Thapan 2006: 4195-4203). The interventions of the state and the religious affiliations to create ideal citizens run parallel to the religious minorities or elites seeking support of the state to organize and sustain. However, such 'bi-instrumentalisation'⁶ often confuses one as to who uses whom, between the state and the religious organizations. However, the project of citizenship training remains pertinent in school education always, whether through practice of religious rituals or adopting secular methods, and at times taking the mid-path. And standing at such a crossroad of multi-variate forces, the edgy and exploratory adolescent minds and senses are often the target of many to build a potent population in the days to come when either of the agencies (state or market) can benefit and make them subservient to their interests. However, the promises of an exalted experience through varied learning programs and extracurricular activities often defer such straight-jacketed transformation of adolescents into standardized citizens, if not completely denounce it.

Besides, the multicultural values have no doubt found a throbbing presence in the policies of Indian education ever since independence and have kind of build an overarching nomenclature that the schools often try to adopt and follow like any other rhetoric. But the adolescent mind is ever curious and questioning the given, making them accommodate multicultural ethics in a possibly revised way along with drawing upon and rejecting the larger social vision and mission of education. Surprisingly, all of these negotiations and assimilations seem to happen silently within the extracurricular engagements of the adolescents.

Conclusion

My endeavors, in this paper, have not been to merely locate the religious ways deployed at schools to attain citizenship ideals; my interest, rather, has been to document the ritualistic engagements within the school that echo the larger socio-religious practices and help identify the distortions, manipulations and/or the reassertions in the sub context of a school. This, in turn, helped me understand the other hidden forms of learning and unlearning that takes place deploying the adolescent agency. I have tried to paint a vivid picture of the adolescent lives at the crossroads of experiencing, learning and making collective memories to trace the genealogy of their existences across a culturally plural landscape. The adolescents at the liminality of adulthood seem to accommodate the religious prescriptions handed down to them in a novel way at times. Primarily, their higher level of exuberance and energy make them participate in the ritualistic practices of religion with much enthusiasm. The collective effervescence that they exhibit along with their peers often guide them away from the dogmatic and divisive forces of religion. Thus, as they learn religious ways to discipline their bodies and minds, the celebrations and rituals make them rethink about, if not outright flout, the controlling character of religion. So while enquiring how the popular cultural reverberations occupy the intuitional framework of education under the garb of socio-religious practices, I try to nudge the readers to revisit religion and the celebrations it entails within the school premises. Further, I hope to draw an account of the same celebrations as impacted and nurtured by the compulsions of consumption among adolescent students in a neo-liberalized economy.

Notes

1. The notion of rituals as irrational and symbolic vis-à-vis the rational and instrumental activities can be contested by the performative

value it underscores. Ritual as cathartic performances are often carried out in response to fear, anxiety and disciplining into some sort of social symbiosis. In fact, Victor Turner developed the notion of social drama enacted through ritual performances to highlight the expressive yet the instrumental function that they fulfil in any institutional set up.

2. Bourdieu defines practice in terms of a dialectical relationship between a structured environment (by which he invokes 'objectivist structures', which are not necessarily the real world but an agent's practical interpretation of the world) and the structured dispositions engendered in people which lead them to reproduce the environment even in a transformed form. (Bell 2009: 78)
3. Ritualization is a way of organizing certain social action so that they can be marked off from other actions. Culturally specific ordering of these actions is done to meet some strategic purpose of distinguishing the sacred from profane and thereby assigning powers to the act itself that transcends the human actor.
4. Culture uses ritual to control by means of sets of assumptions about the way things are and should be. The rituals often remain invisible in their process of naturalizing the dominant assumptions and ideologies. While apparently having to do something insignificant, the ritual practices extorts the essential commitment to order. However, this kind of silent control through formalism of ritual can run the risk of having a dissociative and distancing effect. But interestingly rituals are performative in nature and thus transform into practices, a real time activity, whereby intrinsically weaving instrumental logic in its modes of inherent strategic manipulation, economy and expedition. Thus making the Gramscian notion of ideological domination (cultural hegemony) less pertinent, as the will to act in the structure of dominance and subordination becomes a motivational dynamics of agency.
5. Social positions in terms of accumulated economic and cultural capital often impacts one's ability to remain detached from matters of religious behavior and belonging. Such secular religiosity shows a possible way of circumventing the reductive religion vs secular binary. The contemporary religiosities when perceived from the eyes of the people who consider themselves not so traditionally religious and questions the all-pervasiveness and unilineal nature

of religion, helps account for the ambivalences. (Copeman and Quack 2015: 54)

6. Bi-instrumentalism acknowledges religion as a tool that is used by several institutions to exploit each other. There are often instabilities and incoherence in such exploitation, whereby making it very difficult to understand who is using whom as an instrument to serve an interest.

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Social Networks Behind Trade Credit Guarantee Networks

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Abstract: *Trade on credit is a very common practice among industry participants both in less developed countries and advanced economies. The non-branded readymade garment manufacturing industry in Metiabruz and its adjoining areas of Kolkata is one of the largest such industries in India, where input sellers of the industry often extend trade credit to their buyers, i. e, manufacturer-cum-producers of the industry. In addition to that producers often extend trade credit guarantee facility among themselves and use their own social network for accessing and providing it. Out of a sample of eighty firms in Metiabruz, the seventy-one firms had acted as guarantors for around two to three firms on the average in the last two years, and seventy-seven firms had asked around three to four other firms to act as guarantors. It has been seen further from the primary survey that guarantors and the producers, who take trade credit guarantees from them, are tied by various kinds of social relationships and use these social ties for accessing trade credit guarantees. The central focus of the paper is to study the role of social networks behind this trade credit guarantee system. Empirical findings show that the producers who want trade credit guarantees often use their family ties, friendship ties and friends of friends for getting trade credit guarantees. Presence of social networks here enables producers to establish their creditworthiness as a potential borrower to a guarantor and makes this informal credit system a successful one.*

Keywords: Social networks, trade credit, guarantors, readymade garments, production structure, family as production unit.

Introduction

Trade on credit is a very common trade practice among industry participants both in less developed countries as well as in advanced economies. There is ample international evidence of suppliers who extend trade credit to their buyers. It acts as an alternative source of fund when financial market is poorly developed and industries with higher dependence on trade credit financing exhibits higher rates of growth (Fisman and Love 2003). This sometimes acts as a “locking in” device that firms use to prevent their customers from moving away to other suppliers and trade credit is offered after the usual waiting period when creditworthiness is determined (Fisman and Love (2004)). However, social ties often play an important role in providing trade credit apart from business reputation. Fafchamps (1997) reports that all types of firms in Zimbabwe depend on trade credit, though there may be some bias against providing such credit to firms owned by native Africans. Fafchamps (2000) further reports that in Kenya and Zimbabwe, where some ethnic groups play a dominant role in manufacturing, blacks and women ‘are disadvantaged in the attribution of supplier credit’. Fishman and Raturi (2004) finds that among African firms, a firm is more likely to get supplier credit from a firm owned by someone with the same ethnic origin than a firm owned by someone from a different ethnic group.

The non-branded readymade garment manufacturing industry in *Metiabruz* and its adjoining areas of Kolkata is one of the largest such industries in India, where industry participants often extend trade credit facility among themselves and use their own social networks for accessing it. This is an industry where existence of family businesses is very prominent. Young family members start active participation in family business at early ages. The entire family acts as a production unit here. What is observed in this industry is that input sellers of the industry often extend trade credit to those manufacturers cum wholesalers with whom they have a long-term relationship and who they think trustworthy. This is suppliers’ side credit in nature, where buyers buy part of their total purchases, or the entire amount, on credit from the input sellers against promises to repay by some pre-specified date. Here suppliers of trade credit do not explicitly charge interest but purchases in cash cost less than purchases on credit. In addition to that manufacturers-cum-wholesalers extend trade credit guarantees to each other when such a need arises; producers who have good relations with input sellers act as a guarantor for another producer. However, a potential guarantor checks the creditworthiness of a potential borrower by using his own networks. A producer acts as a guarantor for another producer who he knows very well and thinks creditworthy. This trade credit guarantee

networks adds another dimension to trade credit networks. This has become a common trade practice there and producers often use trade credit guarantee networks for accessing trade credit. The central focus of the paper is to study how the presence of social networks helps manufacturers cum wholesalers to access trade credit guarantees.

This is an industry where financial data is closely held; no public disclosure and hence no secondary data are available. A primary survey has been conducted for collecting information from industry participants using free flowing repeated interviews and structured questionnaires. Total number of firms that have been surveyed is 80. Empirical findings show that manufacturers cum producers often use family ties, marriage ties, friendship ties, and extended family ties for accessing trade credit guarantees. As industry participants are engaged in their respective lines of production generation after generation, stay in the same or adjacent neighbourhoods, and have their own family reputations and family connections, it helps them to build trust and asking for guarantees from each other if such a need arises. Social networks thus play an important role in forming trade credit guarantee networks. In particular, in the study of the sample of eighty firms in Metiabruz, the seventy-one firms had acted as guarantors for around two to three firms on the average in the last two years, and seventy-seven firms had asked around three to four other firms to act as guarantors at least the last two years. The paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 presents industrial production structure and the nature of participating agents, Section 3 trade credit generation, Section 4 discusses social networks behind trade credit guarantee networks, Section 5 concludes.

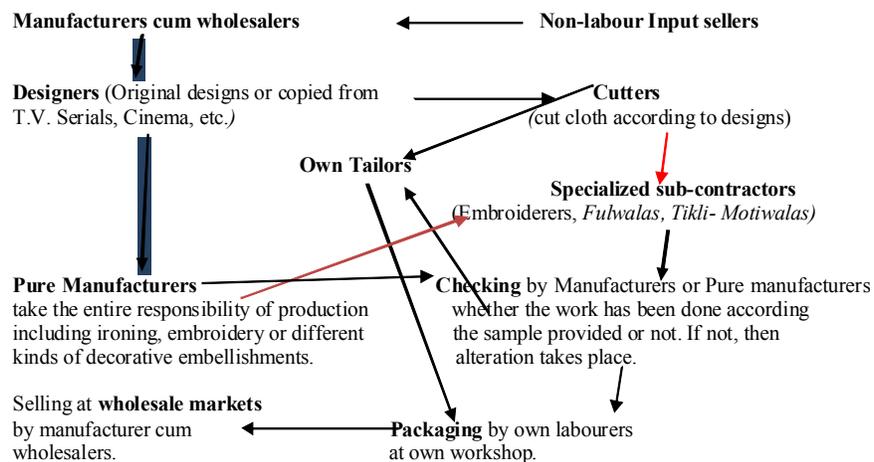
2. Production Structure and the Nature of the Participating Agents

There are sharply defined community divisions in the production process. Divisions of different types of participants at different production layers are along religious lines and are sometimes ethnic community specific. Industry participants are manufacturers cum wholesalers who are locally known as *Ostagars*, pure manufacturers, who are locally known as *Petty-Ostagars*, specialized subcontractors, input sellers, cutters, designers, and hired workers. For the most part, manufacturer cum wholesalers, pure manufacturers and specialized subcontractors, excluding embroiderers, are Muslims, the non labour input sellers are Marwaris and, in contrast, one can find both Hindus and Muslims working as hired workers. Much of the wholesale trade is carried out in wholesale markets, locally known as *haats*, housed in buildings lined with small wholesaler shops. In addition to these,

there are temporary stalls clustered around these buildings where relatively smaller manufacturer cum wholesalers ply their trade. Some of these new entrants are Hindus, and a more recent phenomenon is that of the Marwari input sellers financing people who have the requisite knowledge and skills to set up their own firms.

At the top of the hierarchy of firms are the manufacturers cum wholesalers who produce all, or part, of their output, subcontract out work to firms that are pure manufacturers and to firms that do specialized work on the garments. These firms, from the wholesaler cum manufacturers at the top of the hierarchy, down to the smallest pure manufacturing firms, specialize in the kinds of garments they produce. For example, those who produce trousers and shirts for boys up to ten years of age (*baba suits*) do not produce lady's garments like *salwar suit*. In a similar manner, product specialization exists among pure manufacturers. Specialization exists even among the group of specialized subcontractors: a sub-contractor, who does embroidery works, does not do bead work. The final marketing is done at the wholesale level by the wholesalers cum manufacturers who are at the top of each marketing channel. At the wholesale level, trade with buyers of the manufactured garments is carried out in wholesale markets (*haats*) set up for the purpose, which meet twice a week. Ready-made garment buyers come from other parts of West Bengal and from states like Bihar, UP, Delhi, Manipur, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, etc., across the country.

Figure 1: Production Structure



Manufacturers cum wholesalers purchase their non-labour inputs, mainly fabric, thread, and other variable inputs from local input sellers. In-house cutters cut the cloth according to the designs given by designers, though there is a recent trend of subcontracting this part to cutting houses. At this stage of the production process, manufacturers cum wholesalers decide whether they want embroidery, or other forms of decorative embellishments done on the garments. If they do not want to do any of these, the cut pieces are sent directly to their own tailors for stitching. Manufacturers cum wholesalers have some permanent tailors throughout the year who work at their workshops. Large manufacturers cum wholesalers often outsource the entire production process to smaller operators (*Petty Ostagers*) because it saves them money and transaction expenses and the search costs to find different small reputed tailors, and also the time spent on monitoring them. However, manufacturers cum wholesalers, whose scale of operation is not so large, prefer to subcontract to the specialized agents like embroiderers, *zari* workers, tailors, separately as do the pure manufacturers.

Manufacturers cum wholesalers monitor and check the subcontracted-out output when sub-contractors submit them. If minor disputes arise, the contractor does alteration and the manufacturers-cum-wholesalers delay payment for the entire output till the rectifications are done. However, if major dispute arises then sub-contractors are penalized in monetary terms; a part from their payment, usually 10-15 percent from the total payment agreed upon for bigger is deducted, and in extreme cases, the contractor has to pay the wholesale price of the damaged items.

The final stage of production is packaging. There are several permanent workers who package these finished products at the workshops of the manufacturers cum wholesalers. An interesting feature of this industry is that women family members also actively participate in the production process. Participation of female members in the production process is absent for the sub-contractors and manufacturers cum wholesalers whose scale of operation is large and family members, who are engaged in the production process, mainly do the managerial work. In smaller firms, especially in the specialized contracting firms, women mainly do ironing, stitching of pants' folds or shirt's folds, and embroidery work. Some of them also do packaging as well. On an average one female family member actively participates in the business and, sometimes two to three female family members (wife, mother, and daughter) are engaged in the business for the manufacturers cum wholesalers, or sub-contractors whose business sizes are small.

3. Generation of Trade credit and Trade Credit Guarantees

Producers require working capital to run their production process throughout the year. In many instances, trade credit facilities extended by input suppliers enables producers to produce when the latter face shortages of working capital, and formal sector financing is limited. However, one producer can have multiple trade credit relationships simultaneously. In a similar manner, each input seller maintains business ties with several manufacturers cum wholesalers. In general, an input seller agrees to extend trade credit to a producer if there is a significant growth in the volume of transactions with him overtime. Lenders form estimates of the credible limits for loans to their borrowers based on the past business transactions between them. Consider a producer who purchases fabric worth Rs. 4 lacs per week from an input seller. Suppose he has made a purchase of Rs. 4.5 lacs and has only Rs. 4 lacs. Therefore, he needs trade credit equivalent to Rs. 50,000 and the input seller gives him the facility. On his next visit to the market, he purchases fabric worth Rs.4.5 lacs from him and pays Rs.4.2 lacs. Therefore, Rs. 80,000 is the total outstanding credit and he continues to do this. At the end of the year (in general before *Durga Pujas*, or before an *Eid*) the producer clears all outstanding dues. This is what is called rolling credit in the industry. If the mode of transaction is weekly, then it takes a minimum of one year to form a trade credit relationship. If the mode of transaction is monthly, then it takes a minimum of two years to form a trade credit relationship.

However, it may happen that the producer wants some bigger amount as a credit which his input seller is unwilling to provide. It may happen that the producer is about to face a high demand situation which is unobservable to his input seller but observable by another producer. In that case, the producer is searching for a guarantor who will guarantee him for credit. Usually, producers who belong to the direct network of a particular input seller, have long business ties, and take credit from the latter on a regular basis, are the potential guarantors for producers who do not have direct credit links with the input seller. The amount of loan that can be guaranteed by a guarantor depends on the guarantors' own credit surplus, which is the difference between his credible loan limit and the amount of trade credit that he has actually taken from his lender. However, guarantors form estimates about how much trade credit can be guaranteed based on their private information about the borrowers' business. Here the guarantor guarantees that the producer will be repaying the dues within a stipulated date to his input seller. However, guarantor's right is not legal, and he can't

sue borrower in the court if the latter defaults strategically. Here, a guarantor is liable to pay on default. Hence, a guarantor needs to know whether the producer who is looking for a guarantee is trustworthy or not. And for that he uses his own social networks. The next section, Section 4 discusses the role of the social networks behind the formation of trade credit guarantee networks.

4. Social Networks behind Trade Credit Guarantee Networks

Manufacturers cum wholesalers often use their social networks for accessing information regarding who can provide a guarantee. Information sharing through networks among producers is important here because a producer needs to know whether the producer he approaches to act as a guarantor has a credit surplus that he can use. Conversely, a producer who has been asked to act as a guarantor would need to know if the person for whom he stands as a guarantor is reliable, creditworthy, and is likely to pay the dues on time. Input sellers rely on guarantors, who belong to their trade credit networks as it helps them to solve the adverse selection problem in the credit market as producers have better information about each other's reliability as a borrower, and only act as a guarantor for those borrowers who are likely to repay. The next subsection 4.1 shows empirical support of this by taking the help of some tabular representation on extension of trade credit guarantees among producers. Producers are denoted by 'firms' in the following sections.

4.1 Empirical support on Trade Credit Guarantees

This section discusses some empirical findings based on a primary field survey on trade credit guarantees that has been exchanged very frequently between producers. It shows the extent of trade credit guarantees among firms (firms and producers are the same) first and then the nature of social ties that is present among firms for accessing trade credit guarantees. These tables further show that how the existence of various kinds of social ties acts as a backbone of the provision of trade credit guarantees and helps to form trade credit guarantee networks between producers. Table 1 shows that asking for trade credit guarantees and offering to act as a guarantor are ubiquitous. It shows that most of the firms in each product category in the sample have acted as a guarantor for other firms. It further shows that most of the firms have taken trade credit facilities from other firms in last two years. On the average firms ask more than one other firm to act as a guarantor, and firms who have acted as guarantors have done

so for more than one firm in the last two years. The firms, who offer to act as guarantors in the sample may, or may not, be offering to do so for firms in our sample. Also, those who ask other firms to act as guarantors may be asking firms who are not in my sample. This explains why the average duration of relationships between guarantors and firms for whom they have acted as guarantors differs from the average duration of relationships guarantor and receiver of guarantees relationships between firms. This further shows that firms help each other mutually when there is a need for that in spite of the fact that these type of helps are associated with some risks; the risk of default.

Table 1: Details of the Provision of Trade Credit Guarantees in the Readymade Garment industry in last 2 years

Details of Trade Credit Guarantees in last 2 years in the industry				
Type	No. of firms that acted as a guarantor for other firms	Average no. of firms for whom they acted as a guarantor	No. of firms taken trade credit guarantee from other firms	Average no. of firms that acted as a guarantor for them
T-Shirt	7	2	10	3
Jeans pants	8	3	10	3
Formal Pants	8	2	11	3
Formal Shirts	7	2	8	2
Fancy shirt	4	2	4	3
Kids wear (Girls)	16	2	15	3
Kids wear (Boys)	3	2	3	2
Western dress (Ladies)	6	3	6	3
Shirts and pants	3	2	3	2
Jeans jacket	1	2	1	3
Punjabi	3	2	3	3
Ladies Kurti	2	3	2	3
Pants (Jeans + Cotton)	1	3	1	3
Shirt (fancy + formal)	2	2	2	3

Source: Primary Survey

On the average each firm in the sample acted as a guarantor for 2-3 firms repeatedly in last two years. However, average number of firms that acted as a guarantor for the firms in the sample repeatedly is 3. This shows that provision of trade credit guarantees among firms is a very common trade practice and firms often have long-term relationships between them. Almost all the firms in the sample acted both as a guarantor for others and have taken trade credit guarantees from others.

Table 2 shows the average number of years over which firms have asked for and received guarantees from their guarantors. Their professional, or

other social relationships may actually be of much longer duration. On the average each firm in the sample has been acting as a guarantor for other firms for 7 years. Firms which are producing readymade Pants show the maximum extent of this; each firm in this category has been providing trade credit guarantee facility over the last 14 years on the average to other firms. However, each firm in the sample is received trade credit guarantees over the last 10 years on the average from other firms. Firms which are producing Jeans Jacket show the maximum extent of this; each firm in this category has been receiving trade credit guarantee facility over the last 20 years on the average from other firms. This shows that there exists a strong bond between firms which take guarantees and their guarantors.

Table 2: Trade Credit Guarantee Relationships between Firms

Trade Credit Guarantee Relationships between firms		
Type	Average duration of the trade credit guarantee relationships	
	With the firms whom they provided credit guarantee facility	With the firms from whom they received credit guarantee facility
T-Shirt	4.0	6.3
Jeans pants	7.3	7.4
Formal Pants	5.4	6.4
Formal Shirts	5.1	7.6
Fancy shirt	5.0	11.9
Kids wear (Girls)	5.6	6.9
Kids wear (Boys)	11.8	7.4
Western dress (Ladies)	7.5	8.8
Shirts and pants	5.9	10.6
Jeans jacket	4.0	20.0
Punjabi	10.7	13.7
Ladies Kurti	6.7	9.7
Pants (Jeans + Cotton)	14.0	13.0
Shirt (fancy + formal)	4.8	10.8

Source: Primary Survey

What we can say as a whole is that there is a long-term trade credit guarantee relationship between firms and their guarantors. The firms in the sample used to take trade credit guarantees from other firms for meeting the working capital requirements first and then they started acting as a guarantor for other firms when their own reputation as a safe borrower has been established to their own input sellers.

Next two tables, Tables 3 and 4 indicate that for firms in my sample, guarantors largely belong to the same or very similar product group as the firms for whom they act as guarantors, suggesting that professional relationships between firms or producers within product groups matter. However, it may happen that provision of trade credit guarantee reduces the market share of the firms who provide guarantees as firms who receive guarantees belong to the same product groups and compete with their guarantors for selling product. However, my empirical observation reveals that firms don't afraid to provide the trade credit guarantees to the firms who are also engaged in the same line of business as these firms sell their product in other markets, or a different set of customers, or a different point in time. Table 3 in particular, shows the product categories of firms for whom the sampled firms provided trade credit guarantees in the last two years.

Table 3: Details of product categories of the firms who the sampled firms provided trade credit guarantees in last two years

Details of product categories of the firms who the sampled firms provided trade credit guarantees in last two years									
Type	No. of firms for whom they acted as a guarantor	Product type of firms for whom they acted as a guarantor							
		T-Shirt	Jeans Pants	Formal pants	Formal Shirt	Fancy Shirt	Kids wear (girls)	Kids wear (boys)	Western dress (Ladies)
T-Shirt	15	8	0	3	4	0	0	0	0
Jeans pants	21	0	7	6	3	0	3	0	2
Formal Pants	18	1	0	9	6	0	0	2	0
Formal Shirts	18	4	0	3	9	0	1	0	1
Fancy shirt	9	1	0	2	3	3	0	0	0
Kids wear (Girls)	34	6	5	4	8	0	6	0	5
Kids wear (Boys)	7	1	1	1	2	0	2	0	0
Western dress (Ladies)	15	1	2	1	2	0	1	2	6
Shirts and pants	6	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Jeans jacket	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Punjabi	7	0	0	0	5	0	1	1	0
Ladies Kurti	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Pants (Jeans + Cotton)	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Shirt (fancy + formal)	4	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0

Source: Primary Survey

This shows that guarantors and the firms who have taken guarantees from them are mainly engaged in the same line of production; they produce and sale similar products. This happens as firms can guarantee only to them

who are willing to buy from their input sellers as their reputation as a guarantor is established to those input sellers with whom they interact on a regular basis. For example, a guarantor who produces and sells Western dress acts as a guarantor mainly for producers who produce and sell Western dress as his input sellers sell only the fabric which is required for producing western dress. Table 4 in particular, shows the product categories of firms who acted as guarantors for sampled firms in last two years. The same trend is seen here too.

Table 4: Details of product categories of the firms who acted as guarantors for sampled firms in last two years

Product categories of the firms who acted as guarantors for sampled firms in last two years										
Type	No. of other firms who acted as guarantors	Product type of firms who acted as guarantors								
		T- Shirt	Jeans pants	Formal pants	Formal Shirt	Kids wear (girls)	Kids wear (boys)	Western dress (Ladies)	Jeans Jacket	Punjabi
T-Shirt	23	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jeans pants	29	0	7	9	6	3	0	2	2	0
Formal Pants	30	3	2	13	9	1	1	1	0	0
Formal Shirts	19	2	1	3	8	2	2	1	0	0
Fancy shirt	11	0	1	4	5	1	0	0	0	0
Kids wear (Girls)	40	5	8	5	6	4	0	11	1	0
Kids wear (Boys)	7	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Western dress (Ladies)	17	1	4	3	4	0	0	4	1	0
Shirts and pants	7	1	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	0
Jeans jacket	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Punjabi	9	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Ladies Kurti	6	1	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0
Pants (Jeans + Cotton)	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Shirt (fancy + formal)	5	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Primary Data

The next two tables, Tables 5 and 6 provide more details about the network relationships between guarantors and the firms for whom they act as guarantors. Family ties seem to be the most important link among them. Direct friendship ties as well as indirect friendship ties (friends of friends and friends of the family members) play an important role too, followed at a distance by purely professional or neighbourhood ties. In particular, Table 5 shows the existence of social networks between guarantors and the firms for whom the sampled firms acted as a guarantor for trade credit.

Table 5: Various types of Social Relationships between guarantors and the firms for whom sampled firms acted as guarantors: Existence of Social Networks for trade credit guarantees

Various types of Social Relationships between guarantors and the firms for whom sampled firms acted as guarantors: Existence of Social Networks for trade credit guarantees					
Type	No. of other firms for whom they acted as a guarantor in last 2 years	Existence of Different types of Social Relationships			
		Family ties	Friendship ties	Professional ties + Neighbourhood ties	Indirect ties (friends of friends+ family friends)
T-Shirt	15	8	4	0	3
Jeans pants	21	8	7	1	5
Formal Pants	18	8	4	0	6
Formal Shirts	18	9	2	1	6
Fancy shirt	9	4	1	0	4
Kids wear (Girls)	34	22	4	1	7
Kids wear (Boys)	7	6	0	0	1
Western dress (Ladies)	15	7	1	1	6
Shirts and pants	6	4	1	0	1
Jeans jacket	2	2	0	0	0
Punjabi	7	4	1	1	1
Ladies Kurti	5	1	1	0	3
Pants (Jeans + Cotton)	3	2	0	0	1
Shirt (fancy + formal)	4	1	2	0	1

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 in particular shows the existence of social networks between guarantors and the sampled firms who have taken trade credit guarantees from them. It shows that family ties have become very important for accessing trade credit guarantees which goes hand in hand with the empirical observation that family acts as a production unit here.

Tables 5 and 6 together show that family ties matter the most among other direct ties. They further show that indirect ties where the guarantors and the firms who have taken guarantees are connected via friends of friends and friends of family members. This shows the strength of social networks in this industry where not only direct links, but indirect links matters a lot. Taken together, Tables 1 through 6 suggest that families of manufacturers cum wholesalers and their friends and relatives are often engaged in the production of similar products. They form groups based on their own social networks and the existence of social networks enables them to engage in the provision of trade credit guarantees among themselves safely, without having the fear of voluntary default.

Table 6: Various types of Social Relationships between guarantors and the sampled firms who take guarantees from them: Existence of social networks for trade credit guarantees

Various types of Social Relationships between guarantors and the sampled firms who take guarantees from them: Existence of social networks for trade credit guarantees					
Type	No. of firms that acted as a guarantor for them in last 2 years	Different types of social relationships			
		Family Ties	Friendship Ties	Professional Ties + Neighbourhood ties	Indirect ties (friends of friends + family friends)
T-Shirt	23	11	7	4	1
Jeans pants	29	17	4	2	6
Formal Pants	30	16	6	2	6
Formal Shirts	19	8	4	1	6
Fancy shirt	11	8	1	0	2
Kids wear (Girls)	40	22	6	2	10
Kids wear (Boys)	7	1	0	2	4
Western dress (Ladies)	17	9	2	3	3
Shirts and pants	7	5	1	1	0
Jeans jacket	3	2	0	1	0
Punjabi	9	8	0	1	0
Ladies Kurti	6	3	1	1	1
Pants (Jeans + Cotton)	3	3	0	0	0
Shirt (fancy + formal)	5	3	1	1	0

Source: Primary data

In the readymade garment industry of Metiabruz, social and economic networks promote the trust, which is necessary for favour exchanges in terms of providing trade credit and trade credit guarantees among firms, and they also reduce the rate of strategic default by potential deviants. As information flows freely and quickly within a network and across the networks, this gives less incentive to a firm to default strategically as their future access to trade credit is dependent on their overall past repayment history. Further, even guarantors who have given them trade credit guarantees will not do so in the future if the borrower defaults strategically and, in addition to this, no one from the potential set of guarantors from the same network will be willing to act as a guarantor for him thereafter. This is a kind of trigger strategy backed by multilateral punishment. To make the threat of multilateral punishment credible potential guarantors develop business ties based on social ties among themselves, and form networks so that they can communicate with each other with ease. Thus, these networks act here as informal credit institutions and penal institutions which solve the adverse selection and moral hazard problems of lenders and help them to inflict multilateral punishment when they provide trade credit and trade credit guarantees.

Conclusion

As a whole we can say that the presence of social and economic networks makes the monitoring as well as collecting information less costly; gives a potential deviant the least incentive to deviate and behave opportunistically and reduces the search cost of identifying the right person. It is not a limited information system and the information transmission mechanism through networks makes producers fully and quickly informed about the dispute and makes the system so successful even in the absence of formal legal credit repayment institutions. It is my conjecture that the informal legal structure that underlies the commercial interactions (provision of trade credit guarantees) of producers in the system is so stable because of its dependence on the network-based interactions.

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Equality or Hierarchy: The Organisational Structure of a Sect in Bengal

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Abstract: *During the seventeenth and eighteenth century numerous deviant vaishnava and semi-vaishnava sects emerged among the lower orders of both the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. Challenging the great traditions of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity these sects altogether rejected the Vedas, Shastras and most importantly the caste system. Dumont, while emphasizing the hierarchical characteristics of the Indian caste system, held that in opposition to castes sects have an egalitarian nature. The present paper is concerned with the structure of one such sect, namely Kartabhaja, which emerged as an anti-Vedic, anti-caste group and survives till date. The study attempts to examine whether the sect follows a true egalitarian structure or not. The necessary data for the study were gathered in the annual fair of the sect called Satimar Mela through personal visits for seven consecutive years (1999-2005) and again in 2012, 2016 and in 2018. The methods of non-participant observation and unstructured and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from about 100 sect members on a snowball sampling basis. Historical accounts were also used to construct a history of the sect. The study reveals that the sect, which rejected the exploitative caste hierarchy and emphasized on equality of human beings, irrespective of caste, religion and sex, had to develop a new form of three-level stratified system of Karta, Mahasaya and Barati for organizational solidity. These separate and independent groups within the sect could easily be distinguished through their different ritual performances. The formation and continuation of stratified structure within the sect obviously is contrary to the image of egalitarian structure of the sect.*

Keywords: Sect, Sahajiya, Kartabhaja, Equality, Hierarchy, Satimar mela, Karta, Mahasaya, Barati.

Introduction

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century numerous deviant Vaisnava and semi-Vaisnava sects or minor religious sects emerged in Bengal. The development of these sects could be explained as a reaction against the domination of Brahmanism during the period. The political situation during the seventeenth century must be taken into consideration in this context. The downfall of the Mughals after 1709 and the slow consolidation of the British in Bengal before 1757 made the life and society in Bengal highly hazardous. The *Nawabs* of Bengal failed to tackle the various problems of this period of transition. As a consequence of such political scenario, economy of Bengal also suffered during this period. The internal and external markets for indigenous goods began to die out. Again with the gradual penetration of British mercantile capital into the traditional Bengali industries the old economic order was totally upset. Both the Bengali peasants and the weavers were badly affected by the work of the foreign monopolists (Chakrabarty 1985:346).

The social situation, on the other, was also reflective of such political as well as economic turmoil of the period. The supremacy of Brahmanism almost shattered the economic and social life of all people belonging to the lower order of the society. Vaisnavism in the earlier society provided a space for all these lower order people, both from Hindu and Muslim community as also for those large number of people who converted from lower caste Hindus and Buddhists into Islam during the Mughal period. But soon, vaisnavism was diverted from its original philosophy to treat people equally irrespective of their caste or religion. The caste rules were strictly applied after the historic festival of Kheturi (Rajshahi in undivided Bengal), held sometime between 1576 and 1582, which was attended by representatives of nearly a hundred Vaisnavagroups from all over Bengal. The Kheturi council laid down the doctrinal and ritual framework of what was to become the dominant orthodoxy of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, based on canons prescribed by the 'Goswamis' of Vrindavan (Chatterjee 1989). There emerged differentiated forms of social identity and distinction appeared in the body of the Vaisnava *sampraday*. The earlier practices of non-Brahmin vaisnava *gurus* such as Narahari Sarkar or Narottam Datta having Brahmin Disciples, or in the later period the practice of wearing sacred thread irrespective of caste, from now on, were not accepted by the new orthodoxy.

The emphasis now was against indiscriminate proselytization, and the highest status was accorded among vaisnavas to the Brahmin '*kulaguru*' who acted as initiator and spiritual guide to a small number of respectable upper-

caste families. Gradually there emerged social distinctions between high-caste Gaudiya Vaisnava householders and the low-caste *jat*-vaisnava (i.e. vaisnava by caste) who were considered by the former as outcastes (Ibid). Thus with the development of orthodox Gaudiya Vaisnavism the lower order Hindus and Muslims again lost the respectable place they had achieved through vaisnavism. This led to the emergence of a number of smaller sects among the lower order population of Bengal. These sects challenged the great tradition of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity where these people found no respectable position for themselves and sought for a new identity in order to live a better life.

Chakrabarty (1985) provided a list of fifty-six vaisnava or semi-vaisnava heterodox sects including Aul, Baul, Balarami, Darbesh, Jaganmohini, Kartabhaja, Kishoribhajana, Khusivisvasi, Sain, Sahebhdhani and so on. These sects were mainly the offshoots of vaisnavism and were called *Sahajiya* sects as they adopted simple way of practicing their religion that emphasized human body and body centered practices. They had no caste bias. Most of these sects are broadly classified as vaisnava or semi-vaisnava, but it is heterodox, which is the hallmark of their status as 'minor sects'.

All these sects evolved in opposition to caste society and thus rejected caste hierarchy as well as the dominance of the upper castes. Louis Dumont held that the caste in Indian Hindu society is a hierarchical system based on religious ideas of purity and pollution. The system, according to him, is contradictory to the egalitarian Western society where Christianity stressed upon the individual, not on group. Dumont noted that the individual is given greater importance on many Hindu sects and cults that, thus, could be considered as egalitarian formations. The present study is concerned with the origin and evolution of one such sect, namely Kartabhaja, which emerged as an anti-vedic, anti-caste group and has survived till date. The study attempts to examine whether the sect follows a true egalitarian structure at all.

What the Literature says

Srinivas (1968) found that in contemporary times there are a very large number of sects (in India), a few major and many minor. Each sect has a founder, a cult, a body of doctrine and social organization of its own. He observed that the major sects are known for their distinct philosophical standpoints whereas the minor sects do not have elaborate philosophies although they do have their own special ideas and beliefs. Membership in a

sect is not hereditary like caste, rather it comes through initiation. Srinivas observed that hardly any sect is composed of only one *Jati*, who are considered as a caste itself, but have members from different castes. He also held that no sect recruits members from all castes. Untouchables are rarely admitted into a sect including upper castes, whereas untouchables have created their own sects. He opined, “even though a sect includes members from more than one caste, caste distinctions are not entirely obliterated” (Srinavas and Shah 1968: 362).

Cohn (2000:135-36) held that the participation of the *Chamars* (untouchable caste) of eastern Uttar Pradesh in the Sivanarain sect served as an agency of sanskritization and helped to improve their status. Therefore, it is understood from the above literature that the sects whether major or minor give a special individualistic identity to its members and this identity raise them above the ordinary caste identity.

Indian society, according to Dumont (1970) is based on caste. Caste or *jativyavastha* is a hierarchical arrangement with the Brahmin at the top and the untouchable at the bottom. Caste hierarchy contrasts with the egalitarian ethic of the West. The caste system based on purity and pollution forms a hierarchy of several interdependent caste groups. For him, the man-in-the-world or the householder possesses an identity primarily defined by membership in a caste group. Brahmins being on the top of this caste hierarchy determine the social rules to be followed by the householders. Thus householders do not have individualistic identity at all. In such a society humans are identified by their roles in society (Homo Major, as Dumont termed) in contrast to individual identities (Homo Minor) in Western Society. Dumont juxtaposed the householder with the renouncer. For him the renouncer in Indian society after performing the death rituals of his own can leave this society of caste ranking to pursue his own liberty (*moksa*) and in so doing he can define himself as an individual. Obviously he is an individual – outside the social world, because the caste society has no room for the individual. The religious outlook of the renouncer has therefore, provided a civilizational alternative to caste-based religious values. In opposition between those in and out of the social world, the Brahmins are left in a difficult position. As priests they are settled in society while the renouncer being outside the social world remains beyond their purview. According to Dumont orthodox Brahmins have therefore expressed subdued hostility to renunciation, which they have always tried to control. According to Dumont sects are a distinct creation of the renouncer. He held that “the Indian sect is a religious grouping constituted primarily by

renouncers, initiates of the same discipline of salvation, and secondarily by their lay sympathizers any of whom may have one of the renouncers as a spiritual master or guru” (Dumont 1970: 187).

Adherence to such a sect for both the man-outside-the-world and the man-inside-the-world is an individual matter and the Indian sects, as Dumont felt, in contrast to caste hierarchy, form an egalitarian social structure. To him the absence of the notion of impurity, which he took as the ideological basis of the castes, makes the sects egalitarian instead of hierarchical. Dumont examined the case of the Lingayats or the Virasaiva sect in Karnataka. They comprise a considerable part of the population of its northern districts (Dharwar). Following McCormack (1963), he notes how the Lingayats have been transformed into a dominant caste in the region.

There are a number of studies on the Kartabhaja sect. Among the earliest studies on the sect Aksay Kumar Dutta (1870), Jogendranath Bhattacharya (1896) and other contemporary writers criticized the religious practices of the sect and the advantages taken by the *gurus*. For Dutta the Pals were increasing both properties and social dominance being the *gurus* of the most of the Kartabhajas. Although they mentioned the levels within the sect, they have not attempted to analyze the nature of the structure in detail. In their recent studies Sumanta Banerjee (2002), Hugh B. Urban (2001) also presented their perspectives about the sect. Banerjee discussed about the factors that led to the institutionalization of the sect; one of the factors being the Ramsaran's attempt to consolidate the hierarchical structure of the sect through a network of sub-*gurus* called *mahasayas* who recruited the grass-root level disciples called *baratis*. However, he too, did not clarify the hierarchy within the sect.

Method of study

The Kartabhaja sect since its emergence has tried to maintain secrecy and the sect members were reluctant to disclose their membership to the sect. They also do not display any special sign or symbol of membership. In fact, they observe conventional social customs and norms in society, while they follow sect norms in the company of their *guru* and fellow sect members. Moreover, the members of the sect are scattered all over Bengal and outside Bengal or even outside India. The annual gathering of the sect members at Ghoshpara (popularly known as *satimar mela*) is the one occasion when almost all the sect members gather and perform all their customs and rituals. The outsiders can experience, to some extent, the sectarian rituals and

observances in this fair only. Therefore, the present study is based on the data collected from the members of the sect at its headquarter in Ghoshpara in the district of Nadia, West Bengal mainly on the occasion of the annual fair and also during the *rath-utsab* when they congregate here. The present study is a part of my Ph.D. research. The study has been done on the basis of field research method. For this I studied the fair for seven consecutive years from 1999 to 2005 and also studied further after Ph.D. in 2012, 2016, and in 2018 by repeated visits to the fair in order to have an in-depth understanding. I interviewed a total of 100 Kartabhaja members as well as at least 50 people not belonging to the sect on the basis of snowball sampling method. I have used the methods of non-participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews to collect data. Historical accounts were also used to gather the historical information about the sect.

The Kartabhaja Sect

The Kartabhaja was among the most prominent sects emerged during the seventeenth and eighteenth century and that continue their existence still today. The sect was founded by Aulchand or Aulechand whose identity itself was shrouded with mystery. Various legends are available to describe the personality of Aulchand. Myths have been created to attach supernatural power to him. Chakrabarty (1985) mentioned seven such legends describing his emergence and development into a personality with extraordinary power. According to a common legend, Mahadeva Barui, a betel grower of village Ula of Nadia district found an eight-year-old boy in his betel field on the first Friday of the month of *phalgun* in 1694 or 95. This boy of unknown antecedents was later known as Aulchand. Mahadeva took him home and he lived with Mahadeva for twelve years. Later he lived with different persons in both West and East Bengal till he was twenty-seven. He then renounced the world and became a *fakir* mendicant. It is not clear whether Aulchand was a Muslim by birth or whether he was a Mohammedan proselyte. Later Aulchand came to Bejra village where Ramsaran Pal, Hatu Ghosh and others became his disciples and the Kartabhaja sect was formed. Aulchand while visiting East Bengal probably became a mendicant of the Aul sect. In one song of the *Bhaber Geet* (the law book of the Kartabhajas and which is a compilation of over 500 songs composed by Dulalchand, the most prominent leader of the sect) there is a reference to a brilliant gem preserved in Dacca city who was possibly the preceptor of Aulchand. There is also reference of Aulchand's visit to Sylhet in the *Bhaber Geet*. Sylhet was the center of the Jaganmohini sect, the members of which

along with other sects such as Khusivisvasi, Sahebhdhani, Balarami etc. also attend the fair of the Kartabhajas at Ghoshpara. Possibly Aulchand was influenced by Jaganmohini theism and *guru*-worship, and also by the contemporary Sufi *fakirs* of both East and West Bengal.

According to the Kartabhaja accounts Aulchand was no one else but Sri Chaitanya himself in disguise. The myth goes like this – Sri Chaitanya decided to disappear from Puri. Since he was believed to be immortal God he did not die and again appeared sometime between 1760 and 1770 as young and handsome *fakir* Aulchand in Triveni. He then miraculously crossed the Ganges and came to Jagadishpur village where Ramsaran Pal found him and became his disciple. The identification of Aulchand with Sri Chaitanya by the Kartabhajas was obviously to lend respectability to the Kartabhaja sect. Again providing a Muslim *fakir*'s identity to Aulchand made the sect popular among both the Muslim and Hindu peasantry of Bengal. Thus the foundation of the sect was laid in such a way that it soon spread among the masses of lower orders of both the Hindus and the Muslims who needed to come out of the conservative Brahmanism.

A number of myths were also created to describe the meeting of Aulchand and his most important disciple Ramsaran Pal and his wife Sarasvati Devi (who became famous as Satima in later years). All these myths in some way or the other depicted the supernatural power in Aulchand. Some stories described how Aulchand cured Sarasvati by sprinkling water from his *kamandalu* (small container of water). According to some other version Aulchand told Ramsaran to bring some water from the nearby pond (which, afterwards, became famous as Himsagar) and after infusing some magical power into the water Aulchand sprinkled it over Sarasvati. Some water fell on the ground under a pomegranate tree (now popular as Dalimtala) and Aulchand took the mud and asked Ramsaran to spread it over her body and Sarasvati was completely cured this way. Aulchand stayed at Ramsaran's house in Ghoshpara in Nadia district where he initiated Ramsaran and other twenty-one persons to form the Kartabhaja sect. They are popularly known as '*baish fakir*' (twenty-two *fakirs*). Aulchand derived the origin of the new religion (which was initially called *satyadharm*) from both the syncretic personality cults and syncretic sects. Like other contemporary sects the Kartabhaja attempted to reject the Vedas and all Brahmanical rituals. Instead it developed a simple mode of worship that was centered on human body. The influences of *sahajiya* Buddhism and Sufism are evident in the Kartabhaja philosophy. The term *karta*, which may mean the Prime Mover, was used in *hevajra tantra*. Moreover, the

traces of *sahajiya* Buddhism and Islamic Sufism could also be in certain concepts of the Kartabhaja philosophy like the body as the microcosm of the universe, the concept of *moner manus* (the man of heart) or *sahajmanus* (simple man) etc. as found in a number of songs of the *Bhaber Geet*. Different songs of the *Bhaber Geet* refer to the *sadhana* to realize the *moner manus* or the *sahaj manus* as the ultimate purpose of the *sadhak*. The *sadhana* includes certain body centered secret practices like controlling the breaths and others, which could be learnt from the *guru* (the *murshid* in Indian Sufism) or the spiritual guide. Now, to what extent the *tantrik* or any kind of body related *sadhana* was performed by the sect people may not be ascertained, but definitely the sect was based upon the anti-vedic *sahajiya* philosophy and as reflected in the *Bhaber Geet* the sect did emphasize the difficult body-centered practice in order to understand the meaning of *sahaj manus* or *moner manus*. According to this ideology the orthodox rituals and practices prescribed by the *shastras* and Vedas were based on *anuman*, literally meaning inference and more colloquially ‘guesswork’. On the contrary, like the *sahajiya* theology the Kartabhaja sect, too, placed much importance on *bartaman*, or the path of direct knowledge and extension of unorthodoxy, which is evident in their song:

Bartaman satyagnan jatha sambhab,
Anuman anarthak brtha he bhab ...
(Bhaber Geet)

[Bartaman is the true knowledge as far as possible
(whereas) anuman is meaningless (and) useless idea...]

All these *sahajiya* groups were also called *bartamanpanthi*, (the followers of the path or philosophy of *bartaman*) who are engaged in esoteric practices. Although, again to say, it is hard to find out how far the Kartabhaja sect was engaged in such esoteric practices, we find, like in other *bartamanpanthi sahajiya* groups, the categorization of stages of attainment in *sadhana* in the Kartabhaja sect too. Aulchand emphasized the distinction between *vyavahara* or social behaviour and *paramartha* or the supreme spiritual interest. The Kartabhajas were advised to assert their individual freedom in matters concerning faith, but at the same time they were also instructed to respect the social norms as they say, “Lok-madhye lokachar, sadguru-madhye sadachar.” In fact, the Kartabhaja had to promise that excepting the caste rule, they would violate no other Hindu convention, or conventional morality. Since the Kartabhaja (worship of *karta*) itself was *paramartha*, it could be cultivated by people whose *vyavahara* compelled them to worship different Gods and Goddesses. There are the following stages of spiritual attainment for the Kartabhaja:

- a) *sthul* or *daik* (simple Kartabhaja);
- b) *mul* or *kangal* (main Kartabhaja): i) *pravarta*, ii) *sadhaka*, iii) *siddhi*, and iv) *nivrtti*.

Sthul, which means gross, signifies the stage before the esoteric practice begins. The *mul* or main stages are for those Kartabhajas who undertake esoteric practices. The four stages under the *mul* category are again linked with four types of eligibility, namely, *sadhu*, *sati*, *sura*, and *mahat* respectively. The first stage *pravarta* means the state of the neophyte, when he is also called as *sadhu*. The higher stage is that of the *sadhaka*. At this stage the disciple is permitted to be associated with a woman, who was to be his wife. The female partner of the *sadhaka* is called *sati* (Chaste woman) and *sadhaka* and *sati* form a single word, *sadhaka-sati*. The third stage of *siddhi* (Achievement) is that of the lesser Gods and *sura* and *siddhi* are combined together. The highest stage is *nivrtti*. In this stage man realizes the non-duality with the cosmic greatness of God and he is now called *mahat*. At this stage the Kartabhaja is *jiyente mara* or “un-living”, because now he is free from the shackles of desires. The Kartabhaja *guru* belongs to the highest category. However, this hierarchy of the Kartabhajas on the basis of spiritual achievement is not easy to realize and to make clear distinction between people achieving different stages is obviously hard for an outsider, because these esoteric *sadhana* is done secretly and is never expressed publicly, if at all practiced on mass scale.

As mentioned earlier the sect rejected the hierarchy of the caste system. There was a firm commitment to the upholding of equality of all human beings irrespective of caste, religion and sex. Thus developed on an egalitarian basis the Kartabhaja sect provided a more or less secure social space to those large numbers of people, who remained in the lowest rungs of both Hindu and Muslim religion.

Differentiation within the sect

Aulchand did not become the chief (or *karta* as they call their chief) of the sect. He was considered the *adiguru* or the main preceptor of the sect. After his death Ramsaran Pal, *sadgop* by caste, became the chief or the first *karta* of the sect. Ramsaran after taking over the responsibility of the *karta* or the chief of the Kartabhaja sect attempted to organize the sect on a structure of three strata or levels, namely, *karta*, *mahasaya* and *barati*.

Karta: *Karta* is the chief religious guide and occupies the highest position within the sect. Ramsaran Pal, *sadgope* by caste and one of the twenty-

two main disciples (*baish fakir*) of Aulchand, was the first to be worshipped as *karta* by the sect members after the death of Aulchand. He was called 'Kartababa' and this chief position is inherited by the descendants of Ramsaran till today. According to Aksay kumar Dutta (1870), a person usually a descendant of the Pals whom the present or existing *karta* chooses to inherit the position can become a *karta*. However, the whereabouts of other main disciples of Aulchand are not clearly known. After Ramsaran's death his descendants like his son Ramdulal and grandson Iswarchandra became *kartas* successively. In between them Sarasvati Devi, wife of Ramsaran became *kartama*. She was reputed to have had a strong personality, and to disciples and devotees came to represent the *adyashakti* or the Universal Female Principle. As her fame spread, Sarasvati soon came to be known as 'Satima'. *Karta* is worshipped by the sect members as God. For them, *karta* is the only truth others are untrue, they follow their *karta* in every step of their life, as is evident in their saying "I speak what *karta* speaks, I do what *karta* makes me do, I eat what *karta* feeds me, I go where *karta* takes me" (Sarkar 1975:04). Sarkar (Ibid) opined that the hereditary nature of the *karta* and his absolute power reflects the influence of feudalism rather than democratic ideology.

Mahasaya: *Mahasayas* were the upper level Kartabhajas who took direct initiation from the *Karta* and are also in a higher stage of the Kartabhaja *sadhana*. *Mahasayas* are considered sub-*gurus* who initiate people at the grass-root level with the permission of the *kartas*. *Mahasayas* convey the ideas and sayings of the *kartas* to their disciples or *baratis*. *Karta* sanctions the status of *mahasaya* to a person with higher level of achievement in the *sadhana* (religious practice) as prescribed by the sect. Obviously it is *karta* who decides the eligibility of the person to be a *mahasaya*, however, the exact eligibility criteria were not elaborated by the present *kartas*. A *mahasaya* is allowed to set up *asana* of Satima in his house and he can retain the *asana* till his death if he maintains the rules. After his death his position may be passed on to a person according to his wish with the permission of the *karta*. *Mahasaya* is liable to submit the part of *khajna* taken by him from the *baratis* to the *karta* during *dol-mela*. Aksay Kumar Dutta (1870) wrote that the *mahasaya* also received different kinds of gifts from the *baratis* and the *mahasaya* always enjoyed excellent food, clothing and many different types of goods sitting at home only. However, the *mahasayas* might have received gifts from their disciples, but perhaps it was a bit of an exaggeration to say that *mahasayas* received so much expensive items regularly from their disciples, who mostly belonged to poor lower caste section of the society.

Dutta found some Muslim *mahasayas* having Hindu disciples who also secretly took food from their *gurus*. Muslim *mahasayas* like Shibshekhar Mandal from Murshidabad, Ismael Fakir from Nadia were prominent *gurus* and have large number of disciples from both Hindus and Muslims. Their descendants still come to the fair and continue their legacy. A *mahasaya* is supposed to test the person before giving them the mantra for initiation into the sect. Only after this does the *mahasaya* give the *guru satyamantra* to the devotee and tells him not to disclose the *mantra* (which is also termed as *bij mantra* or the core hymn) to anybody. The person is given the final initiation only after he gets much knowledge about the sect and his respect toward the *guru* is proved to be true. Since the Kartabhaja *mahasayas* are the local level *gurus* who directly interact with the grass root level disciples or *baratis* and spread the ideas of the *Kartabhaja* sect throughout these mass people, their position is very important within the sect.

Most of the *mahasayas* strictly maintain the sectarian rules and even today these *mahasayas* mostly follow the Kartabhaja rituals only. However, some like Goswami from Berhampur, Murshidabad district worship other Gods as Mr. Goswami has *narayanshila* at his home. He worships it regularly because he claims that his predecessors were originally the followers of Nityananda, the Vaisnava leader. But the *kartas* at Ghoshpara instructed him not to disclose the fact to others because this may affect the sanctity of his identity as a Kartabhaja *mahasaya*. Another female *mahasaya* Ms. Pal from Bali, Howrah district, who gives Rs.22/- as annual *khajna* to the *kartas*, discloses that she herself is also a worshipper of Krishna and along with Satima worships Bipadtarini and Lokenathbaba as well. Daughter of an old *mahasaya* Mr. Mukherjee from Katoa, Burdwan claims that they are originally the descendants of Kesab Bharati, the *guru* of Sri Chaitanya and along with Kartabhaja rituals of singing of *Bhaber Geet*, eating vegetarian food on Fridays they also worship Gods and Goddesses like Krishna, Laksmi, Saraswati and others. Thus although the *mahasayas* or the sub *gurus* of the Kartabhajasect who are placed below the Pal *kartas* follow Kartabhaja rules and perhaps some even practice the *sadhana* prescribed by the sect, sometimes they too (in most of the cases the female descendants of them) worship other Hindu Gods and Goddesses. However, most of the *mahasayas* today do not accept the worship of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses as the part of their sectarian practices. Still, some of them admitted that their wives and children worshipped these Gods and Goddesses. The lower orders of the sect, i.e., the *baratis* have a greater tendency to worship different Gods and Goddesses and more recently even other popular *gurus* like Loknathbaba, Balak Brahmachari, etc. In most of

the cases the descendants of the *mahasayas* get that position, but if the descendant is not able to attain the desired stage of spiritual achievement, he may not be considered a *mahasaya*.

The present *kartas*, the descendants of Ramsaran and Satima do not seem to be much active to spread the sect philosophy, they are more concerned to collect the share of the earning of *Thakurbari* (House of Satima). However, some old, knowledgeable and energetic middle aged *mahasayas* are presently trying to organize the sect in a better way. Dr. Roy from Dhaka, Bangladesh and some others have initiated to form an association of the *mahasayas* called *satyaseba sangha*. They meet together, mainly during the *dol mela*, to discuss about the strategies to increase the number of sect followers. Dr. Roy and some other relatively modern educated *mahasayas* (mainly from Bangladesh) now want to popularize the sect among the elite section of society.

Barati: *Mahasayas* initiated enumerable disciples throughout Bengal and these disciples at the grass-root level formed the third stratum, namely, *baratis*. *Baratis* constitute the largest section of the Kartabhajasect. They belong to the lowest level of the organizational structure of the sect. *Baratis* or the grass root level disciples are first tested by the *mahasayas*. Before the final initiation a probationary or temporary initiation is provided, and they are given the complete initiation (*sholo-ana mantra*) into the sect only if they prove their honesty toward the *guru* and the sect. Most of the *baratis* belong to the *sthul* or primary level of sectarian *sadhana*, which means they follow the rules prescribed by the sect that they come to know from the teachings of their *mahasayas* as well as from the songs of *Bhaber Geet*. The *sadhana*, which is not simple at all, is performed by the *mul* or main level of Kartabhajas and probably hardly any *mul* Kartabhaja comes from the category of *barati*. *Baratis* maintain social rules and rituals in their own community, either Hindu or Muslim, but carry out the sectarian rituals among their fellow sect members and *gurus*. Almost all the *baratis* at present participate in the social ceremonies in their own community and also worship Gods and Goddesses like Laksmi, Saraswati, Narayan and others in their houses. Many of them worship the popular *gurus* like Lokenathbaba and Balakbrahmachari. Mr. Goswami, a *mahasaya* from Berhampur says that many of his *baratis* even left the sect to be the disciples of these famous *gurus*. Many *baratis* like a woman *barati* from Medinipur, worship Laksmi, Saraswati, Lokenathbaba along with Satima. Some others like Mr. Mandal from Cuttack come to Ghoshpara during different pujas like Durga puja, Viswakarma puja etc. Mr. Mandal also

performs Laksmi puja in his house during the Bengali month of *baisakh* and also visits Puri during *rathayatra*. Mr. Santra and Mr. Dolui from Howrah keep the photographs of both Satima and Lokenathbaba in their houses.

Although *baratis* constitute the largest category of the sect, they are more or less a floating population. The large section of lower caste people joined the sect where they received a respectable position, had the opportunity to mix up with all castes – upper or lower and dine with them at least during the annual fair at Ghoshpara as also they got their very own Satima for redressing their sufferings. They learn about the sect philosophy from their *mahasaya*. In many places the local *baratis* gather at their *mahasaya's* house on the Fridays and other sacred occasions and listen to their guru and sing songs from *Bhaber Geet*. Such practices obviously renew and confirm their identity as Kartabhaja. Many of the *baratis* come to the annual fair at Ghoshpara where they get chances to meet the *Kartas*, *Mahasayas*, all other *baratis* from different places as also visit the sacred spots at Ghoshpara. But not all the *baratis* are fortunate enough to visit the fair every year, as this is a quite expensive journey for the poor *baratis* to avail every year. Many of the *baratis*, mostly poorer section of them attend the fair with a gap of few years. One can even find *baratis* who came for the first time to the fair. Moreover, when the local *mahasaya* dies with no one to continue his legacy the *baratis* lose the opportunity to meet the Guru every now and then. In such cases they have to go to other *mahasayas* in distant villages or visit Ghoshpara to keep in touch with the *gurus* of the sect and nurture the sectarian ideas. Since both the options often become inconvenient for many *baratis* they perhaps take refuge of other popular available *gurus*. Some leave the sect completely as Mr. Goswami of Berhampur opined, when most of them adore different *gurus* along with Satima. Again many people also take initiation every year into the sect and one can even see people taking initiation at the fair. So at least a section of the category of *barati* can be considered floating. However, although in most of the cases the *baratis* do not enter the *Mul* stage of Kartabhaja *sadhana* and many of them may not be strong or permanent adherents of the sect, this group of *baratis* constitute the main source of *khajna* for the *kartas* at Ghoshpara. Thus the sect survives mainly on the flow of fund from the lower most category of *barati*.

In short, we can say that *Karta* was the chief religious guide and occupied the highest position within the sect. The position of the *Karta* was hereditary, i.e., only the descendants of Ramsaran Pal acquired the status. *Mahasayas* were the upper level Kartabhajas who took direct initiation from the *karta*

and are also in a higher stage of the Kartabhaja *sadhana*. *Mahasayas*, who might also be considered as sub-*gurus*, initiated enumerable disciples throughout Bengal and these disciples of grass-root level formed the third stratum, namely, *baratis*.

Deviation in the structure

Presently some deviations in the organizational structure of the sect can also be noticed. Some of the Kartabhajas who are not given the status of *mahasaya* are seen to be the direct disciples of the Pal *kartas*. Even initiation given by the *kartas* to such people (who are not family members of *mahasayas*) can be seen during the *dolmela* at Ghoshpara. The explanation for such exceptional practices given by the *kartas* is that they sometimes give initiation to people who are of old acquaintance. By old acquaintance they, perhaps, mean those people who are for long attached to the sect. Mrs. Sarkar from Lake Town, Kolkata, Mr. Baen from Joynagar, 24 Parganas, Mr. Mandal from Cuttack and many others are direct disciples of the Pal *kartas*, but are not considered *mahasayas* and do not have the right to initiate others as well. So they are the direct *baratis* of the *kartas*, not of any *mahasaya*. Although such deviation in the organisational structure of the sect is not mentioned in any previous work about the sect, the practice does not seem a new one; rather it is an old practice as the *baratis* mentioned earlier are quite old disciples of the Pals.

The organizational structure of the sect, however, prevails with all these exceptions and deviations. Of course the deviations on such a large scale implies that the stratified organizational structure of the sect was never too rigid, rather it welcomed people to be a member of the sect in every possible way. Still, this differentiated structure, I feel, was the most important advancement of the apparently egalitarian sect. The organized structure became the backbone of the sect and is well maintained till today. Although the sect initially had members from lower castes only, later some upper caste people also joined the sect. As some of the prominent upper caste influential persons like Jaynarain Ghosal, a zamindar of Bhukailash, were attracted to the sect and joined it Perhaps others too were influenced by such events and also joined the sect. Since Kartabhajas rejected the caste hierarchy, upper caste disciples touched the feet of their lower caste *gurus* – the practice continues to the present. But instead of showing respect to the upper caste the sect members pay their respect to their *gurus* – *baratis* to their *mahasayas* and *mahasayas* in their turn to the *karta*. Thus although

the sect rejected the exploitative hierarchical caste structure, they created an organisational structure, which though not egalitarian was devoid of the exploitative nature of the caste system. In this new structure the *kartas* belonged to the topmost position having authority over the sect. For the disciples, *baratis* are liable to pay *khajna* (tax) to their immediate gurus, i.e., the *mahasayas*, who pay that tax to the *karta*. This confirmed flow of tax from below helps to sustain the organisation within the sect.

Conclusion

It is now clear that the sect was never an egalitarian one as it is constituted of three groups of people who are obviously not of equal status within the sect. However, the sect is different from caste in many aspects. The commensal and connubial separateness which is the characteristic feature of caste hierarchy is totally absent in the case of the Kartabhaja sect. The members of the different strata within the sect interact freely with each other. Moreover, organisational position within the sect has to be attained and is not inherited like caste ranks. But at the same time it can also be said that the three categories, which were formed in the early stage of the development of the sect continued to exist as distinguished groups having different ritual status, value as well as prestige within the sect. This definitely led to the development of a hierarchical system, to some extent like caste hierarchy, in the form of Kartabhajas. One can thus obviously say that the Kartabhaja sect instead of being egalitarian formed a new system of caste within caste. Therefore, the assertion made by Dumont regarding the Indian sects as egalitarian is contradicted in this case of the Kartabhaja, one of the largest and popular sects of Bengal. Perhaps, people, mostly belonging to lower orders of rural areas are a helpless lot in all walks of life and are not prepared enough to live independent individual life. They still need some group to the common sufferings and some guidance to lead a better life. For this reason, the categories of gurus, i.e., the *kartas* and the *mahasayas* of the Kartabhaja sect are still necessary categories for the large number of *baratis*, and this in turn strengthened the hierarchical structure of the sect.

The study reveals that the sect, which rejected the exploitative caste hierarchy and emphasized on equality of human beings, irrespective of caste, religion and sex had to develop a new form of three-level stratified system of *karta*, *mahasaya* and *barati* in order to organize the sect on a firm basis. These separate and independent groups within the sect could easily be distinguished through their different ritual performances. The

formation and continuation of stratified structure within the sect obviously is contrary to the image of egalitarian structure of the sect. The study is significant for understanding the social structure of sects constituted mainly by the people of lower orders in society which in turn will help to realize social behaviour of a large section of population who deviate from the institutionalized structure while living within the same society.

[**Acknowledgements:** This paper is a part of my PhD thesis and I am deeply indebted to my supervisors Prof. Abhijit Mitra and Late Prof. Anjan Ghosh for their valuable suggestions and guidance.]

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We, the people of India

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Abstract: *The word ‘development’ has increasingly become an oft-used, clichéd political slogan, particularly before an election in the country. But, on pondering deeper, the question that arises in mind is, ‘whose development’ are we talking about? Drawing from our basic readings in political literature, we would like to believe, it is the ‘development’ of the common people of our country, irrespective of their class, caste, gender or race, because the Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic that India has committed itself to be can make one feel that the common people are the supreme rulers in this land and that all policy decisions will be taken keeping in mind their good governance. But, has it so happened? This paper aims to particularly focus on the issue of displacement-induced development of the country in last six years, with the tribal population bearing the brunt of such flawed policies.*

Keywords: Statue of Unity, Hasdeo Arand, Aarey, Godda Project, Land Act 2013.

Introduction

The art of conducting politics in modern democracies has often been characterized by a tendency to repress, limit and impede the spontaneous forces and functions of life. Basic readings on Foucault’s concept of ‘Biopolitics’ or ‘Biopower’, as may be found in his seminal works, ‘*The Will To Knowledge*’, ‘*Society Must Be Defended*’ and ‘*The Birth of Biopolitics*’ often used interchangeably and synonymously, critiques the modern democracies for reducing citizens to objects on which precise control and comprehensive regulations can be imposed and therefore, regulating their lives in the guise of development and welfare. Is it true? Let us begin by placing this article against the backdrop of such a theoretical foundation.

What do the laws on Scheduled Tribes say?

The Scheduled Tribes, having been recognized as the most marginalized, isolated and deprived population in the country, have been granted some legal and constitutional protection. ‘The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, in section 4(5) states that save as otherwise provided, no member of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes or Other Traditional Forest Dweller shall be evicted or removed from the Forest Land until his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is complete. Under Section 5 of F.R.A., Gram Sabha is, inter-alia, empowered to ensure the decision taken in Gram Sabha to regulate access to community forest resources and stop any activity which adversely affects the wild animals, forest and the biodiversity are complied with. As per the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation Resettlement Act 2013, its main objective is to ensure, in consultation with institutions of local self-government and Gram Sabha, a humane, participative, informed and transparent process for land acquisition with the least disturbance to the owners of the land and other affected families and provide just and fair compensation to the affected families whose land has been acquired or proposed to be acquired. As per Section 41 (1) of RFCTLARR Act, 2013, as far as possible, no acquisition of land shall be made in the Scheduled Areas. As per Section 14 (2), where such acquisition does take place, it shall be done only as a demonstrable last resort. As per Section 41 (3), in case of acquisition or alteration of any land in Scheduled Areas, the prior consent of the concerned Gram Sabha or the Panchayats or the autonomous District Councils, at the appropriate level in Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, as the case may be, shall be obtained, in all cases of land acquisition in such areas, including acquisition in case of urgency, before issue of a notification under the Act, or any other Central Act or a State Act for the time being in force. As per the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act of 1996, the Gram Sabha or Panchayats shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas or development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas. According to Schedule V of the Constitution, the Governor of the State which has Scheduled Areas is empowered to prohibit or restrict transfer of land from tribals and regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such cases’¹ (Saruta 2019).

In 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government brought an Ordinance to amend the RFCTLARR Act of 2013, which had come into existence under the Congress- led UPA regime. The Land Act of 2013 had replaced the colonial- era Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which permitted forcible acquisition of land. The new government at the Centre brought an Ordinance to amend the 2013 Act by promulgating the RFCTLARR (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014. The government sought to amend some key features of the 2013 Act, which the opposition protested because to them these were efforts to ‘dilute’ the original provisions and thereby grabbing land from the tribals would be made far easier. For instance, the 2014 Ordinance of amendment ‘sought to empower the government of exempting 5 categories of projects- from the requirements of “determination of social impact and public purpose”, and “special provision to safeguard food security”. Besides, it also exempted these categories of projects from the “consent” clause² (Sharma 2020). It means that under the 2013 Act, it needed the consent of 70 percent of families, where the land would be taken for public private partnership projects, and 80 percent of families would need to give consent before a land is taken for private projects. But the new Ordinance sought to remove the prerequisite condition of taking consent in these 5 categories of projects, mentioned above. Secondly, it ‘also exempted these projects from having to go through a social impact assessment- a study by independent experts to determine a project’s impact on people’s land and livelihoods, and its economic, social and cultural consequences, in consultation with affected communities³ (BBC 2015).

Demographic Situation of the Scheduled Tribes

The tribal population of India constitutes 8.2 percent of the total India’s population, that is, about 84,326,240 people, as per the Census of 2011⁴ (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2011). It further states that the literacy rate among the tribals is 58.95 percent and the sex ratio is 990⁵ (ST Data, Census 2011). Percentage of Scheduled Tribe population living below the poverty line in the country around 2011-12 was 24.1 percent.⁶ (Annual Report, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GOI 2016-17: 30) Landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour was a whopping 35.65 percent, tribal households with salaried jobs in government was 4.36 percent only and a meagre 4.48 percent of tribal households in India had the monthly income of the highest earning member in the family greater than Rs. 10,000. Moreover, only 3.43 percent

of the tribal households had refrigerators at home and a whopping percentage of 57.39 of households did not have any access to either landline or mobile connection.⁷ (Annual Report 2016-17:31) According to the Census 2011 data, only 22.6 percent Scheduled Tribe households had latrine facilities in their house premises⁸(Annual Report 2016-17: 32). It further shows that less than 20 percent of the Scheduled Tribe households had drinking water facilities in their house premises. About 39.1 percent of the Scheduled Tribe population had to depend on hand pumps away from their houses for drinking water, 28.2 percent went to wells away from their house premises, 1.9 percent went to tank/pond/lakes and 4.2 percent depended on rivers and canals away from their homes for finding drinking water⁹(Annual Report 2016-17: 33). As far as their professional profile was concerned, based on the report formulated during the 70th round of National Sample Survey (NSS) around January-December 2013, 50.95 percent of the Scheduled Tribe population depended on self-employed cultivation, 0.75 percent on livestock farming, 3.75 percent other/allied agricultural activities, 32.90 percent had salaried employment¹⁰(Annual Report 2016-17: 34).

The Promised Path

Given this grim situation, true development of the tribal population of the country called for continuous and sincere efforts. At such a crucial juncture, there occurred a change in the government at the Centre in 2014. The rightist Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) came to power with a thumping majority. The election manifesto of the party before the 2014 General Elections, did manage to kindle hopes in some sections of the society. It promised a “vibrant and participative democracy, empowered and inspired people, inclusive and sustainable development, basic amenities to all, pro-active, pro- people good governance, a shift to representative to participatory democracy, developmental process a people’s movement - Jan bhagidari, actively involve people in policy formulation and evaluation, people - centric good governance, government of the poor, marginalized and left behind”¹¹(*BJP Election Manifesto* 2014). However, in last six years, the country as well as some states has seen a phenomenal rise in reported incidences of tribal eviction due to developmental projects, without consent or proper rehabilitation, apparently not only in contradiction to the proposed and promised path that we had set out on but also flouting the established laws of the land. In the following pages, an effort will be made to highlight some of these incidents.

The Statue of Unity

The statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, or more popularly, the Statue of Unity has been recently built in the Narmada District of Gujarat. For the purpose of its construction, the State government has evicted about 75,000 tribals¹²(NDTV 2018). To the displaced tribals, the ‘tallest’ statue of the world could not stand tall on the values of Sardar Patel of seeing a united India, a non- violent India and a country for everyone living on its territory. The project, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October 2018, met with stiff non- violent opposition from the tribal population in the State. They chose the Gandhian way of Satyagraha to protest their eviction for the construction of the statue of a visionary who was a staunch Gandhian himself. Dr. Praful Vasava, a tribal leader in the Narmada District had remarked ahead of the inauguration, “No food will be cooked in 72 villages affected by the entire project, as we will be mourning on that day. The project is being carried out for our destruction. Our rights as tribals are being violated by the government. Sardar Patel’s honour should be maintained. We are not against this development even, but this government’s development idea is lopsided and against the tribals”¹³(NDTV 2018).

As far as the rehabilitation of the displaced tribals for the project is concerned, “The government took away our land and only paid us money for it, but other commitments like alternative land, providing jobs to the affected have not been carried out as per the rehabilitation package, according to the Narmada Tribunal Authority”¹⁴(NDTV 2018). Not only the tribals in the Narmada District, but also across the entire eastern belt of tribal population in Gujarat, including more than 72 villages, were protesting against the unveiling of the statue before the inauguration. The sarpanchas of affected villages wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister of the country. The tribal population has always had a very intimate relationship with nature. Evicting them from their habitual place of dwelling and cultivation has a severe effect on their well- being. In the open letter, the villagers wrote, “These forests, rivers, waterfalls, land and agriculture supported us for generations. We survived on them. But, everything is being destroyed now and celebrations are also planned. Don’t you think it’s akin to celebrating someone’s death? We feel so”¹⁵(*The Economic Times* 2018). It is to be noted that the rehabilitation of evicted tribals have not yet been completed despite the fact that more than 2 years have passed since its inauguration.

As per a Report which was published in June 2020, as many as tribals of 19 villages were yet to have any rehabilitation. They were living in temporary

shelters¹⁶(Patel 2020). It further states, ‘The Statue of Unity is only 3.2 km from the Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary. According to a Supreme Court order dated December 4, 2006, if a project requiring environmental clearance is located within a 10-km radius of a wildlife sanctuary or national park, the project requires the approval of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife’¹⁷(Patel 2020). In this case, after the then Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi first announced this project on 7th October 2010 facing Narmada Dam, environmentalists from across the country started writing to the Union Environment Ministry that such a project would have severe ramifications for the ecological balance in the region and the work on the project had started without even obtaining any basic environmental clearance¹⁸(Seth and Raval 2014). The Land Act of 2013 clearly stipulates that compulsorily there would have to be given employment to one member of the affected family. It is alleged that such a condition has not been fulfilled in this case. Even the proposed amendment to this Act, which was brought in the Lok Sabha in December 2014, had talked of hassle free mechanism for grievances redressal of land losers. Obviously, this prerequisite condition has not been met. Furthermore, as per the Land Act of 2013, Panchayat’s nod will be compulsory for acquiring tribal land. In this case, sarpanchas of 22 villages protested vehemently, boycotted the inauguration after they wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister before the inauguration and all their pleas fell onto deaf ears.

The Hasdeo Arand Forest in Chhattisgarh

The Hasdeo Arand Forest, a pristine contiguous forest covering about 1,70,000 hectares is located in Chhattisgarh. Beneath the forest there is a huge stretch of coalfield, known as the Hasdeo coalfield. Although the coal mining sector is primarily controlled by the public sector company, ‘Coal India’, Hasdeo Arand forest, reportedly having more than billion metric tons of coal reserves has attracted much attention from private players, who operate solely from its personal profit motive. This region is rich in biodiversity and several threatened animal species inhabit the forest. This is also the homeland of Gond Adivasis. They are one of the largest tribal groups in India and are to be found in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. According to the 2011 Census of India, there were about 2.98 million people who speak the Gondi language.

At one point of time in this region, because of its importance in terms of biodiversity and because of the dependence of the Gondi people on this

forest for their lives and livelihood, mining was not permitted. In fact, till 2011, mining in Hasdeo Arand forest was legally prohibited. In 2012, permission of mining in the block was given when Raman Singh of Bharatiya Janata Party was the Chief Minister. However, in 2012, when the clearance was given for the block, it was assured that no mining would be allowed in the middle of the forest¹⁹(Suresh 2020). But that definitely did not happen as by 2013, the Adani Group started the Parsa East and Kete Basan open cast mine in the region²⁰(Cassey 2020). Now more open cast mines have been approved by the government of Narendra Modi. An estimated 80 percent of the entire forest area - and 30 villages - may be lost²¹(Cassey 2020). The Union environment ministry apparently has no qualms about it, whatsoever. A Report published in the Hindustan Times remarked, 'The Parsa mine - open cast mining involves digging for coal after removing all the vegetation and soil from the area - came up for consideration of the environment ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), thrice before clearance was fully granted on February 21, 2019'²²(Nandi 2019).

The Land Act of 2013 states that the Panchayat's nod will be compulsory for acquiring tribal land. But in this case, 'On February 20, the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan wrote to the EAC on environmental and legal concerns related to the project. In a letter, it suggested that two villages in north Chhattisgarh's Surguja district complained to the district collector that Gram Sabha consent was allegedly forged'²³(Nandi 2019). The Gond Adivasis there today are staring at an uncertain future as the core central areas of the Hasdeo Arand forest have been thrown open to mining by the Chhattisgarh government to the Adani Group. Reportedly, there are not less than 18 active coal blocks in the Hasdeo Arand region.

Mining in the Parsa East and Kete Basan block started in 2013 by the Adani Mining, which is a subsidiary of the Adani Group. However, the ownership of this block is in the hands of Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited. The Adani Mining extracts the coal and transports it to Rajasthan for thermal power generation there. The Sahlinullah and Ketenullah which used to flow perennially in the region have now dried up after the open cast mines were constructed. The tribals there used to depend on these streams for their drinking and irrigation necessities. It was also reported that the waste from the mines were dumped in these streams, which have even caused deaths of a few people in Sahli. Also, near Kete, an elephant corridor existed. The opening up of the mines have increased the man- elephant conflict in the region and loss of lives and farm produce have become a regular feature since then.

Change of Land Laws in Jharkhand

The government in Jharkhand led by Raghubar Das of Bharatiya Janata Party, in November 2016, managed to ‘usurp’ its majority in the House and passed the Chotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) and Santhal Pargana Tenancy (SPT) Act amendment bill 2016. The amendment allowed transfer of agricultural land, owned by tribals, and put it for non-agricultural use, besides allowing the government to take possession of the land for state development projects²⁴ (The Economic Times 2016). The amendment was passed despite widespread protests across the State. Highlighting the situation, a news report in the Frontline mentioned, ‘On October 22, in an incident that did not evoke much outrage, the police opened fire on tribal people in Seko village in Khunti district in Jharkhand, killing one person and critically injuring at least five others. This is the third such incident since August this year... The day after the firing, the tribal people refused to cremate the body of the deceased, leading to further clashes with the administration. Nearly 1,500 unnamed persons were booked under the various cases.’²⁵ (Rajalakshmi 2016) With the situation spiraling out of control, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after inaugurating the first-ever national tribal carnival in New Delhi, tried to diffuse the tension by issuing a strong warning to everyone who is trying to tweak the rights of the tribal people. He made it known his displeasure towards abuse of the tribal people for the sake of exploiting the forests and natural resources. However, the BJP government’s activities in Jharkhand were in total contradiction. Section 71 (A) subsection (2) of the CNT, which dealt with the very crucial issue of tribal land transfer after compensation, has now been abolished after the amendment was passed. ‘In Jharkhand there are around 64,000 cases pending under Schedule V... and by abolishing 71 (A)(2) these claims are likely to null and void’²⁶ (Gupta 2017). It is feared that these amendments will only help private players to grab tribal lands. These amendments also negate the spirit and sacrifices made in several tribal uprisings to put Jharkhand under the protective measures of Schedule V of the Constitution of India. The Pathalgadi movement gained ground in Jharkhand during this time to counter the ‘ill-conceived’ policies of the Raghubar Das government and to assert the rights of the tribal people over Jal-Jungle-Jameen (water, forest, land). Eventually, the Bharatiya Janata Party lost the assembly elections of Jharkhand in 2019 and experts opine that the tribal anger due to the arrogance of the then Chief Minister Raghubar Das were the main reasons behind this defeat.

Besides the change of pro-tribal land laws in Jharkhand, the Adani project has also invited the wrath of the tribal population. In 2016, a village called Mali in Jharkhand, which is situated about 380 km east of Ranchi, along with nine other surrounding villages suddenly became much sought-after territories. It is at this time that Mr. Gautam Adani, Supremo of the Adani Group communicated its proposal to the BJP government in the State that it wanted to build a coal-fired 1600 MW plant on over 2000 acres of land in the Godda district. The plant is supposed to be commissioned in 2022 and the total amount of electricity that will be generated from this plant will be sold to Bangladesh through high-tension lines. During PM Modi's visit to Bangladesh in August 2015, Bangladesh sought power transmission from India and Mr. Gautam Adani was reportedly one of the industrialists accompanying the PM on the tour. However, the project has since been shrouded in controversy and protests over 'forcible' land takeover. Such reports from villages in Godda District, such as, Mali, Moti, Nayabad, Gangtaetc became a daily affair. Such a Report published in the Business Standard read as follows, 'Soon after police personnel drove up in a convoy of vehicles that Friday, August 31, 2018, "Adanike log (Adani's people)" arrived with earthmoving equipment, recounted Adivasi (tribal) and Dalit villagers in Mali, in this lush eastern corner of Jharkhand. "There were 8 to 10 police for each of us villagers", said Sita Murmu, a wiry farmer in her 40s from the Santal community, one of India's largest indigenous tribes, describing the attempt that followed to take over the villagers' farmlands, abutting a clutch of mud and brick homes. These fertile, multi-crop lands are the only source of livelihood, and the villagers were shocked when the earthmovers began uprooting valuable palm trees and bulldozing the young paddy stalks, laboriously sown weeks ago. "We begged Adani's people to stop", said Santali farmer Anil Hembrom. "But they said our land was theirs now, that the government had given it to them". Villagers said they made urgent phone calls for help to Godda's Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the Superintendent of Police (SP). "The SP told us, 'Go to the local thaana (police station) and lodge a complaint,'" they recalled. "We told him, 'how can we lodge a complaint at the thaana, when the police from there are here with Adani.'" The DC too ignored their pleas, villagers said, recalling, "She said, "Your money (compensation for the land) is lying in the government office. Go, take it.'" Meanwhile, Adani personnel were casting concretine wire to fence off the land, and a farm pond. Santalis bury their dead on their land, and the earthmovers dug up this clan's burial site too, the farmers recalled'²⁷(Choudhury 2018).

Why the Godda Project has reasons to worry for tribals in Odisha?

Adani's under-construction Godda project in Jharkhand has already had ramifications for Adivasis, moving well beyond the territory of Jharkhand. This is because it has been reported that the coal supply for the Godda power plant will be brought from Australia's Galilea Basin in Queensland and it will be shipped to the Dhamra Port in Odisha. Therefore, the South Eastern Railways have been engaged to construct railway line for carrying coal from the Dhamra Port in Odisha to the Godda Power Plant in Jharkhand. For constructing this railway line, it has been reported that about 700 Adivasi families will be displaced. In that case, the Adivasi residents will have to be provided with adequate compensation, including 7 acres of land and a job in the railways. However, no such assurance has come from any source so far, and the authorities seem to be in a hurry to begin construction²⁸(Dasgupta 2020). That is why, the Adivasis are regularly confronting the railway workers at Barhabans village in Odisha, and the authorities are resorting to coercive measures such as filing First Information Report (FIR) against agitating tribals to muzzle the protest.

Aarey Forest in Maharashtra

In 2019, the plight of tribals in Maharashtra came to our notice with developmental plans in the Aarey forest region. This forest is an urban forest, more popularly known as the 'green lung' of the city of Mumbai. It is a suburban region of Mumbai and is situated within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. The State government of Maharashtra in 2019 made known its plan to cut down about 2,700 trees to make way for a car shed for the Aarey metro²⁹(Tapasya 2019). 'On October 4 (2019), the Bombay High Court gave a go ahead for the cutting of trees in Aarey. Overnight, hundreds of trees were allegedly razed as protesters were detained. All the entrances to Aarey were blocked by the police. However, environmentalists, Aarey tribals, and the people of Mumbai opposing the move gathered at different locations- Powai Police Station, Thane Local Train Station and Aarey Police Check Post- to protest and express dismay'³⁰(Tapasya 2019). The tribals in Aarey are staring at an uncertain future with possibilities of them being displaced for the project, without proper rehabilitation taking into account their lives, culture and way of living holistically. Aarey has 27 tribal *padas*, or hamlets, with an Adivasi population of over 10,000³¹(*The Indian Express* 2019)After much hue and cry by the green crusaders, the Supreme Court on October 7, 2019, ordered the BJP government that no more trees should be axed in Aarey and ordered to maintain the status quo. In this case,

reportedly 29 activists were arrested for protesting against the felling of trees. They were later given bail.

Conclusion

A few case- studies in a few States in the country can in no way deal holistically with the complex issue of displacement of tribals due to faulty developmental policies in the country. However, the purpose of this article is to discuss a few incidents in the country that prick our conscience dearly. What if the developmental policies that we are adopting are not sustainable? What if those are not pro-people? What if those are not pro- poor? What if those are not pro- backward strata in the society? What if those are destroying the environment and ecological balance in the country? What if those are filling up the pockets and coffers of select entrepreneurs and business conglomerates and alienating a section of our brethren? What if it forces us to question, seventy-one years after the adoption of the Preamble to the Constitution of India, if at all “We, the people of India” makes any sense today? This is because, if really we had given “to ourselves this constitution” of a free, liberated, nascent nation, then where did “we” get lost in the process of development? Is a country merely a geographical border, a fixed territory, some skyscrapers bearing testimony to the rising Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a government to rule us over? But then the question that arises is how to define ‘development’? The United Nations define development as a ‘multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of Sustainable Development’³²(UNDocumentation-Development). Going by this definition, we have not only fallen short of bringing ‘development’ in the country, in fact, we have acted to the contrary. These incidents merely prove to be a narrative of failing our own people. It is not that eviction of tribals have suddenly started taking place in the country since last five-six years, but it is certainly that adoption of these displacement-induced developmental policies have apparently intensified in last few years. Moreover, private conglomerates are seen to have been given a freer hand in defining development the way they want to, and in most cases, the government authorities are reportedly hand in glove with them and with their modus operandi. The government has even tried to amend laws by bringing in Ordinances, both at the Centre and in States, to make land acquisition easier. The ‘Father of our Nation’, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has always believed in the concept of ‘trusteeship’, that is, the

State must be looked upon as the repository of public trust and public resources, and the State must function on behalf of the public as the resources legitimately belong to the public and the State must protect them. But, we fear when we see that draft notification has been issued to revise the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), which proposes to do away with environment clearance altogether for the purpose of ‘ease of doing business’³³(Trivedi 2020). ‘The draft exempts 40 types of projects from prior environmental clearance. The most worrying aspect of the draft notification, according to experts, is the introduction of post- facto clearance of projects. This goes against a Supreme Court order delivered on April 1, 2020 in *Alembic Pharmaceuticals vs Rohit Prajapati and Others* that held ex post facto environmental clearances contrary to law. “Environment law cannot countenance the notion of an ex post facto clearance. This would be contrary to both the precautionary principle as well as the need for sustainable development. The concept of an ex post facto environmental clearance is in derogation of the fundamental principles of environmental jurisprudence and is an anathema to the EIA notification dated 27 January 1994. It is, as the judgment in *Common Cause* holds, detrimental to the environment and could lead to irreparable degradation,” the apex court observed. On March 12 (2020), the Ministry (of Environment, Forests and Climate Change) released the 2020 draft notification online in English and Hindi. On April 11 (2020), it published the notification in the Gazette of India. It fixed 60 days as the deadline for receiving feedback on the draft from the public. Apparently, 17 lakh letters and emails were received by the Ministry in response to the draft. But on July 23, the cyber-crime cell of the Special Cell, Delhi Police, sent a notice under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to Fridays for Future (FFF) India, a people’s movement for climate justice, for challenging the “sovereignty and integrity of India”. The website of FFF India was blocked along with two other environmental groups, *Let India Breathe* and *There is no Earth*. Several environmentalists wondered whether writing to a Minister constituted attacking the sovereignty of India’³⁴ (Trivedi 2020). We had set out on the journey to find whether Foucault’s conceptualization of ‘Biopolitics’ finds its resonance in today’s democratic societies. It seems truly, under the guise of development and welfare, the State tends to control their lives. With the guardian forsaking them and refusing to even listen to their anguish, the Adivasis or the original inhabitants of the country are striving hard to find their rightful place in ‘New India’ that aims to be ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ and in this regard has pledged to bring ‘Samajik Nyay (social justice) and Samajik Samrasata (social harmony), to be complemented with economic

justice and political empowerment³⁵(BJP Election Manifesto 2014). We hope and pray that true social harmony prevails in the society.

Notes

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‘Doing History’: In and Beyond the Archive

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Abstract: *Unpacking an archive is difficult primarily due to its dual presence and functionality. While on one hand, it symbolizes the space/building where records of the past are preserved; on the other hand, an archive itself merges with the records it seeks to preserve thus embodying the past in fragments. Making history or the craft of seeking meaning in the pasts involves an intimate and constant engagement with an archive in both its embodiments. While search for the various versions of ‘truth’ lies at the core of this connect, it also necessitates being receptive to the silences, omissions and discontinuities that lie embedded in such seemingly uniform and unproblematic representations of the pasts. The identification of an archive with a repository or documents of the past however does not exclude its metaphoric and polemical dimensions and this article elaborates upon such non-material existences by questioning the materiality and fixity of archives. It attempts to interpret the engagement of the researcher with the archive through the theoretical lens of ‘intra-action’, by emphasizing non-fixity of both the archive and the historian. Focus on archives also problematizes the role of ‘facts’ in history thus raising questions on the action of the historian and the practices and politics of archiving. Memory and its role in archivization and the concurrent production of knowledge about individuals, communities and nations and in the production of archives per se, feature as a central concern of this essay, as the past or its reconstruction is as much about remembering as about forgetting.¹The interplay between memory, archivization and discovery/formation of individual/communitarian/national identities thus forms a central piece of this essay the scope of which needs to be situated within my own experiences of working in archives and hence the frames of analyses are chosen to be in sync with my experiential frameworks.*

Keywords: Unearthing, Memory, Non-fixity, Intra-action, Archivization, Archons, Non-positivistic, Temporal.

Introduction

Let us begin at the beginning: the title of this article. Read together, '*doing history*' attributes the actor/historian with the verve to stimulate conversations with the past. The use of the present continuous tense, '*doing*', entails a process of continuing engagement, a ceaseless to and fro motion in which the historian participates, searches and eventually narrativizes. '*Beyond the archive*' takes off from the Derridean understanding of how things don't actually begin in the archives and that we need not necessarily search for beginnings there. The oft-quoted opening premises of his critically acclaimed work 'Archive Fever'² speaks of the need and responsibility of a historian to search for 'origins', 'beginnings' and sources outside the archive and in many ways thus test his/her zeal to look beyond the promise of an archive or what the archivist upholds as the past or many pasts. Recognition of extra-archival knowledge of the pasts questions the overarching legitimacy of the materiality of an archive, the latter founded as much on the political dispensation of the times as on the power/discretion of the archivist. Such theoretical underpinnings pre-empt a prior understanding of the etymology and structure of the institution. The Latin term *archivum* or *archium* comes from the Greek *arkheion* originally meaning "a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates..." or the *archons*.³ These *archons* were believed to be a class of politically powerful individuals who framed laws and in lieu of their official position, offered their private residences for preserving documents/records of the past, necessary for administrative references and otherwise.⁴ Definitionally therefore *archives* and *archons* share a common space, the *archons*-predecessors of modern archivists, visualized as 'guardians' of those documents, armed with what Derrida termed as the hermeneutic right and competence to interpret the archives.⁵ In modern era with the formation of sovereign nation-states, citizen identities and memories, archives became synonymous with spaces to store 'authentic' records. Francis X. Blouin, Jr.⁶ discusses how such visualization of the modern archive grew from an acceptance of a shared space between history and archive. As a 'unified conceptual space', the archive thus came to symbolize the official historical past of a nation and its people. The 'archival turn' in Social Sciences upheld this legitimacy till the rise of a counter perspective—an anti-archival school of scholastic thinking, that ostensibly challenged notions of shared space with historians questioning the role of *archons*/archivists and exploring interdisciplinary non-archival avenues of accessing the past. A host of post-colonial historians looked upon the use of the archive in colonial historiography as politically meditated

and called for subverting that discourse thus casting serious aspersions on the instrumentality of the archive in yielding 'authentic' knowledge of the past.⁷ This new thrust was informed by a renewed interest in the role of memory in shaping multiple pasts. As cultural and political subtexts of memories were explored and pre-archival genesis of incidents probed, "records" stored *in* and *as* archives and their concurrent legitimacy came to be read as products of unique political and cultural conditions and compulsions. Gradually academia settled on a rational midpoint as the archive came to be reinstated as one of the fundamental props of historical research in the post anti-archival scholastic turn. Re-invention of archives meant considerable weightage added to its metaphoric and to quote Zachariah, rhetorical value in historical research.⁸ The archive henceforth was no more equated with a fixed space for studying the past and instead itself emerged as an object of study and analysis in which space and time were important indicators of analysis. While Derrida is often credited to be a doyen of this new critical discourse, many historians argue that such discourses have a pre-Derridean origin.⁹

The Subjective Turn: Entering the Archive

The structure of this essay juxtaposes my archival experiences with such various academic discourses on the archive. My personal tryst began on a mellow February morning of 2005 that marked my first access to the Record Room of the National Archives, New Delhi. I was in my MPhil 1st semester and the maiden entry was nothing less than being allowed into the sanctum sanctorum of history where the 'past' lies embedded within sheaf of documents and microfilms waiting to be unearthed. On retrospect, such an outlook seems overtly positivist. Non-acquaintance to any archive before 2005 explains why I had displayed the routine positivism of a traditional historian and remained loyal to the Rankean idea of representing history as "it really was" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) thus reiterating the '19th century fetishism of documents'¹⁰ that was dominant in Western historical consciousness till the outbreak of WWI. A better part of the next six months went in trying to 'unlearn' the foundational principles of the Common-sense view of history/Scissors-and-Paste history, strengthened by the Empiricist tradition of Great Britain that had defended the notion that facts 'speak for themselves'. As days progressed and I searched for the 'right' file and 'most authentic' record on the *Mahari/Devadasi* of Jagannath Temple of Orissa, my understanding of the role of archive in history and the character of 'facts' came to be informed more profoundly by my subjective

experiences and issues raised and discussed in contemporary archival studies than the inherited positivist wisdom.

In my M. Phil. years, I had to consult primary records in archives of four cities namely Delhi, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar and Puri, each 'produced' and maintained as much by its specific political and cultural settings and research protocols as by the discretion of the archivists. While the experience of working in each of them was characteristically different from the other, there were certain common junctures that created some familiar experiential patches.

(a) New Delhi

Back in 2005/2006, the record room of the National Archive was a sprawling rectangular space where more than twenty researchers could simultaneously sit and work, surrounded by stacks of files in several racks lining the walls. Tags of every imaginable shape peered through the files as those waited patiently for their 'masters'—the scholars, to reclaim them each morning, dusting their backs and making them 'speak'. The room also had two microfilm readers carefully stationed beside rolls of microfilms of newspapers, journals and other documents of historical importance - meticulously preserved and catalogued. Though wider than a standard room, the record room was smaller than a hall, appearing more like an-in-between space. In its character too, the archival space lacked definiteness—a feature that resonated with what scholars especially young researchers felt about and around that place. Winter evenings were especially laced with feelings of disquiet as I often worked till the closing hours, rummaging through the catalogue to uncover something pertinent or frantically trying to complete a particular file in order to place the next requisition. I recall how the unrest would invariably persist till I could stop making notes, take the last 615 bus back to the campus just in time for dinner and call it a day. Steedman¹¹ would have perhaps interpreted my travails as a *historian's loneliness* that gets reinforced by an 'out-of-place' feeling though that can be contested as journeying by public vehicle for five days a week and staying alone in a campus in Delhi, I hardly felt like a stranger either in the capital city or around the impressive Janpath building. Nonetheless a feeling of alienation did mark my initial engagement with the archive and what perhaps triggered such placelessness was, to begin with, the layout of the room that resembled a school classroom. The archivist's desk stood at the head of the room facing scores of researchers¹² either ruminating over the dearth of required sources or opulence of the same, lack of time-in-hand or more often simply waiting for their files to arrive. Such positioning, from the Foucauldian

perspective, seemed unequal as far as sharing of power was concerned. Consequently, a researcher's engagement with his/her files, notes or thoughts was never impenetrable or an individual act. The solitude and privacy necessary for a researcher to navigate through the sources and make a temporal journey was denied thus making the act of engaging with the files tedious and often banal. It was as if, along with the space, the thoughts of the researchers and their terms of engagement with the pasts were also structured by the archivists, thus making the experience of working under such gaze, disturbing and distracting. While I distinctly remember his personality being benign and helpful, the phenomenon of being 'visible' and 'accessible' from 10am to 5pm each day *did* upset my concentration and thereby productivity. I recall how scholars took frequent breaks and often slipped into the adjacent room that was sunnier, perhaps to counter the almost oppressive silence of the record room. Barring the chatter and laughter of the archive staff and the sound of the ceiling fans that remained operational March onwards, practically nothing sliced through the almost deafening calm as scholars hardly exchanged notes amongst themselves or spoke to the archivist except while asking after their files. On hindsight it seems they were apprehensive of being reprimanded by the 'guardian' or simply wished to value time by concentrating solely on research work. The adjacent room housed the library where one could access first edition printed materials of historical value or collections of rare books. It had a different architecture and perceptibly dissimilar character. It was smaller, crammed with racks of books which though put on display were not freely available for a scholar to consult. The librarian-in-charge was however encouraging and eager to oblige the various requests of the scholars. The pitch, tone and texture of that room was so refreshingly different from the record room that I (like many other researchers) visited it daily even if to soak in the vibes. Significantly the record room was more lighted and spacious than the library, and should have ideally offered more latitude to a researcher to arrange his work or thoughts. In reality it ensured none. Later however I remember having devised my own techniques to dodge the gaze and work comparatively undisturbed. Apart from these two, there was a Reprographic section at the back of the main Records Room which I accessed, albeit infrequently, to have the necessary documents photocopied. Having no scholarship to sponsor my research in those initial months at NAI, I couldn't afford the luxury of ordering random photocopies. Also the interconnectedness of the files made it virtually impossible to selectively photocopy some in exclusion of others. While NAI was a space I engaged with during both my MPhil and Doctoral years, its presence was most conspicuous during the former when I regularly scouted for

Government Reports, Census, Gazette, Press clippings to narrativize the locus of the *Devadasis* within the contemporary socio-cultural and political matrix of the Jagannath Temple of Orissa. The Home and Ecclesiastical files proved helpful but my memory of consulting them is complex as I seemingly encountered an extremely layered reality. While on the one hand, they tended to be completely silent on the cult of *devadasi* or the rituals associated with it; on the other hand, I happened to identify files that collapsed 'information'/anecdotes on this particular section of women with those on prostitutes thus clearly hinting at a process of vilification and stigmatization in which both the colonial policy makers and the native bureaucrats were equal partners. Considering that both mythologically and in practice, *devadasis* of Orissa are recognized as one of the 36 *Karanas* or principal *sevayets* of the temple whose services are indispensable and non-substitutable to the Lord, such acts by the colonial policy makers or archivists reveal a deep bias and reek of constructionism thus giving leeway to the researcher to push the envelope and reinterpret the pasts.

(b) Kolkata, Bhubaneswar & Puri

The singularity of the West Bengal State Archives (WBSA) or my experience of the same is primarily linked to its comparatively obscure location in a 'hidden' lane right beside the illustrious Presidency College, as also to the unassuming building that houses it. Despite being conversant since my Presidency days with the photocopy shops lining the entrance of Bhabani Dutta Lane, I was unaware of the presence of an archive in the second floor of a non-descript building at the farthest end of the lane or the fact that it was the most significant repository of historical records of the Bengal Presidency between 18th and 20th century. I discovered it years later during my M.Phil. The archival building resembled a regular three-storied old building of North Kolkata that seemed a far cry from the distinctive demeanor of both the National Archives and the Odissa State Archives which I visited later in that year. Unlike the NAI in Lutyen's Delhi, brimming with exclusivity partly for its monumental structure but mostly due to its close vicinity to the Delhi Gate and the Parliament; the West Bengal State Archives is neither a building of national importance nor situated in a protected area bustling with bureaucratic and national importance and yet on first encounter it seemed more familiar and personal. As it resonated seamlessly with the composite milieu of College Street¹³, my connection with WBSA seemed instantaneous and more assuring, at least to begin with. Consequently, the placelessness experienced in NAI (till I had managed to set up an individual work rhythm), did not feature in my

conversations with the WBSA as in the Bhabani Dutta Lane building, I was largely free of the archetypal historian's loneliness. On retrospect it was the particular personality and approach of the archivist in charge of WBSA in 2006 that actively eased my initiation into the archival space coupled with the fact that being in Calcutta I could commute from my home and not my room in Godavari Hostel. The archivist - a lady in her mid-forties who was also a scholar of history was sensitive to and appreciative of the queries and dilemmas of a researcher thus ably bridging over the solitude that otherwise was part of any researcher's archival experience. My working space consisted not of an individual desk and chair but a common wooden bench and table parked beside large old styled French windows looking over the back wall of Presidency College. As for days I worked from the same table with other scholars, an invisible bond was forged thus making the research atmosphere less rigorous or formal and much more relaxed. Even while waiting for files that never came or carried labels different from the ones originally requisitioned for, I seldom felt like a lone crusader as co-researchers often echoed my feelings and returned my thoughts. The attitude of the archivist further contributed in dispelling the aloofness of the place. With a detailed knowledge of the records, she was prompt with cues to assist. The persona of the archivist thus seemed to challenge and fracture the Foucauldian equation of Knowledge-Power since her role as a guardian didn't make her suppress or tweak the knowledge represented through the archival documents. Instead she appeared more as a protective guardian. What was starkly different from the National Archives or the Orissa Archives was the personal interest this archivist took in the research questions and sources requisitioned by each of the scholar—a trait that I again found embodied by the local archivist of the Jagannath Temple Research Centre run by the Jagannath Temple, Puri.

Both of them displayed a rare ability of remembering minute research details of the scholars at work and operated with a certain open mindedness that made the archival spaces non-prohibitive thus prompting creative ways of engaging with the primary source materials. The experience of working in the Orissa State Archives (OSA) in Bhubaneswar was qualitatively different from the Jagannath Temple Research Centre or the WBSA. While the ambience was not forbidding, the archivist of the OSA could not be of much help since a greater part of the cataloguing was in Oriya and most of my co-researchers working there were local. It presented me with the classic dilemma of how to negotiate with the alien language since sources and the act of meaning-making are determined as much by their content

and historical contexts as by the language. Reading of an archive therefore begins with negotiating with the language¹⁴ in which records are sourced and archived while archivists tend to follow the definition and terminology of the ICA (International Council of Archives). Though English was spoken and used in cataloguing the source files in the Odissa State Archive, the medium of instruction and exchange inside the archival setting was predominantly Oriya peppered with broken Hindi. Also on occasions when file tags were torn and replaced, the new tags were mostly written in Oriya thus making it difficult to decipher without assistance. At that stage I possessed a preliminary knowledge of Oriya and it was practically impossible for me to rely on my rudimentary reading skills. Significantly, my Oriya language skills were not called to test while working in the archive of the Jagannath Temple where cataloguing and naming of files were predominantly in English. Copies of old news items from Oriya newspapers were attached with suitable English translations thus making them legible for all and the prudent mind and care behind these was undeniably that of the archivist which made the issue of archival access smooth and non-complicated.

By contrast, in the OSA taking the archivist's help became an everyday ritual and seeking him out each time was arduous given his preoccupation with other scholars and routine administrative activities. The entire experience of relying on the archivist's knowledge to explore the past was frustrating and tiresome. In a sense, it was the ideal pretext for cultivating a sense of alienation. Culturally too, the ethos of OSA was unlike that at NAI or WBSA, a sense of regional-ness perhaps dominating the style and priorities of archiving in Bhubaneswar unlike in NAI or Kolkata.¹⁵ Adding to the language woes, the OSA resembled more of a government office with a bureaucratic setting than an academic space thus demanding separate kinds of protocols and behavior rituals from the researchers who approached it with very different expectations and demands. The duality of the space informed my temperament and negotiation with its keepers each time I walked in or waited for my files to arrive.

Recurrent Themes

Certain patterns, acts and dynamics repeated themselves during my four city archival journey that ranged from data searched and discovered, the power and persona of the archivists to the ethics of peering into past lives. While archival data worldwide is of two kinds - private and public, my archival experiences made me raise certain uncomfortable questions concerning the *efficacy of the privacy quotient* especially for sensitive

communities and also regarding the *technicalities distinguishing 'private' data from their 'public' counterparts*. Exploring the nature of private data involves engagement with the different facets of *Informed Consent* - either of the archivist or of the people who had created the data to be archived or more importantly of the person/community about which the data is about. Such engagement raises pertinent questions regarding the ethicality of handling sensitive records and such *ethical dilemmas* remained part of all my archival experiences.

A researcher's ethical dilemma especially while interacting with an archive (as an abode of records or as records per se) generally revolves round two broad questions—(a) whom does an archivist protect by displaying or suppressing certain records and whom should the researcher aim to protect through his/her research and eventual narrativization and (b) whether it is right to access private memories, emotions of individuals, communities and nations. While exploring files on Devadasis or *Maharis* of Orissa in NAI, WBSA, OSA or at Puri, I stumbled upon many sources that could effectively contribute to alternate historical narratives. Considering that my research questioned the historical identification of a *mahari* with prostitutes in a bid to resituate her within the discourse of Bhakti, I had to consciously choose those sources which would foreground the latter identity. I remember experiencing a persistent ethical dilemma over how to select and deselect the sources and rationalize against the dominant historical discourse on the devadasis. The zeal and responsibility to 'protect' the people about whom we are writing forms a key element of research ethics and this was a challenge I had to constantly rise up to during my MPhil archival days especially since the woman who was my key respondent and the community that formed the core of my research enquiry were historically maligned and misrepresented.

Apart from grappling with ethical dilemmas, issues of privacy of data etc., the question of access to records remain integral to any archival experience, such access being moderated and regulated by the archivist. Reflecting on the *role of an archivist* thus becomes indispensable and I recall how in the archives of Delhi, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar or Puri, this factor critically shaped my research productivity as well as my memory of and association with the spaces. Why is an archivist so fundamental to a researcher's experience? Why is he/she considered a 'guardian' of the space? Arguably since the past is never visible/accessible to the researcher as it 'happened' i.e. in a positivistic way, it seeps into the cognizance of the researcher as impressions/ montages principally through the intervention of the *archon*. Therefore, in an archival setting a researcher's first engagement is not

with raw, splintered pasts but with an ensemble of the past pre-selected by the *archon* whose lenses are also usually pre-determined by the socio-political backdrop of a particular archive. An archive thus acts as a double blind through which the researcher comes in contact with fragments of the past by interacting with the archon's mind and the politics of selection and de-selection before forming a historical discourse. What do the archivists guard? Is it some state secret which if revealed can disrupt the legitimizing tenor/discourse of the ruling dispensation? Or is it an alternate version of the past which if accessed and revealed will challenge the reigning historical narratives? Some scholars argue that archivists, especially a state archivist, is attuned primarily to 'controlling the revelation of the past' and not in revealing it authentically. Since my research focused on stigmatized women performers who did not occupy a central role in state discourses, the controlling dimensions of an archivist's role did not inform my archival experiences per se. Yet comments like 'eaten by red ants' or 'eaten by white ants' that often accompanied my returned requisitions and explained the non-availability of records did hint at the layered role of an archivist and more importantly the complex politics of the archive.

An abiding feature of my field experiences in all the four spaces was a concern for *research budget*. Scholars have written at length on how a constrained research budget affects their productivity along with compressed research time. While I was comparatively free to devote as much time as necessary to the archival visits both within and outside Delhi, my Supervisor being very categorical that a researcher needs to 'feel' the varied pasts embedded in the archive; the research budget continued to be a constant worry. Working in Bhubaneswar and then Puri appeared super-ordinately expensive vis-à-vis the Research Field allowance granted by the Centre for Historical Studies that refused to climb above Rs.65 a day even in 2006—an umbrella grant supposed to cover a researcher's daily accommodation, food, local transport, stationary, photocopy and print out costs! I remember waiting in front of CHS Office with knitted brows, wondering how to make that paltry sum expand and embrace every cost incurred during my archival visits to Bhubaneswar and Puri, identifying how much I needed to contribute through my own UGC fellowship. My worries were compounded by the rule that a researcher could avail of the departmental field trip allowance only once annually while my archival visits to the capital and coastal town of Orissa needed to be sequential, both for reasons of research continuity and cost-effectiveness. Fortunately, during those years my maternal aunt, an economist with NABARD,

happened to be posted in Bhubaneswar thus saving me the trouble of spending on accommodation.

While these patterns and motifs might be seen as impersonal, occurring across board to many more researchers, their chronological alignment is however subjective—the particular context of the research and location of the archive determining, to a large extent, their meaning and potency. Significantly these find meaning in and from the assumption of an archive as a static entity, and as a legitimate prop of production and emission of knowledge about pasts of a nation and her people. The following section decenters this assumption, aiming to look at the archive as a relational concept, the realization of which for me was as much notional as personal.

Problematizing the Archive

What was the function of an archive within my experiential canvas? Did it merely help in identifying and collecting the source materials that could definitively shape my research questions and corroborate my research hypothesis? Or did it have a wider metaphoric significance vis-à-vis my interaction with pasts? Such questions are open-ended and seldom lead to linear answers since ‘facts’ or sources were never ‘out there’ and my task as a researcher was neither predetermined nor uniform. However the process almost always involved an element of interaction or what Maria Tamboukou in an incisive article¹⁶ has termed as “*intra-action*”. Tamboukou recounts her experiences of using the archive of Texas Austin to unearth the past life of a feminist writer and discusses how she relied on Barad’s concept of ‘intra-action’ (which is again a spin-off of Niels Bohr’s concepts in philosophy-physics) that emphatically foregrounds the relation between components than connections between formed entities having well-defined boundaries. She refers to Barad’s core argument that it is through intra-actions that both human and non-human entities emerge and take shape thereby indicating that their forms are not pre-determined or pre-existing. Tamboukou applies this model of intra-action to a historian’s research experience in the archive to explicate that “‘the researcher’, ‘the letters in the archive’ and the ‘research strategies of narrative analysis’ cannot be taken as separate and pre-existing entities that interact in the final stage of the research process’ ...”¹⁷. Elaborating upon the received wisdom she posits how such intra-actions are not limited to the ultimate stage. Instead they are decisive in forming continuous entanglements within a particular spatial and temporal matrix thus informing the shaping of all

the involved entities. Tamboukou makes yet another significant observation that in historical research, the archive, similar to a research apparatus in scientific researches, is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of narrative formation around a particular research theme and is not a 'given' as a static repository of tangible facts. Such conceptual model hinged on intra-action turns the table on prior notions of positivistic fixity.

Juxtaposing Tamboukou's observations with my own archival experiences which were hardly uniform, the theory of intra-action seems equally relevant. On retrospect my archival knowledge did not emerge from files or records per se but my relationship with and reading of the same, this intra-action being tempered with both wonderments at 'discovery' of significant fragments about the past and dejection at 'absence' of sources. Requisitions for files in NAI were often met with rejections carrying explanatory notes like 'reserved by Ministry', 'Confidential', 'and Missing' etc. Here it is pertinent to offer a brief peek into the kinds of sources I was exploring. My MPhil focused on reconstituting the identity of the *devadasi* community of Jagannath Temple of Puri within the framework of religion and I operated around my principal research hypothesis that a *Mahari/Devadasi* of Puri cannot be equated with a prostitute of the colonial period and needs to be resituated and their identities reconfigured within the pantheon of religion which was *sanatan* Hinduism. Thus to 'rescue' and reify their identities lost within the trappings of 'Evil' in colonial India, there was need to re-evaluate the colonial understanding of evil which for a larger part of the 19th and early 20th century was synonymous with fallen women or prostitutes. This led me to look for Police, Judiciary and Public records classified under Home Files. Considering that these sources concerned a community—stigmatized and pariahnized in colonial documentation, their classification under 'confidential' category was unexpected and raised questions about the motive and intent of such cataloguing. It left me wondering without avail, about what triggered such classification—whether it was from a protective impulsive or from an instinct of suppressing sensitive data about women considered widely as public and fallible.

It was only around the third month of working in the NAI that I chanced upon an important source material. This wait for the 'right' sources is fundamental to a researcher's archival experience, built upon perseverance and fortitude—virtues essential to his/her craft and dialogue with history. The wait and the subsequent 'find' further made me realize that no researcher of history actually finds anything in an archive as a letter, a bill, a list of employees or an Assembly Debate are not historical per se. They

enter into the world of history only through a process of intra-action and meaning-making informed by the particular research template of a historian. It is this process of intra-action that thereby inserts meaning and temporal context to an otherwise mundane, ahistorical document, the research potential of which is not pre-fixed. Evidently it is through a process of intra-action between a researcher's quest and questions and the space, time and materiality of the archival experience that the quality and character of the research output can be properly determined. The non-fixity of my own archival experiences thus finds theoretical corroboration in Tamboukou's model based on Barad where the former finds parallel between a scientific research apparatus and an archive¹⁸. By this analogy it is the relationship of reciprocity formed between a researcher, an archive and the spatial and temporal matrix that surrounds them that works collaboratively in determining the research output. Thus much like the researcher/scholar, the archive might also be perceived as an important actor involved in rescuing and framing histories, its passivity and non-neutral nature remaining constant amidst the variedness of its spaces in the regional or national contexts.

Facts of the Past and Facts of History

The non-fixity of an archive raises questions about the nature of documents it is supposed to protect, identified by historians as 'facts' though there is hardly any historical consensus on their specific nature. E. H. Carr, a British career diplomat and perhaps the most impactful exponent of the meaning and methodological content of history in the twentieth century, has discussed at length the perils of a historian in failing to recognize that all facts/events of the past *do not* and *should not* qualify as facts of history. He cites the example of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon River in 49 BCE¹⁹ to suggest that it was a historian who had attributed a historic meaning to Caesar's action by connecting it to the wider narrative of Rome's fate and by default the fate of the Western Civilization. Therefore, it was none other than a historian who had rescued this event from the rubric of everyday events of the past, gleaned it and identified it as *history*.

Carr emphasizes on this process of historicization by establishing a dialogic relation between a historian and events of the past. The role of a historian is deeply underscored in the following extract.

...the facts of history never come to us 'pure'...they do not and *cannot* (accent is mine) exist in a pure form:

they are always refracted through the mind of a recorder...when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it. (Carr 1964/1987:22)²⁰

Viewed from a non-positivistic point of view facts do not appear to 'speak for themselves' nor does history 'happen' on its own or through divine dictates²¹. I argue that the praxis of this discipline or processes of selection, omission and inclusion of past events in a narrative need to be understood not only as a handiwork of the historian—as R.G. Collingwood would have us believe, but as an outcome of intra-action. Such intra-action, I argue, takes place between a historian and facts of the past against the backdrop of a particular space-time mosaic. Dvelving further into the inter-temporal intra-action patterns, I identify two distinct temporal motifs: a) the past time that seeps into the present through the narrativization of history and b) historian's own time with its singular socio-political dimensions that inadvertently shape his *mentalité* and predilection, impacting his choice of concepts or language. To make sense of histories through these dual temporal lenses, there is need to go beyond the empirical understanding of the subject and explore its inherent philosophy²² that suffuses the historical processes with meanings stretching across times. Such philosophical perspective urges a historian to search for meanings beyond the archival representations, the latter largely documenting not the past per se but impressions of the same captured in contemporary thoughts, annals and varied entries. This holds true as much for the 'Private Papers' category of the archives as for '*Histories*' by Herodotus. As a process of meaning making, the researcher/historian is thus required to re-enact in his mind the thoughts /actions of the actor whose lives or actions are objects of historical study. For a researcher therefore, encountering truths of the past is usually through a process of double screening. Therefore, it can definitely be argued that a historian is twice removed from the 'actual' phenomenon and to arrive at the 'meaning', he is required to practice 'imaginative understanding'.

While sieving through the copious archival notes and arranging them into a cogent meaning-structure, I often exercised imaginative understanding, taking a peek into the minds and motives of colonial policy makers and even the *maharis*. Engagement with the mind of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy—the fiery medical practitioner and social activist of British India, known historically for her feisty campaign to pass the Madras Devadasi (Prevention of Dedication) Act into a law in 1947, was especially rewarding. Such tête-

a-tête led to a string of questions. I was prompted to imagine whether it was her own maternal lineage— (her mother being a *Devadasi* and father a college principal) that made her unusually perceptive to the ‘disease’ perpetuating the custom of dedicating small girls to the temples as *devadasis* or God’s servants. Or was it her self-affirmed role as a feminist that made her take such a radical stand against the continuance of the custom? The dissenting voices of the *devadasis* began making equal sense when I came across law suits filed by some of them in protestations²³ against this proposed Bill in the record room of the Indian Law Institute Library, New Delhi. I recall being faced with the onerous task of imagining the contradictory motives of the social activist and the *maharis* so as to arrive at some historical objectivity.

Conclusion

Archives tested my erstwhile idea of history as also how to engage with it, leaving me with a lasting realization regarding a researcher’s responsibilities as also his/her relation to the past. And I found myself returning time and again, to Walter Benjamin’s observation that “it is not so much what the dead leave behind as it is what the living end up retrieving...” (Fritzsche 2005:15). Researchers or practitioners of history are thereby heirs to the past lives in all their material and immaterial dimensions and after-effects. Since the past inheres as much in material objects as in its non-material traces like memory, it is therefore the onus of a researcher to revive the latter. Such acts are essential to ‘retrieve’ not only that temporal scape that precedes a historian’s own; they also redefine his ties with the discipline of history. I searched for it as much in archival files and records as in the long oral interviews with *Sasimoni Mahari*—memory emerging as the binding factor in both. It is thereby fitting to conclude that a researcher while engaging with memories of past lives in an archive and outside it, creates his/her own archive that is trans-temporal in the same way that he himself gets constituted through entangled intra-actions.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin’s understanding of memory as an inheritance is significant, as within his theoretical universe, it becomes an inheritance only when the successors of the dead, cultivate such memory by historically situating it. “Benjamin proposes a cultural

interpretation of remembering in which traces are not simply left behind and recollection is not assumed, in which mental habits across time rather than physical things in the present bring the past into view, and in which specific heirs undertake the work of memorialization.”(Benjamin 1969: 98)

2. “Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive.” (Derrida 1996: 1)
3. Derrida, Jacques and Eric Prenowitz. 1995. ‘Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression’. *Diacritics*. Vol. 25: 2.
4. The presence of a shelter house for documents and their guardians—besides raising questions of regulating the easy accessibility of the documents and thus fragments of past to researchers especially in difficult socio-political settings and thus of ethics, assumes a given and fixed, non-transferable identity of the artifacts of the past.
5. Derrida, Jacques and Eric Prenowitz. 1995.
6. Blouin Jr., Francis X. 2004. ‘History and Memory: The Problem of the Archive’. *PMLA*, Vol. 119: 2.
7. “‘The colonial archive’ was the repository of prejudice against the ‘native’, who was only visible when he (usually he) was a problem: as insurgent, criminal or savage; and a malaise was diagnosed among historians (especially of South Asia) where they were deemed to be reproducing the assumptions of the archive and/or the authors of its documents” (Zachariah 2016: 13).
8. “I think that as historians learn to operate with a more active conception of an archive, ‘the ‘archive is revealed to be a rhetorical move rather than a place where documents are deposited...” (Ibid:14).
9. Ann Stoler categorically argues that the archival turn is pre-Derridean, the theoretically critical and politically charged role of the historian and the archive being talked about in works of Natalie Zemon Davis, Thomas Richard etc. (Stoler 2002: 92)
10. Often considered the father of modern Scientific History and an important representative of German idealistic philosophy (Gilbert 1987: 393), Ranke articulated his faith in the limited power of historians which is just to reveal the past as it was, and not to interpret it or assign meanings to it as per his own understandings of how people should have acted or incidents should have unfolded.

Bearing an indelible connect with ‘facts’ as they existed, Rankean idea of history was thus largely positivistic.

11. C. Steedman 2001.
12. The arrangement bore a striking similarity with that of a school classroom, sans the characteristic dais/podium common in a class room to officially elevate a teacher’s position vis-à-vis the students. Relationally too, the skewed disbursal of power within that space between the archivist and the researchers resembled a school room setting than an independent research environment.
13. Culturally it is an immensely rich region of abiding international repute with historically significant Colleges, Universities, the World’s largest market of second hand books and the Indian Coffee House situated within 200 mts. of each other.
14. “Language as carrier conveys concepts created over time by professional practice and theory and formed and biased by their surrounding administrative traditions and overall organizational and national culture and subcultures... concepts go with language just as wines go with dishes in France” (Albada 2007:215).
15. While Delhi was the capital of British India since 1911, Calcutta continued to be the cultural capital of pre-independence India even after the official transfer of capital. English remained the common language of parlance in both the places, more so in Calcutta, owing to the connect the Europeans had developed with the erstwhile capital. Orissa though a part of Bengal Presidency was still a land of feudal lords and kingships thus upholding the dominance of Oriya and resisting Anglicization. This socio-cultural difference was noticeable in the archival setting too.
16. Tamboukou, Maria. 2013. ‘Archival research: unraveling space/time/matter entanglements and fragments’. *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 14: 5.
17. By “final stages of the research process” Tamboukou implies the publication of monographs or chapters based on the research.
18. “In drawing analogies between the apparatus in scientific research and the archive as an apparatus in narrative research, what I want to emphasize here is that the specific material, spatial and discursive conditions of my archival research...had a significant impact on the conduct and outcome of the research. In the same way that ‘apparatuses are not passive observing instruments’, archives are

not neutral sites within which researchers 'objectively' read, take notes and accumulate data." (Tamboukou 2013)

19. Till date the metaphoric value of 'crossing of the rubicon' is immense as this event due to the historic changes that it ushered in, has come to symbolize a point of no return/a path that once taken cannot be retraced back and thus revolutionary.
20. Carr, E.H. 1964/1987. *What is History?* Penguin, England.
21. The cult around self-sufficiency of facts was largely founded on an assumption that it was through God's discretion and actions of a Superior Force that certain facts become enabled to speak for themselves. This view was subscribed to among others by Ranke and came to be dismissed only after the WWI. Post 1918, people of Western Europe could no longer repose faith in the earlier version of God ordained history which lay in crumbles. Appreciation of a historian's role and responsibility grew from the juncture.
22. This term was first invented by Voltaire and through Ranke, Dilthey and Croce, it has crossed many divergent and contradictory continents of meaning. Till date R. G. Collingwood, a British philosopher and archaeologist remains the finest exponent of the philosophy of history—a discourse he has debated and discussed in great detail in the classic *The Idea of History* (1946) which was published posthumously.
23. The counter-argument of the *Devadasis* against the proposed Bill was that delegitimizing it would perpetually label it as an 'Evil' and thus reproduce the colonial understanding.

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Empathy and Embeddedness in Social Science Research: The Contrasting Methods of Malinowski and Elwin

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Abstract: *Empirical, field-based research in Social Sciences, are neither bereft of empathy (the will to do good to and feel for others) and embeddedness (involving oneself with the process of transformation, while, at the same time, drawing consciousness about it) nor are they obstacles in the way to draw an understanding about social reality. This is the social science tradition that we inherit from Marx and the post-Marxists (the scholars of German Critical School, Gramsci, Althusser and so on), Levi-Strauss, C. Wright Mills, and the feminists starting Simone de Beauvior to Julia Kristeva or Judith Butler. The phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz have taught us how empathy for others' subjective experiences and cognition is the central component of the reflexive method through which the subjective knowledge can be transcended into intersubjective (hence universal) knowledge. This is in the space of the humanist social science tradition which does not conform to the "scientific" non-normative methodological tradition popularized by Comte, Durkheim or Weber. In this paper I have discussed about the essences of the "scientific" (read objective) and the empathetic methodological traditions of two noted anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski and Verrier Elwin, which represent two contrasting methods (although one cannot claim that Malinowski never expressed empathy for the native people he studied), and find out if one could strike a balance between the two traditions while highlighting the significance of empathy and embeddedness in field-based research.*

Keywords: Empirical research, fieldwork, participant observation, positivism, empathy, embeddedness, fieldwork as interaction, negotiated information.

Introduction

One way of doing social research is the positivist way, where the researcher is a distant, dispassionate observer-analyst of the social events, institutions or facts, dedicated to follow the rigors of “scientific method” in production of objective, universally valid knowledge. All textbooks on research methodology would teach us to do research of this kind. In reality, however, this prescription appears idealist, impracticable, ineffective and mythical, because, even the crudest of all positivists take normative positions, explicitly or implicitly, in their writings. In research, in social sciences, we primarily follow the humanist tradition, where the ideologies, values, interests, the philosophy of life, the practicality all these factors come into play and we end up producing “discourses” or social science concepts, in Foucauldian sense, which combine the philosophy, text and a guide to social action (Hall 2004: 345-349).

There is no denying that all social science research should aim to reach at objective knowledge and the researchers are trained to produce value-free and shared knowledge unravelling the truth of the well-defined social facts by studying the facts dispassionately, while distancing from the objects of study by resorting to “value reference” rather than “value preference” and without taking a normative position. This is precisely what we learn from Weber’s interpretative methodology. However, any form of research and production of knowledge is rooted in the praxis of bringing about social transformation, following the Marxists and existentialists, and Foucault, who assert that every discourse prompts an array of actions by the freedom-loving individuals in their efforts to tear apart the hegemonic structures. The social location, ideological position and interests of the researcher and her empathy for fellow human beings are difficult, if not impossible, to “bracket” (meaning, ‘to keep aside’ in phenomenological sense) in social science research. Rousseau, one of the ideologues of French Revolution, whom Levi-Strauss hails as the “father of anthropology” (Levi-Strauss 1963, 1966) and Levi-Strauss (1962, 1963, 1966), the French anthropologist, and many others, have discussed the significance of empathy, which works at the root of all social relations and actions, including research. Empathy (the will to do good to others and respect others’ views), a universal human quality, makes the researcher humble and drives her/him to reach out to the knowledge produced by other scholars and thus elevate subjective knowledge to intersubjective knowledge.

Fieldwork has been a proven method to draw “objective” knowledge in sociology and social anthropology. The idea behind fieldwork is to get to

the roots of the subjectively constructed realities of the individuals and communities we study. In other words, in research we try to capture the cognitive world of the individuals and groups and look for the common patterns and also explore the “unconscious” following Levi-Strauss’ prescription. In an earlier article I have argued that there are three possible ways “empathy” works in field-based research (Roy 2020: 168-180). First, fieldwork, which has been the “heart and soul” of research, especially in the field of social anthropology and sociology in the ethnographic tradition. In fieldwork, the researcher gets into close-range interaction with the people who constitute the field. While interacting with the people the researcher is generally driven by “a will to human good”. In field both the researcher and the researched operate as independent agencies and every bit of information is thus negotiated. Second, empathy has been widely used as a medium of drawing both subjective and intersubjective knowledge. The phenomenologists like Husserl (1982) and Schutz (2004), and anthropologist like Levi-Strauss have effectively used empathy as a means to arrive at universal and shared knowledge. Third, empathy works in application of knowledge to bring about the desired changes in society. Social science in Marxist tradition is founded on the principle of using philosophy for social transformation. The Marxists in general refuse to separate the process of thinking from the process of doing, which they hold, work in an endless feedback. Michel Foucault, endorsing the Marxist position, has observed that every discourse translates into social action.

In this paper I would particularly discuss the importance of empathy in anthropological and sociological fieldwork. In this task I would draw from the works of Bronislaw Malinowski and Verrier Elwin to give an idea of two extreme and oppositional approaches to empathy and argue, drawing from my own research, that what we need is a balance between the scientific and the humanist traditions.

Empathy in fieldwork

In anthropology, “participant observation” is still considered the “ideal” method of authentic data collection and scientific research. But there are variants of participant observation and the researchers have to address the universal “ethical” question as to whether the researcher should empathize with the subjects of research and “go native” (to be an integral part of native life) or remain a disinterested, distanced “other” out to collect “objective data”. The researcher also confronts the questions whether

“embeddedness” and “empathy” are avoidable in field-interaction and if such an attachment is detrimental to production of “objective” knowledge.

The term “participant observation”, in practice, is broad enough to cover a range of fieldwork methods from non-participation through passive, moderate, active and complete participation (Spradley 1980: 59-62), but we can delimit its scope to a situation where there is at least some interaction and involvement, with certain degree of empathy, with the people being studied. Using Spradley’s description (1980: 60-61), this would mean either maintaining a balance between insider and outsider (moderate participation) or doing what the people are doing (active participation), not merely gaining acceptance, in order to better understand cultural rules for behaviour. Therefore, the adjective “participant” becomes crucial for denoting interaction with and involvement in the society being studied (Baker 1887: 15). The information about peoples’ lives and about their perceptions about their experiences and culture could be subjected to interpretations with varied degrees of abstraction, depending on the ethical standard of the researcher and yet there will always be a claim of authenticity and objectivity in the narratives thus produced.

Claude Levi-Strauss has upheld the value of empathy in drawing ethnographic knowledge. Levi-Strauss borrowed the idea from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom he regarded as the father of modern anthropology (Levi-Strauss 1962). Pity or empathy, for Rousseau, entails a “desire for identification with others” and a “total refusal of identification with [oneself]”. The ethnographer can use himself “as his own instrument of observation”. He can “learn to know himself objectively and at a distance as if he were another person.” To do so, he must identify with “his” essential humanity – what Rousseau called the humble third-person “he” within himself. Only this “other” person within him can empathize with (or pity) the concomitant others within those the anthropologist observes. In this self-mediated and intersubjective context, ethnographic identification, subsequent communication, and eventual objectification are possible. Levi-Strauss argues that “the principle of ‘confessions’, written or unacknowledged, is ... basic to the work of every anthropologist”. In this sense, Rousseau’s celebrated formula “the me is another” heralds both the emergence of “unconditional objectivity” and the resolution of the epistemological schism between self and other, outside observer and native participant (Levi-Strauss 1962: 11-12).

Bronislaw Malinowski: The Unempathetic, Unembedded Fieldworker

Bronislaw Malinowski, the “mystic hero” of participant observation (Levine, citing Stocking, 1985: 339) wrote the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), which has been credited by Levine as “the first principled instantiation of participant-observation as the *ne plus ultra* (the high point) of anthropological field methods” (Levine 1985: 339).

Malinowski had put two and a half year long intensive fieldwork in writing the anthropological classic *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). He made three long expeditions to the islands in the Pacific; he spent the first a half year on Toulon among the Mailu, and two years on the Trobriands (June 1915-May 1916, and Oct. 1917-Oct. 1918). During these periods Malinowski developed his methods and carried out his research, which was later to be seen as an important breakthrough in methodology and a major landmark not only in British social anthropology but in social anthropology around the globe.

With his training in physics, mathematics and the scientific method Malinowski made efforts to develop anthropology as a science based on a scientific method. In the introduction to Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) he proclaimed:

No one would dream of making an experimental contribution to physical or chemical science, without giving a detailed account of all the arrangements of the experiments; an exact description of the apparatus used . . . (etc.) In Ethnography, where a candid account of such data is perhaps even more necessary, it has unfortunately in the past not always been supplied with sufficient generosity, and many writers do not ply the full searchlight of methodic sincerity, as they move among their facts and produce them before us out of complete obscurity’ (1922: 2-3).

As early as in 1913 W. H. R. Rivers, the British anthropologist, made a similar prescription:

The essence of intensive work ... is limitation in extent combined with intensity and thoroughness. A typical piece of intensive work is one in which the worker lives for a year or more among a community of four or five hundred people and studies every detail of their life and culture ... by means of the vernacular language’ (Rivers 1913: 7).

Malinowski asserted that a field-based researcher must fulfil three primary conditions: (1) that “the student must possess real scientific aims, and know the values and criteria of modern ethnography”, (2) that “he ought to put himself in good conditions of the work, that is, in the main, to live without other white men, right among the natives”, and (3) that “he has to apply a number of special methods of collecting, manipulating and fixing his evidence” (Malinowski 1922: 6).

Anthropologist like Hsu has questioned Malinowski’s honesty about his own prescriptions. Hsu (1979: 518) has observed that had Malinowski not been stuck in War time entangle, isolated by the war (The World War 1)¹, he would not have endeavored to stay in the field for so long. His explorations in the field, in Hsu’s assessment, have made Malinowski the first to make anthropology an observational science by living near the natives, although he never “went native” showing empathy for the people he studied and his participation in the cultural activities of the natives was an act of well-calculated strategy, a rational action driven by interest, in Weberian sense.

Although Malinowski is widely held as the trend setter in participant there is ample scope to doubt his honesty about his participation in native life. The fundamental question is if Malinowski had developed any empathy for the Trobriand Islanders, who had hosted him for more than two years and made him famous or if he was a shrewd “calculative rationalist” in using the natives. The world of anthropology had to wait till the publication of his Diary in 1967². The Diary brought to light the shocking notes written in Polish which stablish, beyond doubt, that although Malinowski nursed a scientific temper, he was a disinterested fieldworker and lived among the natives with a great deal of aversion. The Diary reveals that he did not have the temperament to relish life among the natives. One gains the impression that the long field expeditions were like an interminable ordeal, and that only his self-discipline and uncompromising ambition drove him on.

Malinowski was an unwilling fieldworker in the Trobriand Island as he nursed a “feeling of hopelessness and despair” and had the symptoms of “culture shock”. He wrote: “I had periods of despondency, when I buried myself in the reading of novels, as a man might take drink in a fit of tropical depression and boredom” (Malinowski 1922: 4).

Malinowski recommended that a good fieldworker should “really be in contact” with the natives but his presence in the field should be inconspicuous, so that the natives carry on in their natural course, rather

than the ethnographer empathizing with them. For him, “the native is not the natural companion of the white man, and after you have been working with him for several hours ... you will naturally hanker after the company of your own kind” (1922: 7). Drawing on the native perception of him Malinowski wrote: “as the natives saw me constantly every day, they ceased to be interested or alarmed... In fact, as they knew that I would thrust upon my nose into everything, even where a well-mannered native would not dream of intruding, they finished by regarding me as part and parcel of their life, a necessary evil or nuisance, mitigated by donations of tobacco” (1922: 7-8).

Fink (1955: 62) calls Malinowski’s type as “incomplete participation”, in which there is little integration with the field and the anthropologist remains an external observer. Malinowski was honest in admitting that he was by no means trying to live as the natives lived; living among the natives was for him a far cry from what is now called “going native”. Powdermaker (1967: 36) has observed that Malinowski’s “extraordinary empathy” is nothing short of a myth. Noted anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who read the *Diary* in 1967, commented that the publication of the *Diary* not only “destroyed one final idol”, but also shattered the image of anthropology. The image of the fieldworker, who was largely acknowledged as “the fieldworker with extraordinary empathy for the natives”, stood shattered as Malinowski turned out to be a “hypocritical narcissist” (Geertz 1967: 12). Although Malinowski never claimed to be driven by empathy for the natives, he actually despised them in his *Diary* saying: “As for ethnology, I see the life of the natives as utterly devoid of interest or importance, something as remote from me as the life of a dog” (1967: 169).

Many entries in the *Diary* speak of Malinowski’s dislike for the natives and his own “longing for civilization” (1967: 155). Instead of being a theorizing tool, the diaries were used as a therapeutic release for all kinds of pent-up frustrations. Often, if he is not complaining about his poor health or telling of his longings for his fiancée, he is cursing the natives as “bloody niggers”³, Hsu (1979:518) counted some 69 entries in which Malinowski expresses various degrees of aversion toward the natives. A glaring example is the expression: “On the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to *Exterminate the brutes*” (emphasis in original) (1967: 69). These entries seem to be hard to rhyme with such (sparse) statements as in the introductory chapter of *Argonauts*, “. . . with the capacity of enjoying their company and sharing their games and amusements, I began to feel I was indeed in touch with the natives, and this is certainly the preliminary condition of being able to carry out successful fieldwork” (1922: 8).

Malinowski was not an “active” or even “moderate” (Spradley 1980: 60) participant, except on very rare occasions. Only once he writes in his Diary: “To encourage them to play ... I began to *kasaysuya* myself (a circle dance/game). I indeed exercise, moreover I could learn more taking part personally” (1967: 280-281). One might classify him in Spradley’s typology (1980: 59) as practicing “passive participation”. He held the place of a petty lord with servants, dealing out tobacco to insure tolerance from the natives for his incessant interrogations. Indeed, Malinowski was a questioner who worked a great deal with informants; and he was a systematic observer, for few people would have accumulated so much data: statistical documentation reduced to charts for an overview of the societal framework; minute observations of daily life; and a wide range of original material, including myths and folklore, transcribed in the native language. An unbridged gap existed between Malinowski and his *Trobrianders*. Some scholars (e.g., Firth 1957; Fortes 1957; Nadel 1957; Leach 1963 cited in Geertz 1967: 12) attribute his frequent misinterpretation of Trobriand magic, religion, kinship, economy, law and psychology, to this gap. Wax has observed that although he gave the natives “flesh and blood”, which is seldom found in anthropological accounts, he made the error in his theoretical interpretations of portraying them as “Europeans in dusky skins” (Wax 1972: 12).

However, a more balanced account of Malinowski as an anthropologist is quite possible. The two field visits, the first among the natives of the Mailu in New Guinea and the second among the aborigines in a gap of about four years between 1914 and 1918, which resulted the Diary (1967) and the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), bring to light Malinowski’s differential approaches, one full of disliking and devoid of empathy and full of likings and empathy for the natives. Clifford Geertz (1967), as we have shown above, was harsh in his review of Malinowski’s Diary, where he was which was in his true self venting the frustration of a young man away from his love and own people, trying to grapple with the odds of life in the midst of an alien tribe and inhospitable condition. The Diary, for Malinowski, was a kind of dialogue with himself. About 20 years later, Geertz gave a balanced assessment of Malinowski as an anthropologist in his book *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (1988). In this book Geertz took a broader view of Malinowski as an anthropologist as was reflected in his published writings and revised his earlier assessment. In his ethnographic writings, Geertz opined, Malinowski “tried to project two antithetical images of himself – on the one side the empathetic Absolute Cosmopolite with fellow feeling for the savages he studied, and on the other the Complete Investigator (Geertz’s terms), dispassionate, rigorously objective.” (quoted

from Raymond Firth's new "introduction" to the Diary of 1989 edition, pp. XXIX-XXX). According to Geertz, "High Romance and High Science ... easily yoked" in the writings of Malinowski (Geertz 1988: 78-79). Thus, if we go by Geertz's reading of Malinowski, the Diary represents only one and not to be told unempathetic side of Malinowski but going by his other writings it is difficult to say he was completely unempathetic towards the natives he had studied.

Being in positivist mould, Malinowski treated the social facts as external to the researcher and was driven by the wrong perception, as did Durkheim, that the external facts are like "things" and could be studied like the "objects" of material sciences with precision and in totality and the anthropological knowledge thus produced would be "objective" and universal. Treating social facts as dry objects, in essence, means overlooking of the human sentiments, passions, the world of feelings, the uncertainties in cognition, and romanticism, which constitute the inseparable parts of any social relation or the way of life of the people. During the course of his fieldwork, therefore, he remained detached from the objects of study as an external dispassionate observer. He forgot a fundamental fact, which was made clear by Max Weber and the phenomenologists, that there could be a gap between the "fact" and the "understanding about the fact" at the level of social participants who we study and at the level of the anthropologist.

Verrier Elwin: The Empathetic Fieldworker

One can find an alternative approach, so different from that of Malinowski in the work of Verrier Elwin, who had come to India as a missionary and established Gond Seva Mandal (Society for the Services of Gonds) with his team in Karanjia in erstwhile Madhya Pradesh. He always tried to be an integral part of the people among whom he had worked and worked for their wellbeing. Elwin lived 22 years in Madhya Pradesh and married a Gond girl, who accompanied Elwin in almost all his field trips in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. In Elwin's admission, this helped him making initial contact and rapport building with the local people (Misra 1971: 102). His love for the tribal communities in India finds reflection in tribal development policy for the North East, the *Panchsheel* (See Nehru 1953-54), which he had drafted for the Government of India. His commitment to the tribal cause was total as he relinquished the British citizenship and his membership of the Church, to become a follower of Gandhi and later an administrator in the Government of India.

While working among the tribal communities Elwin did not intend “to take an exclusive interest in the tribes but were concerned with everybody who was poor and exploited” (Elwin 1964: 105). His objective, as he proclaimed, was “to build up a settlement to help the people and to base our policy and way of life on a mixture of Franciscan and Gandhian ideas.” But once he decided to do intensive research among the tribes where he lived, as well as those in other parts of India, he remembered the responsibilities of a social scientist despite his empathy for the people. Elwin’s humanistic approach influenced his methodology but he did not see it as a hindrance to his scientific pursuit. This is how he explained his position: “there is nothing whatever hostile to scientific enquiry in having an intense and affectionate interest in the people one studies, in desiring their progress and welfare and in regarding them as human beings rather than as laboratory specimens” (Elwin 1964: 141). He approached his anthropological studies with a literary bias and was proud of having a humanistic background. This is why he declared: “the study of folktales and myths, which some people regard as unworthy of the notice of a serious scholar, brought home to one the importance of the fears and anxieties of the people and the need to ensure that we did nothing that would intensify them” (Elwin 1964: 142).

How embedded he was with the people he studied could be gauged from the following words in his Autobiography:

For me anthropology did not mean “field-work”: it meant my whole life. My method was to settle down among the people, live with them, share their life as far as an outsider could and generally do several books together.... This meant that I did not depend merely on asking questions, but knowledge of the people gradually sank in until it was part of me (Elwin 1964: 142).

So much was his embeddedness with the people that studying people and living amidst them became his way of life; he refused to segregate his “empathy for the people” and the responsibilities of an anthropologist. For him, it became a way of life.

Elwin’s method to comprehension was an integral part of his initiatives for the wellbeing of the people. He often drew the attention of the administrative for the betterment of “his people”. He believed:

This need not mean any lowering of the standards of research, still less a bias towards any particular theory. For it is the glory of science to direct the radiance of truth into the dark places of human life and transform them (Elwin 1964: 132-33).

Elwin's field diary, 1932-1935, titled *Leaves from the Jungle: Life in a Gond Village*, provides the background for an analysis of his basic theoretical problem in each of the four monographs (*The Baiga* 1939, *The Agaria* 1942, *Maria Murder and Suicide* 1943, and *The Maria and their Ghotul* 1947), and the analysis of the contextual and human aspects of the field situation in each case. The diary gives a vivid picture of the situation in which he lived, and his method of establishing rapport with his informants. It also gives an overall view of his life, explaining his drive for undertaking later scientific inquiries. A review of the diary in *The New Statesman* contains the following comments that reflect Elwin's work at the time and explicate the nature of his mission. About the ashram that Elwin had set up in the midst of the Gonds, which he used as the meeting point with the locals, the reviewer writes:

Mr. Elwin's ashram with its chapel and dispensary, its school and its rest house and its leper colony, is built in the Gond manner, but with little details of sanitation, etc., that the Gonds have overlooked, and with flowers everywhere where flowers will grow. Here where all creeds are honoured and Christianity is practised rather than preached, Mr. Elwin and his Indian friends live and work (*The New Statesman*, London, October 24, 1936, p. 8).

Speaking about this contextual situation and the human aspect of field methods, Elwin said: "My nearest English neighbors were a hundred miles away: I was thus compelled not only to work but to relax in tribal company" (Elwin 39: xxviii). As a "participant community-worker" rather than just an observer, he was able to identify himself with other members of the community and thus obtain information about the feelings of the people. Such a situation gave him the opportunity to understand the people, their traditions and problems in great depth. By identifying himself with the people and their problems and at the same time observing with an eye of a scientist, Elwin lived up to a social scientist's standards. Benjamin Paul observes: "Participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity" (Paul 1953: 441). But to Elwin, "scientific objectivity" meant not to solve a particular "small-scale hypothesis" but to understand the core-problem of a culture in order to devise means of preserving the culture rather than allowing it to fall before an alien culture. Further, he had a role more unique than that of an academician, a missionary or an administrator. This in one way gave him

the opportunity to understand the culture in its many-faceted expression. Elwin wrote:

I had the further advantage of being neither an official who might seem too alarming nor a missionary who might seem too respectable. I was simply regarded as an amiable and eccentric person who was interested in everybody and everything, and to whom people could say anything that came into their heads. I was the Bhumiasahib (Elwin, *The Bagia*, 1939: xxviii).

In Elwin's admission *the Bagias* had accepted Elwin as their own man, *bara bhai* and a *mamuli admi* (an ordinary man). Elwin wrote:

One of the greatest compliments an ethnographer could be paid was given me by a Baiga in Pandaria. We had visited his village and been received with great friendliness but none of the fuss and deference which the touring officer generally receives. One of my company was annoyed at this and said to the villagers: 'Here is a sahib; he must be someone important. Why don't you make proper arrangements for his reception?' The Baiga laughed at this. 'We know it's only *bara bhai* (the usual name for me). He is such an ordinary man (*mamuli admi*) that when we see him coming, we say, oh, it's only *bara bhai*, there's no need to bother' (Elwin 1939: xxviii-xxix).

By not following a routine path in the collection of folklore and by devoting himself to a cause, Elwin created his own methodology in the field. No method can be right for all situations; since methodology helps in understanding a situation and new situations demand adjustments in methodology. In *The Baiga*, Elwin collected short autobiographies of men and women "for these give a clear and immediate insight into those things which the Baiga themselves consider memorable." (*The Bagia* xxviii). At the same time, he was in a position to check his data with the help of these autobiographies. In addition to this particular methodology in corroborating his observations with the autobiographies, Elwin also described his unique experiences and the native people's assistance to him in cases of physical distress. He recalled one such situation:

The next morning, I was standing in the forest when a large pig lumbered up to me with a leaf in its mouth which it dropped at my feet. I was rather moved by this-sort of Francis among the bird's touch, I thought and then forgot all about it. But no sooner had I returned home than I went down with a violent attack of fever.

The local magicians waited on me, and soon diagnosed the cause—the witch of Bohi, annoyed at my presence in the village, had put magic into a leaf and sent it to me by her pig. They immediately took necessary measures and I recovered (Elwin, *Autobiography*, p. 149).

This is a true account of the participant observation, which demonstrates Elwin's keen observation and analytical power, and, at the same time, gives him raw anthropological facts about that which Malinowski has called the "imponderabilia of actual life".

The central theme of *The Agaria* (1942), Elwin's second monograph, was the "marriage of myth and craft." In this book he highlighted the importance of a long stay in the midst of the tribal communities in order to grasp the essence of their life. He castigated the hit-and-run approach of the anthropologists saying:

There is a tendency to scamp personal investigation on the spot, to make brief visits of a fortnight or less to a district and then write about it, to conduct inquiries from the veranda of a dak bungalow (*The Agaria*, p. xxxi).

Elwin also criticized such an interview conducted by another investigator in his presence and with the help of a police officer since he was convinced that this method will never take the anthropologist anywhere close the facts.

For the purpose of obtaining exploratory information on the Agaria, Elwin made several trips to different areas to get first-hand information about the distribution of the tribe. He understood clearly that reliance on government records and officials was not helpful. Dependence on assistance from administrators in that particular period of time was unsuitable for scientific consideration, as Elwin explained:

... the Tahasildars of certain districts in the Province were asked to compile lists of villages in which there were Agaria smithies. This, you would say, was a simple enough business and, since government taxes the smithies, almost a specialty of Revenue officials. Yet every list was hopelessly inaccurate and useless, not only for the purpose of science but even as guide to research (*The Agaria*, p. xxiv)

Reaffirming his belief in the necessity of fieldwork in such a situation, Elwin declared:

You cannot observe mankind from the howdah of an elephant. There is no substitute for fieldwork. There is no substitute for life in the village, among the people, staying in village houses, and enduring the physical distress as well as the possible misunderstandings that may arise (*The Agaria*, p. xxxi).

Elwin believed that “the truth is told to those who are loved,” and data cannot be “bought by presents of liquor and tobacco.” To be a fieldworker among the tribes of India requires “long residence, intimate personal contact, knowledge of local idiom” and “trained Indian assistants.” For this reason, as indicated earlier, he frequently criticized hastily-made generalizations.

On this count Elwin criticized W. Reuben monograph on the Asur tribe entitled *Eisenschmiede und Dimonen in Indien* (1939) saying: “Reuben’s monumental *Eisenschmiede und Damonen in Indien* was written after a sojourn of only a month among the Asur of Chota Nagpur. No scholar, however brilliant, can expect the results of such hastily gathered inquiries to be accepted” (*The Agaria*, p. xxxii).

Elwin’s comments in *The Agaria* were not based on hypothetical assumptions relating the iron smelters with the mythological Asurs but, instead, on contemporary beliefs. Describing how mythology vitalizes crafts and how beliefs are ingrained in the life of the people, he writes:

Special reverence is always due to fire: it must not be kindled for some days after a death; it is dangerous to swear by fire; if a man urinates on fire, his penis may become swollen and covered with sores. This happened to an Agaria boy in Bhanpur (Karanjia). He tried many remedies without effect: at last, he gave food-offering to Agyasur and recovered (*The Agaria* p. 117).

The Agaria is full of such personal observations which reveal his intimate relationship with the people, “the people that lived every moment of their lives for an ancient craft and by a living myth.” He championed their cause based on what Elwin considered the decay of the industry, which created anxiety, fear and poverty among the people. S. C. Roy, in the foreword to the book, lauds Elwin for his method, which combines scientific method with empathy:

... we are filled with admiration at the clear and comprehensive, accurate and scientific and yet deeply sympathetic delineation of the life and manners and mentality of one of the poorest and lowliest but withal most interesting forest tribes of India. Indian ethnology is fortunate in securing the wholehearted (and let us hope lifelong)

services of a consummate scholar and a sturdy champion of the poor and the oppressed in Mr. Verrier Elwin, whose name is now a household word among the aborigines of the central provinces (*The Agaria*, p. xxxii).

In sum, in *The Agaria*, Elwin depends on the collection of folktales, beliefs and myths of the people connected with the age-old craft of iron-smelting. Particularly in the section on myth, he quotes a number of his personal experiences and observations, a technique that is a rarity in anthropological or folkloristic work in India. These observations give a lucid picture of the human aspect of the field situation.

In *Songs of the Forest* (1935) Elwin (along with his collaborator Hivale) collected folk poetry of the Gond. Examining any of Elwin's tale or song collections, one easily finds that they meet the standards of a scientific exercise. Unlike many of the Indian Folktale collectors, Elwin strove to present his collections as authentic documents of tribal life. In a review of the Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal, Norman Brown explains:

... Mr. Elwin, himself a man of literary skill, feels the literary content of his stories throughout, though he scrupulously refrains from any doctoring or "improving" or even from excluding stories that have little, if any, artistic quality. With high appreciation of the value these stories have to the people among whom they circulate, and of the worth of these "primitive" people and their culture, he offers them as ethnological material. They are given in direct and most commendable-and for Indian folk-tales unusually-un bowdlerized form (Brown 1948: 186).

Elwin's methods of collecting various genres of folklore varied according to the situation and the problem of language in the areas concerned. Working among the tribes of Madhya Pradesh he "went native"; he stayed among them, became one of them, and through his love and affection for the people won them over. All members of the community were his informants, and they "opened their hearts." (From the comments of Prof. Walter Kaufmann). He did not set out to find singers or tale-tellers; they were all around him. Elwin collected everything, with the help of his team, while around the firesides in the little villages, on his tours through the hill areas of Madhyapradesh. In addition to texts, he included vivid descriptions of the social function of the telling situation. In one such description he said:

We will give two more examples of the tales told by the fireside in these little villages among the Satpura Hills. They were given us

by Hothu the Baiga in a remote village of Bilaspur. It was a strange and absorbing sight to watch in the firelight the wild handsome faces of the Baigas as they listened to Hothu, himself a tall, striking-looking man, naked save for a scanty loin-cloth, his long hair tied in a knot hanging on one side of his head, in his ears large rings of white and blue beads. Certainly, he had the gift of speech. He told his stories with slow expressive gestures, long pauses, a touch of poetry in his repetitions, and an inimitable trick of crumpling up his forehead at the funny bits. His first story was in form exactly parallel to the Saila songs, a theme progressing gradually through various grades of innocence to a highly vulgar termination (Elwin and Hivale 1935: 28).

My Fieldwork Experience in an Urban Setting

I chose to work on the *Life of the Middleclass Aged in Kolkata* for my PhD, which has been published as a book (Roy 2019). Two things dragged me to social gerontology when I was looking for a research topic for my Ph.D. First, my close proximity with my own grandmother and grandfather and empathy for the other elderly whom I interacted with in course of growing up, and second, the media-created view that the elderly are the victims of neglect and ill-treatment at the hands of their own children and family members.

I conducted my fieldwork in phases for over two years between 2013 and 2015, covered 120 families for background survey and conducted 64 case studies of the families of the elderly persons, in Salt Lake area and in two old-age homes in South Kolkata. The families in my study were all from middleclass background, largely free of economic hardship. All had high level of education, many were doctors, engineers, college or university professors, high officials and so on.

I had to use all personal contacts to reach out to the elderly persons and use all my cultural capital to build some kind of rapport based on mutual trust and liking. There were a few cases of rejection and in some cases the interactions remained at the level of formal interviews. I took all my informants as the “givers” while I was the “taker” and therefore I approached them with all humility and gratitude. For them, I was the next-door girl, naïve, who could be shown some “pity”, given some advice and trusted to be taken in the private space of lived experiences. Because of my past interaction with my own grandparents as their granddaughter helped

me draw an empathetic discourse about the elderly (a combination of cognition, articulation of the cognition in language and treatment of them) which, perhaps, worked consciously or unconsciously as the foundation of my approach and interaction with the elderly in the field.

I was living in Salt Lake during the period of my fieldwork, in the same neighbourhood of many of my informants. We used to meet in banks, market place, on the street, at the auto stand or bus stand, on social and political gatherings, and so on. The brief and informal interactions helped trust building. Having known that I was a trained singer some of my informants started inviting me to perform in the family functions as well as some social functions. Many of my informants were singers themselves or had interest in Rabindrasangeet. Having known each other's interest in music we turned many interview meetings into performance sessions. While working in the old-age homes, I attended many of the evening prayer sessions, and sang prayer songs along with the elderly boarders and participated in their collective social functions.

One thing that I really cherish about my field work is that through close interaction with the elderly I managed to establish a very strong bond with some of my respondents, and the relations that turned out to be intimate, based on mutual care, love and respect. After the interview sessions got over many of my respondents invited for lunch or dinner before I left for my native place (Siliguri). Some of them asked me to visit them whenever I get time and sing some songs for them. The most wonderful thing is that even after returning to my native place I am in regular touch over telephone with some of the respondents with whom I have developed intimacy. They call me asking about my health, my music and insist that I should visit them whenever I go to Kolkata next. I visited them as a researcher, a stranger, yet brief spells of interactions have helped establish life-long bonds. I was the taker and the respondents were the givers and the exchange was never reciprocal yet they showered on me unconditional love and "pity". A close look at the problems of the senior citizens made me a mature and sensitive self and tied me into relations of mutual empathy. Rousseau's idea of pity, which has been endorsed by Levi-Strauss, as one of the foundational rules of social relations (or social structure) always fascinates me. I look at my life and the people around me in the same light. My interaction with my respondents, which was a thoroughly learning experience rooted in empathy and embeddedness, changed my approach towards life and my relationship with my parents and all the elderly people I live with and see around me in

the social setup. I went to my field as a researcher but came out as a granddaughter.

Conclusion

I did not stay in the field for a long time as Malinowski or Elwin did since they studied “other societies”, which were so different from that of their own. Malinowski’s was a reluctant stay in the midst of the aboriginals and he had to stay longer because of disturbing political developments and he could not come out of his rootedness in European culture and develop a liking for the aboriginals. Malinowski, however, was not completely bereft of empathy for the “primitive” but the demands of production of “scientific knowledge” kept him detached and unembedded ethnographer. Elwin, in contrast, “went native” breaking free all his cultural inhibitions, married a tribal girl, lived amidst the tribal population and empathise with them, yet came out with ethnographic accounts of great scientific value. Empathy and embeddedness mixed with the demands of scientific knowledge production constituted the backbone of Elwin’s method. It is almost impossible to emulate either Malinowski or Elwin in modern day fieldwork, one can however, combine the strategies of both these iconic ethnographers in fieldwork depending upon the demands of the research project at hand and the field situation. The scholars who study their own and known society and culture are always (albeit unconsciously) a participant observer; because they can easily relate the findings from the field with the own lived experiences. The formal fieldwork is a kind of planned extension of an otherwise normal course of social interaction. Through social participation and dialogue the researcher can come out with a negotiated insight of the life of the population under research.

Right from our undergraduate days we have been taught that sociology is an objective science, an idea that has been endorsed by Andre Beteille and many other sociologists and anthropologists in India (Beteille 2002) and that we have to detach ourselves (in emotive and value terms) from the subjects of our study (Weber 1949). But when we approach our field of research and start interacting with the subjects of our study, we tend to take it as a form of social interaction in which both the parties (the researcher and the subject) approach with all the human qualities like emotions, passion, pains, and sufferings and will to care for the fellow human beings. From my year-long field work experiences, I have learnt that when the two sides trust each other they relate to each other with

certain degree of compassion while often transcending the rules of a formal meeting and travel to the private space (in the space of mutual feelings). They share their problems, pains and joys, achievements and regrets of life to each other with an unconscious will to relate to the other with a hope for moral support. Even mere sharing of each other's pains can have a therapeutic effect. In this interaction the researcher is the one who is the taker and therefore the primary beneficiary of the interaction. But she cannot approach the interaction in the line of "calculative rationalism" (in Weberian sense or as Malinowski did at times); rather she travels into the private space searching for "grandparents" in the elderly, who, in turn see an image of their children or grandchildren living in distant places. The subjects in the field too try (mostly unconsciously) to connect to the researcher (in varying degrees, depending on the degree of mutual liking), and share their emotions, sufferings and joys. I understand that without this emotive and empathetic connect the fieldwork remains formal and the data, thus collected, remain superficial. The fundamental question therefore is can two sensitive persons remain unconcerned about each other's problems? Probably not. The other relevant question could be whether the outcome of such research would be "objective". I would answer in the negative to the first question and "yes" to the second one. Because without the emotive and empathetic connect with the subjects, the fieldworker is most likely to return with the superficial numeric information and the outcome of such research would be without heart and soul. As has been demonstrated by Verrier Elwin in all his ethnographic accounts, empathy for the local population does not come in the way to the production of true accounts of their life. Discourses, thus produced, will also include a strong will to bring about "desired changes" in the life of the people.

Notes

[An earlier version of this paper was presented in a national seminar on "Ideology, Art and Science in Social Sciences" organized by the Department of Sociology, North Bengal University, on 6-7 March 2020. I am thankful to the scholarly participants who had commented on the paper and gave valuable suggestions.]

1. Being a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, he was formally seen as an enemy and was required to report regularly to the Australian police (Skalnik 1982: 32); and because of the wartime situation, he was prevented from doing any but local travel. It was

with the help of his anthropological friends that he gained permission to do fieldwork in New Guinea.

2. Malinowski's second wife published his field diaries under the title *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* in 1967, after Malinowski's death. Malinowski wrote the notes expressing his anguish and frustrations as he felt culturally estranged amidst the people of a completely different culture. Questions have been raised on why Malinowski did not publish the Diary himself and if he would have approved the idea of publishing it.
3. It has been claimed that the word "niggers" is an incorrect translation of the Polish word Malinowski used in his field diary and his students and close associates were firm in their opinion that Malinowski was, by no count, a racist. The appropriate translation should have been "natives" (See Raymond Firth, the first "Introduction" to Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967).

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Missing Daughters: Social Perceptions and Treatment of the Girl Child in India

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Abstract: *India has been witnessing a decline in both sex ratio and child sex ratio (0-6 years) over decades. Female mortality at pre-natal stage, at the time of birth, neo-natal and during childhood has contributed to a syndrome called “missing girls” in India and other south Asian countries. Demographic data in India record low child sex ratio than sex ratio. Therefore, the problem basically is of missing girls than missing females. The threat lies more in childhood than adulthood. Girl child has been differentiated/ neglected in terms of health, nourishment, education and other gendered values. The problem also lies in the imbalance of child sex ratio in India which shows that apathy towards girl child is visible in some states of India. The vulnerability of the girls is more prominent in north western India than in southern India, which is the result of certain cultural practices that make discrimination and unequal treatment of daughters a normal phenomenon. The paper aims to discuss the various factors of daughter discrimination that leads to drop in sex ratio, making the missing girl syndrome all the more problematic in Indian context. The paper also discusses the basic factors that are responsible for low child sex ratio with major emphasis on foeticide, infanticide and neglect of girl child in India.*

Key words: Missing girls, daughter discrimination, infanticide, foeticide, patriarchy, dowry.

Introduction

India has witnessed trends of rising masculine sex ratio for many decades owing to the overarching patriarchal mind set. This has been a matter of grave concern for the past few decades and so considerable attention has been paid to address the various dimensions of female deficit and negligence

in India along with persisting regional variations (Sen 1990; Agnihotri 2000; Dasgupta and Bhatt 1995; Miller 1981 and 1989). The numerical imbalances between the male and female sexes were pointed out in the seventies (Visaria 1971; Nataranjan 1972). Atrocious practices like sex-selective abortion and female infanticide are to be blamed for the deficit in the child sex ratio of the country. Not only in India, the heinous act of eliminating premature female foetus is practised rampantly across Asian countries. Amartya Sen (2003) mentions that in the last century, “100 million women have been missing in South Asia due to discrimination leading to death experienced by them from womb to tomb in their life cycles” (as cited in Patel 2007: 289). The 2011 Indian census shows a reduction in child sex ratio from 927 female children per 1000 male children in 2001 to 914 female children per 1000 male children. Child sex ratio is the direct indicator of low status and welfare of daughters in India. The reason cited for this decline is the obnoxious practice of negligence of health care to female children in the age group of 0-6 years, sex-selective abortion, killing of new born female children or female infanticide. This skewed sex ratio is a reflection of practices like son preference and daughter negligence which are directly result from the patriarchal mind set or the overall supremacy of male over female in all walks of life.

Conceptual Framework

The child sex ratio of the last three decades show that it has been on continuous decline from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011. This clearly depicts that males decisively outnumber females in India. Overwhelming presence of daughter-aversion and son preference across India are the causes of this phenomenon of daughter deficit in Indian population. There is a predominance of strong patriarchal culture where men enjoy a higher position than women and hence exhibit strong son-preference. Girls are treated as liability as the practice of dowry followed by expensive marriage rituals are ingrained in Indian culture. Boys, on the other hand, are considered assets. In contemporary times, science and technology is being misused to carry out the practice like sex-selective abortion, which is a threat to the life of the unborn girls. Abortion was legalised in India in 1971 but it was misused and it spearheaded the practice of female foeticide, until the PNDT Act (Pre-Natal Diagnostic Act) was passed. The misuse of technology had a colossal impact on country's population demographics as there is higher proportion of boys than girls, causing an imbalance in population. Amartya Sen (2003) has termed it as

“technological revolution of a reactionary kind”. The Census data (2001 and 2011) depict that the practice of daughter discrimination and neglect can also be witnessed in the lack of access to health care, nutrition, and neo-natal and maternal care. Furthermore, changing social norms have brought in attitudinal change towards having small family. Rationalization of family size has furthered the practice of masculinization of family by practicing sex-selective abortion with the use of new technology.

Demographic trends in India

Fertility trends in India show a strong inclination towards practice of son preference in contemporary India resulting in unwantedness of daughters. Recent studies on female infanticide, new biases in sex ratios at birth and infant child mortality rates indicate that extreme forms of daughter discrimination resulting in death have persisted (Miller 1981; Coale and Bannister 1994). India has been witnessing demographic transition from high to low fertility with increasing modernization and economic development leading to dramatic change in consumerist culture. The increasing age at marriage of educated urban couples and work participation of women outside household have contributed to a decline in fertility. An educated urban woman wishes to be financially independent and therefore opts for small family, with one or two children. There is a strong correlation between the rapid economic growth and decline in fertility. The social evils like son preference, female infanticide along with other threats to the survival, growth and development of daughters are expected to disappear with increasing economic development and spread of modernity.

Table 1 below presents overall sex ratio and child sex ratio (0-6 years) of total population of India from 1961-2011.

Table 1: Child sex ratio (0-6 years), Census 1961-2011.

Year	CSR (0-6 years)	Overall sex ratio
1961	976	941
1971	964	930
1981	962	934
1991	945	927
2001	927	933
2011	914	940

Source: Census of India

Table 2 has been compiled by taking child sex ratio since 1991. Successive decades have also been included to have a clear understanding of the status of girl child in India. The table provides break up the country into regions of north, south, east and west.

Table 2: Child sex ratios (0-6 years), Census 1991, 2001, 2011

State	1991	2001	2011
INDIA	945	927	914
North- Himachal Pradesh	951	896	906
Punjab	875	798	846
Haryana	879	819	830
Chandigarh	899	845	867
Delhi	915	868	866
Uttar Pradesh	928	916	899
North-east- Sikkim	965	963	944
Arunachal Pradesh	982	964	960
Nagaland	993	964	944
Manipur	974	957	934
Mizoram	969	964	971
Tripura	967	966	953
Meghalaya	986	973	970
Assam	975	965	957
South- Andhra Pradesh	975	961	943
Karnataka	960	946	943
Tamil Nadu	948	942	946
Kerala	958	960	959
East- Bihar	959	942	933
Orissa	964	938	920
Jharkhand	NA	965	943
West Bengal	967	960	950
West- Gujarat	928	883	886
Rajasthan	916	909	883
Maharashtra	946	913	883
Goa	964	938	920

Source: Compiled from census of 1991, 2001 and 2011
(<http://www.censusindia.gov.in>)

According to 2011 census there are 914 girl children per 1000 boys (in the 0-6 age group) and corresponding figures were 927 girl children per 1000

boys in 2001. The CSR in 2011 has been recorded to be the lowest since 1961. Demographers, however, show differential trends in different parts of India. The state that has the highest CSR as per 2011 census is Kerala (959) which is higher than the national average and the state having the lowest sex ratio is Haryana (830 girls per 1000 boys). It is evident that there is widespread disparity between the northern and southern parts of India. The southern states have better child sex ratio compared to the north, especially the north-western region. The northern part of India has low literacy level and high level of agricultural development. The Census data show that the people in north India hold on to a clear practice of cultural preference for son. The south generally exhibits higher literacy levels and have better health care facilities. Thus, the southern states have lower levels of infant and female mortality rates and lower fertility rates. The northern states, on the other hand, have a considerably higher rates of infant and female mortality and fertility (Jeffery and Jeffery 1997; Guilimoto and Rajan 2001). Demographers have observed that the incidents of atrocities done on girl children in the north-western parts of India are higher compared to the southern region. The regions including Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, parts of Bihar and Orissa always nurse apathy towards girl children. According to 2001 census there has been alarming decline in sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years in the northern states of India especially Haryana (819/1000) and in Punjab (798/1000). Demographers have accorded the practice of female infanticide, sex selective abortion, female neglect and son preference as the reasons.

However, the 2011 census also shows that some of the north Indian states have shown improvement in their child sex ratio (CSR). In Himachal Pradesh the CSR rose from 896 in 2001 to 906 in 2011, in Punjab it is 846 in 2011 against 798 in 2001, in Haryana the ratio has risen from 819 in 2001 to 830 in 2011, in Chandigarh it rose to 867 in 2011 from 845 in 2001, in Delhi here is a rise from 868 in 2001 to 866 in 2011. The figures clearly indicate that the north-western India is gradually developing a more liberal and tolerant outlook towards girl child; the improving sex ratio in 0-6 age group is an indicator of the status of girl child. According to Census 2011 child sex ratio has been recorded as 914 for India as a whole, with 919 in rural and 902 in urban India. It is also to be noted that rural India records higher child sex ratio than the urban India. It is easier for urban couples to access the technologies to get the desired family size and sex composition of the children. Rationalisation of family size has given impetus to gendering of family. The rural counterpart on the other hand is yet to completely adhere to small family norm.

Data on Union Territories have also been incorporated to have a better view of the changing child sex ratio pattern in the last three decades.

Table 3: Child sex ratio of Union Territories- 1991, 2001, 2011

UT	1991	2001	2011
Chandigarh	899	845	880
Delhi	915	868	871
Daman & Diu	958	925	904
Dadra & Nagar Havelli	1013	979	926
Lakshwadeep	941	974	911
Pondicherry	963	958	967
Andaman & Nicobar Island	973	965	968

Source: Compiled from census of 1991, 2001 and 2011 (<http://www.censusindia.gov.in>)

India exhibits relatively high but declining fertility along with uneven economic development with marked regional disparities of social group, age group and levels of prosperity (Agnihotri 1995; Dyson and Moore 1983). The declining child sex ratio from 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011 corresponds to the era of neo-liberalism which is highly attributed to commercialism and consumerism. Families in India are heavily being driven by these two attributes which eventually leads to reduced fertility rates. Access to new technologies have eased parents to achieve their desired size of family. Smaller family size through drop in fertility has increased opportunities of women for greater capacity building and work participation. Better educational opportunities along with rise in socio-economic status have led to reduced fertility. Strong son preferences in certain parts and in some classes of India show that daughters logically suffer while the culturally mandated needs are fulfilled (Miller 1981). The practice of dowry in India continues to perpetuate the overall unwantedness of the daughters. Dowry has become a rule in rural areas rather than an exception. In urban areas it is more often referred to as “gifts” by educated people. Dowry acts as a cultural norm that devalues daughters in India. Often it becomes a perpetual one directional flow of resources from a daughter’s parental house to her in-laws. It becomes cumbersome for the daughter’s parents to bear this drain of resources as well as for the male siblings, if any.

Daughter-discrimination and declining child sex ratio in India

Gender difference and sexism in India are rooted in culturally legitimized patriarchy. India being a heterogeneous country has considerable

demographic diversity. The states vary in level of socio-economic developmental aspects, cultural differences, difference in levels of fertility. All these factors are responsible for the difference in child sex ratio across the country. The factors leading to the decline in the child sex ratio are infanticide, female foeticide also known as sex-selective abortion, and discrimination/neglect of girl child.

Female Foeticide- Historically, female foeticide is the process of killing female foetus inside the womb of the mother. With the advent and convenient accessibility to sex determination technology (also referred as SD), sex selective abortion has become preponderant. This practice has turned out to having a phenomenal implication for the changing child sex ratio and overall sex ratio in India. Child sex ratio has been on the decline from 971 in 1981 to 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 and 914 in 2011. The factors responsible for this deplorable syndrome are the widespread use of sex determination and sex pre-selection test. Sex determination initially was an urban phenomenon as it implied the use of sophisticated technology. Gradually it has found its way into rural areas where the practice of sex determination and sex selective abortion was unheard of. The use of amniocentesis and ultrasounds has been prevalent in clinics of small towns and cities of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan since the late 1970s. Punjab was the first state to start the commercial use of this test in 1979 (Patel 2011).

Ultra-sonography was introduced in medical science so as to monitor the overall healthy growth of the foetus in the mother's womb. However, the patriarchal social ambience and spurious business interests have combined to misuse the technology. The noble function of ultra-sonography was put into an inhuman practice. The misuse of ultrasounds led to sex selective abortion. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1970 governed the law on abortion. It permitted legal abortions without any criminal intent and with a good purpose of saving the life of the mother, especially in case of any medical complications. Further, this liberalization of abortion was allowed with a purpose of controlling population. With these intentions, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act was passed in July 1971 and it came into action in April 1972. This law allowed pregnant woman to play a decisive role in controlling the frequency of pregnancy, number of children and also whether to have or not have a child. But this good intention measure backfired on women as it was used for forceful abortion of female child. In order to overcome this lacuna, Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act was passed in 1994, which came into

implementation in January 1996 which made sex determination of foetus a punishable offense.

According to 2001 study, $\frac{3}{4}$ of foetal sexes can be correctly determined. In case of males, the accuracy rate is 50% whereas it stands to be 100% accurate in case of female foetus. When performed after 13 weeks of pregnancy the result is said to be 100% accurate.¹ The practice of sex determination through ultrasound was introduced in major cities of India in 1980's and within 1990's it became widespread in the urban regions of India which led to the fact that the practice of female foeticide is more pronounced in urban areas.²

India has been witnessing the occurrence of several incidences of female foeticide both in rural as well as urban areas. The underlying factors for such atrocious act are son preference and sexism, where the girls are looked into as "problem" rather than "asset". Across diverse cultural contexts, skewed sex ratio results from son preference and daughter aversion (Patel 2007). India has always been more generous towards male child and the preference for male child is for the continuation of lineage and also to provide manual labour (the primary economy of India is derived from agriculture which requires huge manual labour. This is one significant reason for the prevailing desire of son in the family as son will provide physical labour required in agriculture practice). Patrilineal descent still remains the prime factor for preference of male child as the saying- "may you be the mother of 100 sons" is still a blessing to newly married women. Incidences of female foeticide are pronounced in those areas where the cultural norms give preference to male child over girl child. The cultural norms however work in relation to the socio-economic factors. The son preference has resulted in incongruous access to benefits and resources among male and female. There is disparate access to food, education, health and hygiene between male and female children. There have been reported evidences of substantial neglect of health of girl child causing malnourishment having some serious repercussion of female infanticide (Das Gupta 2005). The practice of female foeticide works in congruence with the patriarchal cultural norms. There have been reports of high incidences of female infant mortality and childhood mortality (Stephen and Claudia 2003).

As per the 2011 census the child sex ratio (CSR) in urban areas is 902 whereas in rural areas it is 919. This takes us to the fact that the practice is more rampant in urban areas, more precisely among the upper class and upper-middle class. Higher education level of mothers, urban setting, higher

birth order of daughters and economic prosperity correlate with increased incidence of sex-selective abortion (Das Gupta 1987; George 2006). Urban people can easily access to ultra-sonography for pre-natal sex determination unlike their rural counterparts who find it to be quite an expensive affair. Moreover, women of the upper class in urban areas are entrapped in the social etiquette of sophistication which restricts their decision making and mobility. Woman has no control on her body and that she is forced to know the sex of the foetus due to family pressure.³ Gender composition is an important factor in family planning along with the number and spacing of children. All these have been facilitated by the widespread use of advanced technologies. The practice has been identified in many North-eastern states and Kerala where women have enjoyed a higher status (Patel 2007). Hence, sex-selective abortion or female foeticide has become a matter of grave national concern in India.

Infanticide-Infanticide is another atrocious form of eliminating infant girls, which is widely practiced in India. It is willful and conscious act of killing female child within one year of its birth. It is executed by the parents or family members with the help of midwife by using poisonous substances. This practice is strongly rooted in complex socio-cultural and economic conditions. Females always receive secondary treatment due to social customs and traditions. Discrimination and neglect of girl child goes hand in hand in India. Infanticide and neglect of female children lately have been supplemented with sex identification and sex selective abortion to achieve the desired size of family and gender composition (Sudha and Rajan 1999). The increasing practice of female infanticide is also contributing to widening the gap in the child sex ratio. Various precarious methods are used to execute this heinous act for generations. Some regions use the method of feeding salt to new born to increase the blood pressure; they are fed milk mixed with sap from poisonous plants and pesticides or are given husk rice to swallow and thus slit their throats. Female infants are also wrapped in wet towels so that they catch pneumonia or starved or dehydrated to death by their parents (Aravamudan 2007). Female infanticide in post-independent India has grown exponentially due to easy availability of modern technology. The UN has laid the blame on the unlawful use of ultra-sonography for sex determination (*Times of India*, 8 October 2011).

A study in Bihar (Shrivastava 1998) reports that in rural areas the barbaric crime of infanticide is executed by *dais* also known as Traditional Birth attendants (TBAs). In urban areas it is carried out by compounders and nurses with the knowledge of medical practitioners. In Madhya Pradesh,

certain caste groups in selected parts continue to practice female infanticide. The factors responsible are high cost of dowry due to the practice of prevailing custom of hypergamy and upholding the pride of Rajputs (Premi and Raju 1998).

In Tamil Nadu, infanticide is executed by common methods like “poisoning by the latex of the Calotropis plant, organophosphate poisoning (pesticide), sedative overdose, strangulation, neglect (starving the baby to death, which does not leave any forensic evidence), feeding the child paddy grain soaked in milk or juice extracted from tobacco leaves” (Samuel and Hebbare 1998 as cited in Sekhar and Hatti, 2005).

The government of India has undertaken several measures in order to combat this situation. One such measure was undertaken by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1992 called the ‘Jayalalitha Protection Scheme for Girl Child’. As per this provision, any poor family with only girls (either one or two) and no sons would be eligible for monetary incentives if either of the parent decides to sterilize. Money given in the name of the infant girl would be under fixed deposit until she attained the age of 21 years (George 1997).

Measures for protection and development of girl child

The dropping child sex ratio has drawn the attention of the demographers, policy makers, intellectuals and NGOs. Education is free for girls across states, though the levels of freeship may vary across primary, secondary and graduation as per provision created in respective states. Schemes like *Kishori Shakti Yojana* for adolescent girls in the 11-18 age group ensures right to food for girl child. It educates girls on nutrition and health care and generates awareness on women and child rights. *Anganwadis* also provide supplementary nutrition to girls on rotational basis at the rate of three girls per month. Accordingly, only one girl in every three months receives supplementary nutrition under *Kishori Shakti Yojana* (Patel 2011). Other scheme initiated by different state governments to ensure protection and development of girl child are as follows:

- 1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign-** the Government of India launched in January 2015 “Save girl child, educate girl child” to ensure survival, protection and empowerment of girl child. The campaign covers 100 selected districts across India with low child sex ratio extending to all cities and districts.

(https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/government_tr_rec/beti-bachao-beti-padhao-caring-for-the-girl-child/)

2. **Centre for Social Research-** founded in 1983 this Centre is a non-profit NGO based in New Delhi. It aims at empowering the women and girls in India and guarantees their fundamental rights and also increases understanding of social issues from gender perspective. It operates on national, regional and local level.
(<http://www.csrindia.org>)
3. **Let Her Live-** this movement was launched by Salt Initiatives, a charitable trust registered in New Delhi. It aims to eliminate female foeticide and other forms of violence against women. Its programmes include workshops and community-based events in order to engage people belonging to different communities and change the social mindset.
(<http://letherlive.in>)
4. **Talita Cumi-** it is a registered non-profit organisation based in New Delhi which works to reach out and rescue girl child from atrocious and inhuman practices like female foeticide, infanticide, abandonment and negligence. It also focuses on educating and liberating the girls emotionally and financially and also to promote a sense of self-sufficiency among young girls.
(<http://www.talithacumi.in>)
5. **#Selfie with Daughters-** the present prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi initiated this campaign in June 28, 2015 which aims to spread awareness about gender imbalance and urged parents to value their daughters. This was a social media campaign which had huge response from parents across the country posing selfies with their daughters.
6. **Cradle baby scheme-** this scheme encourages people of Tamil Nadu not to abandon their unwanted girl child. This two-decade old scheme ensures that female babies who would otherwise be killed are given up for adoption. This was launched by government of Tamil Nadu to stop female infanticide.

National Girl Child day was first initiated by Ministry of Women and Child Development of the Government of India in 2008. It is celebrated on the 24th day of January every year. It aims to providing support and

opportunities to girls and promotes awareness about rights of girl child. It also aims to increase awareness about the importance of education of girls along with health and nutrition.

Conclusion

Despite laws to prevent female foeticide, female infanticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child, child sex ratio has declined over the years in India. The legislative measures initiated by the Central and State Governments have been largely ineffective in curbing the practice killing girl child as female foeticide, female infanticide and daughter discrimination/neglect are still practised in several parts of India, transcending all classes, castes, communities and even north-south dichotomy. Girl child will continue to be in a vulnerable state as long as son preference is practiced in India. With modernization and increasing economic development, welfare and education there is a possibility of changing the mindset of the people at large which will be in synchronization with the spread of values of gender equality. An overall structural change in status, education and economic role of women would bring a reversal in trend that would value daughter as equal to son. Social movements, legislative reforms and strict administrative measures combined with change in social perceptions of the patriarchal order would hopefully bring about changes in the right direction.

Notes

1. Mazza V, Falcinelli C, Paganelli S, et al. (June 2001) "Sonographic Early Fetal Gender Assignment: A Longitudinal Study in Pregnancies After In-Vitro Fertilization". *Ultrasound Obstet Gynecol.* 17(6): 513-06
2. Mevlude Akbulut-Yuksel and Daniel Rosenblum (January 2012), *The Indian Ultrasound Paradox*; IZA DP NO.6273, Forshungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit, Bonn Germany.
3. Gupta, Skewed Sex Ratio at Birth, UNFPA, 14.

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Gender Minority and its Changing Portrayal in Bollywood Films

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Abstract: *This paper outlines how the sexual minorities like LGBTQ are represented in Bollywood films. Cinema is the most important medium that influences people's opinion and it has contributed a lot to the spread of queer awareness and queer movement. This paper aims to give some idea about how LGBTQ is portrayed in cinema and how such portrayal influences peoples' perceptions about them. The paper talks about how Hindi films have represented different discourses on the LGBT theme over time. It took almost 40 years for Indian cinema to portray a homosexual character. Since then, there have been differential representations of the LGBT community and the audience in this homophobic society has also reacted differentially.*

Keywords: Homosexual, lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, homophobia, queer, queer culture, heteronormativity.

Introduction

One of the greatest sources of influence of media on modern life has been cinema. Cinema, on the one hand, reflects on changing social reality and impacts peoples' perceptions, on the other. It has become a powerful vehicle for communication in the fields of culture, education, leisure and propaganda. Baldoon Dhingra, in a report for the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has quoted from a speech by Prime Minister Nehru who stated, "...the influence in India of films is greater than newspaper and books combined" (Dhingra 1963).

Films have a strong impact on the way people think and can influence the society. Films carry an advantage of being a part of the social reality and also a medium of portraying it. Projection of gender stereotypes in films

forms social perception of gender roles. The over-saturation of gender stereotypes in the films results in misrepresentation of gender roles which get embedded in the human mind and is passed on from generation to generation as an acceptable view (Kaur 2017). This is called normalization of the abnormal. Indian cinema has largely contributed to this task of normalization by reproducing the gender stereotypes along the line of patriarchal order. Indian cinema took a long time to make films based homosexual themes. But the portrayals in most cases have been ambivalent, reflecting a strong social division on the issue. In some cases, however, the portrayals have been sympathetic, touching the roots of the problem.

Sexual and gender minority is a group whose sexual identity, orientation or practices are not generally accepted in the larger society. Sexual or gender minority is an umbrella term that encompasses populations included in the acronym “LGBTI” (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) and those whose sexual orientation or gender identity vary from the “normal”. Our culture is deeply committed to the idea that there are only two boxes of sex i.e., male and female, and these boxes also consist of few characteristics of what is “male” and what is “female”. Heterosexuality has been defined as “normal” and all other forms of sexuality, despite being in practice alongside heterosexuality, are labeled “abnormal”.

Homosexual relationships and unions have been a source of social discomfort since they challenge the conventional morality rooted in heterosexuality. The traditional morality had cultural, legal and religious sanctions. The homosexual movements therefore were confronted by social and religious orthodoxy. The legal acceptance of homosexuality is a recent phenomenon and a large majority of the societies are yet to legalize any form of homosexuality (Acharya et al. 2017).

Homosexuality means the same sex orientation relationship and is not a new phenomenon. Even instances of homosexuality are found in Hindu mythology. “The literature drawn from Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and modern fictions also testify the presence of same-sex love in various forms. Ancient texts such as the *Manu Smriti*, *Arthashastra*, *Kamasutra*, *Upanishads* and *Puranas* have references to homosexuality. There are also reports that same-sex activities are common among *sannyasis*, and members of the Orthodox Church, who cannot marry. Thus, instances of homosexuality are available in historical and mythological texts world over and India is no exception to this” (Parasar 2010). The religious communities view homosexuality as a sin, against nature and especially against God. Religions like Islam, Christianity, and Judaism reject homosexuality

completely. Homosexuality was considered as a mental disorder until 1970s. Societal attitudes towards homosexuality differ from culture to culture and over historical periods. Homosexuality is not a taboo but a tradition in India, which has been in practice in different forms. Ancient India never defamed homosexuality; instead, it has been a part of its traditional spiritual consciousness. Ancient India was quite tolerant to homosexuality although the Hindu law book *The laws of Manu* took a very conservative position on the issue.

Homophobia entered into Indian society with the British and when they came to India, the *Laws of Manu* was one of the first texts to which they had referred. As a result, *Laws of Manu* became the ultimate voice of authority for the British and sex became confined to heterosexual monogamous marriages. This was legitimized in 1860 when the British government brought in section 377 of Indian Penal Code, which reads: ‘whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for term which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine’. It was rooted in the Judeo-Christian religious morality that abhorred non-procreative sex. Based on this, homosexuality become illegal in India which was also supported by nineteenth century social reformers and the nationalists, upholding either Hindu or Islamic morality (Khatun 2018: 218). Monogamy was the ideological and moral bane of The Hindu Marriage Act of 1954, which criminalized all forms of polygamy for all Indian citizens excepting the Muslims.

Methodology

This paper is based on the method called “content analysis”. Content analysis is a research method for studying documents and communication artifacts, which might be texts of various formats, pictures, audio or video. For this paper I have done content analysis of some selected Hindi films which feature sexual minorities. I have tried to capture the varying discourses that find reflection in the portrayal of homosexuality in the Hindi films in recent decades.

Conceptual framework

Queer is the term used by and for those persons who are gay, lesbian, transgender and bi-sexual. Queer theory suggests that identities of individuals, especially their sexual identities, are not stable and straight forward as the socially given identities sometimes do not match the self-identities constructed by the grown-up agencies.

Though the context of heterosexuality is the origin and foundation of society's heteronormative stability, the concept of queerness focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Queerness has been associated with bisexual, lesbian and gay, and its analytic framework and includes topics like cross-dressing, intersex bodies, gender ambiguity and gender-confirmation surgery. Queer theory holds that individual sexuality is fluid, fragmented and dynamic collectivity of possible sexualities and it may vary at different points in one's life time (Jagose & Genschel 1996:47).

Queer theory is a part of the field of queer studies whose roots can be found in women's studies, feminist theory, in gay and lesbian studies, and in postmodern and poststructuralist theories. In 1991, Teresa de Lauretis used the words "queer theory" to describe a way of thinking that did not use heterosexuality or binary gender constructs as its starting point; instead, argued for a more fluid concept of identity (Giesecking 2008: 737). Queer theory has represented a different way of thinking and discussing about gender identity which is not based on heteronormativity. Queer theory is not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire (Spargo 1999: 9).

LGBT studies as a form of discourse has challenged the dominant notion of sexuality, i.e., heterosexuality. When one category is designated as "normal", it automatically makes its opposites as "deviant". The practices relating to deviant category are marked by less prejudice and these practices are liable to different forms of social condemnation and punishment. "Queer theory emerges from gay/lesbian studies' attention to the social construction of categories of normative and deviant sexual behavior. But while gay/lesbian studies focused largely on the questions relating to homosexuality, queer theory expands its realm of investigation to a wider field. Queer theory looks at, and studies, and offers a political critique of anything that falls into normative and deviant categories" (Harris 2005: 1). The term also describes representation of same-sex relationship in literary texts, films, and music. This describes the power relation in sexuality. It reverses the process of designating heterosexuality as a norm.

Heteronormativity is defined as a world view that promotes the idea that heterosexuality is the default, preferred or normal mode of sexual orientation. It assumes the gender binary (i.e., that there are only two distinct, opposite genders) and argues that sexual and marital relations between people of opposite sex are the most desirable forms. This belief system is harmful for sexual minorities because it creates a hierarchy among sexual practices that reinforce heterosexism and homophobia. This term was coined by Social theorist Michael Warner in 1991, and further examined this ideology in his book *Fear of a Queer Planet*(1993), one of the building blocks of queer theory.

Heteronormativity is problematic for its assumptions and beliefs for all societies. As far as heteronormativity is concerned, any non-confirming sexual orientation is a passing phase and an individual will eventually grow out of it to be “normal”. LGBTQ people may face healthcare discrimination; the transgender people face struggles when trying to receive healthcare services.

Heteronormativity informs the normativity of daily life, including institutions, laws and regulations that impact the sexual and reproductive lives of members of society as well as the moral imperatives that influence people’s personal lives. Heteronormativity refers to the practices, norms governing those practices, institutions that uphold them and effects produces by those norms within individuals. These effects can be seen in the behaviour and feelings as well as in the aspirations for the future that the narrators nourish for themselves and their children (Wieringa 2014:28).

Journey of the Hindi Cinema

The scholars started taking interest in the depiction of homosexuality in cinema in the 1970s with the spread of feminist awareness and we could notice increasing representation of diverse issues relating to race, ethnicity, gender and even LGBT groups.

The last quarter of 20th century witnessed the America and Western Europe-driven globalization and the subsequent increase in transnational mobility, especially from East to West. Developing nations like India reacted and responded to the ‘liberal project’ of the globalized modernity in multiple ways. The western discourses around newly felt sensibilities and identities such as non-heteronormative sexualities are seen as significant, certainly not the only marker of this project. Sexuality has become a decisive factor of individual’s identity. Moreover, the idea of community started building

around sexuality. Expression such as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘bisexual’, and ‘transgender’, ‘queer’ for individual identity and LGBTQ or queer community for collective identity which are originated in western societies, achieved international currency and the rights-based projects supporting the anti-AIDS and-discrimination campaigns of NGOs in non-western societies (Ramesh 2016: 63).

With the changing society, the world of cinema has also changed. The audiences have become more tolerant about the queer sexualities. The Indian cinema is still perplexed about the projection of LGBT characters. The discussion on queer love stories has been a long one with twists and turns, ups and downs. It still has a wave of awkwardness, shame, mockery and the fear of the public condemnation and stigmatization. Hindi films have tried to include gay themes in their own way. But in such movies the gay characters are far from reality. The mainstream movies invariably show a caricature in the name of a homosexual or LGBT character and the audience too expect these characters to bring some comic relief. The Hindi film industry is one of the powerful forces to create new opinions. But unfortunately, one of the largest film industries of the world is often seen lacking a sense of responsibility towards LGBT community.

India has seen cinematic brilliance with films like *Fire* (1996) to *Margarita with a Straw* (2014) and also seen shameless depiction of a queer character and ridiculing gay culture. *Fire* was directed by Deepa Mehta and she was one of the early and brave directors who brought the concept of homosexuality, especially lesbianism on the screen. She eventually faced a lot of public wrath. *Fire* was one of the most controversial films and it set the cultural landmark in Indian cinema which was both loved and hated. Previously, the queer characters were only effeminate character that added zero meaning to the plot of the movie but were only kept to add insensitive humour.

Mooji has captured this changing mood of Hindi films saying: “More film school graduates are getting their first break in an industry where the big stars have typically passed on the baton to their children, regardless of their talent. These educated first time directors are bringing new stories to Bombay or new ways of telling stories” (Mooji 2006: 32).

Featuring the LGBT characters in any Hindi film means that they are just an object of ridicule and joke. The directors never dare to bring different sexual characters under one screen. Earlier, in the 1960s and 1970s the characters of LGBT were depicted as companion of hero or heroine. The

characterization of LGBT was far from reality as they were just represented in the form of transvestite or cross dressed in order to evoke laughter. Commercial films had a long history of using cross dressed male actors in songs in order to add a comic scene, like in “Mere angane mein” number from the 1981 super hit *Lawaaris*, where Amitabh Bachchan cross dressed as woman to be mistaken as a eunuch (Fig: 1)



Fig:1

Hindi film industry began to witness a noticeable transformation during the 1990s, from the old school love stories to more challenging and audacious stories. But these adventurous movie plots mostly backfired as the restlessness and discomfort devised by films were represented in debates. Few images and scenes were accused of being obscene, vulgar, against the Hindu tradition, against Indian culture and faced public wrath.

Queer images rarely found significant space in commercial ventures and whenever they did, it was in the form of comic relief which could be found in large number of Hindi films. Gay representations have been made in different ways in Hindi films. The first in the form of Hijra, the second is in the form of humour, the third is in the form of mental sickness and lastly, in the way which shows the complexities of the life of the gay people (Kaur 2017: 27).

1990-1999

It was the last two decades that the filmmakers are in a dilemma to choose the themes of the films, which is publicly accepted and does not hurt the morals and traditions of any community. As cinema is one of the most powerful, popular and accessible form of art which leaves a strong influence on the people. *Saadak* (1991) portrays a transgender character, which is depicted as completely evil. *Raja Hindustani* (1996) represented two homosexual characters Kammo and Gulab Singh as comic characters in the film. *Tamanna* (1997) is a national award-winning film which touched upon many social issues like female infanticide and third gender. The film was based on actual life of a eunuch. In this film the character of eunuch 'Tikku' played by Paresh Rawal who faces a lot of humiliation from neighbourhood but also his brother and his family because of his gender. At first, Tikku was not involved in the traditional way of living of hijra community, he was a hairdresser and worked for Bollywood actresses. But at certain point when he lost his job, he turned towards this traditional path like begging, dancing in marriage parties, on occasion of new born baby etc.

2000-2020

It was after 2000 that the Indian Cinema was conscious about not mingling up the gay characters with the transgender. Film like *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2003) created a comic gay plot between two lead characters. The scene was actually of mistaken identity. It is about a love triangle, both Rohit and Aman are in love with Naina. Rohit's housekeeper, Kantaben mistakes Rohit and Aman as homosexuals which made her appalled. This exaggerated reaction to the mere implication of homosexuality gives a visual image of *Visceral Homophobia* (Holtzman 2010:123 cited in Webb 2018), spilling the tray of orange juice; fainting; screaming. Largely silent, she is denied a voice in which to vocalize her objections (Webb 2018). Karan Johar made an attempt to introduce gay themes into popular films, but he chose to do it through homophobic humour which, soon turned into a trend.

Male homosexuality is established through implication and innuendo with Rohit and Aman, embodying a "buddy" or *dosti* role of "barely disguised same-sex desire" (Gopinath 2000 cited in Webb 2018). Neither character is explicitly queer, yet homosexuality is framed as a disjuncture to heterosexuality. Rohit is established as aggressively heterosexual, harassing

a woman in an elevator before being confronted by a security guard (Webb 2018).

The film *Girlfriend* (2004) has shown that being homosexual is not natural process. In this film, one of the lead characters was sexually abused in her childhood and this is the reason that she becomes comfortable with same-sex relationship i.e., lesbianism. The director intended to throw some light on homosexual relationship but he ended up representing that queer sexuality is not natural but it is due to social circumstances or misfortune, where one changes their sexual orientation.

A breakthrough film was *My brother... Nikhil* (2005) directed by Onir. This film was well directed and it took great care in representing homosexuality with utmost sensitivity and it did not focus on the sexual life of Nikhil. The film primarily focused on HIV theme and about its awareness. Another film by the same director *I am* (2010) focuses on how gay people are abused and used in a country where homosexuality is considered as taboo. Some other films like *Dostana* (2008), *Straight: Pinu Patel ki tedhi medhi love story* (2009), *Ek Ladki ko dekha toh aisa laga* (2019), and *Shubhmangal zyada sabhdhan* (2020) have also dealt with different themes relating to homosexuality. *Dostana* marks a cynical appropriation of an increasingly public discourse on sexuality for the purpose of comedy while *Straight* is a brave exploration of what it means to be gay, who is really gay or more accurately who is not. And yet Pinu Patel's journey towards self-realization ends in an overwhelming validation of heterosexuality, which does justice neither to the idea of homosexual love and nor to the woman who ultimately wins the race (Srinivasan 2011).

The third gender

Hijra characters always had some presence in Hindi cinema. It was the late comedian Mehmood who, for the first time, portrayed eunuch in a respectable manner in his blockbuster *Kunwara Baap* (1974). The films like *Tamanna*, *Shabnam Mausi*, *Daayra*, *Darmiyaan*, *Welcome to Sajjanpur* attempted to take a serious take on third gender. There were many actors who grabbed eyeballs playing eunuch character on the silver screen.

Sangharsh (1999): *Sangharsh* is a 1999 Indian psychological action horror film directed by Tanuja Chandra. Ashutosh Rana played the role of Lajja Shankar Pandey, a religious fanatic, a psychopath transgender who

sacrificed children to attain immortality. This role of transgender won him several accolades.

Sadaak (1991): Sadashiv Amrapurkar played Maharani, a eunuch who was the lead villain of the movie. Maharani was a brothel owner who tortures and traffics young women. The film was directed by Mahesh Bhatt and it did its bit to improve the image of eunuch in the society. The performance of the actor fetched him a Filmfare award.

Tamanna (1997): Mahesh Bhatt once again showed courage by making another film which involved transwoman as an important part of the film. This film was based on actual life story of a eunuch 'Tiku'. The movie represented a transwoman played by Paresh Rawal, who finds an abandoned girl child and raises as her own. This film was an attempt to represent the struggles of a transgender and female infanticide.

Daayra (1996): This film explored the male-female relationships, the preconceived notion of love and the changing attitudes towards them. The plot includes a romantic relationship between a transvestite dancer and a gang raped woman who begins to dress up like a man.

Laxmii (2020): *Laxmii* is a comedy horror film directed by Raghava Lawrence. The story revolves around Asif played by Akshay Kumar who is possessed by transgender ghost. This film represents the issues and struggles faced by a transgender. They are discriminated against by the society on all grounds be it social, educational or economic.

Although the journey of experimenting with different themes on the Indian screen has not been smooth with passing time people have accepted male sex relationship. It evolved as a celebration of masculinity and exclusion of women. To make my point clear about the portrayal and its changing nature through the passage of time, I have discussed below three films in greater details.

Fire

Fire, released in 1996, is the most controversial film in the history of Indian Cinema. It was written and directed by Deepa Mehta and is an Indo-Canadian romantic drama film. It is the first film of her trilogy, the other two being *Earth* (1998) and *Water* (2005). It was the first transnational film which was commercially released in various global cities. After release it had a negative impact on the main stream audience. The film got banned in Delhi and Mumbai, where its screening stopped after two violent

demonstrations. The film was described as “unconventional”, “sumptuous” and not “lesbian” or “homosexual”.

The film is about two daughters-in-law of a family, who are not happy in their respective marriage. Radha (Shabana Azmi) is the wife of elder brother Ashok (Kulbhushan Kharbanda) and Sita (Nandita Das) is the wife of younger brother Jatin (Javed Jaffrey). Ashok had no intimate relation with his wife, as he was under the influence of a Swamiji. Jatin, on the other hand, had a Chinese girlfriend and thus had no interest in Sita. These denials brought both the daughters-in-law closer and they, as an alternative exploration, started having an affair. Having been caught red handed by Ashok, Radha confesses that she loves Sita and wants to be with her.

Deepa Mehta’s *Fire*, no doubt, is considered a cultural landmark in the history of Indian cinema, which has been both loved and hated for its portrayal of lesbian desire. Responses to the film have veered wildly between unqualified appreciation and destructive rage. The rage displayed in India, soon after the release of the film through violent, Hindutva-inspired protests, was directed at Mehta’s audacity to represent a lesbian relationship that appears to develop as a result of the crippling pressure of Indian middle-class patriarchy (Bose 2007). Those who expressed anger against the film were Hindu right-wing activists, who took a clear position in support of Article 377 of the IPC, which criminalizes any form of homosexual relation. In their perception, in a country like India, where woman is seen as goddess, mother, daughter, daughters-in-law, the idea of woman having sexual desires ruin the so-called Indian culture and morality.



Fig:2

Mehta has taken a huge and bold step to introduce Lesbianism in Indian cinema as a realistic alternative to heterosexuality, the only form of sexuality endorsed by patriarchy. As the film was a Canadian production, it was claimed that Lesbianism is a Western concept. The film portrayed love relationship between two sisters-in-law of one family. This movie focuses on unhappy heterosexual relationship with their husbands. The protagonists never thought of having a love affair with same sex until they met each other. The protagonist Sita and Radha were not lesbians from birth, and they were not aware of their different sexual orientation prevailing within themselves. Sita and Radha were the two sides of the same coin as both of them were sufferers of alienation and denial from their respective husbands. This is also an acknowledgement of the fact that neither men nor women have just one sexual identity, which is fixed for life. The monolithic fixation of heterosexual identity, which perfectly endorses patriarchy, has been challenged in *Fire*.

The act of physical intimacy is not perceived merely as a contact of two female bodies. The bodies become territorialized with inscription of nationality, in being Indian (defined by borders), of religion in being Hindu, probably upper caste and kinship, in being sisters-in-law. Hence, the act of physical intimacy does not remain just a contact between two female bodies. Many critics described *Fire* as the story of “the two unhappy housewives compelled to seek emotional and sexual satisfaction from each other because their husbands provide none” (Kishwar 1998: 3).

Deepa Mehta did not portray the negative stereotyped of their looks but has represented the negative but authentic outlook of people, when they come in terms of lesbian relationship. The moment Ashok (husband of Radha) came to know about the love affair of Radha and Sita, he got devastated and got furious. He asked Radha that it is only for sexual desire that she has committed this sin. He wanted her to apologize for her sin and so that he can forgive her and continue life as usual. But Radha had a clear idea of what she was doing and her agency spoke when refused to apologize about her deeds. Their argument became violent and Radha’s saree caught fire. Ashok saw and left the room. This behavior portrayed the homophobic attitude of almost all the people in this country who are trapped in heteronormative ideal. People cannot accept the female love relationship, Ashok left her to burn and die for committing this sin.

Fire is an advance film with a different theme that was released in 90s, which would require broad mind people to understand. This film did justice to the representation of homosexual character and being a 90s film did not

stereotype homosexuality. But the same sex relationship was seen emerging only after the two women failed in heterosexual relationship and not as a preferred choice.

Aligarh

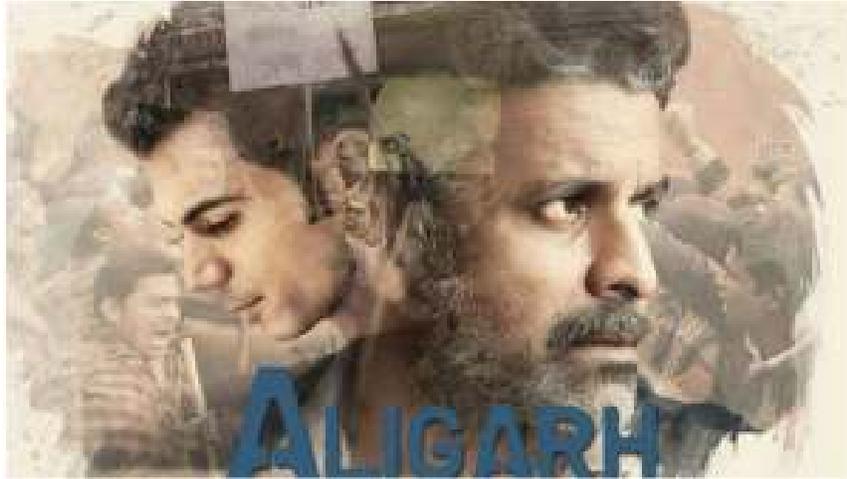


Fig 3

Aligarh is an Indian biographical drama film released worldwide on 26 February 2016. This film is directed by Hansal Mehta and written by Apurva Asrani. This film is based on the life of Ramchandra Siras, who was an Indian Linguist and author and was a professor at the Aligarh Muslim University. He got suspended from his job just because he was homosexual.

This is a true story of Ramchandra Siras (played by Manoj Bajpayee), a professor in Aligarh Muslim university. He worked in that university for 20 years and suddenly got suspended because of his different sexual orientation. His intimate video with a rickshaw puller was released in the internet which resulted in many protests resulting in his suspension from his job. After this a journalist Deepu Sebastian (Rajkumar Rao) helps him and the court gives verdict in his favour.

This film is in fact the best gay-themed film in Indian cinema. Thanks to the directors like Hansal Mehta and many others, Bollywood has come to accept homosexuality as a serious mainstream theme. Some of the well-known filmmakers in the industry were otherwise interested only in the “funny” portrayal of gay people. This film is more significant because it has boldly represented the attitude, pressure, prejudices towards gay people. Riggle et. al. (1996) stated in their paper that being homosexual is associated with prejudice. Even contact with homosexual people is looked down upon

in society. They have referred to Devine’s model of prejudice to support their statement. In discussing the model, Devine et. al. (1991) have stated that “the change from prejudice is not viewed as an all-or-none event but as process during which the low prejudice person is especially vulnerable to conflict between his or her enduring negative responses and endorsed non prejudiced beliefs” (Devine et. al., *Prejudice with and without compunction*, p. 515).



Fig:4

The film was released with a #comeout campaign. The campaign asked people to come out about their sexuality, discuss it and accept more openly about being homosexual. Coming out to the world is the most difficult task as it will have a negative impact on his/her life and those who are related to him/her. Society is divided into a masculine-feminine binary, and all those who do not fall in this binary have to face “othering”, humiliation, violence and isolation. This binary system of gender is a social construct and not biological, and is forced on people. Heteronormativity is declared as default sexual orientation and anyone falling outside this is unacceptable.

Aligarh became an important film not only for its homosexual theme but also for its stand on the LGBT rights. Everyone has the right to right to freedom, right to live their life in her/his own way and it does not change with anyone’s class, caste, status, race, ethnicity or gender. As, the whole society is bounded by heteronormativity, which is forced on the members;

homophobia prevails in peoples' mind. Earlier, in movies gay people were presented as “girlish”, “feminine” or “less manly”. Their dress up, walking style, and personality were presented in a feminine way. But Indian cinema has travelled a long distance to make a gay main plot film. Like in this film Aligarh, Prof. Siras was represented as a normal man, he was masculine and was a married person. This film also depicted the impact of criminalization by section 377 of the Indian Penal Code on the homosexuals. The court case against Siras gets delayed day by day, after many days of struggle when Deepu finally succeeds to bring justice to Siras, drunk Siras tells Deepu on the phone that he strongly believes he should move to U.S, where no one will humiliate or torture him for being gay.

This film carries social relevance but also has importance of religious institution. Since heteronormativity aims at ensuring a utopian society, scenes where the protagonist was portrayed following conventional Hindu practices such as not sharing food with a non-Hindu, or referring to his Muslim partner as ‘friend’ established the symbolic violence which is perpetrated in the name of religion. Therefore, religious moralities control not just sexual but individual expression (Bhatia 2017).

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan

This Hindi movie, directed by Hitesh Kewalya, portrays queer people in a more realistic and dignified manner, although through humour. *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* is a story of Kartik Singh (Ayushmann Khurana) who overcomes all the social obstacles to be with his lover Aman Tripathi (Jitendra Kumar). The main characters of this movie do not hide their masculine and gay identities.



Fig:5

This is a film about two gay men Aman (Jitendra Kumar) and Kartik (Ayushmann Khurana) who unwittingly come out of their homophobic families to be together for their whole life. Both try to convince Aman's family at his cousin's wedding. The next day, the Supreme Court decriminalizes homosexuality. Aman and Kartik reconcile with family and leave for Delhi.

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan makes a serious effort in throwing some light on the experiences of LGBT groups and the abuse and violence that they are subjected to, even in their families. This film is a significant step towards right direction in the light of growing social acceptance of the rights of the LGBT members. The fact that this film was allowed to be released in a homophobic society without any cuts was a sign that we as audience is going towards right direction; the otherwise conservative decision makers on the Censor Board are also changing their perceptions.

The film portrayed the alternative sexuality with empathy and the representation of homosexuality was quite open. This movie, however, holds one thing wrong – the struggle of being a queer individual in India was played down; the treatment is too safe for a gay couple living in India. The queer community in a place like India, is unquestionably marginalized. The same sex marriage may not be a big problem, but their different sexual orientation itself creates problem. The homosexual couples face difficulties in walking in the streets, in finding accommodation and are often victimized in the domestic realm. The film focused on Aman's dad discovering them kissing in train. The film does not give any illustration of the difficulties the couple faces in their living situation. Kartik's family background was never disclosed. The struggle and pain that he has taken to grow into a gay personality, who can declare his gayness and attack homophobia, has not been adequately depicted. Overall, this film is a good step for any mainstream movie to portray same sex relationship, but still there is a long way to go, in order to establish the LGBT rights and give them a "normal" life like that of the heterosexuals.

Conclusion

Cinema was and will remain one of the strongest media for influencing peoples' perceptions especially on emerging issues of an ever-changing society. Therefore, it is the duty of the all the directors and actors to make films on the LGBT subjects being well-informed about the changing course of the movements for alternative sexuality and legal reforms. A progressive

and humane treatment of the subjects can contribute positively to freeing the society from heteronormativity and homophobia. Sexual minorities are slowly finding place in Hindi films. Their representation has changed with the passage of time. The shift from negative to positive representation of the “queer” in the films has helped to change the societal attitude towards the LGBTQ community. Some of the young directors have challenged heteronormativity through their projection of gay themes. The reaction of audience of these films also holds a touch of patriarchy. People are gradually becoming sympathetic towards gay relations but still find difficulty in accepting lesbian or gay relationships wholeheartedly. After the decriminalization of section 377 of the IPC by the Supreme Court on 6 September 2018 it can be expected that the filmmakers would be able to make films on queer themes in an ambience of tolerance and more freedom. The films being popular can do a lot in bringing about the necessary discursive changes in giving the LGBT communities their rightful place in society. Many people have different sexual orientation but they are still in their closet because of the fear of discrimination heteronormative society; they will come out in the open and claim their identities when the overall ambience in the society changes. Films like *Aligarh* and *Shubh Mangal zyada saavdhan* capture the changing moments of a major social transformation.

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**Foraging the Nationalist Movement through
Women's Education: Decoding Savitribai Phule and
the Cultural-reformist Critique of Caste**

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Abstract: *Savitribai Phule is regarded as one of the towering figures of the nationalist movement for her pioneering role in women's education which set the stage for the cultural renaissance of our motherland. Her passionate struggle for women's empowerment, to build up the equality for men and women made possible for the growth of nationalist movement against the colonial rule. Savitribai dedicated her entire life to fight against the rigid patriarchal structures of the caste system with the help of her husband Jyotirao Phule through the establishment of the Satysodhak Samaj in Maharashtra that initiated the progress of women hailing from diverse corners of the society. The seed for social equality sowed against the practice of untouchability and cultural deprivation marked a 'paradigm shift' of such alternative principles with respect to tradition that brought women into the mainstream society. Sociologists interested in social movements have often conveyed about the guidelines of this "truth seeking" program as facilitating the creation a counter- ideological rubric of humanity that could be achieved only through the total annihilation of the Brahminical system. The present article intends to reflect upon Savitribai's role in the work of this culturally homogenous and pluralist organization whose novel character helped in inducing a political upheaval replacing the patriarchal hegemony of caste by a new secure tradition.*

Keywords: Annihilation, Brahminical, Caste, Empowerment, nationalist, hegemony, pluralist.

Introduction

If one has to search for the sociological underpinnings of gender justice that ultimately took the shape of a feminist movement in the early nineteenth century, he will immediately draw out its roots in remarkable contributions of Savitribai Phule. This is largely because of the pioneering role that she has played in the development and maturity of women's education that had consequently set the stage for the cultural renaissance of our motherland. One cannot ignore that her passionate struggle for women's equality, directed against the atrocities of caste, made possible for the impending growth of nationalist reform that ended the colonial rule. Savitribai dedicated her entire life to fight against the rigid patriarchal structures of the caste system through the establishment of the *Satysodhak Samaj* in Maharashtra that initiated the progress of women hailing from diverse corners of the society. Indeed, one would agree, that the canvas of Hindu social reform that later moved beyond the traditional concerns of education, legislation and social welfare only achieved self-expression through the participatory role of this grass root organization serving as the mechanism of women's empowerment (Patel 1998). Born in 1831, in a poor family in Naigaion, Savitribai embarked upon a goal of freeing the country from the rigid rituals of a religious tradition that engulfed and afflicted large sections of the society. Ironically, she received her education only after marriage from her husband Jyotirao Phule, who taught her and imbued within her the need to develop a philosophy of humanism that would emphasize on self-reliance, individual growth, care, virtue and human development. The problems associated with the institution of female education which was at that time deeply embedded in the traditional norms and social customs that ingrained notions of sex segregation made schooling for young girls an extremely difficult task. In fact, Savitribai herself was deeply ostracized by her family and community members from a very early age. To counter this seclusion Savitribai took the revolutionary strand to integrate all the shudras of the country by establishing the Satyasodhak Samaj for accomplishing the task for female education.

Legacy of the Satyasodhak Movement

The goal of the Satyasodhak movement was universal in nature that is to execute a model of gender development that would convert the ideals of gender equity into practice. Savitribai's vision in this regard was to devise a curriculum that would allow for the operation of collective action and organized movement, and she sought to achieve this with the help of her

fellow colleagues and friends all of whom belonged to the lower caste who have completed their studies. The Satyasodhak Samaj took as its agenda to make amends for the neglect of natural rights of human beings especially of people belonging to the lower castes. It sought to take pervasive action against the misery of the Shudras, Ati-Shudras or the ex-untouchables by nullifying the distinctions between pure rights and natural rights and negate role of the Brahmin priest in performing socio-religious ceremonies and thereby dispensing the political ideology of the Brahmans. In this way it fulfilled its task of establishing the untouchables as a new moral community. In this regard Savitribai's visions were similar to the Marxian conceptions of revolutionary ideology and praxis. The Brahmin priest in particular was conceived as the middleman and exploiter between man and God in terms of its religious rituals and ceremonies. Such an expression of ideological opposition has been advocated in the works of Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai's colleagues such as 'Gulamgir', 'Shetekarayanacha-Asud', Tatyapa Pandurale, 'Jyotibhed Nirnay' and many others which were significant for understanding the contradictions and opposition to the cultural system that was built up and enforced by the Brahmans for their selfish interests¹. They opposed and rejected all the Brahmin texts that were in tune with the caste system and the mythical tradition which served as the bases for social inequality. Careful distinctions were being made between the native culture and the culture of the Brahmin elite which so far dominated the society. More particularly the Satyasodhak made the following oaths and affirmations that served as their principal guidelines.

- 1) The necessity for the spread of education for people belonging to all classes and castes.
- 2) The promulgation of cottage industries and production of Indian goods.
- 3) Eradication of all sacred texts that were meant for the Brahmans which includes rejection of the basic four folded Varna division of society and believing that man's supremacy is determined by his qualities and not by his caste.
- 4) The opposition of child marriages, support of widow remarriages and inter-caste marriage and making such changes in a way which would allow them to marry at an affordable cost. Although the frequency of such type of action was very low in its earlier phase but it started a new innovative form of opposition.
- 5) The main target, which they wanted to fulfill was to eliminate is the bureaucracy of aristocrats and abolish the social status of Brahmans

6) To consider God as their father and ask an individual to live with fraternity and brotherhood between them.

The Satyashodhak Samaj was the first premier institution to have sowed the seeds of development of the masses and propound the spread of rational thinking. It developed into a movement in the later years that reached to every section of the society- and was the first of its kind to reach the remote villages. The principal feminist agenda in this regard was the fight for equal rights. It repeatedly stressed that equality in the society was meaningless without equality of man and woman in the family. It propagated universal humanism based on values of freedom, and universal brotherhood. The principle means by which the Satyashodhak Samaj sought to fulfill this task was through the introduction of new schools. In 1851 girl schools were introduced in Pune as recourse to introduce girl's education. Apart from the British missionary schools, no other indigenous schools existed at that time. In the year, 1853 this school was handed over to the management of a committee of educated natives. Savitribai hence became the first female teacher of India. Few years later under her auspices, two more schools were opened in different parts of the town. A year after the introduction of the girls school, Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule also established indigenous mixed schools meant especially for the lower castes especially to the Mahars and Mangs and consequently more schools for these castes were subsequently added. This movement was widely accepted by the British Officials. Sir Erskine Perry, the President of the Educational Board, and Mr. Lumsdain, the then Secretary to Government took the initiative of visiting the schools and gifted Jyotibai a pair of shawls. The couple continued to work in those schools for nearly ten years. Later these girls' schools were handed over to the Educational Department under the Management of Mrs. Mitche. Thus both Jyotirao and Savitribai established a schooling system that was trade-oriented in nature-provided training to young minds so that they become much more self-reliant and capable of independent thought. Additionally, to resolve the problem of drop outs in school education (which was even graver at those times) they provided reasonable and practical solutions in way of providing salary to the students and made a syllabus which was directed to the interest of girls and boys who came from poorer sections of the society. The stage was hence set to build the revolutionary platform for liberating women's rights.

The Introduction of Health Care in School Education

A major contribution of the Satyasidhak Samaj was the introduction of Health care in school education. Health education was introduced in schools because it was part of the major concern to promote additional dimensions of equality other than education. More importantly, Savitribai contended that children's health should be regarded as the most important element of every social body as it contributes to the overall development of a particular society. Health, nutrition and education are the absolute necessities for a child to grow and therefore such inputs are required to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. While in a general sociological sense the relationship between health and education is broadly conceived as a functional role that social institutions play in creating awareness about individual wellbeing, the schools have to make sure that they are adequately represented in every section of the society, especially when it comes to child care. In a short interview of Jyotibai Phule (taken by Christian missionary periodical Dnyanodaya), he conveyed:

It did occur to me that the improvement that comes about in a child due to the mother is very important and good. So those who are concerned with the happiness and welfare of this country should definitely pay attention to the condition of women and make every effort to impart knowledge to them if they want the country to progress. With this thought, I started the school for girls first. But my caste brethren did not like that I was educating girls and my own father threw us out of the house. Nobody was ready to give space for the school nor did we have money to build it. People were not willing to send their children to school but Lahuji Ragh Raut Mang and Ranba Mahar convinced their caste brethren about the benefits of getting educated. (Phule 1853: 56)

In the year 1897 Savitribai and her adopted son, Yashwant, opened a clinic for the treatment of people affected by plague when it was affecting large sections of the Nalasopara region located at outskirts of Pune city, which was an area free of infection. In fact there is a story that Savitribai died a heroic death trying to save the son of Pandurang Babaji Gaekwad. When she learned that Gaekwad's son had contracted the Plague in the Mahar settlement outside of Mundhwa, Savitribai rushed to his side and carried him on her back to the hospital. However she was herself, caught with Plague in the process and met her death at 9:00pm on the 10th of March, 1897. Many people also regard Savitribai as an anti-infanticide activist because she opened a women's shelter called the 'Home for the Prevention

of Infanticide', where Brahmin widows could safely deliver their children and leave them there to be adopted if they so desired. Savitribai cared for the children in the orphanage as if she were their mother. She had no child; but with her kind and generous disposition she tenderly and lovingly cherished the infants. It was her practice to invite, from time to time, all neighboring children to dinner. She was happiest and smiled her sweetest when she was left among children. So dearly she loved children. She would invite her female neighbours to help her to dress and feed the children. For several years she had worked in the girl's school until 1873 a woman's appointment to the post of teacher was noted in leading papers like the Native Opinion as a matter of respect and pride. Thus, her efforts became the pinnacle of social reform that later transformed into a movement for social reconstruction.

Liberalizing Dalit Education: The Reformist Critique

In the Indian social context the term, 'dalit' refers to the untouchable part of the Hindu social ladder. According to the Chaturvarna system there are four varnas which constitute the Hindu social ladder-The Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishyas and Shudras. But there exists other strata in the Hindu Varna system under the Shudras who are called 'Atishudra', they are untouchables. They are known as 'untouchables', fifth varna", "mlechcha", "Chandal". In our present administration 'Tapashili Jati' and 'Tapashili Upajati' are called the 'dalits'. They generally belong to the backward castes and those who lived in below poverty line in our society. Mahatma Gandhi named these 'dalits' as 'Harijans' as the concept of untouchable did not exist in any religion in the past. The Varnashrama dharma of the Hindus was more of an economic division than a class or caste based one. Gandhi's idea of using the word "Harijan", many argue, was to avoid other words like 'untouchables' or 'bhangis' which were then used to refer to the *dalits*, because they were strongly stigmatised. He used the word "harijan" to bring the untouchables closer to God and thereby to those who believed in God, which was the rest of the Hindu society. Gandhi is also known to have said that he felt using the term 'depressed class' reminded people of slavery and was offensive to them, so he preferred the more benign term 'Harijans'. The Sadhyasodhak Society under Savitribai and her husband Jyotirao Phule's influence attempted to formulate a new cultural identity for the *dalits* as an alternative strategy of negating their earlier identity that had been imposed by the Brahmanical tradition. As a strategic step to heighten the social aspirations of the dalits a certain kind of

glorification of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses were being made whom they conceived of as the protectors of Shudra interest. As an opposition to the Brahmanical elite tradition a number of myths and symbols were provided such as God Khandoba, King Bali, Chatrapati Shivaji, were considered as protectors of Shudra interest. In this way Savitribai through wisdom of motherhood and social protection successfully sought to integrate the *dalits* by providing a common identity based on common practices, beliefs and symbols. This 'collective effervescence' in terms of altering the course of social life had another surface objective in the form of cultivating relations with the British Government in terms of a successful employment generation to the Government offices. This twofold strategy had the consequence of speeding up the social liberation of the Shudras. The non-Brahmin movement reawakened the dehumanized castes of 19th Maharashtra - Mangs, Mahars, Chambhars, Kumbhar, Kolis, Koshtis, Kunbis, Malis, Ramoshis and several other castes. It worked for uniting and mobilizing the backward Shudras and the untouchables, the workers and the small and marginal farmers.

The progress of women's education was achieved at a remarkable pace in the later years. The School Inspection Committee in Poona awarded Savitribai with the Ideal Teacher Award in 1852. It apparently became more significant when the *Poona Observer* revealed the number of girl students in Savitribai's school to be ten times more than the other government schools in Poona. However, Savitribai was faced with severe opposition from all the sections of the society. It has been said that she was even attacked with stones and mud by people in the streets. But Savitribai took up the role of an erudite activist and faced everything courageously. On 14th January 1852, she took an active part in a Til-Gul Program that was arranged by the Mahila Seva Mandal and thereafter received the best teacher's award for her contributions. Savitribai and Jyotibai started a hostel in their residence where students from far off places could stay for the purpose of education. One of the students of the hostel Laxman Karadi Jaaya had written. "I have not seen another woman as kind and loving as Savitribai. She gave us more love than even a mother could".

Spiritualizing Womanhood through Self Reflection

The introduction of widow remarriage was the next crucial step to fight against caste oppression. This had many important consequences. For one it bought the ideals of women's emancipation and liberation into public life. The ideals of equality and oneness were instigated as a moral dictum, and

in order to empower women Savitribai vehemently advocated widow-remarriage and even got a home built for housing upper caste widows in 1854. Savitribai's motherly voice touched the heart of the masses as she repeatedly requested people all the time to send their children in schools he opened for downtrodden and women.² The home facilitated widow remarriage and heavily opposed child marriage. The plight of the widows in India at that time was deplorable. Many of them were young and could only dream of leading a life of the orthodox Hindu widow. Some of them even resorted to abortion and left their illegitimate child on the streets to decide their own fate. Thus, realizing the dangers of a widow giving birth to a child conceived in unfortunate circumstances after her husband's death, Savitribai and her husband opened a home for newborn infants in 1863 to prevent infanticides and suicides". The Satyasodhak Samaj introduced a system of conducting marriage ceremonies without the presence of a Brahmin priest. Such a system of performing marriages quickly spread to the villages. For example it has been said that a barber's wedding was performed in Taligaon village by socially boycotting the Brahmins of the villages and it eventually created a rift between the Barber and the Brahmin community.

Social Transformation through Community Development

Both Savitribai and Jyotibai criticized the policy of the British Government regarding education of the rural masses. The hegemony of Brahmins systematically affected the moral and intellectual foundation of education that prohibited upward mobility of the lower castes. The process of recruitment of teachers in school administration was a derogatory outcome of this practice. The majority of the schools that existed at that time were meant for upper caste Brahmins who reaped the benefits of better education and excluded the lower castes from the opportunities of better employment. In order to free the Shudras from the traditional bondages of caste oppression Savitribai and Jyotibai suggested several policy implementations which would trigger a change in which certain professions were tagged into the practice of the varna. Therefore, the only means to resolve such a problem is to allow the Shudras to take control over educational and development initiatives through a bottom-up approach rather than a trickle down approach. Such a resolution should be carried to the rural sector where the majority of the laboring population is engaged in physical labor of low status. The social mechanism of democracy demands that it should always acknowledge the interests of the lower castes and they should therefore be readily allowed

to take educational initiatives at the highest level. The institutional hegemony of the traditional Brahminical system of production and representation of knowledge of the untouchable castes should be removed. In traditional Rural India, Shudras, Ati-Shudras, peasants and artisans suffered tremendous exploitation in the hands of the Bhatji (priest) and Shetjis (money lenders) and they should be successfully mobilized through a system of rural education to get rid of this oppression.

Conclusion

Thus, as a pioneer of anti-caste movement, Savitribai was without doubt, the leading social reformer who founded and started the dalit feminist movement in India. Her passionate endeavor to uplift the women of the society and her far sighted and clear vision of saving people from the clutches of Brahminical exploitation became an inspiration of mass movements that followed and stimulated social reform. Her relentless efforts to protect the rights of the backward castes not only helped to delineate the fundamental principles of caste-gender system in contemporary India but also helped the nationalist movement to achieve cartographic and political space for the fight against freedom. Not, surprisingly the first report of the Satyashodhak Samaj proudly notes Savitribai to be “the inspiration behind this revolutionary initiative of a constructive revolt to reject centuries old religious traditions” (Sundararaman 2008). The passionate companionship and support that she gave to her husband throughout her life is a prime commitment to the ideal of equality that transcends time and place. Social change through modernity becomes possible only within the terms of such revolutionary movements within an operative tradition whose individual elements are able to expand their implications to the extent that they are capable of adapting to some new externally defined challenges. This becomes more eminently fruitful in a pluralist society like ours/India whose dynamism of social reform is reflected by its storehouse of cultural resources that has helped to achieve a new consensus which emerged through refurbishing its old established principles. The work of Savitribai is a reflection of such a legacy whose path lies not in the metaphysical reflections of a human being, but practical experiences of everyday life that each tradition unfolds.

Notes

¹Jyotiashree Phule is regarded as the founder of the Satyasodhak Samaj in Maharashtra and is credited with the crucial role in offering social and political leadership to the mass movement.

²Savitribai is also known to be a prolific author and a poet and much of her published works including *Kavya Phule*, (1854), *Bhavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar* (1892) was written during this time of the Satyasodhak movement to encourage those who were oppressed and wanted to free themselves by obtaining education.

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COVID-19 and Women Warriors in Health Sector in West Bengal

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 outbreak is impacting societies around the world in an unprecedented manner. With an intention to break the chain of coronavirus spread, India went for complete nationwide lockdown from 24 March 2020. While the comparatively rich and privileged classes could sustain their normal life during the longest period of lock down, it was primarily the poor and the marginalized sections that had to bear the cost. In this pandemic the weaknesses of our health system have been thoroughly exposed but the frontline health workers put up a brave face while attending the COVID-infected patients taking life risk. In this paper, I have tried to capture how our front-line women warriors of the health sector are fighting the disease and the consequences they have to face while carrying out their duties. As the pandemic has given rise to certain fear and anxiety in the public mind, the front-line women health workers have to face additional vulnerability for no fault of their own. Ironically, as compared to the male health workers, the female workers suffer more. For writing this paper, I have relied on secondary data published in newspapers and journals and supplemented those with my own ethnographic findings.*

Keywords: COVID-19, Health Sector, Women Health Workers.

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak is impacting societies around the world in an unprecedented manner. With an intention to break the chain of novel coronavirus spread in India, the Prime Minister of the country announced 'Janata Curfew' on 22 March 2020, followed by a complete nationwide lockdown from 24 March 2020. Even though the nation is in the unlock phase, the long lockdown for 68 days has disproportionately affected various

sections/classes of the society. It is worth noting here that India's nationwide lockdown trajectory is the longest in the whole world. While the comparatively rich and privileged classes could afford to sustain their normal life during the lock down, it was primarily the poor and the marginalized sections that had to bear the cost of survival. Diseases and disasters may not differentiate much while infecting human bodies, but the uneven social structures do render nonuniformity of pandemic impacts upon people. The current pandemic of COVID-19, particularly in India, allows us to revisit certain grim realities where the poor and marginalised sections had to sacrifice their rights and entitlements amidst a crisis (Tripathi and Das 2020). It is true that not all epidemics affected every one in every place; similarly, Covid 19 will also not affect all Indians equally.

In this paper, I would like to concentrate on the way our front-line women warriors of health sector are fighting the disease and the consequences they have to face while carrying out their responsibilities. As the pandemic has given rise to certain fear and anxiety in public mind, the front-line women health workers have to face additional vulnerability for no fault of their own. Ironically, as compared to the male health workers, their woman counterpart has to suffer more. It is widely known that women constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in human society. The gender bias that prevails in our social structure also gets reflected during pandemic situation. It has been witnessed by scholars that during any abnormal situation like epidemic or pandemic, women have to suffer more and become easy target of victimization. As a corollary, increasing instances of domestic violence, child marriage and trafficking are reported in media during the current pandemic. This paper tries to concentrate on the impact of the current pandemic on a particular segment of Indian women and the way they are fighting the battle. For writing this paper, I have relied on secondary data published in newspapers and journals and supplemented those with my own ethnographic findings. I have used the technique of 'digital ethnography' to conduct in-depth interview of 5 women health workers from the district of Murshidabad in West Bengal.

Health Sector

Let me begin the discussion with a brief review of the current status of our health sector where women play a very pivotal role. India ranks 184 out of 191 countries in terms of percentage wise expenditure of GDP on healthcare, as per World Health Organization. At \$ 85 (approximately INR 6044), the average healthcare spending per person in India is amongst the lowest

when compared to other countries. Even countries like Sri Lanka, China and Thailand invest three to four times more per capita on healthcare. At present, the Indian government is spending only 1.15 percent of the Gross Domestic Product on the healthcare sector¹ (Financial Express, 2020).

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, 83.4 percent of nurses working in India are women (Anand, 2016). Regardless of where one looks, it is women who bear most of the responsibility for managing the healthcare services. As majority of the health workers positioned in front lines to treat Corona patients are women, they have a very high chance of contamination of COVID-19. Incidentally, women health care workers also do not have the privilege of isolating them at home. This is mainly because they have to bear the double burden of managing the families along with their jobs. Absence of separate rooms also adds to their fear of infecting other family members. Given such a condition, front line health workers give much importance to PPE (personal protection equipment) and other kinds of protection equipment.

But media reports clearly vindicate that at least during the initial period of the pandemic, insufficient number of these safety equipment made their job highly vulnerable. It has also been argued that there is a gender bias in the design of personal protection equipment which may be less effective for them, and hamper their work (Ghani 2017). Given that the equipment is designed keeping in mind male bodies, women often find those unfit for them. Additionally, there is a high burden of continuous duties due to the large-scale catastrophe of COVID-19. It is therefore commonly seen that these front-line female health workers cannot go home, take rest leading to physical stress and mental agony. Ironically, as of July 13th, 104 doctors and 10 nurses have died due to COVID-19 related complications across the country. Most of the doctors who died were below 60 years of age and the average age of the expired nurses were 49.6 years. According to Perappadan (2020), comorbidity, prolonged working hours, working without breaks, work-related stress, unexpected sudden deterioration, working without PPE, inadequate testing facilities, shortage of hospital bed particularly ICU beds were the reasons for the deaths of so many health care workers. A clear reflection of such a claim is seen when Ambika P K, a nurse of Karla hospital, died due to COVID-19 contamination². After this death, a senior nurse of the hospital raised a vital issue of nurses being asked to reuse PPE, while the doctors were given fresh PPE. The nurses raising objections were told that since this is not a designated COVID-19 hospital, they are at little risk and can reuse PPE (Lakhani 2020).

One visible impact of such a poor health infrastructure was revealed when many migrant nurses throughout the country started leaving their job to treat COVID patients and returned to their home state. As per a report published in *Anandabazar Patrika* (2020) dated 16 May 2020, 185 nurses working in various private hospitals in Kolkata have left their jobs and returned to their home state of Manipur and Tripura. Ironically, there are many instances of nurses treating Corona patients being barred from entering their own or rented homes, mainly by landlords or neighbours³. Such incidents not only explain the prevalence of public fear and anxiety about the virus, it also adds to the agony of the 'corona warriors'. So, it is high time to rethink the condition of women health workers who need to be provided all round protection for curing the patients during critical times.

Apart from the frontline health workers, two other types of activists are also involved in managing the corona pandemic. Among them, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers are doing a commendable job in rural Indian in particular. Since early March, various state governments have started engaging ASHA⁴ workers, who are typically an interface between the community and public health system, to aid the novel corona fight. They are now the foot soldiers who have put themselves out there, marching from house to house, to spread the message to the corners of India (Ramesh, 2020). And after the unplanned nationwide lockdown forcing migrant labours in the cities to pack their bags and return homes, the workload of ASHA workers has increased in geometric ratio. Being on the frontline also means that the ASHA women are also at a high risk of getting infected⁵. Yet, they were not provided safety equipment and were asked to 'purchase their own' hand sanitizer and mask (Ramesh 2020). Incidentally, these workers are poorly paid and they also do not receive their salary on time (Raman 2020). On the other hand, incident of harassment and physical abuse of ASHA workers at different times have narrowed the scope of their work. One thing that is clear from the way the news of harassment of ASHA workers in different part of India is coming up through various news outlets at present is that it is a serious threat to the safety of health workers⁶.

Along with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers⁷ are playing a pivotal role during the present crisis. When the Indian state involved these workers in the fight against COVID-19, they set aside their own fears and concerns to help those who are the most vulnerable. They carry out these high-risk new responsibilities by maintaining links with the government and the community after completing their previous responsibilities such as distributing nutrition to women and children. Surprisingly, a recent report revealed that

these front-line workers have not been advised or properly trained in several northern states to carry out their new responsibilities and are being forced to work in a COVID-struck world without masks, sanitizer and other necessary equipment (Agarwal 2020). Like the ASHA workers, they are poorly paid and the government did not care for the safety of these workers while involving them in the fight against Corona.

Here in this context, I would like to present the experience of some stakeholders. I have collected their opinion through telephonic interview. All names mentioned here are changed to maintain their privacy.

Tulika Mondal

Tulika, a 48 years old ASHA worker, have been working for the last eight years. Being a separated woman for more than twenty years, she lives with her mother along with her brother and his parental family. Her main responsibility for combating coronavirus was to make door to door visit and make people aware about maintaining physical distance, regularity in washing hand and using masks. All ASHA workers are asked to visit a house where someone has come from outside, especially from another state like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Kerala etc. Their main job was to find out the physical condition of people coming from other states and also to find out if they have COVID 19 symptoms like fever, cold, cough, headache, vomiting. They were asked to report any case of infection to the administration. Unfortunately, Tulika or any other ASHA worker received no training to deal with a Covid 19 patients. Although Tulika talked to such patients from a distance, she did not know what to do if she gets infected in the process. She did receive four simple cloth masks, one bottle of hand sanitizer and one set of gloves to carry out her work; but the quality of these products was not good. On the other hand, her neighbours have started keeping a safe distance from her as she was often coming in close contact with the Covid patients. She therefore said, 'The workload has increased so much that I have to walk about 3-4 KMs every day. Sometimes, when I come back home after a field visit, I feel that I don't have any energy in my body left and just want to sleep'. Yet, she had to do all household chores including cooking as she cannot afford any maid. Tulika gets only Rs. 3500 per month as remuneration, which is very less in comparison to her workload. Tulika lamented that 'ASHA workers do a lot of serious work for people, yet their contributions are not recognised in the society'.

Sutopa Saha

Sutopa is an Anganwadi worker. Now she is 35 years old and has been working as an Anganwadi worker for the last ten years. She is a widow and lives with her only son. Sutopa enrolled her son in the Ramakrishna Mission School five years ago and a large part of her earning is spent on her son's education. She receives Rs 7381 per month as honorarium which is the only source of income for her family. Her low income impacts the food habit of the family. Although pulses and eggs are on the diet on most days, vegetables, fruits, fish, milk and meat are rare in their regular meals. 'Eggs are cheaper than fish or vegetables', she said. According to her, 'sometimes due to special needs of my son or to meet expenses on occasions of my illness, the situation becomes such that we eat just to survive. This is because I have to rely on my limited income'. Her main job as an Anganwadi worker is to make the community aware of the epidemic; her task was to inform everyone that in this epidemic they should use mask, keep a safe distance from others, and so on. Sutopa and her fellow colleagues were instructed to inspect the homes of five to seven migrant workers every day without minimum safety equipment. But to carry out such campaign in the public, she received only two simple cloth masks. Sutopa therefore had to buy gloves, head covers, masks from her own source and used them for her own protection. Even after working with the people with potential corona virus for a long time, they were never tested for the virus. She also said, 'we are given training for only fifteen minutes every month at Burdwan Rural Hospital'. Although Sutopa uses masks while speaking to migrant workers and their families, she does not know how to disinfect safety equipment. The distance from her home to work place is more than three kilometres. Hence, she has to walk about seven kilometres every day for work. After doing almost all the old regular chores and manage all the household activity, she had to take new responsibilities for fighting Corona. She therefore sometimes feels very weak physically. She has lost about four kgs of weight in the last few months. She said: 'I need a bicycle to travel; but I cannot afford it'. On the contrary, the neighbours have started avoiding her; they do not talk to her or visit her house. They rather treat her like a Covid patient. Sutopa fears social isolation and is worried about her child.

Sulekha Saha

Sulekha, a 45 years old ASHA worker, has been working for the last seven and a half years. She lives with her husband and a child. Her husband is ill

most of the time and she is the only earner in the family. Since she has to manage with a meagre Rs 3,500 a month, she has to do all expenses from her husband's treatment and child's education to family management. She also relies on eggs as fish and vegetables are very costly these days. Also, foods items like fruits and milk are absent from their daily consumption list. The most important thing in the fight against Covid is to enhance immunity of the body, which largely depends on a high-protein diet. ASHA workers like Sulekha meet corona patients or potential corona patients every day. Their daily food list is marked by the absence of high protein foods and this makes them susceptible to infection. Sulekha said: 'We work under the state government's Swasthya Sathi scheme, but do not get any special benefit through this card'. The Swasthya Sathi scheme includes many private hospitals in West Bengal, but many of these hospitals do not provide services under this scheme citing reasons for not getting money from the government at the right time. Like other ASHA workers, Sulekha visits various migrant workers every day to collect information on their health and to explain important issues such as home quarantine and the use of masks. They have no special training for corona, which increases the risk of infection. Now the new responsibility of ASHA workers is to go to every house in their area and collect information about the physical illness of every person. They were given only four cloth masks and a bottle of sanitizer to work on, which Sulekha said was not enough for her protection. She has to walk about two kilometres every day in connection with her work and sometimes she feels very unwell because she has to do all the household work as well. Her financial situation is extremely precarious because she is the only earner in the family. 'I received Rs 7,000 in September for the months of July and August and I had to borrow money to run my family. Had I received my salary every month, I would not have to borrow from others'.

Tanushree Das

Tanushree is a 43-year-old Anganwadi worker. She lives with her two children and husband. She is the secondary earner of the family because her husband runs a stationery shop. Her house has appliances like TV, refrigerator, inverter, and so on, indicating that her husband earns enough for a middleclass life. She made it clear that since the outbreak of the coronavirus, the work of Anganwadi workers has multiplied, but their salary remained unchanged. She receives a total of Rs. 7381 per month as honorarium from the government. But they do not get salary on time and it

often gets delayed by months. They have to buy potatoes and eggs for the children of their own centre from the market with their own money and receive the reimbursement after 2-3 months. Therefore, it becomes very difficult for them to run the centre. During the pandemic, the prices of all products have gone up and 'we have to buy food items from the market at a higher price and not at the price fixed by the government to feed our children, but we are not getting the extra money we spend to run the Anganwadi centre'. Tanushree and her family members eat vegetarian food two days a week for religious reasons; but on the other days they eat fish, eggs or meat twice a week, and take bread, fruit and milk as food supplements every day. Her Anganwadi centre is located in a remote area of Mushidabad district, where most people do not wear masks. They say if you wear a mask, you will get more infected by corona'. Tanushree finds it difficult put her arguments through. One reason for this is that they are not given proper training. She said, 'Many girls have to stay together during training in the hospital. As it was not possible to maintain physical distance, only a few were provided training'. She has to walk about 5 kms every day for work and has to do cooking for her family. She feels pain in the lower part of her body every day due to work pressure. The Swasthya Sathi card issued by the government also does not provide any scope for quality treatment. She said, 'People treated with Swasthya Sathi insurance in private hospitals are kept separate from the general patients. So, I did not treat myself using this card'. Finally, Tanushree lamented, 'Despite all the hardships, the government has not taken any measures to ensure safety'.

Case of Rita Nandi

Rita, a 48-year-old woman, has been working as an ASHA worker for the last 12 years. In the last week of August (2020), she was told to visit every house in her area and collect information about the various diseases from each family member, and Rita was collecting that information. Additionally, she also had to go to the homes of migrant workers every day and collect information about their physical condition. As a result, the work of the ASHA workers has multiplied since March 2020. But, like all other ASHA workers, she is not paid extra for the additional work. Their main job is to immediately report to the ANM if a corona patient is ill or if a person has corona symptoms. According to Rita, the training they have received is not enough. She learnt almost nothing in the 15-20-minute-long training, which was organised for them. 'I have learned a lot more watching TV programmes than from our training', she said. ASHA workers have no

idea how to wear masks, how to use masks, how to purify masks and have not been taught during the training. So, ASHA workers are not trained to do the kind of works they were doing. With her meagre income, she cannot consume a diet full of protein and vitamins. Rita currently has to travel about three kilometres every day for work. She said, 'There is no value of work experience or seniority for the ASHA workers as the salary of every worker is equal'.

Vulnerability and Suffering of Women Health Workers

Based on the experiences of five women health workers, let me now analyse the conditions of women health workers sociologically. My analysis would be restricted to three major areas, namely, (1) economic field, (2) domestic environment, and (3) personal health.

1. Economic field

It is not possible to give a clear picture of the total number of temporary and contractual health workers who have been working in the health sector in India. Yet, one thing is clear that these workers are very badly paid. The honorarium of Asha workers is Rs. 3500 per month and the salary of second ANM workers is Rs. 10,000 per month, which is much less than the requirement. Apart from health workers, hospitals also employ some other grossly inadequate for a decent life. For instance, the Barwan Rural Hospital, which is located in the district of Murshidabad, employs two temporary women workers in the canteen and pays them Rs. 50 per day for 8 hours of work. Apart from them, two cleaning workers are engaged on daily basis for 15-20 days of a month in exchange of 150 rupees daily. Incidentally, none of the temporary workers, like many other unorganised sector workers, enjoy statutory benefits like provident fund, gratuity, leave salary or pension. It is not known how such poorly paid workers would build up their personal immunity power to protect themselves from COVID-19 virus. This is because they are neither able to consume immunity boosting food items nor are able to spend money towards medical treatment.

2. Domestic Environment

Due to pandemic and lockdown, women have to bear the lopsided burden of unpaid care and unequal share in household responsibilities (Writer 2020). On the other hand, it has been found that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence increases during crisis and disasters (Linde & Laya 2020). Urvashi Gandhi⁸ said: "The load of work [during the lockdown] has

increased in houses because everybody is at home. With housekeeping staff being unavailable, the expectation is for women to bear the load, and chances of violence increase if she fails to do so (EPW Engage 2020). In my ethnography, I have found the same where women health workers feel much stressed handling both the professional work burden and domestic work simultaneously.

3. Personal Health

There is little research on the personal health conditions of women warriors of health sector in India. Yet, we may presume that the story of women health workers is not substantially different from that of general women who go for treatment at the last moment. Incidentally, as against the global trend, women are dying more in India⁹ and this has to do with their quality of food intake, health conditions and treatment received. I have noted how women health workers had to work without proper personal protection equipment and safety. Some of them received a few simple cloth masks and a bottle of hand sanitizer. And as a result, we have seen nurses protesting across the country for protective equipment, from Patiala¹⁰ (Prakash 2020) to Kolkata¹¹ (Loiwal 2020). The case studies I have done also reflect a simmering discontent among the health workers about the work conditions they are offered, yet they cannot put up an organized fight to upgrade their living condition.

Conclusion

The findings of this paper make it clear that Indian society is highly unequal, particularly with respect to female unorganised workers. The current COVID-19 pandemic has made such inequality more visible. It is true that India has neglected its health sector while passing the burden of providing health care to poorly paid nurses, ASHA and Anganwadi workers. With grossly inadequate medical infrastructure and unpreparedness, the Indian state exposed the frontline health workers, without proper training or safety equipments, making them vulnerable to catch the life-threatening infection. Additionally, these warriors were termed as 'corona carriers' by the people living close to them in their own neighbourhoods. The threat of infection from Covid 19 to the worker, her family and the community was a biggest obstacle to win over this war. Such mental agony has put them into awkward conditions as they rely heavily on the family and relatives to maintain their family while being involved in a tenuous work for more than 8 hours a day. Social ostracization, death worries, wellbeing of the family members, physical

and mental stress were the common problems these front-line workers had to face.

In concluding the paper, I would point out the specific issues that face the low-paid frontline rural health workers as follows:

- Protection of ASHA workers need to be ensured as ASHA workers are being harassed or are losing interest in collecting corona related information thinking that they may be harassed in many cases resulting in obstruction in infection control.
- Asha and Anganwadi workers are not getting the necessary training to deal with Corona. On the other hand, in many cases, physical distance rules are not being followed during the training of workers, resulting in a high risk of infection among health workers¹².
- Safety equipment is very important for health workers in dealing with corona, but in many cases the lack of safety equipment for nurses, ASHA and Anganwadi workers is evident in this study. As a result, low paid health workers like ASHA workers are being forced to buy masks, gloves and protective equipment at their own expense to protect themselves which is a huge obstacle depending on their economic condition.
- Unorganized health workers especially Asha workers work with very low wages so it is not possible for them to buy high nutritious food items from the market, but it is very important to increase immunity against viruses like corona, so all these health workers need to be provided proper nutritious food by government initiatives.
- In West Bengal, ASHA and Anganwadi workers are covered under the 'Swasthya Sathi' project; but in many cases they are deprived of quality services. This calls for action on the part of the government.
- There is an urgent need to the government to fix the prices according with the present market value of the products that the Anganwadi workers buy from the market in order to provide food to the children, otherwise there will be obstacles in providing proper nutrition to the children.
- In many cases, the salaries of unorganized health workers, the monthly honorarium of Anganwadi and especially Asha workers are inapt for their livelihood. So it is necessary to increase the

money to meet the minimum demand for their livelihood and recently, the Government of West Bengal has increased their salary by Rs. 1000.

- There is a need to ensure the safety of health workers by raising social awareness and taking initiatives at the government level otherwise health services will be disrupted.

While the lack of infrastructure in the field of health is very clearly observed in our country, the most urgent need at the time of emergency is to develop the infrastructure as much as possible through proper planning and provide proper services to a large number of people.

Notes

1. The Prime Minister of India has promised to double its public health spending to 2.5% of the GDP by 2025 (Financial Express, 2020). Only time will prove whether the Indian state is really interested in reforming the health sector.
2. She died at the age of 46 years at Delhi's Safdarjung hospital, where she was admitted on May 21 (Lakhani 2020).
3. A nurse working in a government hospital was asked by her neighbours in Jadavpur to leave the house (Mandal 2020). Anandabazar Patrika (2020) in a report on 25 August also stated how neighbors threatened to evict a nurse working at Alipore Army Hospital along with her family. The nurse is a resident of Raybahadur Road, Behala. The woman is currently free from corona. But neighbors claim that the woman is responsible for spreading the corona virus in the area.
4. According to a report, 9 lakh ASHA workers work in India (Ramesh 2020).
5. It is estimated that 20 ASHA workers nationwide have succumbed to COVID-19. In Badanakatte village in Ballari district, Karnataka, an ASHA worker died on May 13 while on duty. Her relatives kept the body in the hospital for an entire day, seeking insurance for the COVID-19 warrior. The doctors argued that she had died of a cardiac arrest, had tested negative, and was therefore not eligible (Raman 2020).
6. Savitri Swain, an ASHA worker in Orissa, was physically abused for telling 80 fishermen from Andhra Pradesh to go to the local quarantine

centre and later the local police went and rescued the ASHA worker (The New Indian Express, 2020). And in Haryana, a man went to the house of local ASHA worker Usha and attacked her with an iron rod and hit her daughter Suman's on the head with an iron rod. Suman is now in hospital in critical condition. The main reason for the attack was that two days ago, following a government order, Usha stuck a 14 days home quarantine notice outside the accused's house to become a suspected patient (Prasad, Pallavi, 2020). And in west Bengal, as per a report published in Anandabazar Patrika (2020) dated 18 September, Sanatan Vallabh, a local primary teacher, attacked Minti Mukhapadhyay, an Asha activist from Kaliganj. According to Minti, being in the containment zone, Sanatan's name was given in the list for Corona test and he attacked Minti for that reason. Minti has been given first aid and the local police have also arrested Sanatan.

7. As per official data, 12.8 lakh Anganwadi workers and 11.6 lakh Anganwadi helpers work in India (*The Economic Times* 2019).
8. She is the director of a global women's rights organisation called *Breakthrough India* (EPW Engage 2020).
9. According to a study conducted by the Institute of Economic Growth, Institute of Health Management Research and Harvard University, while 3.3% of all women contracting the disease have died, the figure for men stood at 2.9%. The sharpest difference was visible in the 40-49 age group where 3.2% of infected women, as compared to 2.1% of men, succumbed to the disease (Matta 2020).
10. Nurses and paramedical staff at the government Rajindra hospital in Patiala on 31st March protested against the authorities for allegedly failing to provide safety gear meant for treating coronavirus patients. The nurses said that the PPE kit was faulty and the PPE kit is being provided only to the nurses of the isolation ward, while the doctors and staff nurses who have to examine the suspected patient- before they are sent to the isolation wards – are without PPE. They also said the PPE kits, provided by the hospital, do not cover the entire body which exposes us to the virus (Prakash 2020).
11. The medical staff in various hospitals in West Bengal have taken to the streets to protest, alleging that they have been supplied low-quality PPE against coronavirus. At Howrah General Hospital, nurses and doctors protested in front of the hospital superintendent's office,

demanding PPE and other medical facilities like sanitizers for the treatment of the corona virus affected patient (Loiwal 2020).

12. As per a report published in Ganashakti (2020) dated on 21 September, 87,000 health workers in India have been infected with corona and more than 550 have died. It is clear from government data that 74% of the affected health workers in the country live in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Gujarat. And 86% of health worker deaths are from these states.

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The Social Construction of Motherhood through the Iconography of *Devi Shasthi*: The Goddess of Fertility

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Abstract: *In Bengal, Shasthi-Broto (worship of Goddess Shasthi) is popularly practised by married women for long life and well-being of children. The Broto rites involve the ritual narrative (Broto-Katha) associated with the Broto, which defines motherhood by a set of normative social roles that are assigned to a woman. Motherhood is an idealized status given to a woman from time immemorial. A woman becomes a mother not only by the biological act of delivering a child but also by conforming to the expected role assigned by the society. Mothering may be viewed medically as giving birth to a new born baby nurtured in the womb but sociologically it refers to an expression of a culture which embodies a value system that society assigns to a woman. Thus, the concept of motherhood is a social construction. In this paper, I will explore this social construction of motherhood by analyzing the iconography and narratives of Devi Shasthi the goddess of fertility among the Hindus.*

Keywords: Motherhood, Iconography, worship of *Shasthi* in Bengal, Social construction of motherhood, narratives on *Shasthi*, Iconography of *Shasthi*.

Introduction

‘Motherhood’ as an idealized status associated with woman has been long established. A woman becomes a mother both biologically and socially. Women by conforming to the expected role assigned to a ‘mother’ gains social position in family and society. It is society that defines the concept of motherhood by a set of normative social roles framed by the members of society and reinforced by continual confirmation. The concept of motherhood is a social product and therefore is a social construction. It is based on the idea that in our everyday life through our consciousness,

thoughts, beliefs, ideas, knowledge and cognition we construct our social reality and this construction is a dynamic process.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) argued that man's self-production is always a social enterprise. According to them the 'universe of meaning' is socially derived. This universe of meaning is not only based on high level of philosophical ideas about the meaning of life, but also everyday knowledge which is 'taken for granted'. It includes constant legitimating, repeated reinforcement and justification. This universe of meaning is real, true and correct which is told and re-told to the members of society. Each universe of meaning has a social base (Haralombos 2013: 555-557). For the understanding of the social construction of motherhood it is important to understand the social meanings that are attributed to the normative and religious practices which are closely associated with it. In this study, I want to explore this social construction through analyzing the iconography and narratives of *Devi Shasthi* considered as the Goddess of fertility among Hindus.

Society, Culture and Religion

Culture can influence all facets of life, relationship, identities and response. The manner in which we acknowledge and respond to the outside world is governed to a large extent by cultural constructs. The values with which one grows are deeply rooted in traditional culture wherein myths and concepts are the reflection of ideas and aspirations of its practitioners (Jain 2011). Culture as the basis of our value system is largely constituted by religion. Ideologies that are developed by cultural constructs lead to morality and religion controls the meaning of this morals. Religion is often seen as an instrument which institutionalises and perpetuates patriarchy. Hindu texts present diverse and conflicting views on the position of women, ranging from feminine leadership at the highest as a goddess to limiting her role to an obedient daughter, homemaker and mother (Jain 2011).

Hindu religion has plurality of traditions, has several female deities along with male deities in contrast to the singular patriarchal god of the Christian tradition. Therefore, when a community's object of worship is a female it is logical to expect that women in general will be benefitting by sharing this belief. According to Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi (1986), the worship of the mother goddess does not constitute a matriarchy but it represents matriarchal culture that preserves the value of woman as a life-giver (mother) and acknowledges women's power by women and men in the culture. But here is an unresolved theoretical conundrum for feminism: Whether the

Hindu Goddess is a feminist? Can women really benefit by this belief? From time immemorial it has been seen that the archaic religious concepts promote and valorise the femininity in goddess figures as a conduit to positively construct the ideas of promoting women as the epitome of sacrificing mother, supportive wife and young virgin (Rajan 2004).

India's past is coloured in another stream which is outside the *Vedas* and the *Shastras*. This is the 'narrative' stream of practical advice imparted through fables and '*kathas*' (oral narratives), they represent everyday situations with the various facets of human desires, emotions, deceptions, failures, common man's moral values and social practices. These narratives are populated by different characters mired by all kinds of emotions and feelings revealing the interconnected web of life. These narratives might give examples of a strong woman— capable of looking after her husband and the family, and thus uphold the ideal of *pativrata*, which paves the aftermath in form of rewards or punishments accordingly (Jain 2011). Each aspect of a social life is important for understanding the entire social realm. Every society has its own moral, religious, cultural and social ideologies which are practiced by its' members and which satisfies the needs of the individuals from birth, throughout the entire life till death. These ideologies are the actual basis of social interaction which impregnate the moral and religious meanings, understandings and expressions to be shared by all its members and paves the way to formulate the social construction of reality.

Shasthi: The Goddess of Fertility

Religious rituals are important tenets of Bengali life. Among these, the 'rituals of vow' (*Broto*) are closely associated with our daily chores and nuances of everyday living. Festival of Vows (*Broto-Parban*) is a form of folk culture, a performance accomplished to fulfill the desires of people (Basak 1998). Generally, women are closely connected with *Broto-Parban*. This stems from the fact that women face several crises and unfulfilled domestic aspirations in their daily life, and these rituals serve as a cult instrument to mitigate them. The word '*Broto*' means some particular rules and moderations. Here women play the pivotal role, with Brahmin priest being a non-essential member. Performing these rituals eulogises the role of woman not only as a mother but also as a wife or sister seeking the welfare of her child, husband or brother and thus being a moral instrument to protect the male counterpart in the social system.

Shasthi the goddess of fertility is a Hindu folk goddess worshipped in almost every Bengali home usually by Bengali married woman who is a mother or wants to be a mother. Women can worship the goddess without the medium of a male priest. She has to follow the rules of the worship (*upachar*) and observe a *Broto*. The worship is called ‘observing the vows of *Shasthi*’ (*Shasthi-Broto*). The *Broto* is completed by reading *Shasthi-Broto-Katha* (narratives related to the Goddess) describing the importance and benefits of performing this *puja* (worship) in households. *Shasthi* is considered as the benefactor and protector of children. She is also the deity of vegetation and reproduction and believed to bestow women with children and assist during childbirth. She is often pictured as motherly figure, riding a cat and nursing one or more infants. Barren women desiring to conceive and mothers seeking to ensure to protection of their children worship *Shasthi* and seek her blessings and aid.

The hymn of meditation (*Dhyanamantra*)

describes the iconography of the deity. The *dhyan mantra* (hymn for contemplation/meditation) of *Shasthi* is—

Dwibhujangyubating Shasthingbarabhayayutangsmaret
Gourbarnangmahadevingnanalangkarbhusitam.
Dibyabastraparidhanangbamcroresuputtrakam
Prosannabadangnittyang Jagadhatriingsutapradam.
Sarbalonsampannangpinonnotopoyodhoram
Om Shasthai Namu (Bhramha 2014:340).

This description illustrates her with two hands, as a fair young woman with a pleasant appearance. She adorns divine garments and jewels with an auspicious son on her lap. According to Hindu culture mother of a son has an idealized position than a mother of a daughter (Geetha 2007). *Devi Shasthi* has two hands like an affectionate mother; she is young (the time between childhood and adulthood) because this period is the ideal childbearing age, the ideal time for a woman’s fertility among Hindus. She is fair because according to the Hindu tradition there are three qualities that are— *satya* (honesty) is associated with fair complexion, *rojjo* (royal quality) is associated with coppery complexion and *tomho* (evil quality) is associated with dark complexion, here the purity of affection of a mother is projected by her fair complexion (Bhramha 2014). Her divine garments and jewel portray that an ideal mother should not have any luxury. She has an auspicious son on her lap, the lap of a mother is most secure place in the world and the ideal mother is one who is the mother of a son. The last word

of the *Dhyanmantra* of *Devi Shasthi* entails that she has enhanced breasts signifying flow and abundance of milk ready to feed a child (*pinonnotopoyodhoram*). Breast milk is important for infant's nutrition so an ideal figure of a mother is portrayed by her enhanced breasts as well as breast is also considered as the significance of femininity. A she-cat (*marjara*) is the *vahana*(mount) upon which she rides. *Marjara* (she-cat) symbolizes an affectionate mother. After the birth of a kitten all the responsibilities of its upbringing is taken by the mother cat. As a human baby is fully dependent on his/her mother a kitten is also dependent on mother in its infant phase and not only that cats reproduce twice in a year representing a reproductive quality. Thus, with the divine blessing of *Devi Shasthi* her devotees also can reproduce and achieve the quality to become an ideal mother of a son (Bhramha 2014).

The worship of *Devi Shasthi* is prescribed to occur on the sixth day of each lunar month of the Hindu calendar as well as on the sixth day after a child's birth but in each month the rituals are practiced in different names which have some particular significance that are related with reproduction. The worship is associated with several narrative tales (*Broto-Katha*) in each month (Nashkar 2018). Although in Hindu calendar there are twelve months and one *Broto-Katha* is assigned to each. But only stories are popular among the Bengali married women (to which I will come later). In Bengal *Dhula Shasthi-Broto*, *Kora Shasthi-Broto* and *Mathani Shasthi-Broto* are not as popular among mothers for the protection of their children from dust. Mostly out of all the *Broto*-sonly nine are observed (Basak 1998). *Dhula Shasthi-Broto* is performed in the first month of Bengali calendar (*Boishakh*). *Kora Shasthi-Broto* is observed to receive a son with the blessings of *Devi Shasthi* in the third month of Bengali calendar (*Ashar*). *Mathani Shasthi-Broto* is performed by mothers for the economic profits and gains of her children in the fifth month of Bengali calendar (*Bhadra*) (Basak 1998).

The Rise of the Iconography of Shasthi

The literature has various representations about the origin of *Shasthi*. Among Hindus, both the ancient and folk traditions considered the epitome of the origin for the Goddess, but over the course of the early centuries BCE, the Vedic fertility goddess was Sri *Lakshmi*, the Vedic antecedent of *Lakshmi*, gradually fused with the folk-deity *Shasthi* where she is associated in various ways with *Skanda* (also known as *Kartikeya* or

Murugan). From her origins as a folk goddess, *Shasthi* gradually assimilated into the Brahmanical Hindu pantheon, and ultimately, known in Hinduism as the Great Mother of all. Since the Kushan era, all Hindus both in rural and urban areas (Mahanta 2018) have worshiped *Shasthi* on the sixth day after childbirth. The origin of the Goddess *Shasthi* in *Brahmavaivarta Purana* is as *Shasthi* where she introduces herself to king *Priyavrata* as daughter of Brahma and wife of *Kartikeya*. Later the king worshiped the goddess to bring his son back to life and undertook the task of establishing her worship in his kingdom. N.N. Bhattacharya (1999) describes *Shasthi* the sixth part of Prakriti and the wife of *Skanda* in the *Puranas*. She is fair and beautiful like champak flower, young and merciful mother (Bhattacharya 1999). An early textual reference dating to eight and ninth century BCE relates *Shasthi* to the six *Krittikas* who nurture and nurse *Skanda*. She is regarded sometimes as an aspect of the goddess *Durga* (identified with *Parvati* – the mother of *Skanda*); she is also called *Skandamata* (“*Skanda’s* mother”). The third to fifth century text *Yajnavalkya Smriti* describes *Shasthi* as the foster-mother and protector of *Skanda*. However, later texts identify her as *Devasena*, the consort of *Skanda*, including the epic Mahabharata describe *Shasthi* (as *Devasena*) – the daughter of *Prajapati* and wife of *Skanda*. She is identified with goddesses *Shri*, *Lakshmi*, *Sinivali*, and *Kuhu* in this text. The scripture *Padma Purana* also describe *Shasthi* as the wife of *Skanda*. In the Buddhist texts and belief, *Shasthi* has connections to the Buddhist goddess *Hariti* (Bhattacharjee 1997: 332-337). In Kushan era the goddess is represented as two-armed six headed figure. Several coins, sculpture and inscriptions produced from 500BCE to 1200 CE pictured this six-headed goddess and she is associated with *Skanda* (Mahanta 2018).

Broto ritual is a series of domestic rites that have become an integral part of Hindu ritual and in which women are the sole performers. There are different viewpoints developed by various social scientists on the relationship between women and *Broto* ritual. According to LeelaDube (1988), the ideology of Hindu rituals lead women to a subordinate position to their husbands and paternal relatives as those ideologies have a basis on the image of an ideal bride, wife or mother. Thus, these *Broto* rituals represent women’s ideological code of conduct and expected norms and values (Togawa 2001). Wadley (1984) on other hand discussed about some positive impact of *Broto* ritual on women’s life, for her (for Hindu women) the *Broto* rituals become the opportunity to transform their destiny that have been predetermined by the deeds in a past life. Wadly (1980) suggested *Broto* rituals can provide psychological support to the women which is

derived from their cooperative participation in the ritual (Togawa 2001). Pearson (1996) argued that the religious motivation of *Broto* ritual become source of empowerment for women which help them to gain self-reliance and confidence. She also claimed that the salvation of soul through asceticism was exclusively reserved for men, but through the practice of those *Broto* rituals women, could achieve the same heavenly blessings. However, she did not deny the androcentric gender ideologies of those rituals, all of which are performed by women for the peace, happiness and wellbeing for her husband and children (Togawa 2001).

Clifford Geertz (1966) argued that religion as a symbol system created by humans are derived from the social reality but later becomes the model of social reality and gradually integrated into human behaviour and become important reference point through which they start to identify their own position in society. Thus, they legitimize those symbol systems (Geertz 2017). In Indian context, the symbol of mother is a representation of special power. At the ideological level, it has a prominent place in the pantheon of mother goddess and in the practical level; it promotes the codifications that govern the lives of women. The basis of the construction of motherhood is on this codification of the symbolic system (Mahanta 2018).

In West Bengal Devi *Shasthi* is represented as the goddess of fertility as she helps childless women to become a mother specially a mother of a son (according to Hindu culture mother of a son has an idealized position than a mother of a daughter). She saves her devotees and their children from evil fortune but she become angry for carelessness of her devotees and punish them so that they learn to venerate her with proper ritual and dedication. The narratives of Devi *Shasthi* represent the ideal qualities of a good mother, which helps to define how an ideal mother should act (Mahanta 2018: 11-13).

The Vows, Stories and Festivals as worshipped in Bengal at present

Devi *Shasthi* is worshipped in different forms on the sixth day of each the twelve lunar months of the Hindu calendar and on the sixth day after childbirth in the lying-in chamber (*aturghar*) where the birth takes place. In North India, worship of *Shasthi* is observed during childbirth, at puberty, and at marriage. Traditionally when a pregnant woman is isolated for childbirth in the lying-in chamber, a cow-dung figure of the goddess adorns the room. Consequently, the birth of a living child is a blessing of *Shasthi*, while the birth of a still-born infant or the early death of a child is

manifestation of her wrath. *Shasthi* is worshipped before childbirth to protect the welfare of the expecting mother and her child (Mahanta 2018). *Shasthi* can be worshipped within house or worshipped outdoors in natural open space which is called as *Shasthitala*. In Bengal, a number of items are placed at the night of the sixth day after childbirth in the lying-in chamber (*aturghar*) with a belief (such as an earthen pitcher of water covered with a napkin, offerings of husked rice, cooked rice, bananas and sweets, bangles, and pieces of gold and silver, a pen and paper) that *Devi* might enter the room after everyone is asleep and to write the child's fortune on the paper in invisible ink. In Bihar, the sixth day ceremony called *Chhathi* or *Chhati* ("sixth") and *Shasthi* known as *Chhati Mata* ("Mother *Chhati*") will bless a childless woman with a baby if she can perform the *broto* (ritual) of *Devi Shasthi* (Mahanta 2018). At the end, the worshiper devotees must read the narrative of the goddess called as *Broto-Katha*.

Shasthi as an epitome of an ideal mother is believed to be kind hearted, a virgin, loving, caring, merciful, patient and self-denying: these qualities are essential for being a good mother and the narratives of *Devi* represent the normative code of conduct for becoming an ideal mother (Bhramha 2014). Here through the analysis of those narratives from feminist point of view I want to explore how the idea of motherhood is socially constructed. *Shasthi-Broto* those are popular among the Bengali married women have different names such as—

Aranya Shasthi-Broto is popular among the Bengali married women for well-being of children celebrated in the month of *Jayeshta* (second month of Bengali calendar). The narrative of *Aranya Shasthi* moves around the story of a greedy mother who *Shasthi* punishes for her sin. This *katha* actually tries to provide the normative code of conduct for being an ideal mother. In this narrative, the greedy mother had seven sons and one daughter but she lost her children for her greediness. She stole food and gave the blame on a black she-cat who was the mount of *Devi Shasthi*. Therefore, the Goddess punishes her. Later she goes to the forest, where *Shasthi* appears and with her divine blessing, gives back life to her children. *Devi* tells her about the ritual rites of *Aranya Shasthi* and the *Broto* ritual becomes popular among the married women for the longevity of their children's life. This ritual is also known as *Jamai-Shasthi* as in that day mothers should pray for the well-being of her children as well as son-in-law (*jamai*) (it is believed that the happiness of a woman is based on the well-being of her husband) (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 80-84). In every Bengali family, the mother-in-law teaches her daughter-in-law about the ritual rites

of *Aranya Shasthi*. Thus, the aim of the performance of the ritual is not for their benevolence rather performed by them (women) for the well-being of her children and family.

In India through the ideology of motherhood a woman justifies her existence only as a mother and especially as a mother of sons (Krishnaraj 1995). Her status is considered 'privileged' not for achieving some special rights but as an attribute without which a woman's life is useless. Women's existence is based on her biological capacity to bear a child and the society construct the ideology of motherhood as women's primary vocation through which she also becomes powerful because without this she cannot fulfill her existence, thus society tries to glorify the institution of motherhood through different normative practices (Krishnaraj 1995). Motherhood is one of the key institutions through which women are discriminated into an acceptable, cultural mode of thought and behavior. This view is based on a practice of strict dichotomy of public and private spheres and see woman as confined exclusively to the later (Krishnaraj 1995).

Lotan Shasthi-Broto is performed in the month of *Shravan* (fourth month of Bengali calendar) by the Bengali married women to prevent premature death of children. The *Broto-katha* centre around two women of opposite character, one is kind hearted, virgin, loving, caring, merciful and become the source of happiness of her in-law's family and another one is a cruel, greedy daughter who the Goddess eventually punishes. The daughter was married and had children. Once, she had stolen three *Lotan* (element used in the worship of Devi *Shasthi*) but she blamed the daughter-in-law. Later Devi punishes her as she had lost her children. The daughter-in-law was kind-hearted. The Devi was pleased with her for her prayers for the well-being and happiness of her family. With her divine blessing, she gave life back to the children (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 85-87).

Thus, the story represented how a woman should act as her very existence is for the happiness of her family. Sukumari Bhattacharji (1990) examined the role of women as mothers in ancient India as revealed in the various texts where 'motherhood' is glorified as compensation for an imposed reality. There are many rituals associated with marriage, childbirth and in the upbringing of child but all these represent women as a self-sacrificing mother and wife where the rituals observed are for the well-being of her husband and her sons (Bhattacharji 1990). There are numerous vows for women who wanted to be a mother of sons as the women who cannot bear a child specially a son are stigmatized but no stigma is ever attached to an impotent male as well as society sets no normative code conduct for a man who is a

father or wants to be a father. Different goddesses imagined so far in Hindu religion who had granted the boon of having children to women. However, in practice, there is not any ritual for the woman who becomes a mother. She immediately goes to the background after she gives birth at least until the next delivery. Thus, society constructs the normative conduct mostly prescriptive on how to become a good mother and a good wife.

Chapra Shasthi-Broto is performed in the month of *Bhadra* (fifth month of Bengali calendar). The narrative is based on the story of devotion of a merchant who had three sons and was affectionate of his grandsons. All the members of his family had great devotion for *Devi Shasthi*. Once to test his devotion *Devi Shasthi* asked him to give blood of his grandson in a pond where the merchant and his family had come for worshipping. Without any hesitation, he did that and at end of the narrative, *Devi* brought his grandson's life back. The narrative of *Chapra Shasthi-Broto* provides the message that if any devotee truly surrenders himself or herself to the goddess, She will take the responsibility of well-being of his family members (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 88-90).

In the narrative when the merchant decides to obey the order of the goddess, he does not even tell the mother (the merchant's daughter-in-law) of the son whose life he ordered to scarify so here it is clear that a mother has no right for taking any decision for her children. The male member of the family should take every major decision and a mother has no choice to oppose that. Leela Dube (1986) demonstrates how a patriarchal society symbolizes man as the 'seed giver', the woman as the 'field'. Thus, the reproduce belongs to the one who owns the 'seed' the field also must belong to him. This extends a man's rights over the woman, to a right over her sexuality and reproductive capacities. The actual extent and value of woman's contribution to reproduction is irrelevant. According to Sukumari Bhattacharji (1990) there are also different rituals that are associated with the upbringing of children like— *annaprasana* (rice eating-ceremony of the new born) *varsavardhana* (seeks long life for child), *vidyarambha* (child begins his schooling) in all that rituals the mother plays a passive role where the role of father is more active than a mother. Thus, the supervision and vocational education of a child is entirely controlled by the male members of a family (Bhattacharji 1990).

Durga Shasthi-Broto observed in *Ashwin* (sixth month of Bengali calendar), is the story of receiving a son by the worship of *Devi Shasthi*. There is a belief that *Devi Durga* also observed this *Broto* to become a mother of a son. On that auspicious day *Devi Durga* got her two sons

Kartikeya, Ganapati, and she came to her paternal home with her two sons. She told her mother *Menoka* that if a devotee (woman) performs the ritual of *Durga Shasthi* and read this *Katha* (narrative) she can have a son like her (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 91-93).

As a cultural idiom, the institution of motherhood and the experience of mothering both have been highly glorified in ancient Indian religious texts, mythology, literature, popular art and discourse. The confinement of women to domestic tasks of mothering, feeding, nurturing and caring for the members of the household comes from the idea of motherhood as the primary destination for women. The conceptualization of motherhood as an ideal is based on socially constructed value system which dictates what they ought to do and what they ought to be. The *Dharmasatras* (religious texts) claimed that a woman apart from her motherly care she has no existence (Nandy 2017: 67). The author of the Hindu epics and ancient scriptures had created role models for self-sacrifice and domesticity in *Sita*, *Savitri* and *Sati*. In Hindu tradition, women are singlemindedly represented as — soft, serene, sweet, ever-smiling or as gentle in weeping but always at the service of her children (Nandy 2017: 68).

Mula Shasthi-Broto observed in *Agrahayan* month (eighth month of Bengali calendar) represents the importance of devotion in *Shasthi-Broto* performed for the welfare of children and other members of family as well as pets. The *katha* based on the story of married woman who secure the caste purity of her father-in-law and worship *Shasthi* with her devotion can save the life of a calf with the divine blessings of the Goddess. The ritual has become popular in this name as on that day women are expected to eat vegetable specially radish (*mula*) and worship goddess *Shasthi* (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 94-95).

Maithreyi Krishnaraj (2006) argued that in the realm of history and Indian mythology there are various literatures on the Indian version of ‘*Shakti*’, in many names and many forms in which Shakti worshipped even today. All of them represent the different aspects of fertility and nurturance as a dynamic virgin warrior, each mother goddess has her own weapon and mount, as she is the protector of the world. India is the only country in the world today where any goddess worshipped as Great Mother lives in both the ‘Great’ and ‘Little’ traditions (Krishnaraj 2006). All religious beliefs and Indian epics have developed the fundamental ideological aspect of female role as being kind-hearted, caring, moderate, politethus; women’s mothering has continued to be basic to women’s lives as well as for the organization of family (Krishnaraj 2006).

Patai Shasthi-Broto observed in *Poush* month (ninth month of Bengali calendar) represents the story of a greedy mother and her punishment (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 96-97). Mothers observe this *Broto* for the development of immunity of their children and every narrative of *Devi Shasthi* sets the ideal and normative code of conduct which is expected by society for women.

Sital Shasthi-Broto observed in *Magh* (tenth month of Bengali calendar) represent the importance of a moderate and 'ideal mother'. The *katha* tells the story of a Brahmin family had sixty sons with the divine blessing of the Devi. The narrative also entails the importance of marriage to ensure the continuation of the family's lineage. After achieving all the happiness with the blessings of the goddess in a day of *Sital Shasthi* the *Brahmani* (wife of Brahmin) lost all members of her family for ignoring the ritual vows of *Devi Shasthi*. At the end of the *katha* Devi brings back life of all members and forgives her when she realizes her fault and observes the ritual with her great devotion.

Thus, the narrative again emphasises on the fact that women are responsible for the happiness and prosperity of her family (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 98-101). Samita Sen (1993) claimed that the idealization of womanhood and the construction of domestic sphere as an actual domain of women were based on a general valorisation of motherhood—which legitimize the normative ideology that represents mother as the creator and protector of the sanctuary of the home, as a chaste wife. Here the idealization of womanhood becomes the key to social and cultural organization of the community (Sen 2007: 231). This ideology actually represented the home/family as the microcosm of the nation and women are firmly located within this domestic realm where housework and childbearing become their only legitimate concern. The assumption was that men and women's roles were complementary and actually justified the designation of home as the proper realm for women's activities (Sen 2007: 232-234).

Ashok Shasthi-Broto observed in *Chaitra* month (last month of Bengali calendar), is the story of vegetation and reproduction. The narrative moves around Ashoka, an infant found lying under Ashoka tree near a hermitage of a sage. Later Ashokamarried a prince and at the time of their marriage, the sage gave her some Ashoka flower and seeds and instructed her to drop the seeds on the way to her new home so that the row of Ashoka tree would link her marital home to the hermitage. He asked her to come back by using that path if she is ever in trouble, said to eat Ashoka flower on the day of Ashok Shasthi, and forbade her to eat rice on that day. With the

blessing of goddess *Shasthi* she had eight sons and one daughter. Once on that auspicious day unknowingly she ate rice and next day found entire family dead. She went back to the hermitage by following that path and there with the support of the sage Ashoka pleased goddess *Shasthi* and finally, Devi brought all members of her family back to life (Mukhopadhyay 2013: 102-104). In society, motherhood determines the social status of a woman, they are valued for their biological capacity to reproduce and here male offspring is valued more than the female. This *katha* of Devi *Shasthi* provides the code of behaviour for women through projecting negative reinforcement thus, if a woman breaks the moral code she receives punishment from the goddess and Devi can take away the status of a mother enjoyed by any woman.

Neel Shasthi-Broto, which is observed in the last month of Bengali calendar, represents the importance of the *Broto* for wellbeing and longevity of children. This *Katha* also represents motherhood as woman's primary vocation (Mukhopadhyay 2013). Maithreyi Krishnaraj (1995) claims motherhood is the central fact of feminine existence. Motherhood and mothering perceived as naturally related paradoxically becomes an instrument of subordination. Maternal responsibility leads to exclusion of a woman from power, authority, decision-making and a participatory role in public life. For her, mothering becomes a taken-for-granted act for the unique human need have care and nursing of infants. Thus, the sexual division of labour and sexual inequality within the family leads to women's subordination. It is not the mere fact that motherhood or mothering leads women to subordinate position but the social construction of the concepts itself, the meaning attached to motherhood and the terms and conditions under which it takes place are also important (Krishnaraj 1995).

Conclusion

The western feminist doctrine on motherhood was often gloomy and critical of women's choices. White feminists often were critical of their mothers whom they view as deceitful in their own alternatives. Compared to them the views of the women of colour on motherhood were more likely to respect their mothers' struggles and respectful of the price their mothers had to pay in order to survive. There was a sea change in the view-points of the feminists of the late nineteenth century where mothering instead of motherhood became focus of attention. 'Intensive mothering' as the concept was popular harped on the idea that mothering as an assumption requires

belief in an ideal that mothers are preferred care-takers for children, they are the expert-guide, the experience being emotionally absorbing and labour-intensive. It meant that motherhood ideologies typically require women to sacrifice themselves for their children where other alternatives are invisible and culpable. The gamut of feminist literature on motherhood and mothering focus on the political, economic and institutional features of motherhood and that would enable feminist social workers to see how their own values can be brought to bear on the question of mothering. They were critical of the patriarchal construct of motherhood and how it vests the entire responsibility on women. This patriarchal normative structure of which feminists are critical is woven through the narratives discussed above.

Besides, the normative structure, the social world that we experience is the social world, in which we live, are actually the construction of its participants. Life is meaningful because of the meaning its participants give to it. In our society, the sexual divisions between two sexes are biological phenomenon, but gender is socio-cultural construction. Motherhood is an identity intrinsically linked to women; it is the foundation of the biological difference between man and woman. The capacity to become a 'mother' or to bear a child is fully dependent on some biological factors but the idea of motherhood is based on this socio-cultural construction of roles qualities and characteristics ascribed to being 'feminine'. No area of family life is more laden with ideological baggage than those surrounding women's roles as mothers. It is true that the women have the specific biological capacity for childbearing and lactation but distinct from mothering 'motherhood' is a social construction, social norms of reproducing after marriage have played a fundamental role in stigmatization of women, and thus the commitment to motherhood considers children as a blessing whereas barrenness is a social stigma. Society emphasizes on the importance of motherhood as a major female role. Motherhood is thus a social determinant. The social position that a woman gains by becoming a mother is motherhood and it is society that defines the concept of motherhood by the set of normative code of conduct that are assigned to a woman. Thus, the concept of motherhood is a social construction.

[Acknowledgements: I acknowledge with thanks the valuable guidance I have received from Dr. Sudarshana Sen, Department of Sociology, University of Gour Banga, in writing this paper]

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The Aesthetics of Living: The Deepening Crises

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“The freedom culture is in danger of being destroyed by capitalism”

(Bauman 2002: XXIII).

Abstract: *A combination of neo-liberalism and right-wing nationalism is out to vitiate democratic orders and citizenship in some parts of the globe. This new order threatens the livelihood of a large majority of the population in one way or the other, destabilizes their livelihood rights, disenfranchises them, constricts their freedom and imprisons their creative faculty in its efforts to enforce a homogenous culture. The prime challenge before the citizens in these countries, therefore, is to defend the individual freedom and agency and right to collective resistance making use of their critical faculty. An ideal benevolent social democratic order, which respects freedom of the subjects and of the communities, upholds the egalitarian and humane ideals and negates any form of coercion or oppression, is everybody's dream. Such a dream is actualized in some social-democratic countries in the Scandinavian. However, the countries that combine neo-liberal greed with authoritarianism and a monolithic culture betray the livelihood expectations and sabotage the proliferation of an aesthetic life. The task before the enlightened citizens, therefore, is to prepare to be able to decrypt the systemic technology of subversion of human freedom, rights and agency and look for ways and means to preserve the subjective freedom and be a part of the collective moves to create an ideal material and aesthetic order.*

Keywords: Freedom, authoritarianism, livelihood, aesthetics, neo-liberal order, risk society, reflexive modernity, technology of self.

Introduction

There are two primary and universal objectives that guide human life: one, to work to meet the material needs that are indispensable for the survival

of the humankind and a decent life, and two, to take initiatives to meet the non-material needs in order to make life beautiful in line with the aesthetic practices (search for knowledge, truth and higher philosophy of life, leisure, cultivation of humane ideals, journey into the world of art, literature, sports, decoration, gardening, beautification, activities in self and community care, and so on) of the individuals or the communities in a given time and space. In other words, materiality and spirituality combine to make life beautiful and complete. Both of these, equal in importance, constitute the essence of human life. Life is a journey of struggle and fulfillment to meet these needs following the conventional technology and culture and about surging ahead discovering new ways of doing things while unfurling new and unknown terrains of human life applying the individual and collective creative imaginations. Neither the ontological needs nor the aesthetic demands are fixed; they vary over time and space and across classes, communities and individuals. Even one individual or one family can innovate in meeting ontological and aesthetic demands with improved material conditions and access to right kind of information (or knowledge). The quality of living and that of the socio-political-economic and cultural order depends much on whether the individual members, who constitute the “collective order”, have easy access to the basic material needs and a free ambience and space to chase their aesthetic imaginations. Material freedom, freedom to think, innovate and practice (or cultural freedom) and freedom of expression are the keys to good life and the essence of a prosperous socio-cultural order.

The philosophers of ancient Greece – Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Xenophon - to name only a few, the philosophers of the Hellenic period, and the philosophers of modern time – Rousseau, Nietzsche, Marx, Foucault – to name a few, have searched for the best ways and means to meet the two essences of human life outlined above. Putting it in a grand generalized way, one could perhaps say that all human sciences and actions are directed, at least apparently, to these two fundamental ends, from the ancient to modern times, and the conflicts between the individuals, groups and the social order of the time center around an inevitable mismatch between the expectations of the individuals and groups and what is offered by the order.

An ideal, munificent, social democratic order, which respects freedom of the subjects and the communities and upholds the egalitarian and humane ideals and negates any form of coercion or oppression, is everybody’s dream. Such a dream is actualized in some Scandinavian social-democratic countries, where there is an overwhelming intolerance for inequality and oppression and citizens’ happiness index is on top in the global scale.

However, the countries that combine neo-liberal greed with authoritarianism end up vitiating the livelihood expectations and the conditions for an aesthetic life. The prime task before the enlightened citizens, therefore, is to be able to decrypt the systemic technology of subversion of human freedom and agency and look for ways and means to preserve subjective freedom, and to be a part of the collective efforts to create an ideal material and aesthetic order.

The *first part* of this paper deals with Michel Foucault's perception of subjectivity and individual autonomy, the *second section* delineates Ulrich Beck's (and Bauman's) perception of how the second-order modernity promotes "individualization" and subverts the possibility of a collective resistance, and the *third section* examines how Foucault's and Beck's perceptions would be useful in disentangling the on-going dialects between the "governmentality" and individual subjectivity (or autonomy) and its impact on the livelihood and the aesthetic life of the people in India. The paper ends with some concluding observations.

The loss and recovery of the subjectivity

Writing about the ancient Greek philosophical tradition in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2 (1990)*, Michel Foucault observes that (1) there was no disciplinary boundary at that time and the philosophers looked at life holistically, (2) the individuals enjoyed the highest degree of freedom as free dialogue (among the citizens) was the means to production of knowledge (a fact acknowledged in Satyajit Ray's *Agantuk* (1991) and Amartya Sen's *Argumentative Indian (2005)*, and which was also there in the Lokayat school of Indian philosophy), (3) all knowledge forms or philosophies were directed to the collective perception of aesthetic life (to make human life and society beautiful and philosophically rich), even the discourses and practices of sexuality were conceived to be a part of aesthetics of life and "self-care", (4) cultivation of knowledge was an indispensable part of human life, for both the ordinary citizens and the rulers ("the ruler must learn to rule himself to be able to rule others" was the famous Greek dictum), although the slaves were non-citizens and completely disenfranchised, (5) freedom for all to care for themselves and to elevate themselves morally, spiritually and philosophically was the essence of aesthetics of living in both ancient Greece (Foucault 1990) and Hellenic Greece (Foucault 1986).

Foucault (in Vol. 4 of *History of Sexuality*) has shown how human freedom (sexuality is only a field), which was the hallmark of the ancient societies,

has been constricted as we moved into the mediaeval Christian Age, where the centralized power of the Church and the State (or the Pastoral Power) objectified human beings in order to transform them into the subjects (without agency) of the order. The dialogical mode of knowledge production was replaced by a teacher-pupil like arrangement; the teacher – the Pastor or the King – became the source and symbol of knowledge and truth and the ordinary people were to follow their edicts, their discourses. In Foucault's estimate, the subjective freedom, has been further constricted through all-encroaching and sophisticated bio-power of modern era, through surveillance and systemic discourses on every single ontological issue, and by putting in place an elaborate arrangement of disciplining and punishing the subjects.

Despite structural technology of control of individual subjectivity in modern time Foucault argues that the individuals should make efforts to find liberty, or a free space, to mould themselves, exploring the mechanisms of self-care, creativity, criticality and search for an aesthetic life. The individuals should always search for techniques to preserve freedom, which allows them to work on themselves, while cultivating knowledge, truth and aesthetics. Such alternative technologies, Foucault cautions, could also bind us to the categories, constructed by the given order. As such, we have to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, we have to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination. In "Truth and Power", Foucault tells us:

... what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive (Foucault 2001a: 119).

In Foucault's analysis, the power arrangement (or "governmentality") of a time involves two complementary parts: (1) how the individuals direct their own actions as well as those of others, and (2) how the institutions and states direct the actions of groups of individuals. The disciplinary techniques of the structure in different historical epochs has been elaborated in his books *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1979). The former is central to the critical project in Foucault's late works,

which consider not merely how government imposes laws on individuals but also how individuals mold themselves into subjects, generating consensus for the order. Foucault's project was to rediscover the subjectivity (the individual with identity and autonomy) which the structure intends to deny.

Foucault searched for ways and means to retain individual autonomy while analyzing the structure-agency dialectics in modern governmentality. In his 1980 Dartmouth lectures, Foucault observed that the challenge before us in modern times is to find "positive foundations for technologies of the self," foundations in scientific knowledge grounding practices which allow individuals to become autonomous subjects (Foucault 1997a: 203). The individual, in so doing, must know how the disciplinary power "categorizes the individual . . . imposes a truth on him" (Foucault 2001b: 331). Foucault argues that the problem of self today is not to seek "either a positive self or the positive foundation of the self"; rather, the problem we face today is "a politics of ourselves" (Foucault 1997b: 222) in which new forms of subjectivity are to be promoted (Foucault 2001b: 336). The task is to develop those relations to ourselves whereby the individual actively constitutes herself as an ethical agent (Foucault 1997c: 291) empowered to neutralize the systemic regime of ethics.

What is required to offset such disciplinary effects of the individuals is to develop the competencies necessary to practice their freedom. For Foucault, what is of interest in ancient ethics is that a strong structure to one's life is provided by developing a relation with herself, without submitting to normalizing and disciplinary structures that tell us how to act (Foucault 1997d: 260, 263). The structure to their lives thus reflects a link between the person's volition and action, enabling the person to govern herself (Foucault 1997a: 209-10). Such a relation to oneself—what Foucault calls "ethics" (which, in essence, is "the relation with yourself when you act", and is different from that of "a code that would tell us how to act") (Foucault 1997e: 131)—is not prescribed by a moral code but rather is a matter of individual choice to pursue by undertaking "self-forming activities" (Foucault 1997d 270-71). Establishing a relation to the self is thus central to Foucault's project of developing new subjectivities.

In contemporary society, individuals are made "subjects," categorized and given identities (Foucault, 2001b: 331). In contrast, a "self" is a set of core beliefs and principles that constitute the person's understanding of who she is. The "self" is neither a sovereign universal subject nor some sort of pre-social human nature which individuals strive to realize or to return to. However, for Foucault, nothing is in a power-free realm. He tells us that

“power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not a ‘supplementary’ structure over and above ‘society’ whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of ...a society without power relations can only be an abstraction” (Foucault 2003). However, the individual should reserve the right to critique under all circumstances. “[Critique] is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and questions power on its discourses of truth . . . [Critique] will be the act of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially ensure the desubjugation of the subject in what we would call . . . the politics of truth” (Foucault 2003: 267). The central argument here is that the individuals should connect to their “selves” so that they could understand their own lives better.

By inserting such a “self” into the process of subject formation (or “subjectivation”, to use Foucault’s terminology) new forms of subjectivities may emerge, since there is a critical engagement between the way the person understands herself and the forces that try to imprison her. Foucault’s work on ethics is thus inherently political because it is about forming new subjectivities and resisting the imposition of identities that discipline individuals. The Foucaultian ethics, according to his adversaries, would lead to extreme form of individualism, which would lead to politicization and segmentation of the individuals. James Wong (2013), however, rejects such an interpretation of Foucault and his writings.

The common cord in most other Foucaultian writings as well is the dialectics between the technology of control and self-production by the social order and the struggle of the individual subjects for preservation of subjectivity and freedom in defense of the aesthetics of life. The leviathan social order of a given time fine-tunes the technology of control by controlling human body, existential (ontological) issues, human psyche, discourses and thought process and even the aesthetics of life by monopolizing production and dissemination of knowledge, by mastering the art of surveillance, discipline and punish. While unraveling the structures of systemic control and the history of un-freedom Foucault searched for freedom of the self to decide her/his course of life, for which she/he would need alternative knowledge and truth about human life (not the ones that are constructed by the power of the day), which would be dynamically searched through a dialogical method involving free and critical thinking individuals. The existing structures would change through human beings’ search for alternative truth, aesthetics and morality. The “care of the self” comes in here as the individuals are

called upon to elevate their discursive understanding and create free space for themselves by nurturing and sharpening critical consciousness.

The dialectical relationship between the larger social order and the individual has been captured by Foucault in the following discourse:

As a context, we must understand that there are four major types of these “technologies,” each a matrix of practical reason: (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and semis, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988: 19).

Foucault argues that “what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive” (Foucault 2001: 119).

Self-construction, for Foucault, is both systemic and the result of self-care for autonomy or freedom. It is essentially a power-knowledge dialectics. The systemic definition of self is therefore open to contestation and even rejection. In his effort to work out an alternative to the hegemonic power Foucault takes a post-structuralist position to argue that the hegemonic consensus of the given power-structure cannot be replaced with an alternative consensus since that might also prove to be hegemonic in due course. He is, therefore, arguing in favour of a perpetual or an open-end dialectics or contestation in defense of subjective freedom under all circumstances. The self-care, in this sense, aims not to be trapped in any hegemonic discourse, rather, it looks for alternative discourses and techniques for preserving subjective freedom.

Foucault’s argument is that the aim of seeking consensus (at any collective level) is itself played within a system of power relations, and is not without its own exclusionary effects; rather, one should work against the exclusion

of other perspectives. He adds that we need to ask "... what proportion of nonconsensuality is implied in such a power relationship, and whether the degree of nonconsensuality is necessary or not, and then one may question every power relation to that extent" (Foucault 1984: 379). Working with different, perhaps even oppositional, points of view foregrounds the present constellation of values and traditions framing our relations to one another and to ourselves and allows us to challenge them by viewing the values and traditions differently. This is why Foucault does not privilege the idea of a community, a "we," in his discussions on politics. He tells us "the 'we' must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result—and the necessarily temporary result—of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it" (Foucault 1984: 385.) In conjunction with the practice of *parrhesia*, the joint examination of values and norms in place at present may give rise to other voices, other possibilities (Wong 2013: 11).

Foucault's prognosis of systemic control of the subjects (the loss of subjectivity) and recommendations for the recovery of the subjectivity appear much in line with the discourses of the German critical school and the post-Marxist scholars. However revolutionary Foucault might sound in his discourses, he essentially takes a post-structuralist and post-modernist position which negates, or at least substantially weakens, the possibility of organized counter-hegemonic struggles or that of a total systemic transformation as was dreamt of by Marx and the Marxists. His idea of ethical freedom might help retain subjective autonomy but that would not be good enough to overpower the hegemonic stranglehold of the system. A revolutionary discourse and a collective movement by the oppressed may, in the long run, fail to bring liberation for the masses (as has happened in East Europe in the last century) and may turn out to be hegemonic (as in China or North Korea), but the humankind cannot but search for alternative discourses of collective transformative movements.

Reinvention of Politics in Reflexive Modernity

We can perhaps bring in the ideas of Ulrich Beck as outlined in his *Risk Society* (1992), *The Reinvention of Politics* (1997), 'The Theory of Reflexive Modernization' (2003), and many other latter writings to construct another discourse (different from that of Foucault) that talks about a different kind of existential and aesthetic crises in modern time. While for Foucault the loss of subjective freedom is the root of the crisis in modern life for

Beck “individualization” or the rise of a withdrawn calculative, defensive individuals, who are busy working out survival strategies to smother insurmountable risks unfurled by the modern industrial or post-industrial societies, is the crisis. The fragmentation of the people into atomic individual units because of the growing risks of modern life kills the possibility of collective resistance. While Foucault’s primary concern is the preservation of subjective autonomy Beck’s concern is to restore some form of collective self and collective mobilization for social transformation, which is otherwise lost in post-modern societies.

Beck argues that the progressive “individualization of social inequality” - an inevitable outcome of the modern capitalist societies, manifest in, unemployment, a shift to contractual, part-time employment, and the erosion of lifetime job security in both blue-collar and white-collar occupations – impacts the long-term economic and political development of these societies. The modern society, programmed for speedy economic growth, unleash different kinds of risks – environmental, economic, social-cultural and political, which operate in interconnections, putting human life and the dream of a good life at risk. With gradual weakening of the state in the neo-liberal global order the individuals are left to fend for themselves and are estranged in the jungle of crises. The individuals, in turn, reflect on the ground realities and decide about their livelihood and living strategies and this leads to an extreme form of individualization or atomization (Beck 1992).

Beck argues that the industrial society marks a transition, a watershed in human history, in fact, from a human condition where naturally occurring hazards (disease, flood, famine, and the like) - along with socially determined hazards such as invasion and conquest, regressive forms of thought and culture, and rigid class structures – molded the fate of individuals and groups, to one where increasingly our fate is bound up with risks that are deliberately undertaken – for the sake of benefits conceived in advance, by means of our technological mastery over nature. Too much dependence on technological solution kills the creative aesthetic faculty of the individuals (Beck 1992). A recently published report on global warming cautions how the uncontrolled greed for material comfort and profit of the modern capitalist regimes is leading to global warming at a fast rate, which, if goes unaddressed, would result into a total disaster for the human kind. This precisely corroborates Beck’s worries (UN Report on Climate Change and Global Warming 2021, Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362>).

According to Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994) globalization since the last decades of the last century has brought about a second-order modernity - "reflexive modernity" - which leads to an extreme form of individualism called "reflexive individualism", where, in coping with the risks, the individual works out her or his own strategy. In the first wave of modernism the individuals had a defined path towards rationality, positivism and freedom; there was an expected uniformity in this journey. In the second-order modernity, associated with globalization induced neo-liberalism, there has been a "denormalization of roles". The individual has become, in Beck's word, "nomadic", without a fixed or defined role or direction. There has been a move toward complexity, indeed towards "chaos". Whereas the "roles" of the first modernity depended very much on what Kant called determinate judgement; on prescription, on determinate rules, in the second-order modernity the individual must be much more the rule finder himself. Determinate judgement is replaced by "reflective judgement". Commenting on Beck, Lash has argued that "reflective judgement" is not reflection because there is now no universal to subsume the particular. In reflective judgement the individual must find the rule. "Reflective judgement is always a question of uncertainty, of risk, but it also leaves the door open much more to innovation." (Lash 2002: xi).

The reflexive individualism and reflexive judgement, according to Beck, lead to a post-modern chaos, where the individuals, lost in the chaos of crises, reflect in diverse ways, depending on their socio-economic-political-cultural condition and work out ways and means to have a cozy place for themselves while compromising with power and the dominant ideologies, the ideology of consumerism, in particular, which turns out to be most lethal integrative force in the neo-liberal-global order.

Despite an apparent (and claimed) "openness" of the post-modern order, which vouch for "freedom", there has been the rise of a sophisticated regulative system in the guise of the modern market-oriented State. The system tries to regulate the individual life through Constitutive and regulative rules or, the Constitutional and extra-Constitutional rules. Exploitation takes place through regulative rules while exclusion take place through constitutive rules. This threatens both livelihood and the aesthetic life of the citizens since it tends to vitiate universal human and democratic rights of the people, who aspire for a decent life in a fearless ambience.

The apparent individualization in the post-modern era, according to Bauman, does not subvert the integration mission of the economic-political order. He writes:

... that individualization (a) is a structural characteristic of highly differentiated societies and (b) does not endanger their integration but actually makes it possible. The individual creativity which it releases is seen as creating space for the renewal of society under conditions of radical change. In developed modernity – to be quite blunt about it – human mutuality and community rest no longer on solidly established traditions, but, rather, on a paradoxical collectivity of reciprocal individualization (Bauman 2002: xxi).

Another important manifestation of individualization, according to Beck, is the corrosion and slow disintegration of citizenship' (Bauman 2002: xiii) 'individualization spells trouble for citizenship and citizenship-based politics' (p. xiii); public issues are many but collective resistance is fading.

The gravest of all risks unleashed by the neo-liberal order are: (1) naturalization and universalization of post-knowledge and post-truth as knowledge and truth; although we boast of progress of science never before in human history, the individuals are the victims of false consciousness when they face the risk of being taken over by the mammoth information technology, controlled by the national and global capitalist orders, (2) erosion of the culture of dialogue and negotiation, or "gymnasia", to use Foucaultian terminology; knowledge and information flow only from the power (3) the loss of subjectivity, agency and citizenship; the apparent freedom and citizenship rights have been turned into illusions and "the public sphere" stands colonized by power (4) a new socio-political order that is out to create a genre of ideology-free, unethical self-seeking "rational" human beings bereft of long-standing human values. In this new world, we all are reduced to disenfranchised "labourers" of different forms and the voiceless subjects, who have been structurally forced to give up the vision and the struggle for an alternative humane social order. As a part of their survival strategy, individuals now embrace an irrational "zero-risk" mentality, a mentality of compromise.

In *The Reinvention of Politics* (1997), Ulrich Beck suggests that nothing less than "another reformation" is needed and that this calls for the "radicalization of modernity". He proposes that "this assumes social inventions and collective courage in political experiments" – only to add at once that these "inclinations and qualities... are not exactly frequently encountered, and are perhaps no longer even capable of garnering a majority". Yet here we are: we have no other conditions in which to act. And in these conditions, like it or not, act we will, bearing the consequences of our actions or our failure to act. In a latter book *Individualization*

(2002) Beck and Beck have taken a similar position as is evident in the following paragraph:

Neoliberal economics rests upon an image of the autarkic human self. It assumes that individuals alone can master the whole of their lives, that they derive and renew their capacity for action from within themselves. Talk of the ‘self-entrepreneur’ makes this clear. Yet this ideology blatantly conflicts with everyday experience in (and sociological studies of) the worlds of work, family and local community, which show that the individual is not a monad but is self-insufficient and increasingly tied to others, including at the level of worldwide networks and institutions. The ideological notion of the self-sufficient individual ultimately implies the disappearance of any sense of mutual obligation – which is why neoliberalism inevitably threatens the welfare state. A sociological understanding of Individualisierung is thus intimately bound up with the question of how individuals can demystify this false image of autarky. It is not freedom of choice, but insight into the fundamental incompleteness of the self, which is at the core of individual and political freedom in the second modernity (Beck and Beck 2002: xxi).

The central idea, therefore, is to keep striving for new ways and means to reverse the process of individualization and to work for restoring the individual into the collective self, craving for a better social order. Beck, Bauman or Giddens are out to rediscover this collective self out of reflective individuals, which would voice against the forces that threaten the peoples’ right to a decent life and right to aesthetic life. While Foucault tells us to be self-reflexive and take all care in preserving subjective freedom Beck cautions about the rise of excessive individualism in modern “risk societies”, which vitiates the possibility of collective progressive movements. When we talk about the present situations in India both these theoreticians appear relevant.

The Indian Case

The champions of neo-liberal order had put all their eggs in one basket, namely, the market, the modern panacea of all ills and in the process; the “social” and the “collective” thus stand broken and the individuals are asked to fend for themselves. They thought, the state is too much interfering and a stumbling block in the path of economic growth and prosperity of the

nation, and the public sector units and the state support for the working class, the agricultural labourers, small and medium farmers, the 95 per cent of the workers who find their sustenance selling labour in the informal sector units, and the owners of the small and medium-scale enterprises, is unsustainable and unnecessary. Systematic sell-out of the Public Sector Units to the private capital has led to massive job loss and pushed the new generation job-seekers to take up insecure low pay jobs in the private sector. The only mantra in the neo-liberal order is aggressive economic reforms; the underlying expectation is that the gargantuan market will sustain the middle and the poorer classes by creating enough income/job opportunities. The role of the state, in this discourse, is restricted to create more space for the private national and global capital by opening all the state owned resources for sale and by giving all kinds of support to the corporate capital to grow. In extending its pious support to the private capital, the present Indian government has waived nearly 8 lakh crores of rupees of bank loan for the corporates since 2014-15 financial year and even after this there is an unpaid loan of 12 lakh crores of rupees, which puts the public sector banks and the ordinary depositors in serious crisis (*Ganasakti*, Siliguri, 22 July 2021: 6). For the victims of the neo-liberal order there is a “safety net”, and some financial support under various government schemes in the name of welfare measures, which help the ruling elite to garner public support in periodic elections.

The inevitable upshot of the neo-liberal capitalism is a risk society. The fluctuating economic growth that puts the market in periodic jeopardy, fails to accommodate the ever growing unemployed population (currently the unemployment rate in India hovers around an unsustainable level of 18 per cent) and puts those who manage to retain their livelihood at risk (pay cut, more work, retrenchment at will, abolition of retirement benefits, and so on). The “market in crisis” (for example, the current slump) is a big threat to those 95 per cent of the workers who are dependent on the informal sector of economy. The economic crisis also impacts around 67 per cent of our population who directly or indirectly depend on the agricultural sector for a living. The on-going COVID19 pandemic induced negative economic growth has forced millions of the workforce out of job. Based on updated data Patel (2021) reports that under BJP reign there has been a progressive job loss, starting from 2014. The total number of Indians with work shrunk from 44 crores (440 million) in 2013 to 41 crores (410 million) in 2016 to 40 crore (400 million) in 2017 then to 38 crores (380 million) in 2021, though the workforce grew from 79 crores (790 million) to 106 crores (1.06 billion). Another report reveals that compared to the pre-Covid March 2020

quarter, India today faces a loss of a massive 19.6 million jobs. Although the women account for only about 10 per cent of the jobs, they count for 23 per cent of the loss of jobs a year after India was struck by Covid (Vyas 2021). This is primarily because an overwhelming majority of the women workers are employed in low-pay informal sector and it is the informal sector that has been affected the most by Covid.

Unable to sustain themselves, the jobless workers are committing suicide along with their family members (Pathare et. al. 2020), many are withdrawing their children from schools and colleges, while many others are living the life of destitutes and many are resorting to crime for a living. The condition of the youth with technical education who had been employed in the private sector/corporate sector/ IT sector is no good; many are the victims of retrenchment, many more are fearing the sack and those who have retained their jobs agree to take a pay cut and work for longer hours.

The neo-liberal order governs by systematically disenfranchising the working class. The size of the workers and employees in the public sector has shrunk and those who continue in the PSUs run the risk of losing jobs; their rights have been taken away by amending labour laws and the voice of the trade unions has been muted; the trade unions affiliated to political parties adhering to neo-liberalism now sing the tune of the market. The 95 per cent of the total workforce who depend on the informal sector have no trade union right; albeit highly exploited, their survival depends on the mercy of their employers. The corporate sector has been granted the right to “hire and fire” at will and the workers have been denied the voice of protest. In order to facilitate extraction of more surplus value the employers now decide about the wage structure and the working hours. Even in public sector, in some of the States, the working hour has been extended from 8 hours to 12 hours a day. When the threat of losing job looms large the workers are forced to bury their “will to protest” and willfully “surrender” their subjectivity and freedom while agreeing to accept whatever job-conditions they are offered. When the livelihood is at the risk, the working class, the “vanguard of social revolution” (in Marxist parlance), not only lose their voice of protest but they turn out to be the defenders of the bourgeois order. The loss of subjectivity or individual agency and thus becomes unavoidable; they are forced to live in a perpetual state of unfreedom.

The on-going travails of more than 5 lakh tea-garden workers (mostly of Adivashi origin) and their 25 lakh dependents in the Terrai and Dooars regions of North Bengal is a case in point. The gardens are abandoned or

closed down by the owners at will and some of them reopen after a gap with ownership change. The new owners go for casualization of workforce to cut down the wage-cost, evade the payment of outstanding dues (the provident fund, pension, gratuity and so on) and deny the workers their rights, which are laid down in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. The trade unions in the gardens of this region, which had a glorious tradition of movements, stand as helpless onlookers since they cannot provide any protection or relief to the workers whose survival is seriously threatened by the actions of the owner-government nexus. Finding the class movement ineffective the workers surrender to identity politics (or ethnic politics) and fall into the trap of the ruling class-corporate nexus. The ethnic leaders, mostly the self-seekers, who enjoyed power and privilege while being with the earlier ruling parties, now join the present ruling parties at the Centre or the State to hold on to their privileges. They work as the agents of the owners and sabotage any effort to put up a united working class movement. When livelihood is seriously threatened the jobless Adivasi workers migrate to the urban centers to work as construction labour and the women and children become easy quarry of the human trafficking nexus. When livelihood is threatened and the community life stands fragmented, the cultural activities and the aesthetic creativities appear luxury as the Adivasis put all their energy in earning a living. The education and normal upbringing of the children also suffer, while a section of the adults are forced to make ethical compromises.

Not only the livelihood risks or disenfranchisement that spoils the aesthetics of life, often, the minds of the workers are filled with ideological poison of communalism, casteism and linguistic identity. A look at the history of working class movement would help comprehending how these ideological elements of “false consciousness” (to use Marxist phraseology) have weakened the working class unity and trade union movement in India, right from the colonial period. Historian Chitra Joshi (2003), for example, has shown that the working class unity in the industrial city of Kanpur fell apart with the communalization of freedom movement in the 1920s and 1930s. The workers who had put a united fight against their exploiters for so long took part in communal riots, killing fellow workers of other religious communities. Even after Independence, Kanpur has witnessed several rounds of communal conflicts. The Shiv Sena movement in Maharashtra, in Mumbai in particular, has left a similar effect on the working class unity in the post-Independence period (Gupta 1982). The current ruling elite are playing the same thing with greater potency in different parts of the country to destroy working class unity. Like the life of total subjugation, ideological divide and the

resulting false consciousness spoil the beauty of living in harmony, fraternity, criticality and the struggle for a better life.

Besides, the working class, a large majority of the *dalits*, who survive as labour in different sectors, the agriculture and the informal sector, in particular, live in indignity and in every day humiliation. The large-scale practice of untouchability, even after so many decades of Constitutional democracy in place, denies the *dalits* a life of dignity. The practice has a large-scale support of the customs, traditions and the regulative rules. Ambedkar has phrased it as denial of “social equality”; he predicted back in 1949, that mere political equality (meaning universal adult franchise) will fail to bring social equality with caste system in place (Ambedkar 2013). Besides, the *dalit* girls and women are often the victims of the raw lust of the upper caste men; reports of rape and murder of the *dalit* girls appear too often in the media.

Thus, the workers in India along with the *dalits* live in poverty, insecurity, unfreedom and indignity. With their minds filled with “ideologies of unconsciousness and divide” they are made to support the hegemonic power decade after decade. The livelihood risks force them to compromise with power, both politically and ethically. This explains why the progressive social democratic movements are weak in India. A large majority of the *dalit* women and less educated “non-worker” home-makers also fall in this category of “voiceless” (non)citizens.

The bourgeois, a small minority of the population, controls the neo-liberal order and all the material resources in connivance with the political elite. The ruling elite receive lavish financial support (in the name of electoral bonds) from the business elite while the former extend state support in the form of pro-market policies, infrastructure support, land and soft loans, tax benefit, labour reforms, and administrative protection. The neo-liberal order with the support of the State has created a highly iniquitous economic order where corporate profitability has increased leaps and bounds; according to a report, 20 Indian companies now account for over 90 per cent of profits (up from 30 per cent a decade ago). Most of these 20 companies are growing their free cash flows (*FCF*) at over 25 per cent per annum, despite the challenging economic circumstances in the past five years. While one can see the consolidation of the world’s fifth-largest economy in the hands of 15-20 corporate giants, a large section of the workers, those in primary sector, the women, the lower middle-class, the unemployed and the semi-employed (in the informalsector) languish in poverty (Wadhwa 2021).

The Corporate giants return the favour by donating generously to the electoral fund of the ruling parties. Much of the money that is generated (by the ruling parties) through “secret” electoral bonds, is spent on winning elections, buying legislatures (to garner majority or to topple an elected government) and for bribing the impoverished electorate, which lead to subversion of the democratic institutions and ethical order. The control of the mass media by the corporate houses serve twin purposes: (1) to do business by aggressively commodifying the non-commodities (like folk songs, folk art forms, even news items and so on) and (2) to garner ideological consensus in support of the ruling elite. The media are put to effective use to popularize ruling class ideology and generate consensus in support of the actions of the ruling party and its leaders, even when such actions subvert the democratic institutions and values. The “culture industry” (to use Adorno’s phraseology) is thus interested only in profit and power and, in effect, sabotage the aesthetic demands of the society. The corporate-controlled media promote cheap entertainment or “tittytainment”, which devalues aesthetics in culture and brings estrangement of the people.

There are divergent and even conflicting categories in the burgeoning middleclass in the neo-liberal order. (1) A section of the middleclass (for example, 90 percent of the ministers in the Central Government who are millionaires), who constitute the political elite, work hand-in-gloves with the corporate elite. They are the guardians of the system. For them, power is a means to further the corporate interest while keeping “a share of the cake” for themselves, by both the Constitutional and extra-Constitutional means. One can refer here to the fact that about 42 per cent of the ministers in the present (after reshuffle of ministry 7th July 2021) Central Government have criminal records (*The Indian Express*, New Delhi, 11 July 2021). It is a matter of big regret that “lumpenization of politics” is being normalized in Indian democratic practices. (2) The second category of the educated middleclass constitutes those who do not control the market but are the direct beneficiaries of the market economy. They are the white-collar, technically skilled high paid technocrats and the managers, who opt for “slavery” of the corporate masters. In terms of interest and ideology they are securely integrated into the order; they are the “ideological” flag-bearers of the neo-liberal order. They are completely bereft of critical or reflexive consciousness and serve the system as its “active citizens” (to use Habermas’ idiom). (3) The third category is that of the struggling ones, constituted mostly of the lower-rank skilled workers in the corporate world; they find their livelihood in the corporate sector yet not fully integrated. They bear the brunt of the volatile market economy; they are retrenched at

will whenever market is on a slump. Economic insecurity and instability or the risks of market society make them voiceless; they are willing to serve the system for a living yet remain on the margin. (4) The “petty-bourgeois” small-scale entrepreneurs are closely tied up with the market economy and many of them work as the subsidiary units of the manufacturing industries; hence, their wellbeing depends on the rise and fall of the market. Ideologically they side with the ruling class and neo-liberalism; they are also the flag-bearers of the conservative ideals and reactionary politics. (5) The millions of “the industrial reserve army” consisting primarily of the educated and technically skilled youth, waiting to enter the job market, are the prime victims of the neo-liberal arrangement. They live with an uncertain future when the public sector jobs shrink considerably and the job opportunity in the private sector also dwindles when the economy is in crisis (as it is now). For the market, the graduates and post-graduates in the Arts and Social Science streams are “unemployable” and those with technical education are taken in insecure contractual jobs. Driven by the risk of unemployment the youth shun their radical-critical consciousness and depend much on social and political capital (to use the phraseology of Pierre Bourdieu) in order to find some foothold. This is one of the reasons why in recent decades, since structural reforms introduced in the late 1980s, the students by and large support the political parties which are out to promote the neo-liberal ideology. A section of the unemployed youth is effectively put to use in lumpenization of politics. (6) The artists of different kinds, who take up sculpture, painting, music – vocal or instrumental, acting in TV serials, stage and cinema, could be divided into sub-categories depending on the level of their career success or failure. The successful few find a secure place in the “culture industry” by playing in the hands of the corporate houses while a large majority of the artists live in economic insecurity; many live in perpetual poverty. Ideologically and politically a section of the impoverished artists takes the side of the ruling class and another section plays safe by pretending to be “non-political” (mostly as a strategy to survive in an ambience of highly politicized “culture industry”). A third section of the artists take a critical stance; they constitute the progressive section often adhering to a left-leaning ideology and openly support left-democratic forces. This section of the artists expresses their critical voice while putting their career and income at risk.

The most notable of all categories are the Left-leaning and free-thinking freedom-loving writers, social workers, lawyers, film makers, who are subjected the surveillance, censorship, control, disciplining and punishment by the “oppressive state apparatuses” (to use Althusser’s phraseology) by

using repressive laws like Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and are often detained in jail without trial for years; the judiciary remains a passive bystander. The death of 84-year-old Father Stan Swamy, a tribal rights activist, who had COVID and was suffering from Parkinson's disease in a Mumbai hospital on 5th July 2021, and the arrest of 16 noted academicians, writers, lawyers and rights activists in Bhima Koregaon case of 1st January 2018 (only 8 of them have been charge sheeted so far) is a case in point. The ruling powers, besides using legal means also use the unlawful means to silence the critical voices. They would label them Urban Naxal, shame them in public using social media, subject them to media trial, vandalize their properties, and paintings (as happened with the painter Maqbul Fida Hussain some years back), would censor or ban a cinema, label them as traitors (famous actor Dilip Kumar, who passed away on 7th July 2021 is an example) and the killing of the free-thinking writers/activists like Narendra Dhabolkar, Gobind Pansare, M. M. Kalburgi, and Gauri Lankesh, and so on, allegedly by the Right-wing fanatics, are a few burning examples.

The repression of the critical voices applying legal and unlawful means by the power elite, by subjecting them under surveillance and punishment (extreme form is elimination) is a deliberate ploy to create an ambience of fear and un-freedom. Not only the direct victims are taken to be silenced; there are millions of potential creative-critical minds who prefer to remain silent as a strategy to avoid oppression and purging. Two recent incidents, cited below, are perfect illustrations of how the oppressive State is out to silence the oppositional voices by means of surveillance and penal actions.

1. On 20 July 2021 the Pegasus spying scam was brought to light by research wing of the Amnesty International. It has been reported that over 300 verified mobile phone numbers, including that of two ministers, over 40 journalists, three opposition leaders and one sitting judge, besides scores of businesspersons and activists in India, could have been targeted for hacking through the spyware of Israeli origin. The opposition parties and the informed journalists apprehended government hand in the scam since the Pegasus spyware could not have been procured or put to use without the knowledge of the Home Department of Government of India. NSO, the Israeli Government Agency, the maker of Pegasus, in a statement claimed that they sell the software to government agencies only and not to any private operator. Although the Indian government agencies have denied their hands and claimed the

expose to be an international conspiracy the Amnesty International has stood firm on its research findings. The Government investigating agency in France has also confirmed the use of Pegasus for spying in India, France and many other countries. On 29 July 2021 more than 500 prominent intellectuals, writers, artists, and journalists have written to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India with a plea to institute a thorough judicial probe into the scam (*Ganasakti*, Kolkata, 30 July 2021: 6). Several top journalists and politicians, who were put under surveillance, have also filed separate petitions in the Supreme Court demanding a probe, under the scrutiny of the apex court, and protection of their constitutional rights.

2. On 22 July 2021, the Income Tax Department conducted raids at the offices of the *Dainik Bhaskar* (corporate media and investment group, which claims to be independent) across the country on alleged tax evasion. The searches were conducted at the residential and office premises of the promoters of the group across 32 locations in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan and Gujarat. In a message posted on its website, *Dainik Bhaskar* claimed that the government raids have come against it as it put out the “true picture of the government’s inefficiency before the country during the second wave of Covid-19” (*The Indian Express*, New Delhi, 23 July 2021). While no one can question the authority of the Income Tax Department of the government to bring the income tax evaders to book it is shocking that the Department never finds fault with the media houses that toe the line of the ruling party.

Conclusion

The will to live, will to knowledge, will to freedom and aesthetic life are universal in human life. To meet this universal human craving we need a just social order, an economic, social, cultural and political arrangement that ensures (1) economic freedom or adequate material support for all, (2) freedom to explore peoples’ creative aesthetic imaginations, and (3) political freedom or the citizenship, which gives people the right to criticism and organization, an ambience that promotes free play of critical and plural thoughts and help people construing alternative discourses and praxis. A combination of a neo-liberal order and a false nationalism based on primordial

sentiments denies people a decent material life, puts all kinds of restrictions on their aesthetic freedom, and denies them the right to frame an alternative ethical order. The dream of an ambience “where mind is without fear and the head is held high” (in line with Tagore’s dream), which is not too impractical, fades in such an economic-social-political arrangement. The structural forces coerce the people, through close surveillance, control and disciplining (penalizing), and compel them to spurn their critical creative voice, tame their creative faculty, and coerce them to surrender to the systemic demands.

No one can define “aesthetics” for everybody; as people inherit and nurse an aesthetic culture in every single social locale. Even an extremely totalitarian regime cannot wipe out all the cultural traditions as peoples’ ability to think and imagine (romantically) is fundamental. Hence even a beggar or a destitute folk singer, or an oppressed housewife, would sing, a starkly impoverished tribal woman would dance or paint her wall with indigenous colours and all of them would make efforts to narrate the struggles of their life aesthetically. However, there should not be any denying that when the wretched and the marginalized are down sorting out their livelihood issues their aesthetic life will suffer. The people of middle and upper classes live with material security, yet, their aesthetic and ethical life suffer under an authoritarian regime. I have discussed, in this paper, how the inbuilt forces in the neo-liberal, totalitarian order can threaten the life, livelihood and freedom, which are the fundamental rights of the people who constitute the citizens of the nation. If a large body of the people are made to live under systemic surveillance, and under the threat of being disciplined and punished they would resort to self-control by restraining and disciplining their imaginative-creative faculty in order to avoid the systemic purge or at least as a survival strategy. If the people, irrespective of their economic, social and cultural locale are forcefully fed with the elements of a particular way of life or ideology and are scared to express themselves in aesthetic creations the aesthetic reserve of the nation will fall empty in the long run.

Foucault, as discussed in this paper, has deciphered, in his numerous writings, the systemic mechanisms that have denied the individuals their subjective freedom or autonomy in different historical epochs. He is particularly critical about the rise of pastoral power and bio-power in mediaeval and modern times, respectively, which mastered the art of surveillance, control and disciplining. The central problem, for Foucault, therefore is to find out technics of “self-care”, which includes a jaded defense of individual freedom and alternative ethics against all adversaries. Foucaultian politics is critical about

any ideology-based party-led all out transformative movement; he apprehends that such movements, if successful, would, put in place a different kind of hegemonic and anti-freedom regime. Foucault, therefore, is not too enthusiastic (unlike Marx) about any alternative route to mass liberation; for him, rather, defense of individual freedom under any kind of regime is fundamental.

Ulrich Beck, Giddens or Bauman, on the other hand, disentangles how the neo-liberal orders of modern time take the shape of a risk society that denies individuals both material and aesthetic freedom and leads to mass-scale individualization or atomization, which in turn, scuttles the possibility of organized anti-hegemonic collective movements. They, unlike Foucault, stood in defense of both individual freedom and collective movements more in the form of “new social movements” like green movement, feminist movement, cultural movements, consumers’ movement, and so on, which, according to them, would lead to the creation of a kind of anti-capitalist social-democratic order.

Human history tells us that people never stop reflecting and they never surrender their creative-romantic-critical faculty; they will find their ways to express themselves in their acts of creations and criticism, which will flow in multiple directions (and never in a linear path decided by money and power combine). In India, in recent times, the critical minds have come forward to condemn the “murder” of Father Stan Swamy. Amartya Sen, Jean Dreze, Ramchandra Guha, Romila Thappar and many other celebrated intellectuals have condemned it and the fellow detainees in the Bhima Koregaon case (of 2018), who are languishing in jail have also protested the inhuman treatment of Stan Swamy. The leaders of well-meaning political parties have also expressed their anguish at the denial of justice to the tribal rights worker.

At a time when the authoritarian rule indiscriminately applies sedition law of the colonial era (which the British had applied to suppress the freedom movement) and the anti-terrorist act of UAPA, there are still voices who oppose the existence and application of these rules. We now live in a free country where the citizens are guaranteed the right to freedom of speech, criticism and organization by the Constitution. The oppressed citizens have not surrendered their right to protest; they continue expressing their voices following the democratic means. The apex court of the country is taking note of the misuse of these laws and asking questions about their essence in a democratic country.

Despite being subjected to systemic oppression for his practice of emancipatory pedagogy in Brazil Paulo Freire critiqued the “neo-liberal fatalism” and observed, in his path-breaking *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) that no force can determine the course of history since human history is all about possibilities, and “we can demystify the evil in this perverse fatalism that characterizes the neoliberal discourse in the end of this century”. It is very unlikely that communism, at least the way it was practised in the erstwhile Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, or the way it is practised in China or North Korea now, is the way to freedom of the oppressed primarily because of their hegemonic nature and denial of citizenship. These socio-political orders might be able to provide some kind of material comfort to their populations but they essentially deny individual freedom and imprison peoples’ creative critical faculties. Peoples’ craving for an aesthetic life, which is as fundamental as ontological needs, cannot be met in any authoritarian, disciplining socio-political order. Alternatively, a social-democratic model, which has been successfully put in practice in the Scandinavian countries for decades, and which look more humane, could be the goal to achieve.

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Commemorating two Pioneering Modern Sociologists of India

(Prof. Yogendra Singh and Prof. Arvind Manilal Shah)

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Introduction

There are a number of learned and respected people around the globe who lost their lives due to Covid-19 and its socio-psychological effect. During this pandemic time, we lost numerous intellectuals whose contributions will remain unforgettable in the future. The two renowned Indian sociologists Prof. Yogendra Singh and Prof. Arvind Manilal Shah passed away during the peak of the pandemic. They will always be remembered for their contributions toward the indigenization of sociology. This is a modest attempt to write briefly about them and express a deep sense of respect and gratitude.

Yogendra Singh (1932-2020)

Professor Yogendra Singh passed away during the peak of the lockdown period of the pandemic at his Delhi residence on 9th May 2020 after a massive cardiac arrest. He was born on 2nd November 1932 in a rural Zamindar family of Chowkhara village in Basti district, U. P. He completed his Post Graduation and PhD from Lucknow University. He was the student of eminent sociologists like, D. P. Mukerji, Radha Kamal Mukherjee, D. N. Majumder and A. K. Saran. He started his early career in teaching from Institute of Social Science Agra, Rajasthan University, Jodhpur University and finally become the main architect of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems at JNU.



Prof. Singh was one of the iconic Indian sociologists who established sociology as a respectable discipline within the realm of Indian social sciences. His writings cover the diverse fields of themes and perspectives.

His pioneering contribution to Indian sociology is concerned with modernization, tradition, cultural change, social stratification, media, identity and globalisation. His outstanding book, *Modernization of Indian Tradition: A Systematic Study of Social Change* (1973) opened up a new perspective in Indian sociology. Mukhopadhyay writes that the strength of this book is its ability to employ the universalistic framework of modernization with a keen eye to the historical specificities of changes in India (Mukhopadhyay 2020).

He is also credited with other remarkable works like, *Essay on Modernization in India* (1978), *The Image of Man: Ideology and Theory in Indian Sociology* (1984), *Indian Sociology: Social Conditioning and Emerging concerns* (1986), *The Sociology of Culture* (1991), *Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience* (1993), *Social Stratification and Change in India* (1997), *Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalisation* (2000), *Ideology and Theory in Indian Sociology* (2004), edited series on *Social Science: Communication, Anthropology and Sociology* (2010), *Indian Sociology: Development and Change, Vol. 2* (2014), *Indian Sociology: Identity, Communication and Culture, vol-3* (2014). His research works were published in several national and international journals. He had supervised the PhD theses of some well-known contemporary sociologists of the country like, K.L Sharma, P.K Bose, Dipankar Gupta, J.S. Gandhi and so on.

Prof. Singh's long-standing colleague and eminent sociologist, T.K. Oommen remarked that Prof. Singh extricated the orientation of Indian sociology from the shadow of British social anthropology and made it what we call modern Indian sociology. Gupta in his recent article on tributes to Prof. Singh mentions that he was a great home-grown social science theorist who could hold his own against the best anywhere in the world. He was not a nativistic propagandist who would Indianise social science, strong believer in historicising social theorist and contextualising concepts (Gupta 2020).

Going by his writings one can understand that he was neither a Marxist nor a functionalist. He used an integrated approach to understand and investigate modernity, cultural change and social stratification in India. K. L. Sharma his first doctorate student has categorized Prof. Singh's sociological approaches into five major theoretical orientations. These are: a) Comparative-historical approach, b) Logico-philosophical approach, c) Structural-functional approach d) Philosophico-sociological approach and e) Statistical-positivistic approach (Sharma 2020: 29).

Apart from teaching, he was actively involved with several administrative institutions such as, Planning Commission, ICSSR, he was UGC's National convenor on sociology to formulate a committee for preparation of syllabus, distinguished member of Indian Sociological Society etc. He was also a visiting faculty at McGill University and Stanford University during his days in Jaipur and later he travelled around fifty countries on academic assignments. He received several awards for contributions to Indian sociology, including Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indian Sociological Society in 2007 and Best Social Scientist award from the government of Madhya Pradesh.

Prof. Singh will be remembered for his simple demeanor, unassuming behavior, fine intellect, his work on the historical roots of Indian sociology and his patronage of Indian institutions of science and critical learning (Mukhopadhyay 2020).

Arvind Manilal Shah (1931-2020)

Professor A.M. Shah passed away on 7th September 2020, due to sudden heart attack in Surat. He was born on 7th August 1931 in Vaso, Gujarat. He had pursued his Master's and PhD from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1955. He was the first doctoral student of renowned social anthropologist M.N. Srinivas, with whom he later worked as a colleague in Delhi University. Prof. Shah had started the journey of his career from his own M.S. University of Baroda concluded it in Delhi School of Economics, DU.



During his under graduate life in 1952 he accompanied M.N. Srinivas on field work in Rampura village, Mysore for two months and by the end of Post-graduation he already had published two research papers in Economic Weekly (now EPW) and journal of Maharaja Sayajrao University in 1955 (Patel & Lobo 2021). His work on family and kinship, caste, sect and Hinduism and recent historical sociology have been extremely influential. One could understand his work through his creative skill in writing articles related to history with sociological facts. He was much influenced by M.N. Srinivas which can be seen from his preference to be called a social anthropologist rather than a sociologist.

Prof. Shah's most significant works are *Household Dimension of Family in India: A Field Study in a Gujarat Village and a Review of Others*

Studies (1973), which is widely recognized as a landmark study on Indian family. His other crucial works are, *The Family in India: Critical Essays* (1998), *Exploring India's Rural Past: A Gujarat Village in Early Nineteenth Century* (2002), *The Grassroots of Democracy: Field Studies of Indian Elections* (2007), *Structure of Indian society: Then and Now* (2010/2019 2nd ed.), *The Structure of Indian society* (2012), *The Household and Family in India* (2014), *Sociology and History* (2017), *The Legacy of M. N. Srinivas: His Contributions to Sociology and Social Anthropology in India* (2019). And his other writings with co-authors include, *Social Structure and Change vol-1 to 5*, (co-authors with B.S. Baviskar and E. A. Ramaswamy 1998), *Understanding Indian Society: Past and Present* (co-authors with B. S. Baviskar and T. Patel 2011). *Essays on Suicide and Self-Immolation* (Indian Anthropology 1886-1936, with Lancy Lobo as co-author, 2018), and *Anthropological explorations in East and Southeast Asia* (with Lancy Lobo as co-editor 2020) were his recent works.

Janaki Abraham writes that Prof. Shah was always open to discuss the societal issues, at any time. Kinship and family studies was one of the significant work done by him where he has conceptually clarified how a keen ethnographic eye could understand the basic concepts and transformation (Abraham 2021). According to Patel and Bhardwaj, 'He was a meticulous researcher, teacher and research guide, he would painstakingly read the drafts of his students and colleague's papers because he believed that scholarship is always enriched with comments and criticism. Almost all his PhD students' theses have been published by reputed publishers' (Patel and Bhardraj 2020: 637).

Prof. Shah has been honored with several distinguished awards by various institutions such as Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indian Sociological Society (2009), Swami Pranavananda Award by the UGC, the Distinguished Service Award by the University of Delhi and Prestigious Malcolm Adiseshiah Award (2020). He held fellowships of various reputed foreign universities such as, Centre for Advanced Studies in Behavior Science Stanford, University of Chicago, Institute of Development Studies Sussex and University of New England.

Professor A. M. Shah will be remembered in the future for his remarkable contribution in the field of joint family, household, caste, religion and more recently on historical sociological studies.

Conclusion

The perspectives of both the scholars have always enlightened us on how Indian sociology has developed its own unique discourses without importing the western sociological ideas. Both were the third-generation Indian sociologists who spent their life's most valuable time to understand the Indian sociological tradition. We have lost two visionary sociologists in this pandemic time whose contributions and efforts to reorient and modernise Indian sociology will never be forgotten. Both of them were globally reputed contemporary sociologists. They will be always with us through their intriguing writings, which have enriched Indian sociology immensely. They are true pioneers of modern Indian sociology.

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Remembering Prof. Partha N. Mukherji

Professor Partha Nath Mukherji, an honourable member of the advisory committee of our journal *Social Trends*, passed away on 12th February 2021 in Delhi. He was a distinguished sociologist of India, who made significant contributions to Indian sociology.

Born in Gaya on 3rd September 1940 Partha Nath began his professional life as a research scholar at the Gandhian Institute of Studies in Varanasi and where he worked on 'Gram Dan Movement' in Bihar. He had a long professional career serving in several reputed institutes like Patna University, Delhi University, JNU, and Indian Statistical Institute (Kolkata).

Professor Partha Nath Mukherji was the director of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and later worked in the Council for Social Development, New Delhi. He held the position of S. K. Dey Chair Professor and subsequently Professor Emeritus in the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. He also enjoyed the position of Senior Fellow in the prestigious Nehru Museum and Library, New Delhi. He was the president of Indian Sociological Society during 2004-05.

Professor Mukherji's contribution to sociology covers a wide range of fields and subjects. He is particularly remembered for his writings on Gandhian Gram Dan movement, peasant (Naxalite) movement, Panchayati Raj and social development, sociology of agrarian relations, nationalism and nation building, research methodology, and indigeneity in social sciences. Even in his advanced age he was seriously academically active, researching problems of land acquisition and industrialisation in West Bengal. Partha Mukherji was a great advocate of empirical sociology. He had a life long engagement with the 'idea of field', 'necessity of fieldwork' and 'knowledge of field' and this is reflected in all his writings.

Prof. Mukherji nursed great faith in the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and, at the same time, he was a true Gandhian in his life style and thinking. A person of pleasant personality, he was a true well wisher of the sociology department of NBU and had a life-long empathy for the people of Naxalbari, his old field spot. With his death the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University has lost a well wisher and its journal *Social Trends* an esteemed advisor.

Rajatsubhra Mukhopadhyay
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Note to the contributors

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Published by: *The Registrar,*
University of North Bengal,
Dist. Darjeeling, W.B. - 734013
Printed by: *The University Press,*
University of North Bengal