SOCIAL TRENDS

Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी

University of North Bengal

Accredited by NAAC with Grade B++

Status of the Journal

Contact

SOCIAL TRENDS

Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी

University of North Bengal

Accredited by NAAC with Grade B++

SOCIAL TRENDS

Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

The Bengal Intellectuals

Sanjay K. Roy
Professor, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University
Email: sanroy0015@gmail.com

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

"Where The Mind Is Without Fear" – Rabindranath Tagore

I

If everybody is *homo politicus* and if power or domination concerns every single individual and relation, how do the intellectuals, the intellectually advanced section of society, respond to it? Being the embodiment of desires, interests, purposes, or aspirations, the intellectuals of society often take a calculated stand vis-à-vis power, make value compromises, and, thus, offer themselves as objects of domination. Foucault argued that "there must be elements of fraud, illusion, pretences involved in this" trade-off. The other side of the dialectics is that there is no power without "resistances", since

ii

desires and interests drive us to make compromises, the "will to freedom" also constitutes an integral part of our relation with power since nobody likes to live in perpetual unfreedom. Therefore, "truth" and "freedom" cannot be excluded from power and domination. The core argument in Foucault's interpretation of power and domination is that notwithstanding our desire for freedom, there can be no liberation from the given set of practices of power. In modern time, Foucault argues, power operates on the subjects by false promises of "liberty" and "truth" and make us collaborate in the process of our "subjectivation" or self-formation. Subjugation proceeds by disguises and masks, and the subjects (the intellectuals in specific) are made the partners in the techniques of truth production. As Foucault says:

> There can only be possible exercise of power with a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. This is the case of every society, but I believe that in ours the relationship between power, right and truth is organized in a highly specific fashion…. I would say that we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we must speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess to or discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth; it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth (Foucault 1980: 39).

The exercise of truth production thus happens within the bounds of the truth or discourse of the regime of the time. Foucault thus suggests that we can only raise the banner of truth outside the regime's limits if we do it for another regime and are ready to take some risks. Hence, liberation in the name of "truth" could only be substituting another power system. According to Foucault (1980), thus, the intellectuals of the time either work for the reproduction of truth within the limits of the existing power/knowledge discourse or, with some risk, work for the production of an alternative discourse outside the existing power/knowledge frame.

Bengal has a long and glorious tradition of producing great intellectuals with influential critical minds who have left their mark on the modern Indian history of social and political transformation. In the recent past, the Bengal intellectuals displayed an unprecedented show of unity in their protest against the Left Front Government's efforts to acquire land for the capitalists to

set up industries in Singur and Nandigram. The high point of their protest was a massive public rally organized in Kolkata following the killing of 14 (including two women) protesting farmers in Nandigram on March 14, 2007. In 2011, the Bengal intellectuals, although not an ideologically homogenous group in any sense, displayed their emotive unity in public, which helped bring about the fall of an otherwise indomitable Left Front regime that firmly occupied the seat of power for three and a half decades, from 1977 to 2011.

The Bengal intellectuals had placed a high hope on the new political formation led by Trinamool Congress (TMC), which, they thought, would do sane politics, free Bengal of the "vices of Left rule," and work for setting Bengal on the path of progress and development; they hoped that the democratic ideals would be restored and Bengal would soon move forward in political, economic, social and cultural fronts with guaranteed democratic, creative and aesthetic freedom. However, right within the first term (2011-2016) of the rule of the new regime, the same Bengal intellectuals, who had played a significant part in influencing public opinion for the change, became primarily disillusioned with the "governmentality"[1] of the new regime and had them split into multiple groups and factions while taking multiple and conflicting political positions vis-à-vis the ruling party. The purpose of the present paper is to examine the fast-changing political discourses of the Bengal intellectuals post-2011.

II

For Antonio Gramsci, 'anyone whose function in society is primarily that of organizing, administering, directing, educating or leading others' is an intellectual (Gramsci 1988: 300). These intellectuals include teachers, clergies, philosophers, scientists, industrial engineers, and managers, all constituents of the middle-class. In modern industrial or capitalist societies of the West, Gramsci identified two types of intellectuals: "traditional intellectuals" and "organic intellectuals" The traditional intellectuals are composed of the managerial class, the media persons and the bourgeois intellectuals, and the group of artists and writers, and philosophers who are detached from the masses or the subaltern classes and indifferent to their problems and antagonistic towards their struggle; the traditional intellectuals operate through different routes of culture, education, and media and are active in consolidating the bourgeois hegemony; they help to generate ideological support for the ruling classes and, thus, help the reproduction of

the capitalist order. Gramsci (1988: 300-322) argued[2] that in order to win the class struggle, the subaltern classes have to win the ideological war, and in this task, they need their intellectuals, the organic intellectuals, who would share the sufferings of the subaltern classes and connect to them with a great deal of empathy and educate them about the modus operandi of the capitalist social, economic and cultural order. As members allied to the subaltern classes, these intellectuals would educate and guide the proletariat during class struggle; they would lead them to draw an objective consciousness of their lives and educate them with a philosophical understanding of the social order. Organic intellectuals are not the exterior mover of feelings and passions but active participants in particular life as constructors, organizers, and permanent persuaders. Their organic leadership makes the masses aware of their situations, unite them in a coherent moral awareness, and injects a political will for the class revolution. They play a lead role in waging a cultural battle against the oppressors. According to Gramsci, traditional intellectuals could also be a part of the struggle but must first be oriented with the proletarian consciousness. They have to be ready to enter into the world of the oppressed and ready to accept the socialist setup, dedicate himself or themselves totally to the cause and be ready to renounce all elements of bourgeois ideology.

Gramsci, being a revolutionary, gave the intellectuals a unidirectional role, i.e., the historical role in the class struggle to elevate the working class from the stage of "class in itself" to "class for itself," following Marx, to provide intellectual leadership in winning the ideological war in the class struggle. However, in post-modern neo-liberal times, this expectation about the role of the intellectuals is challenging to meet primarily for three reasons. First, with the rise of Fascism and Nazism in post-World War 1 Europe, we have seen how the intellectuals sided with the reactionaries and helped legitimize such inhuman oppressive ideologies intellectually. Later, we saw a group of intellectuals in the Stalinist USSR was used, often against their will, to legitimize the State oppression; a large body of White intellectuals in South Africa actively contributed to the construction and legitimation of Apartheid; in present-day India, a group of Indian scientists, educationists, social scientists accord legitimacy to Hindutva discourse. These concrete historical instances prove that at least a section of intellectuals can play a reactionary role while siding with the power of the time, either willingly for rewards or unwillingly to save their lives. Second, the "intellectuals "are often not known for their high moral standards as they are often seen acting as self-seekers while making serious moral compromises in their role as "active citizens" (to use the Habermasean phrase[3]) in reproducing

the oppressive ruling regimes. Third, in post-modern times, the essence of Enlightenment or Marxism as a means to the liberation of the masses from all kinds of oppression has been seriously questioned by Michel Foucault and many scholars after him; for them, adherence to a particular discourse or to be an organic part of any political formation is equivalent to living in perpetual unfreedom, which, by implication, leads to intellectual slavery. For him, living without intellectual freedom amounts to the death of the intellectual and her/his creativity.

Notwithstanding all these decentring effects of post-modernism and growing acceptance of the ideals of pluralism and tolerance, there is always a social expectation that the intellectuals of the time will take a moral, reasoned, selfless, and objective position vis-à-vis the forces in power, especially when the powerful political forces are out to oppress, repress, deceive and colonize the masses, the powerless. Since the "intellectuals" represent the enlightened section of society, there will always be an expectation that they would help the ordinary people, who are less educated and more vulnerable, and would lead them by setting high moral standards; the masses would always look up to the intellectuals to set examples and help them to draw an objective understanding of the social, economic and political forces that destabilize the life and livelihood of the ordinary people. In sum, the intellectuals of the time did not have to agree in their assessment of the political issues. However, they have a bounden responsibility to examine everything analytically, objectively, and critically, which would have an educative impact on the masses.

III

In India, in modern times, the British rule, the spread of Western education, the legacy of social reform movements, class movements, movements for India's freedom, the spread of Marxism and other streams of Western philosophy and rich world literature together contributed to the formation of Bengal intellectuals, who, in turn, helped the formation of urban civil society. Historically, Bengal intellectuals have taken a close interest in politics, both in the freedom struggle in the colonial period and post-Independence "democratic" politics. However, their interest in politics found expression in different, at times conflicting, discourses and directions, namely, Hindu nationalism, Islamic nationalism, liberalism, and Marxism. In post-Independence West Bengal, the two dominant groups were the liberal intellectuals having a link with the Indian National Congress. This party ruled Bengal until 1977 (with a brief interruption in the late 1960s), and the

Left intellectuals associated with the constituent parties of the Left Front ruled Bengal from 1977 to 2011.

Notwithstanding the "vices of Left rule", the misadventures in Singur and Nandigram, which, in my opinion, should and could have been avoided, a large part of the Bengal intellectuals who grew up with orientation in Left politics remained faithful to the leftist (not necessarily Marxist) ideology and the Left Front. They were either demure or critical about the "signs of decay of left politics" in the hands of the Left Front but preserved, rightly or wrongly, the conviction that the left leaders were essentially honest and "left politics" is the only option; they were, by and large, convinced that the future of Bengal is not safe in the hands of the "non-left" political formations made up of politicians with "suspect" political lineage, credibility, moral standard, and intention. Within this broad category of intellectuals, there were two distinct sub-categories: (1) a large section of educationists, writers, painters, reporters, play writers and actors, doctors, officers, and the organized-sector employees continued as the organic intellectuals of the left parties, particularly the CPI(M); many of course surrendered their party membership to register their protest against its vices, and (2) an even greater section of intellectuals never became the party members but were ideologically propped towards left politics and a wide range of left parties. Although over the years, particularly after 2011, when the Left Front lost the State Assembly election to TMC, the left intellectuals lost much of their visibility and influence on the ordinary people. Some of them have even switched camps, a large majority of the left intellectuals remained ideologically Left and connected to different left political formations. They are active in the media, intellectual writings, and the Left parties' frontal mass organizations. Their space of operation, however, has dramatically shrunk with the shrinking of the democratic space and with the growing and nude attack on Constitutional rights, especially the Right to freedom of speech and the Right to organization. The critical and rebellious voices, the movement of the working classes, and other depressed classes have lost much of their sting while facing the brutality of the repressive state apparatuses. The fast erosion of democratic space is happening alongside the popularization of the neo-liberal selfish hedonism and the combined threat of an autocratic State and Hindutva nationalism. The crony capitalists have joined hands with power to unsettle the life, livelihood, and free and creative space of the masses and critical minds.

Carrying forward a solid Marxist intellectual tradition, a large section of Bengal intellectuals had sided with the Left Front in its three and half

decades in power, and until the end of the last century, they used to draw a great deal of pride for their association with Left politics. The Left-leaning intellectuals were idealists per se, and they, along with the great national leaders of the first half of the last century, understood politics as a noble social responsibility where an individual has to rise above self-interest and stand by the ideology and work for social transformation for the better in tune with the famous Marxist dictum 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx 1949: 15) . However, in the later part of the Left rule, post-2006 to be specific, during the last term of the Left rule, these intellectuals, or at least some of them, started expressing open dissent against the policies and actions of the Left Front rule. There is nothing unusual for enlightened Leftist intellectuals to criticize the party in power; instead, intellectual freedom and criticism are the hallmarks of the intellectuals, the civil society, in any social-political order since they are the ones who have the ability and responsibility to be fearless in pointing out the right thing in the right time and take the society in the right direction through their creative writings and art. It is quite logical and natural for these intellectuals to be angry to see how the ideal of socialism took a pounding at the hands of the Left parties, which ruled Bengal for three and a half decades. It would also have been painful for these intellectuals to see an overall decline in the moral standards of many of the Left leaders. Hence came the alienation and disillusionment among a section of the Left-leaning intellectuals.

Let us now have a look at the shifting positions of the so-called "independent" liberal as well as Left intellectuals who worked actively for the fall of the Left Front from power and directly sided with the political combination led by Trinamool Congress between 2006 and 2011. Even some of the ultra-Left intellectuals had sympathy for the Naxalites and the SUCI, and a section of the Hindutva nationalist intellectuals joined hands in their mission to oust the Left Front from power. However, most of these intellectuals – from liberal, reactionary to Left – got disillusioned with the new ruling party in the post-2011 period and soon revised their positions. The ultra-left intellectuals got disillusioned with the TMC-led government soon after the brutal killing of their leader Kishanji, who favoured TMC over the Left Front in the 2011 election; the intellectuals associated with SUCI also withdrew support from the government as the party withdrew support. Some of the intellectuals, who were big names in their respective fields (and some of them were known for their sympathy for Leftist ideology), namely, writer Mahasweta Devi (who is no more), singers Pratul Mukhopadhyay, Kabir Suman and Nachiketa Chakraborty, poets Joy

Goswami and Subodh Sarkar, writer Abul Basar, Sirsendu Mukhopadhyay, filmmaker Gautam Ghosh, painters Jogen Choudhury and Suvaprosanna, actor Saonli Mitra (who is no more) and some others remained loyal to TMC as they were rewarded with awards and government positions; these intellectuals are undeterred by the growing criticism of the misadventures of the ruling party as they are visible in TMC party programmes and active in justifying all actions of the ruling regime. After coming into power in the State, the TMC has mastered the "art of cooption" of the educationists and the members of the civil society by giving them periodic awards, rewards, and positions.

However, a larger group of intellectuals, who were consistent in their criticism of the Left Front rule and who supported the TMC in the years leading to the 2011 State Assembly election, soon got disillusioned with the ruling regime post-2011 and were back to their critical role. These intellectuals had extended their active support to the Singur and Nandigram farmers' agitations, which were later hijacked by the TMC. The prominent among this group were Aparna Sen, Kaushik Sen, Miratun Nahar, Sankhyo Ghosh, Bolan Gagopadhyay, and Samir Aich. They were relentless in their criticism of the earlier Left Front rule, even after the earlier Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya declared that no land would be acquired in Nandigram against the farmers' will. Kabir Suman criticized the TMC-led government for a brief spell and offered resignation from Lok Sabha membership (which he did not do) but soon got back into the TMC fold. The members of this group aired their voice of criticism of the TMC regime in TV debates, newspaper essays, individual television interviews, and open letters addressed to the Chief Minister. Some other prominent persons who are very critical of the TMC regime are the retired top police officers Nazrul Islam and Pankaj Datta and prominent doctor Kunal Sarkar. They, however, need to join hands with the intellectual group led by Aparna Sen and Kaushik Sen.

Protesting unprecedented violence and loss of more than 50 lives before and after the panchayat election held on July 8, 2023, some intellectuals released an open letter, which they had written to the Chief Minister of West Bengal, articulating their political stand in no uncertain terms. The letter, which was released at an event in Mahabodhi Society on July 20, reads:

> In the last 37 days, 52 people have died due to the panchayat polls. Many people are missing. As Chief Minister and Home Minister of West Bengal, you (CM Mamata Banerjee) cannot deny this

responsibility in any way. Without denying the constitutional responsibility of the Election Commission, it can be said that the responsibility for the current anarchy lies mainly with the West Bengal government and you. The central forces and the Election Commission must depend on the local administration.

The letter further said:

Let the government elected by the people take the responsibility of protecting the State's lives, livelihood, and property by immediately introducing an impartial administrative system in this blood-bathed West Bengal

At the event, Aparna Sen also hit out at other political parties, calling them "corrupt." She said:

There is no democracy left in this country. After a few days, it may not even be possible to talk like this. I am talking about all the political parties, including the ruling party of our State. Furthermore, those who are not corrupt do not win any seats.

In the last sentence of her speech, 'And those who are not corrupt, they do not win any seats,' she probably hinted to the Left parties, which she considered "not corrupt."

The most notable point about these intellectuals is that they do not side with any political party or alliance. However, they are also critical of the Hindutva politics of the BJP. In order to justify their support for TMC and change in the 2011 election, they argue that the CPI(M) did enough wrong to be ousted from power, but we never wanted the kind of change that the TMC regime has brought about. They also argue that 'we cannot support the CPIM-led alliance of Left parties since the memory of their misrule and the atrocities perpetrated by them are still fresh in the memory of the people of Bengal .'Participating in a TV debate, Kunal Sarkar and Kaushik took a critical dig at the misrule of the present ruling regime, but they limited their role to "criticism only" and refused to outline how to bring about a political change now; their stanch looked "cynical, confusing, misleading and narcissist"; they seemed to take pride of their critical and moral role and were evasive about taking responsibility. If they were serious about their will to change, they should have outlined how to bring about the change, which they refused to do even after being asked by one in the audience to clarify their political position. They rather state that all existing political parties are equally bad. In the 2021 State Assembly election, these intellectuals again became active with the "no vote to BJP" slogan, which, in effect, helped polarization of Bengal voters in TMC and BJP camps and

helped the eclipse of the Left-Congress alliance in the State Assembly. These intellectuals are thus the masters in hiding their political face to help TMC sustain power in the State.

On July 26, 2023, a few TMC intellectuals, namely, the singer Kabir Suman, the writer Abul Basar, painter Jogen Choudhury and dramatist-politician Arpita Ghosh, met in a press conference to counter another group of intellectuals, led by filmmaker Aparna Sen, writer Miratun Nahar, activist Bolan Gongopadhyay, actor Kaushik Sen and many others, who openly supported Mamata during the Nandigram and Singur resistance movements but had now turned into fierce critics of Mamata. All these Bengal intellectuals, who are big names in their respective fields and icons of contemporary urbanite Bengali culture, along with many others, namely, painter Subhaprasanna, poet Joy Goswami and Subodh Sarkar, singer Naciketa Chakraborty, singer Pratul Mukhopadhyay seem to be solidly in support of the TMC regime. The intellectuals who support the TMC regime are the ones who (1) occupy different salaried positions offered by the Government of West Bengal, (2) receive occasional awards, honour, and privileges from the State Government, and (3) occupy seats alongside the Chief Minister on the Government and TMC party programmes and (4) deliver statements glorifying the "development initiatives" of the State Government and counter the critics in public, in media. On TV debates, they justify their support for the TMC regime in the name of "massive development," which was absent in the earlier Left regime. They make efforts to justify their political stand morally, which appear like acts of self-deception and deception of the ordinary people. The members of civil society, the intellectuals, thus, devalue their moral standards in their fake acts of justification of a brand of politics that is otherwise indefensible; they probably cease to be an integral part of civil society by forsaking their critical stanch vis-à-vis the State power. In Foucault's terms, they allow themselves to be dominated by power and collaborate with the latter to produce truth. These intellectuals may be unsure about their creative writings and art and live in some livelihood crises and identity crises. They agree to collaborate in the power/knowledge project of reproduction of the ruling class discourse as a way out.

There is another group among the Bengal intellectuals, constituted of the university and college teachers, scientists, and media persons, which has been growing in the recent decades alongside the rise of Hindutva forces in power at the Centre and in different States. These intellectuals are actively collaborating in the "power/knowledge project" while reproducing

and consolidating Hindutva discourse by propagating pre-science and rewriting Indian history. This section of Bengal intellectuals attends the meetings of the BJP and RSS and pledge to propagate the Hindutva ideology and help the BJP by rationalizing its policies like the repletion of Article 370[4], the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, the place of birth of lord Rama, and so on and the "scientists" among the group would write "research papers" glorifying the "great scientific tradition" in ancient India (one example being the significant surgery on the head of lord Ganesh). This group of intellectuals is inspired by the idea that they would have "a share of the cake" since the BJP is in power at the Centre and if the same party comes to power in the State.

Lastly, the most dangerous constituent of the Bengal intellectuals are the ones who claim to be "apolitical"; they are the masters in hiding their political face because they are essentially manipulative; they are calculative and "play safe" in not making political enemies and keep their options open in striking "secret deals" with the powerful in exchange of short-term favours and positions. It is difficult to believe these intellectuals claim to be "apolitical" despite growing up in a multi-party democracy. They, in essence, are the self-seekers as they are adamant about avoiding their more significant social responsibility; they forget about their more significant educative role and remain silent when the moral standards of the politicians and the democratic values wither. In Foucault's terms, by not choosing to be critical, this category of intellectuals accord legitimacy to the ruling class power/ knowledge project.

IV

The bipolar and conflicting roles of the traditional and organic intellectuals, either supporting or opposing the bourgeois interests, which Antonio Gramsci envisaged, now look simplistic as the intellectuals in the neo-liberal social order seem to work with conflicting and multiple interests. The Left intellectuals are unsure about their ideological and political vision because they have not put in enough effort to update themselves theoretically and philosophically since they take the party and its assessment of the situation as sacrosanct. They must show boldness and clarity in framing and propagating their discourse for an alternative regime. The second group of intellectuals, who display their extraordinary talents in different fields of creative art, are personally honest but suffer from narcissism and are in the habit of attacking all political parties; they are genuine in their criticism

of the ruling party but are masters in creating confusions in the common public, and thus indirectly work for production of truth which helps the same political party in power which they criticize. They need to understand that if they do not have a party, they can side with a political formation that could bring about political and social changes. They do not understand that in a multi-party democracy, only a political party or alliance of political parties can trigger political changes; they do not understand that every political party can potentially accumulate the elements of alienation.

The other two groups of intellectuals are rank opportunists as they do not adhere to any political ideology, and they lack a critical, philosophical, or objective understanding of the neo-liberal governmentality; they put their selfish interests over all other things and prowl for an expedient and rewarding political position as they shift their political allegiance from extreme Left to extreme Right at will; they make wilful compromises with the political parties in State power or Central government for a position or reward. They are undeterred by what the ordinary people think about them.

What we do observe about the Bengal intellectuals is that they fail in their educative role (which Gramsci expected of the intellectuals), they fail in their role of enlightened philosophers, and they fail in their role as the precursors of progressive social transformation; they do not need to join political parties, but they must take a clear political stand not driven by narcissism or self-interest but for making the social order better; else, they will be held responsible for the falling standards of democratic politics.

Following Foucauldian discourse on power/knowledge, we cannot expect the intellectuals to be free of their instinctive desires and interests and their collaborative role in the production of the truth of the regime; however, we cannot give up on the expectation that at least they would keep alive their "will to freedom" in the mode of "self-care" and would work for the production of truth for an alternative regime, thus keeping the dialectics of democratic politics alive. Let us recall that Jurgen Habermas has never given up on "the critical role" of the intellectuals and their role in keeping debates alive in their efforts to the production of truth counter to the "truth of the neo-liberal regime" (Habermas 1989; Kellner 1987: 152-183).

Notes

1. "Governmentality" is a term popularized by Michel Foucault, meaning "the art of governance" of a political regime; it also means

the way the power-knowledge combines practice "subjectivation" or formation of the subjects. (See Michel Foucault, Security, Territory and Population, 2007: 87-134).

2. See 'Intellectuals and Education,' Chapter X, in Gramsci Reader 1988: 300-322.

3. In the Habermasian perspective, active citizens are 'integrated into the political community like parts in a whole; that is, in such a manner that they can only form their personal and social identity in this horizon of shared traditions and intersubjectively recognized institutions.' (See, Helen Lawson, 'Active Citizenship in Schools and the Community,' The Curriculum Journal 12.2 (2001): 166; Also see, Habermas's The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate (Cambridge: Polity, 1994). In the present Indian context, Indian history is being rewritten as the history of an "imagined Hindu nation." The young minds in schools are being taught to be active citizens of the "imagined nation," as Anderson construed the discourse (See Giroux 1998: 181-182; Taylor 1984: 152-183).

4. On August 6, 2019, Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which granted special status to the Stte of Kashmir and some special rights to the Kashmiris, was effectively repealed through a Presidential order on the recommendation of both Houses of Parliament.

References

Express News Service. 2023. 'None of us wanted this change: Aparna Sen speaks out against Mamata on poll violence'. Kolkata | July 21, 2023, 05:29 IST (Source: https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/none-of-us-wanted-this-change-aparna-sen-speaks-out-against-mamata-on-poll-violence-8851582/ accessed on August 1, 2023, at 11 AM).

Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, Territory and Population*. Michel Senellart (ed.). New York: Palgrave.

Giroux, Henry A. 1998. 'The Politics of National Identity and the Pedagogy of Multiculturalism in the USA.' In David Bennett (ed.)

Multicultural states: Rethinking difference and identity. London: Routledge.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1988. 'Intellectuals and Education'. In David Forgacs (ed.) *A Gramsci Reader*. London: Lawrence Wishart: 300-322.

Habermas, Jurgen. 1989. *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jurgen. 1994. *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate*. Cambridge: Polity.

Kellner, Douglas. 1997. 'Intellectuals, the New Public Spheres, and Technopolitics.' *New Political Science*, 41- 42 (Fall): 169-188.

Lawson, Helen. 2001. 'Active Citizenship in Schools and the Community.' *The Curriculum Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2.

Marx, Karl and F. Engels. [1949] 1969. *Selected Works, Volume One*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, Moscow: 13-15.

Taylor, Charles. 1984. 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth'. *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2: 152-183.

1

Escaping the Revolution: Interpreting French Migration after 1789

Anjan Saha
Assistant Professor of History, Maulana Azad College, Kolkata
Email: <u>saha.anjan76@gmail.com</u>

Abstract: *The French Revolution of 1789 is regarded to be an epoch making event – a watershed in history with ample justification. However, the incident triggered a massive wave of political migration. Émigré (French for emigrant) from all levels of French society dispersed throughout Europe in the 1790s. Politically speaking, these 'enemies' of the Revolution belonging overwhelmingly to the Aristocracy and Clergy, attempted to mobilize their host societies against the Revolution, which grew increasingly radical as it spilled across French boundaries. The response of the Revolutionary France was swift and brutal, as the emigres were stripped of their titles, property, rights and promised an immediate visit to guillotine should they dared to return. At the same time they became agents in a multifaceted process of cultural transfer, as part of their attempt to earn their livelihood in exile. They had demonstrated that there were alternatives to the revolutionary process outside of France, before most of them returned to their motherland under Napoleon Bonaparte.*

Keywords: Emigres, Jacobites, Directory, Huguenots, Ancien Regime, Third Estate, Jacobin.

Introduction

The exile of 150,000 French people in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789 constitutes the first instance of political emigration on a European, if not indeed a global scale. *Émigrés* of the French Revolution left their homeland because they eschewed the political development in France or in reaction to the increasing pressure of political exclusion. They dispersed throughout practically all European states from Sweden to Sicily and from Portugal to Russia, as well as to the fledgling United States and to French,

British, and Spanish colonial territories (Jasanoff 2009). They were a politically active minority that made a very significant difference – simply by not being defeated and being able to return. They fought to assume their right to be French and to live safely in a hostile France, where the Republicans used their majority vote to condemn the *émigrés* to death. This group braved the perils of exile, experienced poverty and misery to stand up for their right to belong in a Nation, determined to blame them for all the evils of absolute monarchy. Some did not return from emigration, dying from exhaustion, in childbirth, of old age and stress, or in war serving with the armies of the allies against Republican troops.

On account of its political character and geographical scope, this migration differs from two similarly large predecessors: the emigration of French Huguenots[1] after - the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and that of the Scottish and Irish Jacobites[2] following the Glorious Revolution of 1688/1689 (Ruymbeke 2006). Whereas confession was the decisive factor for the Protestant Huguenots' emigration, the Catholic Jacobites were more strongly motivated by political considerations. Accordingly, both groups sought exile in Europe and in part in the Atlantic world. Another difference lies in the temporal dimension: whereas the Huguenots integrated relatively quickly and enduringly into their host society, the Jacobites focused upon their political activities until the mid-18th century more than on returning home. Nevertheless, the latter's initiatives missed the mark over many generations, in part because they were linked to the restoration of the fallen Stuart dynasty. In contrast, *émigrés* of the French Revolution succeeded in large part in returning home - and not only on the coattails of the Bourbon royal family, which returned in 1814 after having been overthrown in 1792, but rather from the end of the 1790s in most cases.

The peculiarity of the emigration unleashed by the French Revolution should not be overestimated when seen within a broader European and French context. For French exiles were in no way the only political *émigrés* in Europe between 1789 and 1814. When they sought refuge in Protestant territories, émigrés of the French Revolution encountered local Huguenot colonies. In Great Britain and in the British Empire, they met with American Loyalists who had opposed the rebels in the American War of Independence. In Hapsburg areas, French *émigrés* mixed with exiles from parts of the Monarchical states that were also affected by the Revolution, such as the Southern Netherlands, with the result that continuous streams of exiles flowed until the late nineteenth century. As a result, *émigrés* of similar origin met again in different places and often lived in a community of other exile groups. These interrelations began to dissolve the individual characters

of the various revolutions and the emigrations they caused. Out of the *émigré* societies arose a transnational space of political exile. Within the common self-understanding as *émigrés*, the political motives of individual groups lost their immediacy.

Composition and Leanings

The composition of the French *émigrés* is more difficult to track than the paths they followed into exile. The reason is patchy record-keeping both on the French side and in host countries. During the first years of the Revolution, emigration was not yet regulated by law in France. On the contrary, the Constitution of 1791 explicitly stipulated a right to freedom of movement. Only after Louis XVI's (1754-1793) brothers stepped up their military activities in Koblenz, were the first laws passed threatening *émigrés* with loss of property should they not return (Carpenter 2015). With the outbreak of war and the overthrow of the monarchy in 1792, these regulations became draconian: once an individual emigrated, all of his assets in France were confiscated, and his property was nationalized and sold. At the apex of the Jacobin *Terreur* (Terror), *émigrés* were declared dead for purposes of civil law; if they returned from their perpetual banishment, the death penalty awaited them. This also applied should *émigrés* fall into the hands of revolutionary troops outside of France. Thus the high mobility of *émigrés* within Europe is explained by the course of the war in the 1790s.

In order to enforce these laws, lists of *émigrés* were drawn up in their home communities, in the newly created *departements,* and by the central authorities in Paris. Yet these lists were anything but reliable. Gaps in registration, the mistaken spelling of names, and duplicate names impeded the quantification of the emigration. Even the documents of the reparations commission, established in 1825, were of limited value, as they only included *émigrés* with landholdings. Back in the 1950s, Donald Greer pioneered a social and regional classification of the *émigrés* on the basis of these sources. Greer's statistics, despite their shortcomings, continue to provide the basis for demographic conclusions about the French emigration that resolutely contradict the contemporary commonplace that it was a royalist-noble phenomenon. Of the 150,000 *émigrés*, only 17 per cent were nobles, and 25 per cent were clergy; the majority were members of the Third Estate (Greer 1951). This supposedly clear picture, however, should not lure us into accepting the apologetic argument, according to which the *émigrés* came primarily from plebeian social strata. On the one hand, numerous members of the Third Estate followed the nobles for whom they

worked into exile. In addition, there were many artisans, cooks, and musicians who lost the posts they had held in noble families in France and likewise sought to secure their livelihood via emigration. On the other hand, the considerable share (nearly 20 per cent) of farmers in particular can be explained by short-term migration over the French border, such as happened in 1793 in Alsace with the changeful course of the revolutionary wars. The implication is that emigration in numerous host territories far from France was clearly more socially exclusive than the aggregate numbers suggest. As a portion of the overall population of about 25 million, *émigrés* totalled 0.6 per cent. If the first two Estates are considered separately, however, roughly one tenth of the nobility and a whole quarter of the clergy emigrated. Therefore, emigration represented a significant and relevant phenomenon for the political and social elites of the *Ancien Regime* (Carpenter 2015).

The first *émigrés* to leave France, shortly after the storming of the Bastille, were the king's youngest brother, the *Comte d'Artois* (future Charles X, 1757-1836) and his inner circle, initially with the prospect of a short absence and in the hope of a quick containment of the Revolution. In the coming months, he was followed by many of the noble families affected by the abolition of feudal rights, and then by royalist officers in the wake of the army reforms. The 'Civil Constitution of the Clergy', which required an oath to the constitution, was the main catalyst for the emigration of high and lower clerics alike. The fundamental break has always been seen in the year 1792. The outbreak of war and above all the fall of the monarchy broadened the political spectrum of noble royalists and clerics to include constitutional monarchists in particular, who field above all for humanitarian reasons and not as a conscious repudiation of the Revolution.

Despite what would come to unite them, in particular on an average ten years stay outside France that most endured, for many it was not a completely free choice. They often had only one option that could be relied upon to leave them alive, or to keep their family intact. For many individ-uals who were not themselves heads of households, emigration had little of choice about it at all. Dependence upon the decisions of others – fathers, husbands, or other male relatives - was responsible for leaving many women and children individually subject to revolutionary proscription (Hunt 1992). Priests too, who were not officially classed as *émigrés* until the 'Law of Suspects' came into effect. There was a large cross section of people who found themselves on these lists or trapped in emi-gration through no direct political decision of their own, underscoring the point that emigration was fundamentally violent. The *Courier de Londres* clarified in November of 1792:

There are in England several thousand brave people who have not quitted France because their courage was not equal to the events, but because they were personally persecuted, against which their heroism served no purpose (Burrows 2000: 206)

By 1789 September, the Court of Artois and his émigré cohort were based in Turin (Italy) where they established a committee to organise and promote counter-revolution. Artois spent the next two years trying to convince foreign governments to raise an army and intervene in France. He also planned to hire mercenaries to snatch the king and relocate him to a safer province, where Louis could re-form "national government". Neither of these plans came to fruition. The focus of the *émigrés* political orientation was therefore the king's brothers, especially the *Comte d'Provence*. After Louis XVI's execution in 1793, he proclaimed himself regent for Louis XVII (1785-1795), still a minor, and after the latter's death in a Paris prison in 1795, in the eyes of his supporters he ascended the French throne as Louis XVIII. While these decisions may have seemed anachronistic and fictitious and while Louis XVIII (Mansel 2005) failed to be recognized for long by the great European powers, nevertheless in their self-understanding France remained, at least until Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769-1821) coup in 1799, a kingdom with an absentee monarch.

By the summer of 1791, there were sizeable *émigré* communities in London, Vienna, Hamburg, Aix-la-Chapelle and Coblenz. London was by far the largest, holding around 40,000 refugees from the revolution. Most of the London *émigré* community sought sanctuary and a return to high society; they attempted to recreate the *salons* and balls they attended back home. There were at least three French-language newspapers in London that catered for *émigrés*; the pages of these newspapers were filled with ridicule of the revolution and its leaders. The *émigrés* on the continent were more interested in bringing an end to the revolution, facilitating their return home and the reclamation of their wealth. Young nobles and former military officers were at the forefront of counter-revolutionary *émigré* armies. One of the first significant forces was *La Legion Noire* (*The Black Legion*), formed in late 1790s by Andre Riqueti. Viscount Mirabeau, younger brother of the National Assembly leader Honore Mirabeau. The German city of Coblenz became a gathering point for Counter – revolutionary military activity.

Once formed, *émigré* armies adopted an organisational structure that reflected the old society. *Chateaubriand* noted that one *émigré* army 'was composed of nobles, grouped according to [their] province. At the very end of its days, the nobility was going back to its roots and to the roots of

the monarchy, like an old man regressing to his childhood'. Despite their determination, most of *émigré* armies were failures. They were costly to organise and supply, experienced problems with internal organisation and military discipline and were not well led. The *émigré* armies reached their peak in mid-1792 when their numbers approached 25,000. In July 1792, *émigré* commanders persuaded the Duke of Brunswick to issue his famous manifesto, threatening the people of Paris with devastation if any harm came to the royal family. The *émigré* armies were supremely confident of their ability but their first forays into battle proved disastrous. In late August 1792, a 16,000-strong *émigré* force laid siege to the French town of Thionville but failed to capture it, despite outnumbering the defenders four to one. At Longwy and Verdun, the *émigrés* achieved virtually nothing. At Valmy, they arrived after the battle was over. Experienced Prussian and Austrian generals lost confidence in *émigré* battalions, finding most of their leaders militarily inept, cocky and unbearable to work with. To add to these military failures, *émigré* leaders failed to demonstrate an understanding of events in France. The revolution, for all its faults, was unlikely to be crushed with by external force. As events in 1792 showed, external threats strengthened revolutionary nationalism and provoked radical violence. They also believed that once their armies swept into France, the peasantry would welcome them with open arms and volunteer for military service. This was far from true. While many peasants in north-eastern France opposed the revolution, they had no desire to welcome back their former noble masters.

Legal Response of Revolutionary France

Penal legislation targeting the opponents of Revolution was an inevitable product of the deposition of the king, and the property of *émigrés* had already been the subject of penal taxation, then confiscation after the outbreak of war. On 23 October 1791 *émigrés* were first banished in perpetuity from French soil, and those caught on French soil were condemned to death. *Emigrés* who had hoped to return to their homes after only a short absence, were made brutally aware by the first two articles of the legislation that their exodus was permanent. From 1793 onwards they could be condemned to death on the strength of a simple identification test and put to death by local officials in complete accordance with the law and without right of representation or appeal. Their predicament was legally defined by their geographic movements, and the date they left French soil, rather than by their taking arms against the state. The Republican government made it a crime for a virtuous Frenchman not to reside on French national soil and this posed many new administrative and political

dilemmas. The codification of the émigré laws by the Convention between 28 March and 5 April 1793 marked a turning point. These émigré laws, some 200 in all, affected not only *émigrés* but friends and relatives of them, as well as public functionaries who were responsible for implementing the law. The cumulative rigidity of these laws prevented a political rapprochement taking place between *émigrés* and moderate ex-nobles within France in the critical period 1795-97. This critical lost opportunity arguably prevented the institution of a constitutional monarchy years before the eventual Restoration (Carpenter 2015).

The 28 March 1793 legislation was unsurprising in the wake of the kings execution, and amid massive alarm at provincial revolts. The *émigrés* had been tarred liberally with accusations of treachery and desertion before the outbreak of war and these had been further reinforced by the image of émigré soldiers serving along side the Revolution's enemies. Confusion, panic and paranoia surrounded the legislation stripping the *émigrés* of their political rights, possessions, families and friends. Exceptions were made for children less than fourteen years old, as long as they had not taken arms and as long as they returned within three months. In future, younger children would have to return by their tenth birthday in order to avoid being subject to the law. Persons banished and deportees were exempted as were those whose absence pre-dated 1 July 1789, as long as they were not living on enemy territory. The wives and children of government officials and diplomats were exempted, but domestic servants had to be 'habitually employed by that functionary' and had to be in the service of that employer prior to his foreign appointment. Frenchmen whose purpose for being abroad was the study of science, arts or crafts and the acquisition of new knowledge were exempted provided they were *'notoirement connus'* (publically recognized) before their departure. The crime of emigration could also be applied by association to those who had aided the *émigrés* or furthered their hostile projects; those who had sent their children abroad; those who had supplied arms, horses, munitions or financial assistance to them; those who had solicited them by promises or financial rewards; those who had knowingly hidden them or helped them to return to France; those who were respon-sible for false certificates of residence (Ibid.). The law itself initiated its own contradictions because an émigré was a criminal more because of what he or she had chosen not to do – return to France in the designated, brief, amnesty period – than for what any émigré had consciously or deliberately done in person to harm the French nation. As early as 1793, while asserting the need to bring to justice those Frenchmen prepared to take arms against the Republic, concerns were raised for those to whom

the leg-islation might be applied unjustly and without provision for appeal (requiring, as it did the execution of the sentence within twenty-four hours of the judgment). *Jean-Baptiste Michel Saladin*, a Jacobin and a lawyer, was one such individual who flagged the potential abuses. He argued fiercely for the premise of the presumption of innocence which he felt was taken away by a law which prematurely condemned the accused:

Because, if it is true that to condemn an individual to a punishment no matter which, there needs to be a moral certitude that he has violated the law, that he has commit-ted the crime against which the law has established this punishment. Without this moral certitude, the condemnation is an injustice, and its execution an act of violence (Burgess 2008: 158).

Saladin's plea to have *émigrés* whose crimes were not conclusive, transferred for trial in the ordinary courts did not gain a majority, but it echoed across the Revolutionary years. The bureaucratic haste, the euphoria of victory and the impending trial of the king, whose death Saladin voted for, all compounded to set reason and law to one side. In 1792, the Convention was already acting on the premise that Robespierre enumerated (that the government owes national protection to good citi-zens; to enemies of the people it owes only death) and he dismissed those who coun-selled caution as stupid or perverse sophists.

The same issues of guilt and innocence would receive fuller treatment under the Directory, but then too the political circum-stances dictated a negative response. 'The revolutionary tribunal made equality triumph by showing itself as severe for the porters, and for servants as for the aristocrats and financiers' (Greer 1951). Throughout the latter years of the Revolution the émigré laws could not be repealed, in part due to the immediate political threat they posed, but essentially because any re-examination of the validity of the laws questioned the foundations of the Revolution itself. If the *émigrés* were unjustly accused then the injustice was not a mat-ter of Girondin versus Jacobin or confined to the Terror, but it undermined the more universal claims of Revolution going back as far as the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789[3]. After the fall of Robespierre the laws against *émigrés* were still in force, they were still registered on the police lists, but there were few deaths. A revision of November 1794 scaled down the punishment of *émigrés* to banishment in perpetuity and the forfeiture of their possessions to the state, but still referred to them as 'atrocious men who breathed only the ruin of their country'. This perhaps had more to do with revulsion for bloodshed in the aftermath of the Terror than any revision of policy on *émigrés*. Yet while all *émigrés* were declared to be enemies of the state, as time went on, more and more people were

prepared to argue that this was not so. *Les fugitifs francias* was a term adopted in an attempt to disentangle the former from the *émigrés* or *les royalistes-aristocrates. The* term 'French fugitives' was designed to provide a category of émigré where the crime was less severe and previous good service to the Revolution taken into account.

Roederer, a lawyer and a former member of the Constituent Assembly argued that, a state cannot condemn her citizens to perpetual banishment who fled their country only because the social guarantee was insufficient to protect them from violence. Arguments like this gave rise to a certain re-examination of the crime of emi-gration and to questions about what exactly the *émigrés* were guilty of. *Roederer* did not convince the majority, but he made it clear that the émigré, he was pleading for, was a modern political refugee:

The émigré only left his country to seek war against it, the Refugee only quit-ted it when it had made war on him. The émigré has not ceased to turn his arms on France – the Refugee unarmed in France did not take up arms outside it. The émigré wanted to shed blood in our homes, the Refugee only sought an asylum – the one has brought us death, the other tried to defend himself against it (Carpenter 2015: 342).

This sort of analysis made little difference to the actual legislative condition of the *émigrés*, but in the long term it did matter. It showed in many cases that what was miss-ing was conclusive proof against the émigré not caught red handed and in that circum-stance the date of emigration was the only indicator of intent-and that was arguably a rather flimsy one.

Emigres and Host Societies

At first, the *émigrés* were largely tolerated by the authorities; for the most part, Comprehensive rules of admission did not yet exist. A special case within this practice was the Electorate of Trier, where Archbishop Clemens Wenceslaus (1739-1812) allowed Louis XVI's brothers, his nephews, to create an émigré army. Furthermore, he provided money and accommodations in Koblenz, where the number of *émigrés* approached that of local residents, and he even put a part of the city's administration into their hands.

A change occurred in admission practice in 1792. The *émigré* army dispersed after the coalition troops' failed autumn campaign, and its members increasingly headed eastwards through the Holy Roman Empire. In response, a series of German territories issued strict regulations for admission and passage through. As the case of Prussia shows, however, these orders

could barely be enforced, especially in areas along the borders. Thus, with local differences, a wide-ranging practice of toleration was established. Although the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*) decreed no regulations for the Empire as a whole, Prussia, for example, chosen to follow the admission regulations of the Hapsburg Monarchy, which predicated *émigrés'* long-term residency on their ability to provide for their own subsistence. London's rapidly growing émigré colony, with numbers in the five digits, the largest in Europe, made the domestic security situation increasingly unmanageable. Thus in 1793 British Parliament passed the Aliens Act. This law allowed suspicious individuals to be expelled - a practice that among *émigrés* especially affected the *constitutionnels* and caused a number of them to move on to the USA (Carpenter 1999). The Russian Empire tested their views to determine whether they qualified for residency, and in 1793 it required a loyalty oath to Louis XVII and to religion. This was extended to French people who had long resided in Russia as well.

Around 1800, French *émigrés* became prominent intermediaries in European cultural transfer processes for many reasons. As French exiles seeking to return home quickly, they had a political interest in mobilizing their host societies against revolutionary France. Nevertheless, after various military defeats - such as the 1792 campaign in which émigré troops played a leading role, the short-lived British capture of Toulon in 1793, and the disastrous landing of émigré troops on the Quiberon Peninsula in Brittany in 1795 - the question of securing a livelihood became more and more pressing (Mori 1997). In addition to the clergy, often living in precarious conditions, and the less affluent members of the Third Estate, now noble families increasingly fell into a financial position that made them dependent on support or forced them to take up a profession. In their favour was French culture's traditional high prestige abroad, which despite all resentment towards *émigrés* made them attractive suppliers of cultural products. Then again, locals friendly to *émigrés*, such as Edmund Burke (1729-1797), defined European exile against the background of a common civilization. 'From all those sources arose a system of manners and of education which was nearly similar in all this quarter of the globe. When a man travelled or resided for health, pleasure, business or necessity, from his own country, he never felt himself quite abroad' (Burke 1991).

A close collaboration between French and Genevan *émigrés* developed in a totally different area, namely journalistic activity. Together they criticized the expansive character of the Revolution, which was republicanizing Europe, and implored the European powers to act more decisively against advancing revolutionary troops (Burrows 2000). French *émigrés* of all political

persuasions drew parallels between the French Revolution and 17th century British history - pointing to civil war, regicide, dictatorship, restoration, and the renewed overthrow of the ruling dynasty. Different émigré groups sought to make predictions for further developments in France on the basis of fixed points in the English revolutionary cycle, utilising them variously for their own propaganda purposes. Whereas the *royalistes* interpreted the English Restoration of 1660 as a return to the *ancienne constitution*, the *monarchiens* were more eager to stress that it was a constitutional monarchy that had been re-established.

French *émigrés* took on various functions in exile according to their own political and economic interests, keeping in view the needs of their territories of exile. For Britain and Australia, it can be shown on the political level, that *émigrés* partially replaced diplomatic structures once war broke out and embassies were withdrawn from Paris. They advised and sought to influence the various governments, always with an eye to their political competitors among the émigré community. That this input was ascribed a high informational value can be seen in its transmission in diplomatic correspondences, in the archives of foreign ministries. Thanks to their networks across various parts of Europe as well as their connections to revolutionary France via relatives, friends and agents, *émigrés* provided information relevant to the war that otherwise would have been hard to come by (Ibid).

The longer exile lasted, the more pressing became the issue of securing a livelihood, as noted above. This applied first to *émigrés* of the lower Third Estate and of the lower clergy, but increasingly to the upper Third Estate and to noble *émigrés* as well. The fact that the last group took up professions is noteworthy, since in the French understanding they would have been punished with *derogeance*, the loss of their noble privileges. Nobles working as shoemakers, at times under assumed names, were as common as women and children involved in commercial activity. In sectors where state interests existed, manufactories and factories were created. In Prussia, for example, this happened in silk production but also for the purpose of agricultural innovations, as on the model estate of *Chevalier de Boufflers* (1738-1815) (Carpenter 1999). Officers, in contrast after the disbandment of the émigré army, sought employment with the coalition forces in émigré regiments and later in regular army units, especially in Austria. The A*rmee de Conde*, part of the émigré army of 1792, spent the 1790s in close formation in foreign service, relocating from the Upper Rhine to Volhynia before being set loose in Austria. *Emigrés* with professional qualifications like architects, painters and artisans established themselves in their proven milieus. Thus

the musical instrument maker *Sebastien Erard* (1752-1831) had his harp design patented in London and thenceforth, after his return to France, built his pianos with English action mechanisms. The much more famous *Elisabeth Vigee-Le Brun* (1755-1842) spent her exile between Naples and St. Petersburg painting the portraits of the European high nobility. Conversely, *émigrés* in Weimar learned painting in the local drawing school and swapped techniques and motifs (Price 2007).

As for the clergy in exile, its ancestral domain became teaching. Beginning with positions teaching French at universities like Oxford, Gottingen, and Jena; *émigrés* then worked as home teachers and private tutors, and ultimately founded large schools such as those run by the *Abbe Guy Toussaint Julien Carron* (1760-1821) in London or by the *Abbe Dominique Charles Nicolle* (1758-1835) and *Frederic Francois Xavier de Villers* (1770-1846) in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa. If what has been said so far suggests that *émigrés* consciously exploited the locals' Francophile predisposition, such becomes even clearer in the example of the French restaurants that sparked a boom in Hamburg's gastronomy sector, or the émigré theatre troupes that successfully established themselves in Brunswick and Hamburg (Mori 1997). In urban centres like London, Hamburg, Vienna, and Philadelphia, émigré salons, schools, bookstores and publishers developed quickly that, at the same time, acted as forum for discussion about events in France and helped *émigrés* affirm their identity. It was especially the *émigré* publishers and journals - in part with older roots - that turned the emigration into a component of the communications and media event that the French Revolution had become. It was described as follows by the young *Francois Rene de Chateaubriand* (1768-1848): 'Exiles resulting from human persecution is not nearly as disadvantageous to the human spirit as one might think. The healthiest honey is the one that a bee, chased from the hive, sometime produces in the desert' (Burrows 2000). Gazettes like the *London Mercure Britannique* and the *Hamburg Spectateur du Nord* found an audience among *émigrés* in Great Britain and, ultimately all over Europe, within the *Republique des lettres* (Ibid).

There is no question that the vast majority of the *émigrés* wanted to live in a France governed by a Bourbon king. The sympathetic reception of the memoirs of *Clery*, Louis XVI's confessor, when they appeared in Britain in 1793 provides proof of the horror that both the British and the French felt at the king's execution. *Emigrés* provided the written proof that the Revolution could not eradicate all trace of the aristocracy and its supporters, or their habits and ways, simply by killing the king (Doyle 2009). In the

European cities of London, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Madrid, and Lisbon; *émigrés* waited patiently imagining a better France. This imagination and hope for a different political future was the life-blood of the Emigration. It was expressed in all forms of literature from the writings of the exiled deputies of the constituent assembly like *Montlosier*, to the novels of *Madame d'Stael*, *Madame d'Souza* and Senac d'Meihan. It can also be found in the work of another later generation, affected by those who had known the experience of emigration, and written their memoirs, *Émigré* authors were not so much seeking to give a sense to the explosion of violence as to understand how the destruction of a political regime, a system of State, had been possible. A significant proportion never saw their homes again, and the only trace they felt was their writings, giving proof of a patriotic French counter-identity without which the Revolution would not have been such a truly European event. *Madame de Stael* wrote of her hero *Le Comte d'Erfeuil*:

This man had borne the loss of a very large fortune with perfect serenity. He lived by his musical talent and supported an old uncle, whom he cared for, until his death. He constantly refused the offer of money that others pressed upon him. He showed the most brilliant valour, French valour, during the war, and the most unshakable good humour in the midst of adversity (Carpenter 2015: 343).

Anatole France in *Les dieux ont soif* portrayed the émigré from the point of view of Evariste; Jacobin, judge, and someone who prided himself on the sincerity of his commitment to revolutionary ideals. He was one of the first authors to point to the fact that it was the abuse of the legal system which was significant both in the cases of the *émigrés* and of Dreyfus – and importantly what was being protected by such abuse was the political establishment. Programmatic émigré writings like *Jacques Mallet du Pan's* (1749-1800) *Considerations sur la nature de la revolution de France* (1793) were translated into various languages, sometimes more than once, and even read in France itself. *Trophime-Gerard de Lally-Tollendal's* (1751-1830) *Defense des emigres*, for example, appeared in Paris in 1797 in an edition of 40,000 copies. Key literary works included *Gabriel Senac de Meilhan's* (1736-1803) novel *L'Emigre* (1797) and *Stephanie Felicite de Genlis's* (1746-1830) *Les petits émigrés* (1798). Conversely, *émigrés* became a beloved subject especially in German and English fiction. As reviews and critical responses also show, the emigration had a substantial presence in the European public sphere, corresponding with situation on the ground in the host countries.

Return to Homeland and the Aftermath

With the end of the *Terreur*, the emigration had passed its apogee. Under the Directory (1795-1799), the first *émigrés* returned after their names were struck off from the *émigré* lists. This meant primarily *constitutionnels*, who were best able to come to terms with the Republican regime. Alter the Coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte as First Consul, swiftly had the *émigré* lists closed. Removal from the lists, however, still required an official proceeding. Only in 1802 was a wide-ranging amnesty declared; only 1,000 *émigrés*, especially the exiled monarchy and its orbit, were exempted from repatriation. Accordingly, the vast majority of *émigrés* returned to France under the Consulate, including groups supposedly loyal to the Bourbons such as the *royalistes*. As long as it had not been sold, they recovered their confiscated property. Former *émigrés* quickly found employment in the Napoleonic administration and army. After the return of the Bourbons, the emigration remained a controversial topic in both foreign and domestic politics. On the one hand, the period of emigration seemed to repeat itself during Napoleon's *Cent-Jours*[4] in 1815, as the royal family and several thousand supporters settled in Flemish Ghent as an *émigré* colony with clear parallels to the 1790s. On the other hand, the property transfers of the Revolution, embodied in what had been done with *émigré* property, contributed decisively to political polarisation in the 1820s. In 1825, both legislative houses passed a law that renounced property restitution but still recognized the *émigrés* material claims in the form of indemnification payments.

Along with the historical analysis of the Revolution and its dissemination in media, and along with the wide-reaching political mobilisation of European societies and the effects of the Revolution's wars, French emigration is one of the decisive factors in Europe's experience with revolution in the final decade of the 18th century. For European societies, the impact of the French Revolution was immediately felt at home. The *émigrés* had to secure their everyday survival. They acted as politicians and diplomats, as agents in cultural transfer. As part of larger migration movements in the "Age of Revolutions", they established networks with other émigré groups. They thus cannot be reduced to the role of historical losers, as they were seen by adherents of the Revolution and have been seen by some historians. On the contrary, exile provided an alternative to the ever radicalising Revolution and presented a mutual challenge to *émigrés* and their host societies alike.

Notes

1. French Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries who followed the teachings of John Calvin.

2. Supporters of exiled Stuart Monarch James-II and his descendants after the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

3. This was made explicit in the Constitution of 1791 which promised freedom of movement. This was not the only article of the 1789 declaration which was infringed. Article(s) 9 (a man is presumed innocent until proven guilty) and 17 (the right of property is inviolable and sacred) were blatantly ignored in regard to emigres.

4. Napoleon's return to the imperial throne following his exile to the principality of Elba.

References

Burgess, Grey. 2009. *Refugee in the land of liberty, France and its Refugees from the Revolution to the End of Asylum, 1787-1939*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burke, Edmond. 1981. *The writings and speeches of Edmond Burke, Vol. IX*. Ireland: Oxford University Press.

Burrows, Simon. 2000. *French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792-1814*. Woodbridge (UK): Royal Historical Society.

Carpenter, Kirsty. 1999. *Refugees of the French Revolution, Emigres in London, 1789-1802*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Carpenter, Kirsty. 2015. 'Emigrations in Politics and Imaginations'. In David Andrers (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution*. London: Oxford University Press: 330-345.

Doyle, William. 2009. *Aristocracy and its enemies in the Age of Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greer, Donald. 1951. *The Incidence of Emigration during the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hunt, Lyn. 1992. *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*. London: University of California Press.

Jasanoff, Maya. 2009. 'The American Loyalist and French Émigré Diaspora'. In David Armitage et.al. (eds.) *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, 1700-1840*. Basingstoke (UK): Palgrave Macmillan: 37-58.

Mansel, Philip. 2005. *Louis XVIII*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Mori, Jennifer. 1997. 'The British Government and Bourbon Restoration, The Occupation of Toulon, 1793'. *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 40: 699-719.

Price, Munro. 2007. *The Perilous Crown, France between Revolutions 1814-1848*. London: Macmillan.

Ruymbeke, Bertrand Van. 2006. 'Refugies or *Émigrés*? Early Modern French Migration to British North America and United States, 1680-1720'. *International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction,* Vol. 30: 12-32.

2

Encumbered Ontology:
An Intimate Foray into the Sociality of Human Organs

Pinaki Roy
Assistant Professor in Sociology
Govt. General Degree College, Mangalkote; Email:
pinaki.roy88@gmail.com

Abstract: *Appadurai's (1986) "social life of things" approach helps conceptualize human organs as not merely biological but deeply embedded in complex social relationships, and implicated in the associated hierarchies within which they acquire significance. Disputes in the interpersonal realm in immediate, everyday contexts of ailment, disease and its management foregrounds the encumbered ontology of bodies and organs – their entanglement in relational disputes articulated in and through the ailing body and failing organ. Drawing on unanticipated moments in the life-trajectory of the researcher – an essentially unconventional source of data in now canonized practices of sociological and anthropological research, this paper demonstrates that people who are ill or afflicted with some disease which requires personalized care and group attention, physical involvement and financial expenses, often become objects of dispute over issues of care, support and responsibility. Such discourses reaffirm the social – the responsibility of the family and friends or the wider kin group towards the ill, as much as they are discourses of contention over issues like who is ideally responsible for taking care of the ill and dependent? How the responsibility is to be shared or distributed within the family or amongst immediate kin members? And if the responsibility is not to be divided equally, what are the plausible grounds for waiving or discounting one over another? Engagement with unanticipated yet immediate situations of kidney failure and its familial management reveals that such disputes need not always seamlessly centre on the question of ownership of property of the ailing beyond death, but around the failing or afflicted organ itself, in that it serves as the*

material-symbolic locus of disputes which frames the human organ as encumbered property.

Keywords: Social life, sociality, human body, human organs, encumbrance, ontology, dispute, property, kidney failure, dialysis.

Introduction: Tracing the sociality of the non-social

Sociologies of natural entities enable to trace their unthought-of mundane trajectories and embeddedness within the social (see Foucault 1976; Rabinow 2005; Franklin 2007). At deeper philosophical level, such studies facilitate a rethinking of the ontology of natural entities by relocating them within social, cultural and historical discourses, generating interest in what has been called the "social life of things" (Appadurai 1986) – an investigation into the complex societal embeddedness of entities conceived as non-social.

From the scientific point of view, the ontology of natural entities derives from the inherent regularity of their movements and courses of action and reaction, as if some inherent rationality runs through these movements, unrestricted by forces beyond the natural. In short, scientific discourses posit the ontology of things as unencumbered, which is not to say that they deny the cellular or molecular dynamics of things, but in some way point to the essential lack of continuity of this dynamics beyond "thingness" of the thing and the immediate world of things around (see Heidegger 1967; Das 2010). This constitutes the denial of the everyday social life or societal life-trajectory of not only things and objects but their constituent elements, for in such discourses nothing beyond the "thingness" of the thing and the proximate world of things impinges upon its ontology (see Heidegger 1967; Das 2010).

The expression encumbered from which I derive the concept of encumbered ontology to think of a possible reconceptualization and recontextualization of Appadurai's (1986) "social life of things" derives from a typically financial and legal vocabulary, deployed in contexts where there is dispute over a property – characterized by claim by a party which is not its owner, yet functions as an effective restriction or resistance to its conveyance. The expression is useful to grapple with the disputes that may happen over the human body and its constituent organs, which are, empirically speaking, the property of right-bearing citizens, yet there are claims to it by a party that is not its owner or proprietor, but no less significant in that it has the capacity to impinge on it by virtue of proximate and asymmetrical embeddedness in the immediate network of interpersonal relationships. Thinking of human bodies and organs as encumbered involves rethinking

their ontology in terms of how purportedly pure materiality may emerge as the site of material-semiotic contestations in general (Haraway 1988; Butler 1993; Grosz 1994; Kirby 1997) and disputes and contestations in particular empirical situations.

A look at the contexts of organ failure, donation and transplantation demonstrates how such contexts are not merely biological or biomedical but deeply implicated in the complex weave of social structures and relationships, and the associated hierarchies and ideologies within which they acquire significance. It is through disputes and contestations in the immediate interpersonal relations in mundane contexts of everyday life and living that one encounters the encumbered ontology of bodies and organs. The incident of organ failure and how such contexts are rife with relational disputes over issues which flow beyond the ailing body and failing organ empirically located in it, yet deeply connected to and centered on it, foreground the encumbered ontology of bodies and organs.

My tryst with the problem at hand began in mid-2015 as a research student and in the March of 2017 my *boro jethu*[1] passed away after months of struggling with end-stage-kidney-failure[2]. My encounter with his suffering, and his immediate family's struggle to ensure his survival brought me closer to the set of experiences I was trying to narrativize through my research. Of course, the encounter was unfortunate – something I did not anticipate but shaped my perception of the field I was trying to engage as a research student in fundamental ways.

A tragic foray into the field

In an early winter morning of February 2017, my uncle was admitted to the S.S.K.M. hospital[3] in South Kolkata, with breathing trouble and fluid retention in his body. He was suffering from kidney ailment for last seven-eight years. The situation became more critical towards the end of 2015 when a nephrologist[4] told my brothers that his kidneys are severely damaged and will soon be requiring dialysis.[5] The kidney ailment was aggravated by his post-retirement alcoholism and diabetes.[6] My aunt and brothers were extremely worried as a consequence.

Although my uncle was employed in a well-known private firm, he was not financially solvent in the post-retirement phase. There was no solid financial support available that would take care of his hospitalization expenses in case of emergency. The monthly medical expenses were already huge. Much of the money that he had received at retirement got exhausted in last seven-eight years owing to medical expenses and recurrent blood works.

His initial treatment began at the out-patient department of a private hospital in South Kolkata, which was manageable at that point. When towards the end of 2015, the doctor said that total kidney failure was imminent and dialysis will eventually be the only resort, worries aggravated within the family. The issue was two-pronged: money and time. On the one hand, my aunt and brothers were worried that they will not be able to continue treatment in the private facility because dialysis there is too expensive. On the other hand, they could not finalize on a government hospital for dialysis, where the treatment is offered for free or at highly subsidized rates but there is a huge waiting list[7], and patients are asked to come to the dialysis centre at odd hours. Since my brothers are employed in the private sector, they were worried they would not get recurrent leaves for accompanying my uncle for dialysis.

The sense of imminent crisis continued for close to another year and towards the end of 2016, averting dialysis became impossible. My aunt and brothers decided to get my uncle enrolled for dialysis at the M. R. Bangur hospital in South Kolkata, which is close to their residence. In the government facility, the modality of dialysis was such that the patients were informed about their turn ahead of time and the patient party[8] was required to arrive at the dialysis centre on time to get the procedure done. The patient's attendant was required to wait until the procedure is completed. Initially I had no idea about the odd schedules of dialysis appointments at government hospitals. In one occasion, when I asked my aunt about a forthcoming appointment to consider whether I could substitute my brothers who were already alternatively accompanying my uncle for dialysis, I was shocked to learn that the next dialysis session was scheduled at 3.00 a.m. the day after. A connected problem was that of arranging a vehicle every time my uncle went for dialysis. A vehicle and a driver had to be arranged for in advance, ready to respond to their call, as there was no fixed schedule for dialysis. Whether the slot was allotted in the morning or at night, in the absence of privately owned car, a pre-arranged vehicle was necessary as my uncle by then was too feeble to keep up with the waiting time specifications of app cabs.[9]

This first round of dialysis, consisting of treatment sessions with two-day gap in-between, was an immensely draining period for them. I earnestly wanted to help them by substituting one of my brothers for at least a couple of sessions but could not do so owing to my professional obligation. I however made an attempt to help them in ways that would at least take care of associated crises at the home front. My aunt, who was already a senior citizen by then, always accompanied my uncle for the dialysis sessions

which sometimes lasted for four hours or more, with a resting period before he was discharged. However, she could not accompany my uncle if the session was scheduled at mid-night or very early morning, as she had to attend to my elder brother's sons, of whom the elder one was seven years of age and the younger was barely five, who were left at the disposal of my aunt after their parents separated. We – I and my mother, were more than eager to take care of the children when my aunt accompanied my uncle for the day-time sessions. She eagerly accepted our proposal, as she too wanted to substitute and help, at least partially, one of her sons, who had decided to accompany my uncle as the main attendant for that particular day. We even volunteered to take care of the children during the night, in case my aunt had to accompany my uncle for the night-time sessions but she chose not to bother us. This continued for one month and after the first round of dialysis at this South Kolkata government hospital, they were informed that the gap between two sessions could be increased to three days. However, by appearance, there was clear indication that my uncle's overall health condition had deteriorated. He looked exhausted and emaciated.

Dialysis is no easy a process, especially if the patient has resorted under compulsion to the government facility for the procedure. There is not only a challenge of collectively working out the logistics for receiving dialysis service from a government hospital, a whole lot of caution and care is required at the home front owing to manifold restrictions on food and fluid intake. Where employing a twenty-hour attendant is not possible due to financial constraint, there are tangible pressures of managing pre and post-dialysis care. My aunt was worst hit in this regard. My uncle had become too feeble to go the toilet himself. Under such circumstances, my aunt had to attend to his calls, dispose his urine, and clean his lower body. Dialysis in general improves a patient's overall health. In my uncle's case, there were clear signs of discomfort, may be due to the age-factor because he was already mid-70s by then.

In the winter of 2017, towards the end of January, a week more than a month after the completion of his first round of dialysis that complications began to reappear. He had severe breathing issues, his haemoglobin levels dropped drastically, protein and albumin levels too, and there was abnormal fluid retention in his lower limbs. My brothers realized that hospitalization was unavoidable. Admitting him in a private hospital was no option; therefore, they decided to admit him to the S.S.K.M. hospital in Kolkata.

A week had elapsed in between when due to a couple of holidays I was relatively free and called up my aunt to inquire whether I could be of some help. My aunt readily agreed saying that the day after a dialysis session was scheduled and both my brothers had important responsibilities at office. She requested me to reach the hospital by seven in the morning – to be present when my elder brother would leave so that I can accompany my uncle to the dialysis centre where his turn was scheduled at 8.00 a.m. She also gave me the phone number of Debu (name changed), a hospital staff with whom my younger cousin brother had developed a good relationship, in case I needed help.

Dis-ease at the vicinity of suffering

That day, I reached the hospital a bit earlier. Seeing me reach early, my elder brother was relieved that he would be able to get back home early, freshen up and report to office. I had met my uncle after many days. He was awake by then. I inquired whether he could sleep properly at night. He replied in affirmative. But he added that my elder brother could not sleep properly. There is a wooden bench on the other side, he pointed out, where attendants usually take rest by turn. The next person in queue woke him up within two hours. My uncle told me in a faint voice that my elder brother prefers sitting on the stool the entire night rather than having an interrupted sleep.

I was waiting beside my uncle's bed, when two men arrived with an over-sized trolley containing stainless steel plates with a couple of bread slices, bananas, boiled eggs and milk. But the food was not meant for him uncle said, because he had a dialysis session scheduled. He had an early breakfast. Initially the dialysis was carried out through an incision in his hand but the doctors had informed that a *fistula*[10] would be required if dialysis became necessary beyond two weeks. Over time long-term dialysis recipients learn to live with the *fistula* and corporeally bear the tactile mark of that trauma throughout.

When the breakfast of other patients was about to come to an end, a man came towards us with a file in his hand, and asked whether my uncle has completed his breakfast at least an hour ago? When we replied in affirmative, the man asked me to take my uncle to the dialysis centre. He also told me to seek help of any available hospital personnel. I knew I could always seek Debu's help, as told to me by my aunt, but thought of resorting to the available personnel. However, even before I could call him up, he suddenly appeared and asked my uncle: "How are you feeling today?" Seeing my

anxious face, Debu told me in an assuring voice: "Don't worry. Patients under dialysis too have a long life. Only that people around have to be more patient." I confessed to him that as my aunt and brothers were not around, and my uncle was too feeble, I would not feel relieved until he safely reaches the dialysis centre.

Soon Debu helped me take my uncle to the dialysis centre. In the meanwhile, Debu's phone started ringing. From the conversation that ensued I understood it was a call from either of my cousin brothers. After the phone call ended, Debu confirmed to me that it was my younger brother's phone call, and told me he would take my leave, and disappeared. When all this was happening, my uncle was already inside the dialysis unit. By then it was 8.35 a.m. on my phone clock and I made a call to my aunt informing her about the beginning of the procedure, to which she responded and told me that my younger brother's wife will be reaching the hospital soon. I may stay back in case I want or leave if I have some other work.

I was browsing my phone leaning against the handrail of the broad staircase leading to the floor above – the kidney transplantation unit. Many people came in between with their patients. Not all patients looked emaciated but there were definite marks of wear-and-tear in the words and visages of people who appeared and disappeared to reappear soon at the scene, and some lingered with anxious faces, some looking curiously at others, trying to strike a conversation or a casual chat, faced with boredom and disorientation. I understood that I was an object of attention because I was not a familiar face to the stable yet shifting public that appeared at regular intervals in the waiting area for the dialysis of their relatives. Although I tried feigning ignorance – as if I was not aware that others were gazing at me, trying to give an appearance that I am too engrossed in my phone, I knew I had become an object of speculation, ever since I had stepped out of the elevator with Debu and my uncle. This was particularly owing to Debu's – a hospital personnel's cordial demeanour towards me. Some of them recognized my uncle immediately but I understood from their speculating gaze that they were wondering who I was, because most of them had not seen me before as my uncle's attendant. Those who entered the scene after my uncle was already inside the dialysis unit, thought of me as the attendant of some new patient they were yet to know. A lean man in his late fifties, wearing a pale yellow shirt and a pair of black trousers, soon came inquisitively towards me, asking why I was waiting there. I told him that my uncle was inside. When I told him that my brother's wife would soon arrive, he immediately recognized who my uncle was, and referred to him as the "fair, old man." He told me that he is familiar with my aunt and

brothers. At one point it appeared he knew more about my uncle and his condition than I did, which caused me embarrassment. When I asked him about his relative as gesture of reciprocation, he told me that his wife, who is in her late forties, is undergoing three dialysis sessions every week. He is regular at the hospital and has been doing so for the last six months. Some of his family members substituted him during the three weekly visits to the dialysis centre. He added in a slightly smiling face: "Your aunt knows everything. I speak to her and your sister-in-law often when I get bored. We share our problems. We know a lot about each other."

He appeared to be a good man but his insistence that he knows my extended family and their crises better, perhaps as an innocent way of foregrounding familiarity and as a way of seeking companionship, made me feel an outsider to their inter-subjective experience of encountering and managing the kidney failure of a most immediate relative – which caused me dis-ease and made me feel I have not been enough dutiful towards my uncle.

"Serendipity" and its discomforting epistemic potential

Around 10.30 a.m. my younger cousin's wife arrived. Although she told me that I could leave but she had a lot of things to share with me about how she was managing her household work, her responsibilities as a mother of a seven-year-old, as a wife and daughter-in-law. I too assured her that she was doing a commendable job. Soon she started sharing her grievances about my uncle and aunt, and especially my elder cousin brother. I felt awkward because she was speaking in her characteristically loud voice. Everything she said was audible to others. They looked at us with inquisitiveness. I could immediately deduce from her behaviour how others who frequented the dialysis centre developed considerable familiarity with my extended family. My sister-in-law however did not bother and continued sharing her grievances. She started narrating how difficult it has become for my younger brother to manage everything. Not only did he not have enough money for purchasing the medicines and continuing the treatment, for which they had to take the decision of availing free dialysis at a government hospital. He was also finding it difficult, she told me, to be present every alternate day to function as the day's attendant. Spending a sleepless night and then reporting to office the next day was taking a toll on his health, she worryingly said. That is why; she said she was putting as much effort as possible to share his part of the responsibility.

Her object of contention was my elder brother, who, according to her, has a problematic life-history. No point denying the fact that this conception is

also a part of the familial common sense or wisdom. My elder brother got married against the wish of his parents. He moved out and resorted to his in-laws with his wife after their sudden marriage. He lost his job, and it was not the first time that this happened. What exactly unfolded thereafter is not known to us but his wife left him soon after, leaving behind two children with him. He then returned to his parents, he was jobless then too, making an old, ailing private company pensioner and an aging householder responsible for him and his two kids, who were at a very nascent stage of life then. Within the extended family this is more of a narrative of parental indulgence combined with individual eccentricities and its aftermath. The main complaint my younger brother's wife had was that, my uncle and aunt did not take strict stance against by elder brother when he suddenly came back. If they had not allowed him in, on the ground of sympathy, they could have saved money which could have been used now for his treatment at some better hospital. Despite being the reason behind such unnecessary drain of funds, "he too will get an equal share of the parental property," she said. During this period when my uncle was undergoing dialysis, my elder brother was employed in a petty private firm. There is no point demonizing the daughter-in-law for she had rational arguments to place. I obviously did not have any overt sympathy for my elder brother. At an objective distance, what appeared significant was that both were struggling hard to ensure my uncle's survival. After some time, I somehow escaped the scene, assuring her that we would meet and speak again.

When I looked at my phone's clock after reaching downstairs, it was close to twelve noon. Suddenly I saw one woman struggling with a wheel chair, with a young emaciated man sitting on it, trying to push it towards the elevator. I immediately recognized the woman as one of the two whom I saw the last time when I came to see my uncle and had to wait outside the dialysis unit for a long time. However, she was not the one with whom my aunt interacted with quite often but I remembered she was there in the waiting area during my last visit. She was the other woman, who appeared timid, exhausted and disengaged, squatting haplessly on the floor in the waiting area. Having recognized her, and on seeing her struggle with the wheel chair, I offered help. She hesitated at first, but accepted my proposal. She told me to help her station the wheelchair on the elevator, after which she will be able to manage alone. I did my bit, without pushing too much, and returned. I was about to reach the main exit of the Nephrology building when I suddenly noticed the husband of the woman who had a long conversation with my aunt the other day. I could not immediately sense any stark dis-junction in what was unfolding but was wondering why the

woman was trying to manage everything alone when her elder sister's husband is present in the hospital premises. But this wonder transformed into intellectual curiosity when I overheard the man saying to the person on the other side of the telephone:

> I have reached a bit late today. After reaching the ward, I found that Kartik (name changed, I had noticed the real name of the young man on the packet of reports the woman was carrying) was missing. They (possibly indicating the other patients and their attendants) told me that she (pointing to the woman I had encountered a few moments back) has taken him for dialysis.... (Then there was a pause for some time) I don't know what Saraswati (name changed) wants? She has been abandoned by her husband and now she is interfering in her paternal family. Everybody knows Kartik will die today or tomorrow. We can't afford kidney transplantation. From where will the kidney come? Who will donate the kidney? Who will fund the surgery, the treatment? If you ask her for a kidney she won't give but she is after Kartik's property. What about my wife's right? Isn't she the elder sister?

Overhearing this, I immediately realized I had unknowingly and unintentionally become witness to an extremely disturbing fragment of some larger narrative and hurriedly walked past the main exit of the Nephrology building towards my way back home. Merton (1968) has emphasized on the significance of serendipity or accidental encounters in scientific inquiry and how such encounters are disavowed or overlooked in the presentation of scientific data in order to conform to the canonical stylistics of scientific research. Serendipitous possibilities loom large in every stage of sociological and anthropological research and such information widens the horizon of knowledge in the intellectual treatment of the problem at hand.

Conclusion: Human organs as encumbered property

I began this first-person narrative arguing how human organs are deeply embedded in the complex weave of social relationships, which I have tried to demonstrate through an intimate, narrative foray into the experiences of kidney failure and its familial management within the government hospital setting, with reference to: firstly, my significant others – my *boro jethu*, my extended family, and secondly, few unknown people, the family members of the young man with chronic kidney disease whom had I encountered at the waiting area of the dialysis centre at the S.S.K.M. hospital. Here my

contention is, however disturbing it may appear from an ethical-moral point of view – writing about a very close relative or some acquaintance behind his or her back or waiting to witness, at least, the partial completion of an overheard, curiosity-inciting fragment of conversation, if one undertakes the project of depicting the sociality of human organs, foregrounding that among many other important features, under particular circumstances, human organs exhibit characteristics of encumbered property, one has to somehow negotiate and navigate such disputed terrains or morally reprehensible situations. This encumbrance derives from the inherent sociality of human bodies and organs, even though they may appear to have no autonomous sociality or semiotic existence apart from the biomedically-defined material bodies in which they are empirically located.

One can trace the sociality of human bodies and organs by recourse to the complex, oft-unrecognized relational and semiotic topography human organs traverse, as is the case with the two pivotal narrative moments I have provided in this first-person account. The recognition of the material-symbolic hybridity (Haraway 1988) of human bodies and organs does not involve denying their natural materiality – their biological constitution. Rather it involves the gesture of recognizing that human bodies and organs are as much natural or biological as they are social, cultural, historical and political. A study of the sociality of human organs therefore ought to take into account the social ontology of human organs – an ontology that has been categorically obscured by biomedical and technomedical discourses in particular and the universalistic discourses of life sciences in general which reifies the human body as essentially non-social.

This paper is profoundly intimate in that it speaks at length about the personal trajectory of an institutionalized journey called research. In this intimate narrative, two moments count as pivotal in crystallizing my conception of social ontology of the non-social. One moment is extremely intimate in that it relates to the immediate interpersonal and familial set of experiences associated with kidney failure of my uncle – my *boro jethu*. The other moment is not intimate *per se*, but has implications for what I see as intimate in that it is associated with my unintended or rather accidental exposure to information relating to an unfamiliar set of relationships. By way of a combination of individual and situational factors, I ended up bearing witness to a disturbing fragment of telephonic conversation relating to the latter set of relationships. This bearing of witness in this narrative does not happen only via exposure to the experiences of unknown or unfamiliar others – the unintended witnessing of a telephonic conversation about issues however distant, discomforting and awkward they may be, but also through the person

of my sister-in-law while waiting in front of the dialysis unit, when she began sharing with me her grievances about my elder brother and his role in the weakening of my uncle's financial condition.

How I became witness to these fragments of larger narratives of relational disputes, and what implications they have for my study of the sociality of human organs does not only work by way of revelation. Those embedded in family, neighbourhood and social life at large will recognize that people who are ill or afflicted with some disease which require personal support or group attention and care, and mental and physical involvement and financial expenses, often become objects of discussion and dispute over issues of care, support and responsibility. Such discourses reaffirm the social – the responsibility or duty of the family and friends, and the kin group towards the ill, ailing or feeble, as much as they are discourses of contention and dispute over many issues like who is ideally responsible for taking care, both physically and financially, of the ill and the dependent? How the responsibility is to be shared or distributed within the family or amongst those kin members immediately responsible for taking care? And if the responsibility is not to be shared equally, what are the plausible grounds for justifying why one is discounted or waived and whose lesser contribution is seen as legitimate and whose is not?

These are just few questions from an infinite range. Contextual specificity and situational reference may add more dynamics to the issues stated above. Beyond all these, what draws my attention as an ethnographer of the social is how the question of property figures in these discourses. The property question seamlessly is not only associated with who owns or inherits the property of the ill or the ailing beyond death, it is also a question of how the failing human organ becomes the material-symbolic locus for discourses pertaining to proprietorship, which becomes evident in both the narrative instances. In this concluding section, I take up the second instance for symptomatic analysis, while the first acts as the conceptual-empirical point of take off – the intimate edifice for conceptual engagement with the second. Not that I could gather enough information from what Saraswati's elder brother-in-law was communicating over phone. I have attempted to reconstruct through the overheard utterances as sonic resources, the ways of conceptualizing human organs as encumbered property. Towards this end, I will proceed by pointing out the two key insights that I derive from the enunciations or utterances of Saraswati's elder brother-in-law, which will lead to final argument.

Firstly, when I saw Saraswati taking her brother to the dialysis centre all alone from the ward, it poked my sociological curiosity, but it did not occur to me as pointing to any possible dispute over the legitimate right to take care of the ailing brother. But only when I overheard the elder brother-in-law accusing Saraswati for her wrong approach to life – for having been deserted by her husband, for not having a child and a family of her own, and for needlessly interfering in a domain where he thinks he and his wife legitimately have greater prerogative to act and intervene, that I realized that the right to legitimately act – to partake in decision-making and executing the responsibilities for taking care of the ill or dependent, does have some solid connection in some perceptions with the character-traits particular individuals have – how they have managed their own life-trajectory and how such management has put them in troubled life-conditions. This is also true of my elder brother. In short, one does not have sufficient legitimate reasons to partake in decision-making or getting involved in the life of an endangered person, if he or she has mismanaged his or her own life. And because, Saraswati, despite having failed to secure her own life and establish herself, according to societal expectations, from the point of view of her elder brother-in-law, was trying to make a significant claim to decide and act, and was trying to execute the claim with sincerity, she immediately entered into a conflictual relationship with her elder sister and her husband. Her tendentious claim to the body of the ailing brother was not acceptable to her brother-in-law, for he conceives of such claim to proprietorship as illegitimate, given her purportedly disputed life-trajectory.

Secondly, although the conflict is apparently between the elder sister or elder sister's husband and the younger sister or younger sister-in-law, i.e., Saraswati – a dispute pertaining to whether the latter has any legitimate claim to the ailing body of the brother. But beyond this conflict, there are issues relating to legitimate claim to property, of which Kartik has the socially ascribed, if not legally, immediate right to inheritance and ownership for his parents are too old, but due to his severe illness, Kartik is unable to assert the claim, which renders the paternal property open to contestations claims. The elder sister's supposedly legitimate claim to paternal property by virtue of her age-related seniority is communicated through the voice of her husband, but one does not necessarily have enough reason to believe what Saraswati does or how she acts in this fragment of the narrative is a claim to control or own the paternal property of which her ailing brother is the supposed heir, but it is nonetheless an act performing a claim to the ailing body of the brother – a person prematurely rendered incapable by the severity of kidney. Her elder brother-in-law however smells foul in this

serious involvement of Saraswati. He says that she knows her brother will perish but will not donate her kidney to save her brother. Saraswati's claim to the right to own and control paternal property in the enunciations or utterances of the elder brother-in-law is cast in a language that frames such claim as legitimate and acceptable only if the claimant is willing to part away with a part of her body. In this case her kidney. The inalienability of a woman's right to control or own paternal property is called into question by asking her to prove how worthy and deserving she is of the right by promising to donate or by actually donating her kidney to her ailing brother. An immediate equivalence is thus assumed between Saraswati's right to own and control paternal property and corporeal self-alienation by Saraswati by giving away an inalienable part of her body – a kidney – in donation to her ailing brother. Saraswati's elder brother-in-law does not think of women's right to paternal property as dispensable, for he is emphatic about his own wife's right to paternal property. But his wife's claim to paternal property is communicated in a language which posits her age-related seniority, her impeccable character and undisputed life-history viz-a-viz Saraswati, who is younger and has a purportedly disputed one, which is posited as the legitimate ground for discounting her claim to the right to own and control paternal property.

But how does then one demonstrate, on the basis of the above reading, that human organs are encumbered property or exhibit features of encumbered property. In the above analysis, kidneys of two individuals begin to make marked material-semiotic appearance in the utterances or enunciations, the first is that of Kartik, whose kidneys have failed and is dialysis-dependent for rest of his life and the second is that of Saraswati, whose healthy kidneys are invoked in the fragment of the larger narrative presented by her elder brother-in-law, who sees in Saraswati a potential kidney donor for her brother but assumes at the same time that Saraswati is not good enough a human person to donate a healthy kidney to her ailing brother. Both the organs – the kidneys belonging to Kartik and Saraswati, which are part of the discourse at hand, display properties of encumbrance in that although they are owned by discrete individual bodies or distinct right-bearing citizens, empirically located in three-dimensional spatial site of the body, to invoke Das (2010), and therefore, legitimately belonging to these citizens both empirically and ethically in non-negotiable terms, but it is derivable from the fragment of the narrative under scrutiny that such non-negotiable belongingness is compromised by encumbrances from external agents.

In Kartik's case, there is a claim to his ailing body and the associated care-function towards the failing kidneys by both of his sisters, where the

purportedly legitimate claim of the elder sister is communicated in and through what the elder brother-in-law of Kartik has to say, while the young sister remains silent, unlike her elder sister on whose behalf her husband speaks vociferously, yet she makes her presence felt by reaching the hospital on time to execute the disputed care-function. Kartik's failing kidneys therefore get encumbered by conflicting claims to control and care by his significant others – his elder sister and her husband on the one hand and his young sister on the other, yet distinct from his own right-bearing body. The encumbrance is particularly felt in Kartik's case because he is ill, feeble, wheel-chair bound and dependent on others for care. In short devoid of agency both literally and by material implication. In Saraswati's case, although her body and organs are not failing, her kidneys are forcibly inserted into the disputed discourse by her elder brother-in-law who presumes that Saraswati will not donate a kidney to her ailing brother, but is interfering in how they are managing his treatment. Saraswati's kidneys here get implicated in the acts of encumbrance which impose an external restriction on her kidneys through her brother-in-law who presumes that she will not donate a kidney to save her brother, for she is assumed to be more interested in owing and controlling paternal property, for which she will immediately lay her tendentious claim the moment Kartik succumbs to kidney failure.

Kartik's and Saraswati's kidneys, ontologically speaking, exhibit features of encumbered property in the overheard fragment of conversation presented above, in that there are conflicting claims to and about them, and there are restrictions imposed upon them, symbolic or semiotic, with material or concrete implications, by tangible empirical individuals and transcendental societal forces.

Notes

1. Bangla expression for father's elder brother.
2. End-stage-kidney-failure is a medical condition where the kidneys have stopped functioning irrevocably.
3. The full form of S.S.K.M. Hospital is Seth Sukhlal Karnani Memorial Hospital. Presently it is called Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education.
4. A nephrologist is a doctor specializing in kidney diseases.
5. Dialysis is an artificial way of eliminating waste and fluid from the body when kidneys stop functioning properly.

6. Diabetes is a disease related to higher glucose level in blood.

7. Waiting list in case of dialysis refers to the long list of patients with chronic kidney disease enrolled in a hospital for periodic dialysis.

8. Patient party is an expression common in hospitals in West Bengal, referring to family members, relatives and attendants of the patients.

9. App cabs are cab hire facilities available on smart mobile phone applications.

10. Fistula is a surgically constructed connection between artery and vein necessary for dialysis.

References

Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex.* New York: Routledge.

Das, Anirban. 2010. *Toward a Politics of the (Im)possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms*. U. K.: Anthem Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* Volume I. New York: Pantheon Books.

Franklin, Sarah. 2007. *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3: 575-599.

Heidegger, Martin. 1967. *What is a Thing?* Washington D. C.: Henry Regnery Company.

Kirby, Vicki. 1997. *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal.* New York and London: Routledge.

Merton, Robert. K. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.

Rabinow, Paul. 2005. 'Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality'. In Jonathan. X. Inda (ed.) *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell: 179-193.

3

Analysing Classification and its Implications:
Inequality, Ideology and Power

Suraj Beri
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Central University of Nagaland, Lumami HQRS;
Email: criticalsun@gmail.com

Abstract: *The present paper endeavours to delve into the concept of classification and its pertinence within the realm of social sciences. Through an exploration of existing social science literature in anthropology, and sociology, this analysis undertakes a critical examination of the social and political processes involved in the classification of individuals, identities, groups, categories, and, ultimately, moral and cultural discourses. The potential exists for an ideological "misrecognition" of the historical context, whereby certain categories and concepts are emphasised over others, resulting in the eulogising of specific identities while rendering the articulation of certain forms of inequality impossible. The utility and ramifications of categorization are being discussed.*

Keywords*: classification, inequality, ideology, subject, power.*

Introduction

Sociologists have wrestled to make sense of disorienting transformations in the power structure effected by capitalist development. Invariably, sociological literature gravitates towards the fundamental inquiry of discerning the nature of power and inequality. A more suitable inquiry would entail elucidating the issue that the term "inequality" denotes. The scholarly examination of inequality is aptly focused on the intricate workings of caste dynamics, gender-based subjugation, perpetuation of class-based advantages, ethnic hegemony, as well as the systematic deprivation and marginalisation resulting from categorization. It is incumbent upon us to engage in a rigorous analysis of the societal and governmental mechanisms for categorisation and classification of persons, groups, communities. The

process of categorization involves the allocation of objects, relations, and concepts to a specific class, while the act of classification is the underlying cognitive mechanism. Classification may be seen as an object of intellectual scrutiny, not the ones that sociologists themselves use to order their data.

The discipline of sociology has long been preoccupied with comprehending the intricacies of social disparities and their evolution over time. As exemplified, the individual responsible for this notion was none other than Karl Marx, who presented a highly discerning and politically impactful examination of the mechanics of capitalism and its ramifications, specifically in terms of estrangement, subjugation, and the exacerbation of social stratification. In a similar vein, Max Weber endeavoured to explicate the mechanics of capitalism through the advent of "rational enterprise," namely bureaucracy. Contemporary sociologists, including Mike Savage, Charles Tilly, David Graeber, Richard Sennett, and Goran Therborn, have undertaken a thorough examination of the operational dynamics of social inequality within present-day societies. In addition, scholars in the field of economics, such as Simon Kuznets, Joseph Stiglitz, and Amartya Sen, have devoted their attention to analysing the intricacies of the capitalist economy, including economic disparities, the impact of globalisation, market regulations, and the evolving role of the state. The issue of inequality holds a pivotal position in the realm of social science, encompassing various facets such as the financial crisis of 2007-8, the rallying cry of the Occupy Wall Street movement ("We are the 99 pr cent, who is the one per cent?"), and the emergence of social movements, particularly in the Global South, that resist the neoliberal dismantling of collectivities.

This paper tries to interrogate the concept of classification and its pertinence within the realm of social sciences. Through an exploration of existing theoretical works on classification in anthropology, and sociology, this analysis undertakes a critical examination of the social and political processes involved in the classification of individuals, identities, groups, categories, and, ultimately, moral and cultural discourses. The potential exists for an ideological "misrecognition" of the historical context, whereby certain categories and concepts are emphasised over others, resulting in the eulogising of specific identities while rendering the articulation of certain forms of inequality impossible. The utility and ramifications of categorization are being discussed.

Inequality as the process of classification, domination, and exclusion

The issue of inequality stands as a pivotal challenge within modern-day societies. Each societal construct possesses distinct methods of arranging

individuals, classes, and groups within a particular framework. The configuration of disparities exhibits a diverse array of manifestations contingent upon the particular social and political milieu. Academics from various fields have delved into the inquiry of social stratification, disparities based on race, gender, caste, and class. The field of social sciences has undertaken various approaches to investigate the essence and attributes of disparate structures of inequality. Economists tend to rely heavily on quantitative equations and abstract conceptualizations of societal phenomena, whereas anthropologists and sociologists prioritise the experiential and processual dimensions of social inequalities. The inflexible structure of discipline has constricted our potential elucidations regarding the presence of disparities. Therefore, it is imperative to scrutinise the ideological foundations of these disciplinary frameworks in the realm of social sciences, in light of the economic and political obstacles that confront the current manifestation of democratic existence.

As of late, it has become customary to obscure the modalities and apparatuses of societal marginalisation and subjugation. In light of the cultural shift and postmodern dialogue, the material circumstances have become incomprehensible, fragmented, and resistant to analytical interpretation. They remain elusive and abstract when viewed through a sociological perspective. The societal repercussion of this particular practice has been to assign designations and categorizations to certain notions, principles, and viewpoints, deeming them obsolete and archaic. Social inequalities have similarly suffered a comparable destiny. In the mid-twentieth century, the concept of modernization theory gained significant traction within both academic and political spheres. The modernization theory's evolutionary and linear tenets have entrenched certain social and political concepts as axiomatic. The notion of social mobility has been entrenched in the discourse of a laudatory narrative of contemporary nation-states and the corresponding economic enterprise of capitalist markets that endeavour to establish an unobstructed and liberated social sphere, wherein individuals from all walks of life can ascend to the pinnacle of success. The concept of the "mobility narrative" was deliberately adopted by the socioeconomic and political upper echelons of both the Western and Eastern hemispheres, in light of the expanding global markets. The notion of social mobility has gained prominence as an academic discourse, in tandem with political discourse, as a means of negating the systemic perpetuation of class-based inequities within capitalist labour markets. Through the promotion of the concept of upward social mobility for the impoverished and the middle-class desire to ascend to the upper echelons of society, a clever strategy was employed to

entice the masses to embrace the ostensibly democratic and inclusive nature of the capitalist system. However, it is important to note that this system actually perpetuates and reinforces pre-existing social hierarchies, including those based on race, gender, and caste. Put simply, the classification of social and cultural spheres was utilised to gain popular legitimacy and maintain an unequal order while simultaneously denouncing the possibility of revolution.

Over the course of the last thirty years, scholars have rekindled their fascination with scrutinising the patterns of disparity both in the northern and southern hemispheres of the world. Upon closer examination of a specific academic discipline, it has been noted that endeavours have been made to chart and scrutinise the configuration of disparities. Interestingly, the classification of class has been relegated to the periphery and even deemed obsolete or extinct. Can it be primarily repudiated as a matter of representation or empirical evidence? In the event that such concepts as "class" or "elite" are not employed, it becomes imperative to inquire as to the means by which contemporary manifestations of inequality may be comprehended and scrutinised. The demise of the social construct of class, as a representation of reality, has been declared by esteemed scholars such as Malcolm Waters and Jan Pakulski in 1995. However, it is important to note that the objective reality of class inequality persists and flourishes even in Western societies. Recent empirical studies conducted by sociologists such as Mike Savage, Goran Therborn, and Erik Olin Wright have demonstrated the persistent importance of both material and social disparities, as exemplified by social class, in various contexts including those of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. The persistence of material disparities has posed a persistent challenge to the liberal ideals of a socially equitable and unrestricted world. As per the views of numerous postmodern intellectuals, the conclusion of the Soviet regime marked the anticipated termination of history. The aforementioned transition has been denoted as a novel stage of capitalism, albeit one that lacks the traditional stratification of societal classes. The contemporary upsurge in the examination of inequality and elite analyses indicates that the absence of attention given to elites in academic and political discourse can be traced back to fundamental historical, theoretical, and ideological inconsistencies concerning the essence of socio-economic changes (Savage & Williams 2008; Piketty 2020; Beri 2020). It may be prudent to delve into the incongruity present in the theoretical discourses concerning inequality and categorization as a fundamental tenet. The potential exists for the recognition of ideological misinterpretation of historical context and the imposition of specific

categories and concepts, which may result in the glorification of certain identities while neglecting others, ultimately hindering the ability to address certain forms of inequality.

Against this historical context, Piketty's seminal work, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) emerged. The work in question has garnered significant attention and acclaim for its cogent and discerning examination of the issues of disparity, the apportionment of resources, and the economic system of capitalism as it exists in the present day. Piketty posits that to engage in discourse and unveil the intricacies of disparity, one must first grasp its fundamental ideological composition. In his recent publication, *Capital and Ideology* (2020), Thomas Piketty methodically contests numerous theoretical postulations of economists regarding the issue of inequality. The author's extensive inquiry into the perpetuation of disparities across various societies posits the necessity of a novel, all-encompassing egalitarian discourse to effectively counteract the prevailing ideology of inequity. As per Piketty's assertion, disparities are not solely rooted in economic or technical factors, but rather are fundamentally shaped by ideological and political forces (Piketty 2020: 7-8). Ideological frameworks serve as essential rationalisations to render the experience of inequality tolerable. The phenomenon of naturalising inequality has been the focal point of sociological investigation. To elucidate, sociology reveals how particular manifestations of power dynamics and imbalanced relationships are deemed as inherently innate, as though there exists no ideological underpinning to this purported "naturalness." Piketty posits that the justification of inequalities is a necessary component for any given society to validate its existence. His work offers a thorough analysis of the diverse approaches employed by different societies in achieving this objective, spanning a range of what he refers to as "inequality regimes."

Classification as a Principle of Vision: Producing & Legitimizing Inequalities

The popular description of the classification suggests that it is the inherent inclination of the human mind is to engage in the act of classification or categorization. It is worth noting that certain classifications within the realm of commerce and public administration lack a prescribed structure or conform to uniform benchmarks. Throughout our professional endeavours, a considerable amount of time is dedicated to the categorization of various entities, often employing surreptitious methods, and necessitating the creation and execution of a diverse array of impromptu classifications. Humans

tend to categorise various entities based on their chromaticity, dimensions, calibre, utility, and other distinguishing features. The categorization of groups is accomplished through the application of various criteria such as nomenclature, gender, social hierarchy, cultural heritage, linguistic affiliation, geographical location, religious affiliation, and socioeconomic status. As individuals, we are subject to classification by various entities such as other individuals, groups, institutions, markets, and the state. In the realm of commerce, individuals are bestowed with novel appellations such as "premium customer," "cheap buyer," "rentier," "shopkeeper," "client," and the like. Our classification encompasses the religious affiliations of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism. We are additionally categorised as either local, non-local, citizen, illegal migrant, or other such classifications. As human beings, we possess the innate ability to categorise and classify various entities that surround us, ranging from residential abodes to material possessions, urban metropolises to rural hamlets, and even entire nations. However, what are these classifications and categories exactly? If they are social construct or product, what is the process of their formation and maintenance? By whom are they authored and vested with the power to effectuate alterations? At what point do these phenomena manifest themselves, and which variables are implicated in their emergence? What is the mechanism behind their widespread prevalence? What is the correlation, per se, between categories that are formed locally and tailored to the spatial constraints of a bathroom cabinet, and those that are commodified, intricate, and exorbitant, as developed by medical diagnoses, government regulatory bodies, and pharmaceutical companies? It is indeed remarkable that despite the profound impact that these feeble yet ubiquitous entities have on our existence, a great many of us remain oblivious to the social and ethical framework that they have established. The undeniable impact of their influence, as cogently expounded by Foucault, is inescapable. As a rudimentary investigation, try by disregarding your gender classification and utilising the lavatories in closest proximity; endeavour to locate a book that has been misfiled under an erroneous library catalogue number; queue up for immigration at a bustling airport in a foreign nation san the appropriate passport, and so forth. These instances serve as illustrations of how easily mistakes can be made when one is not exercising attentiveness. The inherent potency of categorical constructs shall invariably and expeditiously manifest. From a public policy standpoint, it is imperative to acknowledge the equal significance of categorizations such as regional distinctions, types of activities, and natural resources. The designation of a territory as environmentally significant and the classification of another location as

industrial or residential hold considerable sway over forthcoming economic determinations. Whilst the fundamental principles of decision-making in this domain are often the topic of fervent political discourse, they are seldom discernible. The process of altering established categories is generally a laborious and intricate bureaucratic undertaking.

Tracing Durkheim, Bourdieu, and Foucault one can argue to reflect upon and understand the mode of classification that defines certain individuals, groups and communities as such and how the former indulge in struggles against definition and classification. This politics of classification is crucial to make sense of inequalities in neoliberal contexts where new categories are constructed and certain old categories are deemed unfit to explain inequality, the class being one of them. Only categorization makes social life conceivable, or it exemplifies the execution of continual classifications. This means that we continually make assumptions regarding the group into which we categorize the individual with whom we interact. In order to live a social life, social agents categorize common objects. Social science analyses society that classifies everything. Simultaneously, we must relook at the politics of classification and struggling groups against the classification as a linked process that keeps renewing itself in different times. That would require a renewed social science interest in politics of knowledge. We must ask in clear philosophical and empirical terms:

i.   What is the problem that classification addresses?

ii.   How to address inequality in the midst of individuation of life, and

iii. How do social groups challenge the classification imposed on them?

Around the turn of the 20th century, anthropologists shifted their focus from epistemological problems regarding the "truth" of classes to ontological ones regarding how classifications and their associated categories establish and maintain social interactions. Durkheim and Mauss, in their seminal work "Primitive Classification" of 1903, posited the notion that the social derivation of our world's organisational and categorical forms is a concept of paramount importance. In a manner akin to Durkheim's earlier critique of the psychologists of his era, who attributed the causes of suicide to the individual psyche, they contend in this treatise on classification that the ability to classify is not inherent to human nature, but rather arises externally from society. Durkheim and Mauss have arrived at the conclusion that social categories were the fundamental categories of human thought, based on their examination of three distinct societies: Australian tribes, North American Indians, and Chinese society. The phenomenon of social

differentiation, wherein entities and collectives are categorised based on their unique characteristics, is indicative of the intricate social dynamics that exist between them. The process of classification is predicated upon the demarcations that exist among various societal cohorts.

As per Bourdieu's scholarly work titled *Classificatory Struggles* the classification of individuals cannot be restricted within the bounds of objective measurement techniques. Rather, it is a product of the ongoing conflicts that take place over and against these classification systems as they are manifested in the real world. As per Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the concept of class is inherently relational in nature, and the emergence of social classes is contingent upon the struggles waged against systemic exploitation and injustice. Pierre Bourdieu's critical scrutiny of the epistemological foundations of various classification systems stands as a significant contribution to the early sociological analysis. One of the fundamental duties of sociology is to observe and analyse the divisive principles that operate within a given social context. The task at hand necessitates the cultivation of a certain level of self-control in regards to acknowledging the significance of nomenclature, the injurious nature of categorizations, and the consequential outcomes of classification procedures. Bourdieu's contribution to the sociology of classification lies in his elucidation of the persistence of social class hierarchies in ostensibly less stratified contexts of liberal democratic welfare states in post-War II Europe. Through his work, he offers a comprehensive and nuanced account of the underlying mechanisms that sustain these hierarchies. It has been observed that class hierarchies manifest not only in the realm of labour and capital disputes, but also in the domain of "cultural struggles," wherein the assimilation of unique symbols and expressions of authority, as well as the attainment of cultural proficiencies, play a significant role.

According to Beverley Skeggs (2004), the process of categorising and recording social disparities operates via corporeal means, institutional mechanisms, and evaluative frameworks. As an illustration, the concept of inscription pertains to the physical marking of the body, as well as the attribution of qualities and signs. Institutionalisation, on the other hand, involves the establishment of positions, designations, and domains. A positive institutional act involves the assignment of worth, while a negative institutional act entails the deprivation of dignity. Additionally, the notion of exchange involves the attribution of value to a particular behaviour, act, or point of view. The middle class's ability to establish a system for evaluating the worth of individuals, actions, and items is a key method of justifying their authority. This is exemplified by the current discourse surrounding

those who rely on complimentary resources and the potential risks this practise may pose in the long run. The middle class tends to criticise the state's welfare initiatives aimed at providing fundamental necessities to underprivileged segments of society through the pejorative labels.

The classification of objects and the correlation of such categories with social structure has been a prominent subject of inquiry in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cognitive sciences. The scholarly work conducted by Bowker and Star (2000) delves into the intricacies of classification systems within the realm of information systems, examining both their design and utilisation. Their inquiries pertain to fundamental inquiries regarding the diverse facets of categorization. In the quotidian sphere, bureaucratic regulations, ontological perspectives, communal structures, financial frameworks, and cultural paradigms persist within the realm of textual categorization, albeit in an implicit manner. As one delves into the narratives surrounding conflicts and compromises among groups vying for recognition of their community identity, work lives, or administrative categorization, a delicate balance must be struck between the formal and informal aspects of classification. Upon scrutinising the progression or metamorphosis of classification systems employed in any domain of societal existence, one can peruse and investigate a significant quantity of social, political, and economic contexts inherent in these classifications and categorizations.

Mary Douglas highlights a salient characteristic of classification systems, namely their emergence from and perpetuation by social arrangements (Douglas 1986). The act of classification pertains to the systematic arrangement of the social realm, taking into account its spatial, temporal, or spatial-temporal dimensions. A classification is a hierarchical arrangement of entities, encompassing objects, occurrences, connections, persons, and undertakings, that serves the purpose of fulfilling bureaucratic obligations for territorial delineation or organisation, or for the generation of knowledge. Standards are integral constituents of the modes of categorization. Frequently, the systems under consideration undergo a process of standardisation. Moreover, a standard can be viewed as a mechanism for categorising the universe. The concepts of classification and standards are inextricably linked. A "standard" refers to a collection of mutually accepted regulations that govern the creation of either written rules or physical criteria.

Bowker & Starr (2000) stress the pivotal role of standards in facilitating and sustaining industrial manufacturing. Simultaneously, akin to classifications, these standards' dimensions are, to some extent,

conceptualised as idealised. They encapsulate objectives of praxis and manufacturing that are invariably imperfectly actualized. The categorization and benchmarks are two interrelated aspects of a single entity. The standardisation of classifications is contingent upon various factors and may not necessarily come to fruition. In the event that such actions are not undertaken, they shall be deemed ad hoc, confined to a singular entity or a regional populace, and/or of restricted longevity. Simultaneously, each triumphant norm establishes a system of categorization, at minimum, distinguishing between efficacious and ineffectual methods of arranging actions or objects. The pragmatic implementation of standards often necessitates the utilisation of impromptu, nonconforming classifications. The aforementioned were established as official, standardised categorizations and benchmarks, encompassing both empirical and economic aspects. Individuals have historically engaged in the categorization, quantification, and normalisation of a vast array of subjects, including but not limited to fauna, human ethnicities, literature, medicinal substances, fiscal obligations, vocations, and illnesses. The aforementioned categories were established and existed within the domains of industry, medicine, science, education, and government.

The categorization and standardisation of systems represent a convergence of societal structure, ethical principles, and intricate levels of technological assimilation. The primary overarching concept pertains to the omnipresence of categorization and normalisation. The ubiquitous presence of classification schemes and standards pervades our surroundings. Within the constructed environment in which we reside, myriad standards are ubiquitously employed, ranging from the installation of plumbing fixtures in a domicile to the construction of an automobile engine to the transmission of digital data between computing devices.

The fundamental premise of our methodology is that classifications and standards possess both tangible and intangible properties. In what manner do we apprehend this intricately enriched, categorised, and tactually diverse realm? When one is under the influence of cognitive idealism, it becomes effortless to perceive classifications as attributes of the intellect and standards as abstract numerical concepts or cultural legacies that are not firmly grounded. However, their presence exerts a tangible influence within the realm of reality. These entities are inherently integrated and ingrained within each aspect of the constructed milieu. It is evident that a singular classification system cannot be universally applicable to all individuals. A prime example of this is the traffic light system, which utilises the colours red, yellow, and green to convey information. However, this system is not

effective for individuals with visual impairments, as they require an auditory coding system. An additional prominent motif pertains to the revelation of the pragmatic politics that underlie the processes of classification and standardisation.

Episteme and Classification

Foucault's discourse analysis offers valuable insights into the ways in which our institutions and modes of communication are structured and classified. Foucault's classifications are instrumental in unlocking the evolution of the human sciences, a term he employs to denote the pursuit of contemporary human knowledge, encompassing fields such as medicine, linguistics, ethnology, and psychiatry. The advent of a novel or modified hierarchy of social strata signifies a cognitive shift for him. Foucault notes a transition from the structural and all-encompassing interpretation of organic nature, as exemplified by the classificatory medicine of the 18th century, to a more patient-centric approach in the following century. This shift is reflected in the typologies of diseases developed during the 19th century, which were informed by insights gained from clinical observation and dissection of pathological tissues. As per his analysis, the act of isolating knowledge objects through classification not only constructs but also imposes limitations on discourses.

According to Foucault's perspective, classifications transcend beyond being mere conceptual frameworks. Rather he perceives classifications as societal tools imbued with powerful signifiers that are often utilised to *ostracise*, *restrict*, or *detain* individuals deemed "abnormal," due to their tendency to arise from or manifest within institutional procedures, as is evident from his work on prison, and hospitals. Foucault's historical works are abundant with instances that demonstrate the capacity of categories to exert a profound impact on both intellectual and societal domains.

Foucault's seminal historical work, *Madness and Civilization*, traces the trajectory of "the great exclusion" that transpired during the mid-17th century, whereby the mentally ill, the destitute, and the jobless were collectively deemed "idle" and subsequently relegated to asylums. He showcases how the confinement of mentally ill individuals within psychiatric institutions facilitated the regulation and examination of insanity. Over time, the development of innovative methodologies for managing the mentally ill gave rise to a novel discipline of inquiry, namely psychology. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1970) compels us to investigate the emergence and function of any given system of specification, with regard to the historical

and institutional contexts in which it is situated. Foucault's principles and inquiries, when applied to the subject of inquiry, can aid in identifying the profound and nearly imperceptible structures that underlie discursive and social transactions. This approach emphasises the importance of classification in understanding the influence of these structures. Pursuant to his reasoning, it could be contended that categorizations serve as both a manifestation and a compass for our cognitive faculties. The manner in which we arrange and prioritise our preferences and desires can be indicative of our cognitive and emotional conditions and conditioning. Foucault's work posits that classifications possess the ability to dispose of the entities they contain. The act of categorization often leads to the subsequent isolation of the object in question. He argues that in the process of isolating objects of knowledge, institutions employ a regulatory framework that involves assigning them to distinct and compartmentalised spaces, such as hospital wards, classrooms, and prison cells, as they undertake the classification of their human subjects (Foucault 1970).

How to study Classification?

Drawing insights from the discussion above, we are sharing some key concerns in relations to the classification. When scrutinising any subject matter pertaining to categorization and classification, it is imperative for a researcher to consider the following paramount concerns. To determining the object of the classification is very important. One should ask does the categorization have an impact on individuals? If so, how? In this particular instance, it is imperative to discern and designate not only the explicit entity being classified, but also the individual subject involved in said classification. Then, one may ask whom or what is excluded by this classification? Does the act of categorising individuals, objects, or concepts into this particular classification confer any advantages or disadvantages upon any particular group? Analyse the distinctions between entities that conform to the established categorization and those that do not. One must inquire as to what the specific inclusion criteria are for the purpose of classification? Upon what basis are particular entities or concepts deemed ineligible for consideration or inclusion. In additional, one can inquire the entity or individual responsible for the development of this particular classification system? By whom is it utilised or adopted? Also to inquire who possess the authorization to utilise or alter this classification? What are the origins of the authoritative basis utilised by the individuals responsible for devising the classification system or those who presently utilise it? Is there any

individual or collective entity that challenges the legitimacy of this categorization or scrutinises its ramifications? Why, what are the implications of this challenges to the new classifications. What was the impact of this classification on the object's understanding or administration? Historical inquiries regarding classification may be undertaken to ascertain the genesis of a given classification system and its subsequent evolution over time.

Determine the spatial classification. In which location was it originally fashioned or modified? It is important to bear in mind that certain categorizations are rooted in societal or institutional customs and are subsequently codified in language. In which social and institutional domains is it presently employed? What is the manner in which it is comprehended or administered in these geographical regions? The implementation of institutional protocols engenders a plethora of classifications that exist in practise. The educational establishments in our society tend to stratify individuals based on a variety of factors such as age, gender, social status, and caste. As a customary practice, students are allocated designated areas based on their age and gender, a convention so ubiquitous that it scarcely warrants acknowledgement.

Sociologists encounter things that are already classified: individuals, groups, institutions. For instance, when we look at administrative classification of Indian population into categories such as SC, ST, OBC, General etc. one can ask the question whether classification is just a bureaucratic construct or it represents community identity. And how over a period of time, a bureaucratic administrative category acquires identity of a social group or even develops group consciousness. We study of classification of people who classify themselves and others. Classification based struggles in popular media have intensified in recent times, e.g. "poor" are defined by the mainstream market norm as lazy, and careless people who are a burden on society and the country because they refuse to contribute anything of value to either society or economy. Politicians keep distributing free-bies for the poor. This burden of moral classification by elites and middle class, attaches negative moral stigma on poor people. Similarly, the recent farmers' movement, where one of the dominant section of rich farmers expressed their anxieties of altering identity. With the acquisition of land by state and corporate agencies, these proud dominant landowning castes feel threatened as this policy might completely change their community identity.

Actively rejecting the judgements of the middle class, subalterns instead engage in revalourization strategies, such as forms of class solidarity in which links forged via local, familial sociality are seen as supportive

connectivities rather than sources of self-accumulation. It is possible to construct a model of class as a struggle that details the ways in which people draw on other values in their fight against class prejudice, something that empirical studies can find out.

Classification and misrecognition as Ideologically constituted

To move ahead to the question of ideology, one can understand the organic link between classification, inequality regimes and ideological frames by asking the question, why and how inequality is "tolerated" and not "resisted" or "challenged". One needs to probe how unequal positions and locations become or termed as questions of "difference" and not hierarchy or exclusion. For many decades, sociologists have been demonstrating the relevance of the ideological justification of unequal relations among different sections of the society. For example, think of the discourse of meritocracy, and social mobility. Michael Young (1958) in his classic, *The Rise of Meritocracy* argued quite authoritatively that individuals are sorted into different occupational positions based on their skills, self-worth, merit and talent, where the later are considered as given and "natural". It has become a very well-organized way of hereditary transfers of privileges, power and resources across generations. Merit and talent have today become the leading social ideals. In Indian context it also gels very well with Brahminical caste and gendered form of hierarchy and exclusion. The discourse has been a medium through which politics of inequality is concealed. It blocks social and economic opportunities for the marginalized via the very category of "mobility" and "openness". In other words, the discourse of meritocracy and entrepreneurship strengthens the production and reproduction of inequality regimes by providing ideological legitimation, justification and rendering it as natural. It ends up blaming the deprived of lacking merit, talent and skills.

Piketty (2014) has explained the dynamics of contemporary capitalism while tracing the patterns of the distribution of income & wealth between and within countries e.g. France, Germany, Britain and also America over the past two centuries. He presents quantitative data collected from tax-records (which allow long-term perspective), historical data provided by World Top Income Database (WTID) and builds on Kuznets' pioneering work evolution of income inequality in America. Also interesting is his usage of distribution tables to analyze inequalities instead of economists' conventional tool, i.e., Gini coefficient. One of the strength of his work is aggregation of national statistics from various sources and their depiction through large time-series.

He demolishes the myth of "meritocratic values" and "principles of justice" usually attributed to American society, by showing that top decile owns 72 per cent of wealth, whereas the bottom half just two per cent, and hence is becoming a society of "supermanagers". The sharp increase in concentration of income is due to rapid increase in "supersalaries" of the top decile.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept, "misrecognition" helps us to understand how one form of asset or capital is utilized for gains in different domain without recognizing it as such. Explained through the category of "symbolic capital", Bourdieu points that this process makes inequalities appear natural/just for everyone while the doxic world of neoliberal economy continues its triumphant march across the globe. Thus, it becomes relevant to make sense of how ideology and misrecognition about inequality structures displace our analytical focus of a problem and blocks any politicization of inequality. In recent times it has been observed that many of our social problems portrayed as the problems of "intolerance" and not as issues of power, domination, exclusion, inequality and injustice and the remedy is proposed via the language of "tolerance", and not political struggle, social movement or resistance (Zizek 2001). Slavoj Zizek succinctly captures this ideological formulation of the problem. According to him, social inequalities, class relations of exploitation resulting from capitalist mode of production, are neutralized and termed as "different ways of living" which cannot be overcome but be adjusted with (Zizek 2001).

Throughout the 1960s, when C. W. Mills was conducting study on American power elites at a period when the idea of "elite" was recovering from its link with "fascism" during the Pareto and Mosca eras. In the post-World War II era, the political tensions of the previous conflict affected the practise of social sciences. The emphasis was on the "rise of the middle classes" in Western Europe. The objective was to delegitimize the "polarisation of class" narrative associated with Marxism. The "embourgeoisement thesis" was ascendant, so the academic focus shifted from studying powerful elites to what was seen as the slow but steady movement of people into the middle class in West Europe and North America. This was related to the narrative of "upward social mobility" of the poor and an understanding of the political and economic ramifications of the "democratization processes".

In the aftermath of these societal upheavals, the empirical criticism of "class analysis" disputed the legitimacy of concepts such as "ruling class" and "power elite." The vast literature demonstrating that the working class is no longer a revolutionary force in England and, subsequently, in European contexts, contributed to the dilution of any critical discussion on who dominates, who monopolizes, and what the social and cultural characteristics

of elites are. The sixth and last blow, in my opinion, was the increasing Foucauldian viewpoint and the notion of a decentred nature of power, an insistence on capillary power that supported the new practices of neoliberal government. All these social, political, and intellectual advancements have led to the evasion of sociological examination by elites. In recent years, sociologists have revived elite studies and resumed their examination of the dynamics of power and inequality in the modern world. (Savage & Williams 2009). Growing privatisation and neoliberal policies have prompted doubts about the character of elites and their aversion to democracies and welfare states. Any academician who attempts to map elite advantages and their social practises is called "leftist" or Maoist as an indication of the narrowing room for critique of economic elites.

In a related vein, the vigorous campaign for the demolition of all democratic institutions worldwide and in India is currently referred to as a "revolt of elites" (Appadurai 2020). The current social and political turmoil provides the opportunity to reject elites' discourse of' meritocracy' and examine critically how they conceal their mechanisms of exclusions and monopolisation of resources, thereby undermining the fundamental principles of democracy-liberty, equality, and fraternity. We have been experiencing a certain stagnancy and dullness in the mainstream political narratives. With the growing implementation of neoliberal economic policies in the country the tenor, language, agenda setting, campaigns related to "market" have acquired a depoliticized character. This brings us to the three major social characteristics of "neoliberal politics" itself as Harvey discussed. Firstly, the neoliberal project is primarily a political project to establish the supremacy of the corporate class over the labour, state and other social groups (Harvey, 2016). It aims to commodify all aspects of human life and put a price tag i.e. monetize everything. In the sphere of politics, neoliberal project silences any critical discussion of economic alternatives and primarily reduces everything to ideological and political manipulations. That's why we see political parties might differ in term of their social and cultural agenda but stand united in their economic policies. The second important element of this neoliberal politics is to reduce all politico-economic problems as the problem of bureaucratic management. In this way no ideological critique is allowed of the mainstream economic planning either of welfarist or socialist kind. This becomes very clear with the tactical slogan of "there is no alternative" popularized globally. Third important element is systematic individualization, fragmentation or generation of cracks in the resistance against neoliberal market model, while the ruling class remains united.

According to Bourdieu, the goal of sociological imagination has always been to reveal the processes of dominance and the rhetoric of power that undermine human freedom and dignity. With the increasing dominance of a neoliberal security state, the true problem is to comprehend, evaluate, and experience how academic research responds to anti-democratic authoritarian conditions, and to revive/resurrect the "critique" from its paralysis. Only by conducting a sociology of privilege and focusing on the engines of inequality, i.e., elites, can we better comprehend how inequality is built and organised. We must comprehend the ramifications of making them invisible. The task of critical social science is to critique the consequences of classificatory systems and the forms of value, judgments and norms they establish in human societies. Social and ideological processes of exploitation, domination, dispossession and devaluation, enable us to see how classificatory practices are not just about the production of differences, but about legitimating power and exploitation.

Conclusion

This paper has mapped the conceptual discussions around classification and inequality. It suggests that the underlying mechanisms of the functioning of classifications need to be systematically examined rather than assuming them in advance. In other words, we need to be reflexive about how we understand and examine mechanisms of inequality and power without questioning of the classificatory cum ideological framework that permeates beneath and hides the mechanisms of inequality. Only a creative sociological imagination can help us in formulating relevant questions to probe into the production of the "stability" and "invisibility" of the mechanisms that lie at the heart of an unequal socio-economic order. The task of demystification of the ideological frameworks of classification and inequality is necessary to lay bare the structures of inequality and to throw a critical reflection on what has become invisible and almost forbidden to talk about.

References

Appadurai, Arjun. 2020. 'We Are Witnessing the Revolt of Elites'. *The Wire*,

URL: https://thewire.in/politics/populism-elite-narendra-modi-donald-trump, accessed on 4th April, 2023.

Beri, Suraj. 2020. 'Sociology of Privilege: Inequality Studies and the curious 'Invisibility of Elites'. *Doing Sociology Blog*, 4th June 2020.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2018. *Classificatory Struggles*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bowker, G. & S. L. Star. 2000. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Douglas, Mary. 1986. *How Institutions Think*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1965. *Madness and Civilisation*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire.* London: Harvard University Press.

Harvey, David. 2016. 'Neoliberalism is a Political Project'. *Jacobin Magazine*.

Mills, C. W. 1959. *The Power Elite*. New York: OUP.

Pakulski, Jan & M. Waters. 1995. *The Death of Class*. London: Sage.

Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Belknap Press - Harvard University Press.

Piketty, Thomas. 2020. *Capital and Ideology*. Cambridge: Belknap Press - Harvard University Press.

Savage, M. & Karol Williams. 2009. *Remembering Elites*. London: Wiley Blackwell.

Schwatrz, Barry. 1981. *Vertical Classification*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Skeggs, B. 2004. *Class, Self and Culture*. London: Routledge.

Young, Michael. 1958. *The Rise of Meritocracy*. London: Hudson Press.

Zizek, Slavoj. 2001. *Did Somebody say Totalitarianism*. London: Verso Books

4

Writing on the Body: Indigenous Medicine and Bangla Periodicals (1850-1901)

Sunrita Chakravarti
Assistant Professor in English, Durgapur Government College
Email: azureyearning@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper tries to engage with the discursive construction of the diseased/healthy native body in the essays on health and medicine published in Bangla periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth century like* Bibidhartho Sangraha, Chikitsa Sammelani, Rahasya Sandarbhya, Shwasthya, Chikitsak o Somalochak *and so on. I have attempted to show how the discourses on indigeneous medicine and the diseased/ healthy body of the native in these essays is a product of contradictory forces – the desire to posit the "difference" vis-a-vis the Western medical discourses and the anxiety of establishing the "scientificity" of indigeneous medicine, particularly Ayurveda. With a focus on textual instances drawn from these essays I have argued how these writings can be seen as an attempt to create a counter discourse against the pathologisation of space and the native body in early to mid-nineteenth century colonial medical discourses.*

Keywords: Ayurveda, colonial medical discourse, indigenous medicine, debility, diseased body, scientificity.

Introduction

On 10th January 1836, Madhusudan Gupta, a physician by profession did something which almost gained a symbolic significance. He is credited to have been the author of a climactic moment in the history of medicine in the subcontinent when, 'Indians rose superior to the prejudices of their earlier education and thus boldly flung open the gates of modern medical science to their countrymen' (Arnold 1993: 16). Gupta was the first Indian to have conducted the dissection of a human body in the modern times. This was indeed a triumphant moment for Western medicine which was

gradually beginning to posit its superiority over indigenous medicine at this point of time. Human dissection was hitherto not carried out in native medical institutes for religious and caste concerns. Indigenous medicine and its practioners were understood to be marked by these irrational prejudices – prejudices which deterred them from opening up bodies, thereby denying their knowledge systems the insignia of scientific objectivity.

With the evolution of the colonial medical discourse from the mutual interdependence of the Western and indigenous systems in early nineteenth century to the complete ideological negation of indigenous medicine as a legitimate form of medical practice 1830s onwards, there seems to be a discursive shift in the construction of the diseased/healthy native body vis-a-vis the Eurpean body. As the Anglicist position of branding Ayurveda and Yunani as "unscientific", absurd and irrational grew stronger, there emerged a desire among the educated elite to not only establish the "scientificity" of indigeneous medical systems but also to integrate and reconstitute these systems, Ayurveda in particular, within the folds of modern education. Essays on health and medicine published in Bangla periodicals like *Bibidhartho Sangraha* (1851-61), *Rahasya Sandarbha* (1862-74), *Chikitsa Sammilani* (1885-94), *Chikitsak o Samalochak* (1895-96), *Swasthya* (1898-1901), bear marks of this desire.

The body, be it diseased or otherwise is discursively constructed – it is as much an entity constructed and controlled by medical or legal discourses as it is a corporeal presence. On a superficial level it would seem that the essays on indigenous medicine, Ayurveda in particular were bent on positing an understanding of the body as fundamentally different from Western medical discourses. But one must not overlook the immense intellectual anxiety which haunts these writings – the anxiety of not only establishing the "scientificity" of the object of knowledge (Ayurveda and its effects on the body) but also structuring the matter presented as a rational scientific discourse. This paper tries to understand the effect of these contradictory forces on the construction of diseased/ healthy bodies – especially native bodies produced by these texts. How do these bodies differ (if at all) from those produced by the colonial medical science? Can these writings be seen as instances of resistance or "writing back" against the pathologisation of the natives and the "tropics" as prone to debility and sites of disease? Answers will be sought by focussing precisely on textual instances of unease – where the porosity of bodily boundaries subject the body to invasion – by western medicine (বিদেশী ঔষধ) or contagion by contact.

Hybrid Entities: Colonial Medicine and Science

The desire to construct a rational scientific discourse concerning the body and indigeneous medical systems in the essays published in these Bangla peroidicals must be seen in the wider context of dissemination of Western science in the colonies. David Arnold in *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (1993) has argued that a diffusionist Eurocentric model, one which assumes that dissemination took place through a simple dispacement of 'traditional' knowledge systems by western science is essentially reductive. Arnold refers to George Basalla's article 'The Spread of Western Science' (1967) in this context. While he regards Basalla's "three phase" model of dissemination valuable since it moves away from 'an earlier historiography of science constructed around great men and great discoveries' (Arnold 2009: 16) and contextualizes the developments in a wider socio-political and cultural field so as to elucidate the basic concepts of "colonial science" and "colonial medicine", Arnold points out certain limitations in Basalla's proposition. The three phase model delineates the way in which scientific knowledge spread in the colonies through active cartographic exercises, conducting of surveys, collection of specimen and samples in the first phase, followed by the development of "colonial science" in the second phase and the third phase which marks the completion of the process of transplantation characterised by an effort to establish an "independent scientific tradition" in the colonial context.

Basalla (1967) uses the term "colonial science" in the sense that it was to a large extent "dependent" upon the European metropolitan centre and the third phase is seen as a gradual move towards achieving a distinct scientific tradition by the colonial scientists. Arnold's most significant critique of Basalla's model is the conspicuous lack of commentary on the relationship of traditional sciences and knowledge systems with the dominant western scientific discourse in his work. Drawing attention specifically to the history of medical science in nineteenth century India, he argues that a diffusionist model such as Basalla's falls short of understanding the essentially hybrid nature of colonial science and by extension colonial medicine. The distinct character of colonial science and medicine is born out of the dialectical relationship between western sciences and traditional knowledge systems. From the very early years of contact there had been interactions and exchanges. The categories "indigenous" and "Western" medicine, Arnold points out though used for convenience's sake should not be seen uncritically with the assumption that these are homogeneous and independent entities. The process of transplantation of western science in the colonies is therefore

not a simple process of ousting an "inferior", "superstitious" indigenous tradition with a superior rational knowledge system but an interactive dialectical process whereby both the categories undergo change and emerge as hybrid entities. Transplantation occurs not only through the efforts of western science and medicine to adapt itself to the physical, social, cultural ambience of the colony but also through the attempts of the colonised educated elite to uphold the "scientificity" of traditional knowledge systems. Even a critique of the "ill effects", inefficacy and limitations of western science and medicine had to be framed in the "rational scientific" language of the west.

Bangla periodicals like *Bibidhartha Sangraha, Rahasya-Sandarbhya, Bigyan Rahasya* (1871), *Bigyan Darpan* (1876), *Chikitsa Darshan* (1887) took up the task of engaging in a dialogue with western science and medicine. Mere translation and summarisation of western texts was seen as a deterrent for dissemination of knowledge and independent thinking. But how can this be achieved? As an answer to this the author of *Banglar Chikitsak Samaj* (1889) suggests the formation of scientific and medical societies or organisations. The task of these organisations or bodies would be to publish periodicals which would perform the much needed task of mediation between two competing knowledge systems.

Mediation and mediators: Dialogue or dissent?

Lamenting the utter absence of any kind of effort on the part of Indian medical practioners trained in western medical science to initiate a dialogue between the indigenous and western methods of diagnosis and pharmacology, the author of *Bangalar Chikitsak Samaj* wrote in 1885: "বাঙ্গালার চিকিৎসককুল, শিশুর ন্যায় অদ্যপিও ইউরোপীয় শিক্ষকগণের পদানুসরণ করিতেছেন- আমরা ক্রমাগতই ইংরাজ প্রভৃতি পণ্ডিতগণ যাহা বলিতেছেন তাহাই করিতেছি"।[1] (Bose 2009: 67). The essays regarding health in Bangla periodicals sought to create this much needed mediation. However, the range of opinions that one comes across in these essays is noteworthy. While some of the contributors out rightly hailed Ayurveda as a divine gift, a product of the lost golden age of "Aryan civilisation" and hence far more superior to western medical science, there were others who had a more balanced approach in the sense that they questioned the presumed 'superiority'/inferiority of one over the other and hoped that a constructive dialogue between these opposing systems would ensue. The difference of opinion notwithstanding, there was this vehement desire to establish the scientificity of indigenous medical theory and practice which can be regarded

as a point of convergence. This desire is to be understood as a product of a historical process.

The School for Native Doctors – an institution which offered courses on both Ayurveda and western medical science was shut down in 1835. Significantly this was the year which saw the establishment of Calcutta Medical College and also the publication of Macaulay's 'Minute on Education'. Macaulay argued that the exchequer could not be drained for propagation of "medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand years long, and geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter" (Arnold 2009: 57) It is in this historical context that the claim to "scientificity" has to be considered.

In 'Ayurbed Boigyanik na Oboigyanik'[2] the essayist, Sheetalchandra Chattyopadhyay attempts to establish the scientificity of Ayurveda by drawing attention to the theoretical conception of the diseased body in Ayurvedic texts. Disease is configured as a state of imbalance in the body when the normal balance of *bayu, pitta and kapha* goes haywire: "ইহারা কুপিত হইয়া দেহকে মলিন করে বলিয়া মল নামে এবং দূষিত করে বলিয়া দোষ নামে অভিহিত হয়."[3] (Chattyopadhyay 1885 in Bose 2009: 79) The conception of the diseased body was entirely different in Western medical discourse in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1976) locates the shift in the discourse in the fag-end of the eighteenth century when modern medical science empowered by the clinical gaze is able to locate the disease specifically *in* the anatomical space of the body:

> This is the period that marks the suzerainty of the gaze … experience reads at a glance the visible lesions of the organism and the coherence of pathological forms; the illness is articulated exactly on the body, and its logical distribution is carried out at once in terms of anatomical masses. The 'glance' has simply to exercise its right of origin over truth. (Foucault 1976: 20)

The mapping of the "body of disease" onto the body of the sick man, Foucault argues is a historical process and this "superimposition" is brought about by the relatively recent developments in the nineteenth century medical discourse. Anatomo-clinical medicine being empowered by the "gaze" reads disease as it progresses and symptomises in different parts of the body. As opposed to the classical model which understood disease through classification of "species", the new model is thus a chronological one as it

is engaged in reading this progression in the body of the individual patient. Foucault maps this shift as a change from the "horizontal axis" to the "vertical one". The "truth" about disease is henceforth revealed by a medical archaeology which seeks to interpret the visible lesions in the tissues rather than the flat horizontal classical model where the cognition of the nature of disease rests on identifying the "species" or "class" to which it belongs.

The conception of *doshas* in Ayurveda lacked the perceptual base very much like the pre-modern discourses on medicine in Europe. These were thought to belong to the domain of the fantastic and the vague. If modern medical discourse is based on an "alliance forged between words and things" (Foucault 1976: 12) which enables one to "see and to say" – i.e. the "verbalization of the pathological" depends on the clinical gaze that is able to *locate* the disease in the three dimensional space of the body – the language of Ayurveda seemed full of abstract metaphysics to the European medical officers. The author of *Ayurbed Boijnyanik naa Oboijnyanik* points to this problem quoting a European physician: 'But for the explanations of these facts, they are often interwoven with absurd theories and doctrines which take place of *physiology and pathology*' (Chattyopadhyay 1885, in Bose 2009: 77) (emphasis mine). However, when it comes to defending the claim of scientificity of Ayurveda he writes:

> আর্য্য চিকিৎসাশাস্ত্রবিদ পণ্ডিতগণ... যখন রোগ সম্প্রাপ্তির কূটিলতা ভাবিয়া শরীর মনোবৈশ্যমের গূঢ়তম রহস্য ভেদের চিন্তাপরায়ণ ছিলেন; তখনই ঐশী শক্তির স্ফুরণে বায়ু, পিত্ত, কফের সত্তা উপলব্ধি করেন[4]। (Chattyopadhay 1885 in Bose 2009: 79) (emphasis added).

"Oishi shokti" loosely translated as divine power that which inspired the ancient 'seers' (their seeing very different from the way in which *seeing* is configured in the modern medical discourse) is consistent with the initial claim with which the author began: "আয়ুর্বেদ বেদের উপাঙ্গ। হিন্দুদিগের মতে বেদ অপৌরষেয় সুতরাং আয়ুর্বেদও অপৌরষেয় অর্থাৎ কোন পুরুষ নির্মিত নহে"[5] (Chattyopadhay 1885, cited in Bose 2009: 75). David Arnold, while tracing the history of European encounter with Indian medicine has shown how from the very early years of contact to the mid nineteenth century when attitudes to indigenous systems were gradually hardening – there was a persistent critique of what the colonial medical officers called "Hindu Medicine". They 'deplored the way in which medicine had become mixed up with religion, so that Ayurveda was revered as a gift of gods, a circumstance which has been an insurmountable obstacle to improvement and a reason why medicine in India was still sunk in such a state of empirical

darkness' (Arnold 1993: 45). The contributors to Bangla periorodicals on health and medicine were not unaware of these criticisms. References to the works of colonial medical officers are aplenty in these texts. Clearly aware of the possible misreadings of the word "*apourosheyo*" and eager to posit Ayurveda as "science", Chattyopadhay goes on to elucidate the subtle s*hsastrik* (scriptural) nuances of the word. He cautions that he is not trying to suggest that the Ayurvedic texts, written in human language emerged out of nowhere and thus predated human existence. The author's explanation of the concept *apourosheyo* draws extensively from Vedic philosophy. His argument rests on the claim of the Vedas as a source of "Absolute" or "Eternal" truth – a truth which is beyond human artifice. It is in this respect the author explains that it is *apourosheyo* (beyond the *purusha* – the human). It is remarkable how he attempts to prove the "scientificity" of Ayurveda by drawing on philosophical and linguistic sources though he himself elsewhere in the same text points out how complex metaphysical explanations and references in the Ayurvedic texts have earned unfavourable responses from European commentators. Chattyopadhay's defence of Ayurveda draws on the etymological roots of the words *vijnyan* and *Veda*. Since the Sanskrit root of both words – *jnya* and *vid* signify *jnyana* or knowledge and knowledge leads to the apprehension of "Absolute Truth", he argues Ayurveda is *Vijnana* (Science). The fact that the argument would certainly be dismissed by the Europeans as it is based on linguistic and philosophical premises and not on empirical "evidence" is all too evident but what is significant is that the author's claims of "scientificity" of Ayurveda seems to be directed towards the native educated middle class Bengali reader rather than the colonial commentators/ medical officers.

While Chattyopadhay focuses on the humoural construction of the healthy and diseased body found in ancient Ayurvedic texts, fully aware of the critricisms of Ayurveda lacking the "perceptual base" of pathological anatomy, others like Shourindramohan Gupta reminds his readers of the "glorious golden days" of ancient Aryan civilization when corpses were opened up by physicians to study tissual construction of the brain and other organs. Eager to address the Western criticism of indigeneous medical treatises as devoid of anatomo-pathological evidence, Gupta in the piece titled 'Pracheen Arya Chikitsabijnyan' argues how the ancient Aryans were pioneers in cutting open corpses for knowledge as opposed to the Egyptians or the Greeks. Citing a text called *Shivasanhita*, Gupta shows how the Aryans knew about the constitution of the spinal cord and the grey and white matter of the brain:

আর্য্যেরা মস্তিষ্ক এবং "কষেরুকা মজ্জার" বিষয়ে অবগত ছিলেন। তাহারা জানিতেন যে স্নায়ুমণ্ডল একপ্রকার শ্বেত এবং ধূসর পদার্থে নির্মিত। [6] (Gupta 1895, in Bose 2009: 92)

Like Chattopdhyay, Gupta too seems to address the colonised native Bengali middle class reader. He tries to establish the validity of the Hindu understanding of the body and its processes by bringing up the rather contentious issue of dissection. Colonial medical officers and doctors often commented on what they understood as a serious lack which undermined the legitimacy of 'Hindu medicine' – their unfavourable attitude towards opening up corpses. Like Gupta, an anonymous author writing for the periodical *Swasthya* in 1899 (Bose 2009: 111) refutes this conception and impresses upon the reader to recall how a certain British doctor called Wise, with the help of Madhusudan Gupta had translated Susruta's works and had included the diagrams of instruments for dissection devised by the ancient physician. The contributors to these periodicals were not merely writing back to the centre, but through their deliberations they seemed to make the colonized native middle class reader aware of the "rich tradition of knowledge and learning" that had been occluded by Western discourses of superiority.

The desire of establishing the validity of Ayurveda as "science" is integral to the forging of a counter-discourse against the colonial discourse branding indigenous medicine as 'unscientific' and based on "superstition". While some authors like Chattyopadhyay look towards the Vedas to uphold the claims to scientificity others borrow English words and terms to argue their case. Textual clues like insertion of scientific terms in English written in bold script within the Bangla text in some of the essays seem to be visual reminders of the claim to scientificity. The title page of *Anubeekshon*, a periodical is another case in point. It features an illustration of a microscope and below it is inscribed: *"Drishyate twagryya budhhya sukshmaya sukshmadarshibhi"* (Those who "see" with discerning eyes are capable of profound perception). The image of the microscope seems to assume a symbolic significance in this context. While the image of a scientific instrument – one which facilitates "seeing" emphasises the rational, the logical and empirical observation, the Sanskrit text below is a marker of traditional wisdom. The juxtaposition of the image of the microscope with the Sanskrit text in the title page of this periodical on health and medicine, perhaps connotes the desire of bridging together these two very different ways of "seeing" and perceiving. The discussions on Ayurveda and other indigenous medicine in these periodicals can be seen as both a desire to

engage in a dialogue with Western medicine and medical practices and also a dissent against the demeaning discursive construction of Ayurveda and indigenous medicine.

Native bodies, Kavirajs and Anxieties

The fear of the native body being invaded and controlled by western medicine or *bideshi ousodh* is voiced by several authors in health periodicals like *Chikitsak o Somalochok, Chikitsa Sammilani* and *Swasthya* etc. Some of them were practioners of Ayurveda themselves. The diseased body of the Indian is understood to be as a by-product of the colonial rule itself. Highlighting the ill effects of western medicine ("quinine, brandy, port and derivatives of mercury") on the diseased native body one contributor remarks:

> ইউরোপীয় ঔষধ যদিও আশু রোগ নিবারক কিন্তু পরিণামে যে অস্বাস্থ্যকর তাহা ধীমান মাত্রই স্বীকার করিবেন। ইউরোপীয় ব্রান্ডি, পোর্ট, কুইনাইন ও পারাঘটিত ঔষধাদি এদেশের স্বাস্থ্য গত পঞ্চাশ বৎসরে যত নষ্ট করিয়াছে বোধ হয় শত সহস্র রোগেও তাহা নষ্ট করিতে পারিত না।[8] (Anonymous 1875, in Bose 2009 : 144)

The detrimental long term effects of "western medicine", according to the author far outweighs the immediate relief it provides and it afflicts the native body worse than any disease ever could. It is significant to note here that these essays were being written and published from the mid to late nineteenth century. Ayurveda had already received a blow in the 1830s when the legitimacy of indigenous medical theories and practice were challenged and colonial patronage was withdrawn almost entirely. In the 1860s with the publication of the report on the Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army, the development of a more invasive structure of state medicine and public health gradually emerged. The persistent critique of *bideshi ousodh* is inextricably tied to the critique of western education or *paschatya shiksha*. Writing in 1895 for *Chikitsak o Somalochak*, Kobiraj Prasannachandra Maitreya remarks: 'পাশ্চাত্য শিক্ষার কৃত্রিম আলোকে বর্তমান ভারতবাসীর মস্তিষ্ক বিকৃত হইয়াছেই বলিয়া তাহারা প্রকৃত বিষয়ে হৃদয়ঙ্গম করিতে পারিতেছেনা।[9] (Maiteya, 1895 in Bose 2009: 104). Maitreya's essay reveals a deep anxiety regarding the Indian body being subjected to degeneration and decay by the assault of *bijatiyo ousodh* and more importantly of the body being rendered abject – its sanctity threatenned by a dissolving of the bodiy boundaries of the *inside* and the *outside*. He writes about what he calls the modern day "horrors" of the contemporary sanitation system – a system that contributes to the generation and

proliferation of diseases – of the dangers of air bourne particles of excreta and bodily secretions invading the margins of the body. He argues how the *manab palan samitis* or municipalities have exposed the native population to diseases by replacing the traditional practice of open defecation with makeshift latrines which had to be manually cleaned by municipality workers. Maitreya scathingly remarks:

> এই অভিনব মানব পালিনী সভা কার্য ক্ষেত্রে প্রবেশ করিয়াই অমনি সাধারণের মলমূত্রাদির উপর তীব্রদৃষ্টি নিক্ষেপ করিতে থাকেন ... মলমূত্রাদি পরিষ্কার করার জন্য ... বহুসংখ্যক ভৃত্য নিযুক্ত থাকে... এই মলসংস্কার নিতান্ত অসহনীয়, অস্বাস্থ্যকর। পচা দুর্গন্ধময় মল সমূহের পরমানুকণা বায়ু সহযোগে সঞ্চালিত হইয়া কি প্রকারে সাধারণের স্বাস্থ্যরক্ষা করে তাহা আমাদের জ্ঞানাতীত এবং বিজ্ঞান বহির্ভূত।[10] (Maitreya 1895, in Bose 2009: 105) (emphasis added).

Though many of the contributors like Maitreya were inclined to celebrate the golden past of *pracheen aryachikitshabigyan* they simultaneously felt the pull of *bijnyan* (science) and the need to shape their arguments in the form of a "rational scientific discourse". Maitreya deems the contemporary sanitary reforms as utterly "unscientific" (বিজ্ঞান বহির্ভূত) as the European system of waste management produced putrescence and disease. One of the recurrent arguments in these essays on health is quite in line with the medico-topographical discourses and the environmentalist theories found in the works of colonial medical officers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Bodily constitution is determined by the climatic and environmental factors in which the body is situated and the treatment of diseases, medicines to be administered should be chosen accordingly:

> যে দেশে যাহাদিগের জন্ম, যে দেশীয় জলবায়ু দ্বারা তাহাদিগের শরীর পরিবর্দ্ধিত ... তদ্দেশীয়জাত ঔষধই তাহাদিগের প্রতি একান্ত হিতকর ... ভারতবাসীগণ সামান্য কারণে বিজাতীয় ঔষধ গলাদ্ধকরণ করিয়া থাকেন। ইহাতে স্বাস্থ্যভঙ্গ হইবে না কেন?[11] (Maitreya1895, in Bose 2009: 109)

What exactly is the discourse concerning "western medicine" which was both feared and revered in colonial India?

Arnold problematizes the concepts of Western and "indigenous medicine" by drawing attention to the fact that these were by no means wholly independent or homogenous systems. A long history of interactions shaped these systems and the claims of Ayurveda or Yunani retaining their "pristine purity throughout the colonial period" (Arnold 1993: 14) is as unreliable as the suggestion that western medicine in the colonies was a mirror image of

the medical science taught and practiced in the metropolitan centre. Rather, as Arnold says one should take into consideration the essentially dialectical nature of the interactions of these two systems. In the early years of contact, the Europeans had to depend on the *hakims* and *kavirajs* for their survival in an alien land. Gradually colonial medical science emerged as an objective scientific discourse as opposed to the "superstitous" and absurd doctrines of indigenous texts through systematic surveys and categorizations of topographical, climatic and demographical data. Works of James Jhonson (The *Influence* of *Tropical Climates on European Constitutions,* 1813), James Annesley (*Sketches of the Most Prevalent Diseases of India* 1825), William Twining (*Clinical Illustrations of the More Prevalent Diseases of Bengal* 1832), are a few examples. In the initial phase, the ever present attitude of superiority notwithstanding, there was also sometimes a grudging appreciation of Ayurvedic medicine. Several essays in the Bangla periodicals posit their claim to scientificity of Ayurveda by arguing that the Europeans have understood and acknowldged the medicinal value of certain herbs and medicines prescribed in the ancient texts. Yet there seems to be a persistent fear of hybridization of indigeneous and western medicine and the debilitating and injurious effects of such "hybrid" medicines on the body of the Indians. In an essay titled '*Shwasthya Prosongo*: *Ayurbed Oushodh kahakey boley?*' published in the periodical *Shwasthya*, the anonymous author voices the anxiety regarding the use of quinine and potassium iodide in concoctions sold as Ayurvedic medicines:

> ঔষধগুলি ঠিক আয়ুর্বেদসম্মত না তাহাতে ভেজাল চলিতেছে? ডাক্তারি ও কবিরাজি ঔষধে খিচুড়ি বানাইয়া যাইতেছে কিনা? কুইনাইন রসসিন্দূরের সহিত মিলিয়া হরগৌরী রূপ ধরিতেছে কি না?, ইংরাজি আয়ডাইড অব পটাশ গুলঞ্চ ও শতমূলীর সহিত মিশিয়া কোন কষায় নাম ধারণ করিতেছে...[12] (Anonymous 1901, in Bose 2009: 127)

The native body, subject to western medicines and medical procedures therefore becomes the site of anxieties and fears. The difference between the discursive constructions of the 'diseased native body' in these Bangla periodicals and in colonial accounts is noteworthy. As the Europeans gradually became acclimatized to Indian climates, the body of the native was increasingly associated with images of debility and death as opposed to the earlier representations where the native body is far more well equipped if not immune to the onslaught of tropical diseases. The debility of the body in turn becomes associated with psychological, ethical, socio-cultural and religious practices of the native. They are branded as essentially lazy, superstitious, prone to delinquencies and so on. It will be interesting to compare the colonial construction of the native body with reference to the

Bangla essays on health. Quite a few of the essays engage in what seems to be almost a pathological self-deprecation. However, this is not a mere internalisation of the coloniser's conception of the inferior Other. Bodily debility, in these essays is seen as a psychological effect of the process of colonisation. The colonized has been so charmed by western discourses of knowledge that he is reluctant to adhere to the traditional Hindu way of life which causes disease and debility.

   The conception of native body as essentially prone to debility, disease and death is therefore common to both western and indigenous medical discourses in the mid nineteenth century though the causes vary for obvious reasons. The evangelizing mission of western medical science is evident in this discursive production of bodies and psyches which are in utmost need of cure, of healing. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay has pointed out the recurrent use of medical metaphors in Macaulay's *Minute on Education* as well as in the writings of Charles Grant:

> Healing, Purging, Revival - these words have been reiterated time and again in his works... the ideal of health is one and only... and from this perspective the 'illness' of the Indians are clearly evident: the sick must therefore seek the White doctor or the psychologist... (Bandyopadhyay 2013: 127) (Translation mine)

The diseased body and the addled brain of the colonized are therefore inextricably associated with the question of morality. What emerges as a cause for concern in this discursive construction of diseases, bodies and minds is the fear of contagion – both corporeal and moral. The fear of the moral degeneration of the European child in India just like the lazy, delinquent native haunts western medical discourses of the nineteenth century. Harish Naraindas in an article titled 'Poisons, Putrescence and the Weather: A Genealogy of the Advent of Tropical Medicine' has shown how the discursive construction of the "wasting body" of the European in India and the tropics is based on a pathologisation of space. The warm humid climate of India and the tropics is held responsible for putrescence, waste and corruption which is both "moral and meteorological" (Naraindas 1996: 40) The heat of the tropics is thought to produce corporeal defects – 'a marked disposition to relaxation and to a loose relaxed state of joints… and to 'consequent lateral curvature of the spine' which in turn lead to an indolent, lazy nature. The effect of the climate on the body is also a matter that is brought up time and again in the Bangla health periodicals but the narrative is based not on pathologisation of the tropics but on difference – the bodily or constitutional difference of the native body with respect to the European body – suited to the cold climes. The native body will therefore not respond

to European medicine or food advised by the White doctor. The diseased native body is therefore more a product of the invasive 'western medicine' than the hot and humid climate. Pathologisation of the tropics in the western discourses seems to meet a fitting reply in the writings of *kavirajs* like Prasannachandra Maitreya which pathologise the emergent modern urban space with its "faulty" sanitation system and waste disposal methods as the cause of disease and debility.

Conclusion

The attempt to construct a counter discourse to the pathologisation of space and natives of the colony and to uphold the "scientificity" of indigenous medicine and treatment procedures seems to be the chief objective of the nineteenth century Bangla periodicals on health. These essays can be seen as instances of resistance, as a form of cultural nationalism which sought to evoke in the middle class Bengali reader a sense of the past, to revive a memory of traditional medical practices and methods that appeared to be "threatened" and risked being obliterated by the dominant "scientific" Western discourses on the body and disease, particularly in the colonial context. However, in some instances this process of "writing back" is accomplished by the appropriation of the language and tropes of western medical discourses. This is not merely the shadow of the "superior Other" haunting the margins of the counter discourse but is to be understood as a conscious strategic device to posit the value and relevance of indigenous medicine in the linguistic paradigm of the West.

Notes

1. 'Bengali medics are imitating their European instructors like infants… We are doing whatever the English masters are telling us to do'.

2. 'Ayurbed Boigyanik naa Obigyanik' ('Is Ayurveda Scientific or Unscientific?') is an essay written by Sheetalchandra Chattyopadhyay originally published in *Chikitsa Sammelani* in 1885.

3. 'The disbalance of bayu*, pitta and kapha* makes the body diseased and polluted so they are called "doshas"'.

4. The Aryan physicians while engrossed in deciphering the mysteries of the diseased body were suddenly inspired by divine power and understood the nature of bayu, pitta and kapha

5. 'Ayurveda is a part of the Vedas. According to the Hindus, the Vedas are *apourosheyo* (beyond the *purusha* or the human) i.e. not "made by man"'.

6. 'The Aryans knew about the brain and spinal fluids. They also knew about the grey and the white matter'. Quoted from Shourindramohan Gupta's essay titled 'Pracheen Arya Chikitsa Bigyan'('Ancient Aryan Medical Science) originally published in *Chikitsak o Somalochak* (1895).

7. Sushruta, the author of *Sushruta Samhita* was an ancient Indian physician noted for his treatises on surgical procedures and instruments.

8. 'European medicines are effective in eradicating diseases but any wise man will accept that they have debilitating long term side effects. The way in which European brandy, port, quinine and derivatives of mercury have destroyed the health of the natives in the past fifty years is worse than the debilitating effects of many diseases'. Quoted from *Deshiyo Oushodh o Tahar Shikshak* written by an anonymous author originally pubished in *Anubeekshon* in 1875.

9. 'The artificial light of western education has addled the brain of Indian nowadays and this is the reason behind their inability to come to terms with the reality'. Quoted from Kobiraj Prassannachandra Maitreya's *'Arya Swasthya Bijnyan'* originally published in *Chikitsak o Somalochak*, 1895

10. 'These new municipal bodies have started their operations by a sharp scrutiny of the faeces and urine of the common man…scavengers have been appointed for manually cleaning the makeshift latrines… this method of waste disposal is horrible, unhygienic. We fail to understand how the inhalation of air laden with the foul putrefying particles of human faeces is beneficial for public health and it is utterly unscientific'.

11. 'Indigeneous medicine is best suited for the native body born and bred in the native soil…Indians have formed a habit of needlessly swallowing western medicine… Why will not this weaken their health?'

12. 'Are these medicines truly "Ayurvedic" or spurious? Are these nefarious concoctions of indigeneous and western medicine? Is quiinine being mixed with *rasasindur* to take a "hermaphrodite" form? Who knows whether the strange mixture of iodide of potash, gulancha and shatamuli is being marketed as Ayurvedic medicine?' Quoted from *Swasthya*

Prosongo: Ayurbed Ousodh Kahakey Boley? written by an anonymous author originally published in *Shwasthya* 1901.

References

Anonynous. 1875/2009. 'Deshiyo Ousodh o Tahar Chikitsak', in P. Bose (ed.), *Samoyiki:Purono Samoyikpotrer Probondho Sankalan*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd: 143-145. (Originally published in *Anubeekshon* 1875).

Anonymous. 1901/2009. 'Swasthya Prosongo: Ayurbed Ousodh Kahakey Boley, in P. Bose (ed.), *Samoyiki: Purono Samoyikpotrer Probondho Sankalan*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd: 127-128. (Originally published in *Swasthya* 1901)

Arnold, David. 1993. *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease*. Berkeley: California Press.

Bandyopadhyay, Sibaji, 2013. *Gopal Rakhal Dwandasamas: Upanibeshbad o Bangla Shishu Sahitya*. Kolkata: Karigar.

Basalla, George. 1967. 'The Spread of Western Science'. *Science*, Vol. 156, No. 3775: 611- 22.

Chattyopadhyay, Sheetalchandra. 1885/2009. 'Ayurbed Boijnyanik na Oboijnyanik'. In P. Bose (ed.), *Samoyiki: Purono Samoyikpotrer Probondho Sankalan*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd: 74-89. (Originally published in *Chikitsa Sammelani* 1885).

Foucault, Mitchel. 1976. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Gupta, Shourindramohan. 1895/2009, 'Pracheen Arya Chikitsa Bijnyan'. In P. Bose (ed.), *Samoyiki: Purono Samoyikpotrer Probondho Sankalan*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd: 89-103. (Originally published in *Chikitsak o Samalochak* 1895).

Maitreya Prasannachandra. 1895/2009. 'Arya Swasthya Bijnyan'. In P. Bose (ed.), *Samoyiki: Purono Samoyikpotrer Probondho Sankalan*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd: 103-111. (Originally published in *Chikitsak o Samalochak* 1895).

Naraindas, H. 1996. 'Poisons, Putrescence and the Weather: A Genealogy of the Advent of Tropical Medicine'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 30, No. 1: 1-35.

5

Living in Care Crisis: The Case of the Urban Middle-Class Elderly in India

Sinjini Roy
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam
Government College, Kolkata; Email: roy.sinjini@gmail.com

Abstract: *For ages, the aged in India lived in the care of their children, grandchildren, other family members, close kin, and neighbours. However, in recent times, especially in the urban middle-class context, a growing number of elderly are made to live lonely lives in their own house or apartment, mainly under the care of hired service providers or in old age homes. In such living arrangements, the elderly, with broken health and multiple ailments, live amidst insecurities, fear of illness and death, the pain of living alone and away from children, who are now dispersed to different places, and so on. They live with the happy memory of living amid close ones and with never-ending longing for their children and grandchildren who live afar. The care crisis, thus construed, is rooted in some radical changes in the life world of urban middle class families over the last two-three generations, especially in the post-Independence period. The modernity-induced rationalization of life, reflected in fertility checks, careerism, and spatial movements of the younger generation, which have grown manifold in the recent decades of globalization, have contributed to this crisis.*

Keywords: Care crisis, dropping fertility, old age homes, dispersal of family members, single member households.

Introduction

The burgeoning urban "middle class"[1] is transitioning alongside the shift of the Indian socio-political-economic order from a relatively protected tradition-bound position to a fast-liberalizing-globalizing order. The new neo-liberal socio-political order that thrives on commodifying all resources and services,

consumerism, and new hedonistic ideals is contributing to the making of a "risk society," which is out to unsettle the life of the urban middle class. When the state protection and support in the fields of education, health, employment, and other essential services such as housing, transport, social security, and so on is on the wane, people experiencing poverty and the middle class find themselves amid crises of different kinds; they need new orientation and new calculative rationality to enhance their "life chances" to be able to encounter the risks embedded in the new order. In Risk Society (1992), Ulrich Beck gives a vivid account of the risks ingrained in the neo-liberal order of the West. Zygmunt Bauman has also catalogued the livelihood risks inherent in neo-liberal economic orders in his Postmodernity and its Discontents (1997). In India, in the post-liberalization era (since 1991), the massive privatization of the PSUs, mechanization of the industries, and market volatility have led to a massive drop in organized sector jobs (only about five percent of the labour force now work in the organized sector), which, in turn, has led to the alarming rise in youth unemployment (youth of 15 to 24 age group) and casualization of workforce.[2] Understandably, the educated, informed, urban middle class would take note of these employment risks and take a rational, pragmatic approach to life. In order to combat the risks of the new order, the middle-class urbanites make some noticeable adaptive changes in their reproductive behaviour, in the mode of educating and upbringing their children, career planning, marriage, family and household arrangement, relational adjustments, spatial movements, health plans, planning for old-age, in consumption pattern and so on, all of which bear severe social implications.

While experiencing the abrupt flight from a state-protected economy to neo-liberalism (and the structural adjustments since the 1990s), the aged persons in the middle class have made some significant adjustments in terms of orientation, education, and career planning of their children. The middle-class parents, who spent their professional life in the public sector units, realized that the secure public sector jobs, a hallmark of the state-protected Nehruvian economy, would shrink rapidly. Their children must find jobs in the private sector, run by national and global corporations, or set up their businesses. As the opportunities in the global market opened up, they started preparing their children according to the demands of the new order, which prompted large-scale commodification of education, health, and services. Noticeable changes against this backdrop are (1) fertility check, (2) dispersal of the children (both daughters and sons) for education, marriage, and jobs, both within and outside the country, and (3) mental and physical preparation to spend the old-age with the spouse or alone. These

processes contribute to the transformation of the traditional multi-generational joint families into two-member or single-member families/households. The urban middle class is thus at a cross-road, moving from an old phase to a new phase, responding rationally to the demands of the new order. Max Weber has termed this "a process of rationalization" in his book The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (Weber 1904/1930), where he argued that rational arrangement of work and social relations would be considered essential for attaining the goals with the highest degree of efficiency. Adapting the spirit of Weber's argument to the present context, one could see that the educated, informed urban middle class takes a rational approach to life while adjusting to the market society's demands. While responding to the appeal of consumerism, they define "success and happiness" in terms of career success and degree of consumer freedom, which are also considered markers of one's social status.

Albeit all middle-class elderly individuals, irrespective of gender, go through this process, the position of older women could be significantly different from that of older men. First, the life expectancy of women is higher among women, and there could be more women than men among those who live alone in their old age. Second, many women remain unmarried, increasing the number of women living alone. In my study in Kolkata (2016), I found that women outnumber men in old age homes. Third, the women who lose their spouses in old age and have their children dispersed find it extremely difficult to adjust to lonely life since, until the death of their spouses, they were heavily dependent on their husbands for all practical purposes. Fourth, the women who have to live alone in their houses/flats have to confront not only loneliness but also a whole range of insecurities, namely the fear of losing property, theft, larceny, the fear of being killed at the hands of burglars, and a whole lot of health-related concerns and so on. Finally, women of all ages have to bear the burden of patriarchy; they cannot escape it even in their old age and even after moving to old age homes.

This paper aims to identify the social forces that make the care crisis for the urban middle-class elderly. Drawing from the demographic accounts, reports, and my study on elderly persons in Kolkata (Roy 2016), I have tried to grasp the macro and micro factors contributing to the care crisis and examined some of its social implications. The theoretical argument of the paper is that the risks embedded in the neo-liberal-global order leave a destabilizing impact on middle-class life, and the rationalization process the members of this class embark on contributes to the making of the care crisis for the elderly population.

Dropping Family Size and its Implications

In recent decades, India is experiencing a drop in fertility rate alongside economic growth, the spread of higher education, growing work participation among women, rapid urbanization, and rising level of consumption. The educated urban middle and upper classes have widely accepted the small family norm while sticking to one child or two children.

According to the State of the World Population Report 2018 of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), although India's population has risen to almost double, from 566 million in 1971 to 1.35 billion in 2016, the fertility rate is declining. In urban India, the total fertility rate (TFR)[3] has dropped to 2. Because of this, India's family size has steadily declined since 1971. According to the UNFPA (2018) report, the family size in India has fallen from 5.2 children per family in 1971 to 2.3 in 2016. The report observes that India, along with many other countries, has witnessed a substantial drop in infant and child mortality, partly due to a broader reach of health care systems, economic development, reduced poverty, and increased enrolment of females in primary and secondary education (See Choudhary 2018)[4].

According to the 2011 Census, the median household size in urban India is now less than four for the first time in history. The Census data also suggest that 56 percent of households in urban India now have four or fewer members. The mother's education level is identified as the most critical contributor to fertility drop. It is also evident that women in India, across regions and communities, have fewer children than ever, irrespective of education or wealth.

Basu and Desai (2012) have identified a demographic trend indicating that a large section of younger couples opt for single-child families. Based on data from the Indian Human Development Survey 2004-2005, the authors observe: '… a small segment of the Indian population has begun the transition to extremely low fertility. It is no longer unusual among the urban middle classes to find families stopping at one child, even when this child is a girl (Basu and Desai 2012: 2)[5]. Comparing data from National Family Health Survey 1 (1992-93) and National Family Health Survey III (2005-06) Basu and Desai (2012)[6] found out that the proportion of women in the 30-34 age group with one child has increased from 6 percent in 1992-93 to 9 percent in 2005-06. A similar trend has been seen in the other younger age groups, and they have named it a "rising trend towards one-child families" in India. According to the survey, about 73 percent of mothers with a single child declared that they do not want more children; 22 percent were already

sterilized. Only about 27 percent said they may want another child at some point (p. 11). According to scholars, one-child families are mainly found among the urban educated middle class. While one-child families account for barely five percent of all Indian families, they form 13 percent of families living in metropolitan cities. About 40 percent of the families which appear to have stopped at one child were having a daughter (p. 12).

Fertility checks and the resulting drop in family size indicate the rationalization process the urban middle class is going through. The growing number of urban parents prefer one-child families because (1) they want to avoid the constraints of childbearing, and (2) they want to prepare their child well so they can avail of the employment or work opportunities offered by the market (Basu and Desai 2012). Amartya Sen (2005) has argued that the spread of higher education and higher work participation among women, especially urban middle-class women, gives them the much-needed "agency" which effectively works on fertility checks and higher quality of life. Going beyond Sen, we may argue that the agency in an individual woman is gradually finding replication at the collective level. Thus, a cultural or social trend or style begins. Once this happens, it is collectively sustained and reproduced at the cultural level. The fertility check is a "rational" choice of the urban middle class, which is well-informed about the changes in the socio-economic order. A risk perception drives it at a time when education and health are fast being privatized (commodified). There is growing volatility in the job market.

Status of the Elderly Women and Men in India

According to the 2011 Census, there are nearly 104 million elderly persons (aged 60 years or above) in India, of whom 53 million are female and 51 million are males. Between 1961 and 2011 the share of the elderly population increased from 5.6 per cent to 8.6 per cent. According to the population projection, the share of the elderly in the total population will be 17.3 percent in 2050 (Irudaya Rajan 2006)[7]. The share of elderly females was nine percent against the male share of 8.2 percent in the 2011 Census. Keeping parity with a rural-urban share of the population, 71 percent of the elderly reside in rural areas and 29 percent in urban areas (GOI 2016: i-iv).

In 1951 the sex ratio among the elderly population was 1028 (number of females per 1000 males), which has further risen to 1033 in 2011. In 2009-13 the life expectancy at birth for females was 69.3 as against 65.8 years for males. At 60 years, the average remaining length of life was 18 years (16.9 for males and 19.0 for females), and at 70 it was less than 12 years

(10.9 for males and 12.3 for females). We can thus see that females outnumber males among the elderly population. This is explained by the fact that the life expectancy at birth is always higher among females and that the women in India generally marry men older than them (2011 Census cited in GOI 2016: i-iv)[8].

The old-age dependency ratio has risen from 10.9 percent in 1961 to 14.2 percent in 2011 for India as a whole. In 2011 the dependency level for the female was higher at 14.9 percent compared to 13.6 percent for the males. In rural areas, 66 percent of elderly men and 28 percent of elderly women were found to be working, while in urban areas 46 per cent of elderly men and about 11 per cent of elderly women were working. The higher level of dependency of the elderly women and lower level of work participation make them economically vulnerable (2011 Census cited in GOI 2016: i-iv)[9].

The literacy rate among elderly persons has increased from 27 percent in 1991 to 44 percent in 2011, although the gender gap in literacy is still high (2011 Census cited in GOI 2016: i-iv). In the 60-64 age-group, 76 per cent persons were married while 22 percent were widowed. Remaining two per cent were either never married or divorced (GOI 2016: i-iv)[10]. Growing incidence of widowhood in old age is one of the factors that contributes to their loneliness.

For the elderly in India, the incidence of living alone or without immediate relatives is growing over the years. According to an estimate by Rajan and Kumar (2003), based on NSSO data, about six per cent of the elderly lived in households without their immediate relatives. The incidence of living without children or other close relatives is ever growing. This could be an effect of dropping fertility and dispersal of the younger members. Yet, a large majority of the elderly prefer to live in their own houses. According to a GOI (2021) report, 92 percent of the elderly in rural areas and 87 percent of the elderly in urban areas live in their own houses; 4.4 percent in rural areas and 3.6 per cent in urban areas live alone; 13.4 percent of the rural elderly and 15.5 percent of the urban elderly live only with their spouses. Taking these two categories together, we can see that about 20 percent of the elderly in urban areas live without their children. The trend is sharper in the urban areas. Another interesting finding is that around 30 per cent of the elderly are without spouses and they live as dependents with their children and other relations (GOI 2021: 83-84). The percentage of female elderly persons (60 years and above) living as dependents in the others' houses is more than double the number of elderly men. Among those who live in old

age homes the share of females is much higher compared to that of the male (GOI 2021: 58). Among those who are aged more than 60 years the share of women participating in unpaid domestic services is more than double than that of the men, both in rural and urban areas. Similarly, the proportion of women with paid employment is much less compared to the proportion of men with paid employment, both in rural and urban areas (GOI 2021: 58). On an average, the elderly women 245 minutes a day while providing free services to other household members against 112 minutes by the male members (GOI 2021: 58). The all-India data presented in this section indicate (1) growing number of single-member households, (2) growing share of working population among the elderly, (3) gender inequality and (4) greater vulnerability and dependency of the aged women compared to that of the aged men.

General Problems Facing the Elderly in India

A recent report titled Elderly in India 2021 (GOI 2021)[11] has identified four general problems that trouble the elderly in India, namely, (1) economic problems, which make the elderly vulnerable and dependent on others and push them to work beyond the age of retirement, (2) physiological problems, which refer to "anatomical and physiological changes" that come with aging and prompt psychological, behavioural and attitudinal changes in the elderly, (3) housing-related problems, which refer to homelessness and absence of aged-friendly housing with care facilities for those who are partially or fully immobile, and (4) crime against the aged persons (GOI 2021: 2)[12].

As the findings of my study in Kolkata (Roy 2019) suggest, the problems thus identified are genuine. However, the report fails to point out that the intensity of the problem would vary depending on the class and social conditions of the aged persons. For example, the middle- and upper-class elderly living in metropolises do not have much of an economic or housing problem; they, however, encounter psychological problems and possible crimes as they are generally more vulnerable and live with insecurities of different kinds. The most serious problem that faces, as I understand from my study, is the care crisis, which is not mentioned in the GOI (2021) report. As I have outlined above, the care crisis is more remarkable for older women than for men. Older women, especially those who live alone, either in their own house or in old age home, suffer from a greater sense of insecurity and anxiety since they face greater degrees of crime and atrocities.

The Care Crisis Facing the Elderly in Kolkata

I studied the middle-class elderly persons in Kolkata between 2013 and 2016 for my Ph. D. (2016), later published with the title *Life of the Middle-class Aged in Kolkata* (Roy 2019). I studied the elderly persons of two categories (1) those who live in their own house or flat along with their family members in Salt Lake and (2) those who live in two old age homes, namely, Mukto Bihanga, located in the southern fringe of greater Kolkata, and Rabindra Niketan in South Kolkata. I have conducted the study in two phases: (1) a preliminary survey on the socio-economic background of the elderly persons, 54 from Salt Lake and 56 from the two homes, and (2) an in-depth study of 32 individuals each from the two categories (a total of 64 case studies). Since the universe was unknown and I reached out to elderly persons using snowball sampling in Salt Lake. There could be a problem with the representation of the subcategories among middle-class residents. However, I could not know the constituent differential categories, and I took only the age factor (i.e., those above 60 years of age) to select my informants, keeping a manageable number in mind. The old age homes were selected using secondary contacts; I covered more than 80 percent of the residents in my study's two old age homes and did not draw any sample.

Socio-Economic Background of the Elderly in Salt Lake: Of the 54 elderly I covered in my study from the Salt Lake area, 37 were men, and 17 were women. Selection of a more significant number of men in the population was not deliberate; it just happened that a more significant number of heads of the households were men; the women who came in my study were the heads of their families (in the absence or illness of their husbands). Of 54 respondents, 22 (41 percent) lived in their own houses, and the remaining 32 (59 percent) lived in their flats. The socio-economic indicators suggest that the respondents belonged to upper-caste and middle and upper middle class; 36 of them lived in houses with three or more bedrooms; all belonged to three castes, namely, Brahmin, Kayestha, and Baidya; a large majority of them were graduates and post-graduates (and some had technical education). However, the children of the informants, both sons and daughters, were better educated than their parents (Roy 2019). My study in Salt Lake reveals that while the parents, mostly retired and living on pension after serving as teachers, and employees in the public sector, their children, the present generation educated, both men and women, were mainly doing private sector jobs. Business entrepreneurship was almost absent among the Bengali elderly. Despite being educated, many older women were homemakers and had a greater dependency level (Roy 2019).

The social and economic indicators endorse the middle-class and upper-caste background of the elderly persons in Salt Lake.

 The most important finding of my study in Salt Lake is the progressive downsizing of families. Of the 54 families of procreation of the informants, only two were childless (one respondent was unmarried), nine were with single child (daughter only), 17 had only a son, another 23 had two children, and only three had more than two children. However, all the families of their orientation had more than four members on average, and as many as 27 out of 54 families (i.e., 50 percent) had more than eight members. The sharp fall in family size over two generations has been possible because of fertility checks, and this conforms to the all-India demographic trend reflected in Census data and other studies already discussed in this paper. Out of 54 married informants, 40 lived with their spouses, while five were widows and seven were widowers. Notably, 74 percent of the informants were seen living with their spouses, which carries enormous significance in averting the possible care crisis and the pain of living alone. Having some form of family and care was the most crucial factor preventing the aged persons from moving to old age homes. However, widows and widowers are at a greater risk of living in a greater degree of care crisis; they are the most likely to move to old age homes (Roy 2019).

Socio-economic background of the elderly persons in old age homes: I studied 56 elderly persons in two old age homes, namely, Mukto Bihanga and Rabindra Niketan, of whom only 10 were men and the remaining 46 women. The numerical dominance of the women among the home inmates indicates the collapse of the family support system before they landed in the homes. The spouse's death is one of the main reasons behind their shift. This is confirmed by the fact that 30 out of 56 informants were widows and two were widowers, and as many as 21 were unmarried; only three had their spouses alive at the time of their shift and, interestingly, one of them was deserted, and the remaining two were living in the old age home with their spouses. The instability in the family and care system is also evident because out of 56 home inmates, 21 were unmarried, five were childless, 11 had only one daughter, four had only one son, and the remaining 15 had two or more children. Stable marital life and stable family life is the most important factor that binds elderly persons to their own houses where they live in care, and when this becomes unstable, the middle class tend to move to old age homes. In this case, the women are more vulnerable since they feel more insecure without a stable family. Out of 56 home inmates, 48 (85.71 percent) were above 70. The predominance of the 71+ members

among the elderly in the homes indicates that they become more vulnerable with growing age as their family care system collapses (Roy 2019).

As in Salt Lake, the elderly in the old age homes belonged to three upper castes, and the remaining two belonged to Vaishya caste. Out of 46 women living in homes, nine had primary school level education, 10 had high school level education, 19 were graduate, five were post-graduate, and the remaining three had technical education; the husbands and children of the older women were relatively better educated. Regarding occupation, 25 were homemakers, 12 were school or college teachers, seven were retired government employees, only one served in the private sector, and another woman was self-employed (Roy 2019). The home inmates essentially had urban backgrounds; 47 (84 percent) were from within Kolkata, while only nine were from the suburbs of Kolkata. A large majority (42 out of 56; 75 percent) of the home inhabitants had their own house or flat and could afford the cost of living in the home, ranging between Rs. 10,000 and 25,000 then; this indicates middle-class living. Out of 42 house/flat owners, 19 (45 percent) had disposed of their property, and 13 had left their house/flat behind to use their family members. In one exciting case, a senior citizen donated his house to Ramkrishna Mission (a charitable, religious organization with a global network) (Roy 2019).

Crises Facing the Elderly: From my fieldwork in Salt Lake and in two old age homes, I have drawn home the fact that the factors like rationalization of family size, the urge to live a life driven by hedonistic desires, dispersal of the family members for marriage, jobs or higher studies, the death of spouse, and ailments that make them physically immobile not only make the aged lonely but also take them to a point where they have to face insecurities and severe care crises of different orders. The crises that face the elderly individuals who remain unmarried, those who have lost their spouses, those who are not economically self-reliant, those who do not have a proper house to live and those who are physically immobile are more serious. In this section, I will discuss some of the crises that face the middle-class elderly covered in my study.

(Absence of) economic crisis: The aged women I studied in Kolkata lived independently or were economically dependent on their spouses or other close family members. The widows were living on their husband's pensions. Those who never married and were dependent on their siblings continued depending on them even after moving to old age homes. Most of the women living in old age homes did not have economic hardship. A few of them, however, were economically dependent on close relations.

In Salt Lake, only seven of 17 women were homemakers, and they were utterly dependent on their husbands; the remaining 10 were retired teachers (school, college, or university) or government employees. In old age homes, 25 out of 46 women were homemakers, and they had to depend on the economic support of their children or other family members. However, the remaining 21 women were economically self-reliant, mostly living on pensions or savings. Among the ten male residents, four were self-employed, and the remaining six were retired employees in the public sector. Among the women, 30 had their income, and 11 depended on others (primarily children and close family members).

In contrast, among the ten male home inhabitants, only three were economically dependent on close family members. There were a few exceptional cases, like that of 70-year-old Mrs. Dutta of Mukto Bihanga, who never had a job and was unmarried. She gave voluntary services to Bharat Sevashram and had a share of her father's house. All her life, she was dependent on her elder brother, who continues to pay her bills in old age home.

All the older women, both in Salt Lake and old age homes, who never did any job or business either live on the pension of their living or deceased husbands or are supported by close kin. This is an indication of the fact that the family and kin support system has not broken down, at least for the middle-class elderly, men or women. Overall, economic dependence is greater among women than men (Roy 2019). However, the economic support system gets stressed when they face a severe health crisis. In the absence of insurance coverage, which is the case with most of the elderly, they find it extremely difficult to pay hospital bills. Those who depend on private caregivers round the clock, like 78-year-old Mrs. Anima Basu of Rabindra Niketan, are also financially stressed.

Crisis in health care: Some older men and women in my study with ailments who lacked proper care in their everyday lives. The elderly living with spouses do not face many crises as long as they are healthy. Nevertheless, with aging, they develop ailments of complex nature and face many issues in managing their everyday life. The healthier has to take responsibility for her/his spouse's food, medicine, tests, and overall lifestyle. The husband or the wife reverses his/her roles when the situation demands, like, the husband extending his hands in domestic chores and the wife doing the activities outside the home. As long as she/he is healthy and active, she/he does all the activities smoothly, but when she/he becomes sick, the situation worsens. When one of the spouses dies, the living partner gets mentally devastated,

and the family management system gets derailed. The living aged gets moral support from their relatives and close kin but not for long. He/she then leaves everything in the hands of the caregivers or the maids. When the caregiver's support appears inadequate, the elderly shift to the old age home, disposing of the house or flat. However, even after going to the old age home, the health crisis does not end. Old-age homes provide a care package to cover their health and security worries. However, those suffering from various physical and mental illnesses do not get adequate care. Living away from their children, grandchildren, and their close relatives, the elderly persons miss the warmth of the physical presence of their children and grandchildren. The psychological impact of this separation is difficult to measure or articulate. The pressure of living alone also takes a toll on their health. The health worries and worries for their children, who might be living afar, do not harm their mental health.

In my study in Salt Lake, I found that only 6 out of 54 (only 11 percent) were in good health; among others, 32 (59 percent) were living with various ailments (blood sugar, blood pressure, and joint pain being prevalent), and 16 (29.6 percent) of the respondents live with critical ailments (like problems in heart, kidney, lung, spine or bone); some of them have already undergone surgery. The latter category of ailing elderly depends on professional service providers in one way or the other; many of them cannot move without help. Aged with poor health and critical ailments are more likely to take shelter in their homes in search of security and care, mainly when they live alone. Thus, in two old age homes, I found that 48 out of 56 (86 percent) elderly were living with different ailments, and 27 (48 percent) of them had critical ailments as they were seen living with the support of professional caregivers and had their physical movements highly restricted (Roy 2019).

I have found that the share of persons with critical illness is much higher in old age homes than in Salt Lake. This indicates that those who live in old age homes are in a higher age bracket and suffer from health issues of a more complex nature. This also indicates that the aged persons do not shift to old age homes immediately after crossing the age of 60; instead, they make all efforts to live in their own house, even if they have to live alone with the help of hired caregivers. However, when they become critically ill and do not feel secure at the hands of the care givers, they move to old age homes.

Dispersal, loneliness, and longing: The crisis of isolation, loneliness, and longing for the love and care of children and close relatives is common among aged persons. Middle-class parents make a rational choice in sending

their children for higher studies and career opportunities. Most of the middle-class parents had successful professional careers. The hedonistic approach to life, the impact of consumerism, and the perception of risks in market society (Beck 1992) guide the life of urban middle-class parents to a point when they limit the number of children to one or two and bring them up so that they can have a secure successful career. The parents draw immense gratification and pride in their son's/daughter's achievements in education and professional career. The parents are happy to see their children going abroad for higher studies and jobs and settling there. The parents prefer to marry their daughters off to those having successful careers abroad, the NRIs.[13] This is not a matter of a few individual cases; instead, it has turned out to be a social phenomenon, a cultural pattern. Out of 32 case studies I have done in Salt Lake, 15 families had their sons/daughters dispersed to cities within India and abroad (Roy 2015). The parents try to make different kinds of adjustments to cope with the crisis of living alone – they visit their children occasionally, they ask their children to visit them on occasion, they ask their married daughters to buy or rent a house close to their house, and make use of modern electronic gadgets to keep in regular touch. The older men and women who have lost their wives/husbands or have to live with physically immobile ailing wives/husbands, who have their children dispersed to different cities within India and abroad, make some adaptive changes in adjusting to life. Here are a few illustrations of this point.

Mrs. L. Sengupta, 80, lives with her 87-year-old husband in their flat in Salt Lake, while her only daughter, married, lives in Mumbai with her husband and son. Her husband is ill and almost immobile. Mrs. Sengupta has been a homemaker all her life, and now she has to share the outdoor responsibilities she never did before. She looks after the family with the help of a cook and a maid. She also has hired a nurse who looks after her ailing husband. Mrs. Sengupta had undergone bypass surgery, and her daughter and son-in-law took care of her during the surgery. Although her daughter and her family come twice a year and support her in all possible ways, she misses her daughter's touch, singing, cooking food for her, gossiping about their neighbours, and everything she used to do with her. She also longs for her grandson, as she often recalls the moments of cuddling him, kissing him. The aged parents and their daughter's family maintain close and regular contact using modern communication gadgets. However, the parents miss them badly in daily life and in times of crisis.

Mrs. K. Moitra (68) lived with her elder sister in her flat in Salt Lake. Her only son works as a chartered accountant with World Bank in Sydney. She

has been a homemaker all her life. Her husband, a government employee, died in 2006, and she lives on his pension and periodic remittance from her son. Her son lives in Australia with his wife, a son, and a daughter. He comes home once a year. Mrs. Moitra suffered from blood sugar and hypertension; her sister had chronic joint pain. They take care of each other and do the household chores with the help of a maid. Mrs. Moitra misses her husband and long for her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. Mrs. Moitra said, 'I visited Australia in 2013 once, but I did not like life there; I feel comfortable in my own house in Salt Lake and love my sister's company'.

Mrs. G. Banerjee (78), a professor at a college in Kolkata (now retired), was living alone in her flat in Salt Lake while her husband, who served as a government officer, passed away in 2010. Her only daughter, who was married to another part of the city, has now shifted to a flat in Salt Lake nearby to care for her. Mrs. Banerjee's only grandson, now grown up, was preparing to leave for the USA for higher studies. Mrs. Banerjee had some minor ailments, and the shift of her daughter close by has helped her and has freed her from much of her worries. Her daughter visits her almost daily, spends time with her, and takes all possible care.

Mr. N. C. Gupta (69), a retired engineer, lives alone in his big house in Salt Lake, as his wife died in 2004 of a stroke, and his two sons live in the USA with their nuclear families. Living alone since the death of his wife, Mr. Gupta often feels lonely. He now does some household chores that used to be taken care of by his wife. He faces many difficulties doing the household chores but somehow manages with the help of his hired caregiver. Since his sons and daughters-in-law live in the USA, Mr. Gupta prefers not to disturb them by discussing his everyday problems. About his sons and daughters-in-law, Mr. Gupta said:

I took a lot of pride in seeing my sons building careers in USA and was happy to see them settling down there. They wanted to take me with them to the US, but I refused since I love living in my own house with my associations and culture. My caregiver, who stays in my house all day long, does the cooking and washing besides taking care of me. My sons visit me once a year and keep close contact; we talk over the phone every day. I have some minor ailments, and I manage them. However, living alone in this big house away from my children and grandchildren is so painful.

Mr. J. Dutta (76) lives in his apartment with his wife, while his married son lives in a separate house in the same city with his wife. Mr. Dutta is Ph.D. in economics, while his wife is a Ph.D. in Bengali; both are now retired

college teachers. His son did a Masters in Computer Application. His son works in a multinational company. Mr. Dutta's son is restless and careerist, frequently changing jobs. In connection with his job, he often goes abroad. Sometimes he joins a new job with a posting in Hyderabad or Delhi. Mr. Dutta is unhappy at his son's frequent change of jobs. Mr. Dutta has decided not to interfere in his life. His son and daughter-in-law come to visit them only occasionally. Even when they come, their minds are elsewhere; they are always on cell phones. Mr. Dutta and his wife expressed their unhappiness about their careerist son thus: 'We inform our son and his wife when we fall ill or if there is a crisis; they come to see us with great reluctance; we want them to stay with us, but they go back to their apartment after spending a few hours with us.' Now Mr. Dutta does not inform his son on occasions of minor sickness, knowing well that his son would not come. His son has upset him because of his selfish focus on careerism and indifferent approach to his parents. 'We miss our son, his wife, and their son (now 10-year-old), and want them to stay with us, but they do not care for our feelings', Mr. Dutta said.

Mr. S. Dasgupta (76) lost his wife in 2011 and now lives alone in his flat. His daughter is married, and his son lives in a flat in another city with his family. His daughter was married in 1991 and left him to live with her in-laws, while his son married in 1992 and lived in the parental house until 2002. In 2002 his son shifted to a flat at Golf Green. Mr. and Mrs. Dasgupta were liberal in their outlook and believed in giving space to their children. Thus, when their son and daughter-in-law decided to move out, they were sad but accepted it positively. When Mrs. Dasgupta passed away in 2018, her son and daughter took good care of their father, who was shocked. For the first month of the crisis, Mr. Dasgupta's son used to come and stay with him for three days every week, and for the rest of the days, he was taken care of by his daughter. Since Mr. Dasgupta's children are employed, this arrangement could only be maintained for a short time. After 3-4 months of experimentation, they hired a caregiver for cooking and other household chores. Now the caregiver stays in Mr. Dasgupta's house all day long. His daughter, who stays nearby, visits him every alternate day. Mr. Dasgupta also spends the weekends with his daughter and her family. Mr. Dasgupta said: 'Both my son and daughter visit me often and keep close contact; I feel happy in their company but feel lonely and sad when I have to live alone. I miss my wife badly, whom I loved all my life and who was my dearest friend. I will miss her the rest of my life'.

Crimes and Atrocities Against the Elderly

Crime Statistics in India, 2019, (GOI 2021: 109)[14] offers a list of 17 crimes that are often committed against the elderly in India. The list includes crimes like murder, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, attempt to murder, attempt to commit culpable homicide, simple hurt, assault on women with intent to outrage modesty, kidnapping and abduction, rape, theft, extortion, robbery, criminal trespass, forgery, cheating, and fraud, and so on. Most of the victims of all these crimes are women who live alone or with their aged, ailing spouse in their own house. Daily newspapers often report crimes committed against the elderly in Kolkata, who live in their own houses amidst insecurities. Here are a few incidents.

On July 16, 2015, Prangobindo Das (78) and Renuka Das (75), retired college professors, were murdered in their flat in Indralok Abasan in Paikpara, North Kolkata. The only daughter of the couple was living in the US. The investigating police officer claimed that the motive behind the murder was to loot the couple's belongings; they were killed because the assailant(s) were known to them. The maid, who was absconding, might have done the crime in connivance with other criminals.[15]

On February 26, 2014, a group of miscreants looted money and ornaments of 70-year-old Padma Bhattacharya, at gunpoint, from her residence at B 3/2 Northern Park, Bansdroni, South Kolkata, at around noon. The promoter husband of the lady had gone out for some work. Their only daughter, married, lives in another part of the city. On the same day, around the same time, a 93-year-old woman, Shanta Bhattacharya, was strangled in Ultadanga, and her belongings, money, and ornaments, were robbed[16]. In 2012, 68-year-old Phoolrenu Choudhury, living alone in her house in South Kolkata, was brutally killed by robbers while her belongings were looted (Ghosh 2015)[17]. According to a newspaper report (Ghosh 2015), between 2012 and 2014, as many as 666 senior citizens were kidnapped in Bengal, most of whom were women. *Ganasakti* (2016: 5)[18] reports that Mr. Malin Kumar Datta, 69, was murdered in his flat on the second floor of the Manoprobha housing complex at Santoshpur Avenue in Kolkata. Mr. Datta was living alone in his flat and had acute asthma. Such incidents, collected from newspapers, indicate that the elderly who live alone in their old age, in the absence of close family members, are more vulnerable to crimes of different kinds, and it is understandable that the "risks" of aging in this manner are many. They make a dent into the psyche of such elderly.

On June 25, 2016, 75-year-old Widow Madhabi Jana was beaten to death by her daughter-in-law and 20-year-old grandson in her house at Baranagar.

Madhabi Jana was the mother of a son and three daughters, two of whom are married. She was living with her son, daughter-in-law, and grandson in the house constructed by her late husband. She had a long history of being ill-treated by her daughter-in-law and grandson and was taking food in the house of one of her married daughters, who lives nearby. Mrs. Jana recently gave away a part of her five-cotta land to one of her daughters. Angry, her daughter-in-law and grandson pressured her to give them the remaining part of her land, which she declined. Following an altercation, the daughter-in-law and grandson beat her to death[19].

Gangopadhyay (2013) reports two incidents of extreme ill-treatment of elderly persons by their family members. An 81-year-old widow who served as a police officer, now retired, used to live in her own house with her son, a government employee, and daughter-in-law. On many occasions, the daughter-in-law abused her verbally in the absence of her son. Apprehending further trouble, she refrained from complaining to the police. Nevertheless, some of her friends came forward and had an informal talk with the local police officer. The police called the daughter-in-law and threatened her with action if she did not amend her behaviour. After this, the situation improved for the elderly lady. In another case reported by Gangopadhyay (2013), the son of an elderly lady who lives in the US came and persuaded his mother to hand over her South Kolkata house to a promoter and promised to take her with him to the US. On the day of departure, the son left for the USA, leaving his mother at the airport[20].

An 82-year-old chartered accountant Mr. Ranjit Chatterjee was strangled to death when he was reading the morning newspaper sitting in a chair with a cup of tea. The incident took place at his residence at 17 Bipin Pal Road, near Desopriya Park in South Kolkata. Mr. Chatterjee was living in his apartment with his bedridden wife. Their only daughter lives in the US. The police arrested a cleaner, Sona Das (40), who has worked in this housing complex for 15 years. Das has confessed to the crime. According to investigating officer, the motive behind the crime was money[21].

Mr. Deb Kumar Mukherjee (78) was murdered on June 11, 2015, in his 108 Elliot Road, Kolkata house. He was killed despite being covered by the "pronam" programme of the State police, which promised to ensure his protection. Under the "pronam" scheme, a police officer from the local police station is supposed to visit the elderly, inquire about their health, security, and other needs, and provide the necessary support.[22]

Such inhuman and unempathetic treatment of older women and men at the hands of their close kin/family members, caregivers, and criminals brings to light their everyday life's vulnerability and insecurities. This partially confirms the "bad family" thesis upheld by a large majority of the social gerontologists in India (Cohen 1998). Taking the lead from a large majority of social gerontologists in India, Cohen argued that "the decline of joint family" and its associated care values under the influence of "modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and Westernisation" has led to the sufferings of the elderly individuals in India (Cohen 1998: 17; Lamb 2012: 4). Such incidents of cruelties indicate to a process whereby the material calculation and lust defeat the traditional family care system and human values. However, crimes and atrocities are committed against the urbanites of all age groups, only their nature varies. If anything, the incidents primarily indicate the failure of the state administration to provide the necessary security to elderly citizens.

The root cause of the care crisis lies in a social process called modernization, which leaves a widely felt impact on the life of the urban middle class. Max Weber observed that one of modernization's inevitable and irreversible outcomes is the rationalization of life. Sarah Lamb, in her landmark study *Aging and the Indian Diaspora* (2012), has argued that the urban middle-class families are becoming smaller, and the younger members of modern families, while making calculative efforts in making careers, disperse to different places, both within and outside the country, leaving their aging parents to live alone. The mainstream argument of the present paper is that there could be some stray cases of atrocities against elderly citizens at the hands of close kin. However, the newfound "rational" approach to life is pushing the urban middle-class elderly to a care crisis. The care crisis is thus rooted in the rationalization of reproductive behaviour, family size, household rearrangements, adherence to careerist values, and some of the unavoidable problems like aging, ailments, and deaths. Despite living away from their parents and meeting the high demands of their professions, the younger members try to extend care and support to their parents.

Conclusion

The "care crisis" for the urban middle-class elderly is primarily rooted in a more extensive social process, which has been happening over the last two-three generations as an impact of modernity. The explicit factors that are contributing to the care crisis are (1) rationalization of family size through planned fertility control, (2) growing spatial mobility of the younger family

members due to career compulsions and marriage, and (3) transformation of urban families into single-member households. By the time the senior citizens retire from jobs, they find that their families have been reduced to two-member households having their child/children already dispersed. Within a few years, many of these families turn into single-member households with the death of one of the spouses. The number of women (substantial, particularly among those who live in old age homes) and men who remain unmarried inevitably land up in single-member households. Those who live longer see the death of their spouses, who had been with them in their moments of joy, happiness, pain, and crises, the source of support, and thus become alone.

Although the care crises face all elderly individuals, older women are more vulnerable since they remain dependent on their husbands for economic support and shouldering family responsibilities. In this paper, we have seen that the work participation rate among women is low, and the share of homemakers is very high. The women face many difficulties when they lose their spouses and find their children dispersed. They make adjustments by (1) shifting close to the family of their daughters/sons, (2) by making their daughters close to them, and when nothing works, (3) they shift to old age homes[23]. While living alone in their houses, older women are more likely to be crime victims.

The "care crises" facing the urban middle-class women and men are not so much economic, not much because of loss of family values; it is rather rooted in dispersal or the loss of close ones (children, husbands, siblings, grandchildren). They can, of course, hire caregivers, but that is no replacement for the close ones. The ailments, treatment arrangements, insecurities in every life, the fear of loss of property, atrocities at the hands of the unknown, the fear of death, and, most importantly, the pain of living alone are all crises facing the elderly. It is not that the members of the younger generation have turned inhuman all of a sudden; the career calculations and too much emphasis on careerism (both by parents and children and which is an integral part of the middle-class culture), which bring them security and social status, force some adaptive (rational) relational and role changes.

The decision to check fertility and restrict the number of children to one, in most cases, even when the child is a daughter, is no more a matter of individual choice. This rational choice reflects the ever-dropping total fertility rate (TFR), which currently stands at 2. Amartya Sen (2005) has argued that with the spread of higher education among women (urban women in

particular) and growing economic self-reliance through greater work participation, women are being empowered with agency, which, in turn, finds expression in career planning, in their marriage decision, selection of life partner, fertility control and so on. Going further, it is not a matter of individual choice, but it has assumed the nature of a social pattern, a social phenomenon, ingrained in the new way of life. A social form or cultural pattern or "habitus", which is essentially "collective," is thus set, which, in turn, impacts the individual life (Simmel 1908; Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1992)[24]. Thus, educated middle-class urbanites fall into the trap of calculative rationalism, which, according to Weber, is an inevitable fallout of late capitalism (Weber 1904/1930).[25] The crisis, therefore, is self-made since, for the urbanites, this is a rational choice. However, in conformity with the dominant social pattern, they would always logically justify their decisions like late marriage, fertility control, injection of careerism in their children, and motivating them to tap career opportunities in the global market and be established in life. Middle-class parents and their children may be haunted by the uncertainties, insecurities, and "risks" embedded in the neo-liberal economic and political order. The logical (rational) route to life and a lucrative job in Europe or America earn them material security and elevate their social status. The parents, as well as their children, do not see any moral crisis in giving priority to career compulsions over care responsibilities. Middle-class parents take great pride in their children settling in the USA or Europe. They miss them and long for them but cannot secure the warmth of their presence and care.

Notes

1. According to *Collins Dictionary*, the "middle class" are the people in a society who are not working class or upper class. Business people, managers, doctors, lawyers, and teachers are usually regarded as middle class. Sarah Lamb has defined the middle class as the 'English-speaking, email-using, refrigerator-purchasing, world-traveling, financially comfortable persons' Lamb (2012: 3). Clearly, Lamb has used financial comfort and consumption criteria in her definition. In my study in Kolkata (2016), I covered mostly the white-collar officials (officers and clerks), doctors, bank officials, professors, teachers, and engineers who live in middle-class residential areas of the city and have access to all gadgets of modern living. Although the urban "middle class" cannot be a perfectly homogenous category, the class members are expected to have a

high level of education and have some commonness in their cultural traits, thought process, and approach to life.

2. Aron O'Neill, in an article 'Youth Unemployment in India' (Statista, January 27, 2023), mentions that according to an ILO report, the youth unemployment rate stood at 28.26 percent in 2021; the rate has been more than 22 percent in the last decade https://www.statista.com/statistics/812106/youth-unemployment-rate-in- india/#:~:text=Youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in %20India%20in%202021&text=In%202021%2C %20the%20 estimated %20youth, is%20the%20youth%20unemployment %20rate%3F, accessed on 12.04.2023.

3. Total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children a woman can give birth to in her lifetime. According to NFHS-5 report, in India it was 2.3 in 2011 and 2.2 in 2015-16; the TFR dropped further to 2.0 in 2019-2020. For further details, see Aniruddha Dhar, 'India's total fertility rate drops from 2.2 to 2.0 reveals NFHS -5 report', Hindustan Times, Monday, April 03, 2023: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indias-totalertility-rate-drops-from-2-2-to-2-0-reveals-nfhs-5-report-101652208129487.html; accessed on 03.04.2023.

4. Data cited from the UNPA Report in A. Choudhury. 2018. 'Shrinking Family Size in India! UN report explains how it helped India's Economic growth.' Financial Times: https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/shrinking-family-size-in-india-un-report-explains-how-it-helped-indias-economic-growth/1352184/. Accessed on 22/10/2020.

5. Basu, A. M. and Sonalde B. Desai. 2012. 'Middle-class Dreams: India's One Child Families': tprism/ doc2html?actualname=One_child_families_IUSSP.pdf&file_name=1 599979439.S.897462.3150.H.WUFydW5pbWEgQmh vd21pY2sAT25lIGNoaWxkIGZhbWlsaWVzX01V U1NQLnBkZg__.RU.rfs224, rfs224,1011, 680.f5-224-160&folder=Inbox&angular=1. accessed on 17/09/2020.

6. Ibid.

7. Irudaya Rajan S. 2006. *Population and Health in India*. Mumbai, The Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEAT): https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm#inbox/

F M f c g z G l k s G w m x N G H V w V K v R N Q N F R D x N q ? projector=1&messagePartId=0.2. Accessed on 1/10/2021.

8. GOI 2016. *Elderly in India*. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, General Statistics Office: www.mospi.gov.in, http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/ElderlyinIndia_2016.pdf. Accessed on 12/11/2021.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. The report has been prepared based on the findings of NSS 75th Round (July 2017-June 2018) data. See GOI, Elderly in India 2021. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, General Statistics Office, www.mospi.gov.in: http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Elderly%20in%20India%202021.pdf, accessed on 15/11/2021.

12. Ibid.

13. Sarah Lamb has discussed this crisis of the elderly in India in her book *Aging and Indian Diaspora: Cosmopolitan Families in India and Abroad* (2012), particularly in her essay 'Living Alone as a Way of Life' in the same book.

14. See GOI *Elderly in India 2021*. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, General Statistics Office: www.mospi.gov.in, http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Elderly%20in%20India%202021.pdf, accessed on 15/11/2021.

15. Reported in *Ganasakti*, Siliguri, 17 July 2015: 5.

16. Reported in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Kolkata, February 27, 2014: 7.

17. D. Ghosh. 2015. 'Alarming rise in crimes against elderly', TNN: http://times of india.indiantimes.com/city/Kolkata/Alarming-rise-in-crimes-against- elderly/articlesshow/48106976.cms?gclid=CNeXj-fzoc0CFRcfaAodfTMMDg), accessed on 1/01/2017.

18. Reported in *Ganasakti*, Siliguri, 21 June, 2016: 5

19. Reported in *Ganasakti*, Siliguri 26 June 2016: 5.

20. R. Gangopadhyay, 'Balai 65'. *Anandabazar Patrika*, Kolkata, 30 November, 2013: 7.

21. Reported in *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, November 22 2013: 22.

22. Reported in *Ganasakti*, Siliguri, 12 June 2015: 2.

23. A detailed account of why and when the elderly shift to old age homes in Kolkata could be found in an article by Roy (2018).

24. Explaining the relationship between subjective and objective culture, Simmel observes: '…there can be no subjective culture without an objective culture, because a subjective development or state constitutes culture only by including such objects. On the other hand, objective culture can, relatively speaking, become substantially (though not wholly independent of subjective culture (Simmel 1997: 45). In my understanding, Bourdieu and Giddens have retained this core idea in their interpretation of structure-agency dynamics.

25. Weber observed with a great deal of anxiety that at the last stage of this cultural development as a part of modern capitalism, there would be a celebration of profit, material gain, and efficiency, and there would be: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has obtained a level of civilization never before achieved' Weber (1904/1930: 181).

References

Bauman, Z. 1997. *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. UK: Polity Press.

Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. [Translated from the German by Mark Ritter]. London: Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, P. 1992. *The Logic of Practice*. UK: Polity Press.

Cohen, L. 1998. *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, the bad family, and Other Modern Things*. Berkeley: University of California Prees.

Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Irudaya Rajan, S. and Sanjay Kumar. 2003. 'Living Arrangements among Indian Elderly'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(1): 75-80.

Lamb, S. 2012. *Aging and Indian Diaspora: Cosmopolitan Families in India and Abroad*. New Delhi: Orient Black Swan.

Roy, S. 2015. 'Dispersal of Members and its Impact on the Life of the Aged in Urban Middle-class Families.' *The Indian Journal of Anthropology*, 3(1): 53-72.

Roy, S. 1916. *Life of the Middleclass Aged in Kolkata Metropolis: A Sociological Enquiry*. PhD thesis. Department of Sociology, North Bengal University.

Roy, S. 2018. 'Why the Middle Class Aged Choose to Move from Family to Old Age Homes?' *Tribal Tribune*, 7 (4): 1-14.

Roy, S. 2019. *Life of the Middle-class Aged in Kolkata*. New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.

Sen, A. 2005. 'Women and Men'. In Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture*. London: Penguin Books: 220-250.

Simmel, G. 1997. 'On the Essence of Culture'. In David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture*. London: Sage Publications: 40-45.

Weber, M. 1904/1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Allen and Unwin.

6

Contested Resources, History and Epistemologies: The Lived Experiences of the Indigenous Forest Villagers in North Bengal

Mrinalini Paul
PhD Scholar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai,
Email: <u>pmrinalini2209@gmail.com</u>

We are widely diverse human beings united by the idea that the understanding of the world is much larger than the Western understanding of the world. We believe that the transformation of the world may also occur in ways not foreseen by the global North. (De Sousa 2015: 15).

Abstract: *This paper argues that Adivasi and tribal studies in India have been overshadowed by methodologies and ideologies bearing heavy colonial underpinnings. In order to develop this discipline further with sound epistemological base, it is necessary to engage with methodologies of a more organic and post-colonial nature. This paper uses the Adaptation-Negotiation-Freedom (ANF) framework (Bodhi and Jojo 2019) to understand the historical and contemporary critical events in the lives of the indigenous and Adivasi communities of the forest villages of North Bengal. The ANF framework has been developed contesting the predominant Isolation-Assimilation-Integration (IAI) framework that arises from a caste society understanding and defines the "tribal" as a residual category. The larger significance of adopting such a framework, beyond academics, is that these researches and data contribute to the policy framework of the country. One of the reasons for the continuous socio-economic deprivation and cultural dispossession of the tribal communities in the country, in spite of various legal safeguards, protective legislations and constitutional provisions, can definitely be attributed to the epistemological injustice taking place. This paper is based on a qualitative ethnography which places the researcher's descriptions, observations and the forest villagers' experiences (mostly Rabhas and*

Oraons) in both the ANF and IAI framework, and finds that the former offers a relatively authentic story of the micro socio-cultural politics and narratives arising from the landscape.

Keywords: Forest village, Bengal, framework, Tribal, Adivasi, Rabhas, decolonial, epistemology.

Introduction

Though great minds like Kant and Foucault, were successful in replacing the Lockean ideas but in place of that *tabula rasa* they put forward presuppositions or a priori that condition all contemporary human existence. They were unaware that all experience was truncated to disregard those experiences on the other side of the colonial line.

Research and emphasis on the historical relationship between tribes and forests and the different social formations emanating from it, started with the colonial administrators and anthropologists and was not limited to India. Such research became an exercise in imperialism and did not simply disappear with the British. Colonising of knowledge accompanied colonising territory and no instance bears more truth to this than the Adivasi-tribal-indigenous narratives all over the world, though associated with the global South. As the independent Indian state's policy moved from isolationist to assimilationist to an integrationist approach for the tribes in the country, the corresponding change from colonial to post-colonial in the academic circles was lauded. However, this paper would like to point out the "post"-colonial significance in the histories and lives of many in the country such as the Dalits, Adivasi/indigenous, women, religious and sexual minorities and other such minority groups who are not a minority simply because of numbers but because of the minor role they play in shaping their own discourse. For such groups, the coloniser-colonised is a power equation and not a specific period in history which has passed; but something they still might experience in their everyday. Further, the problem with the post-colonial is not only epistemic but also ontological because apart from the way it frames its arguments, the arguments themselves seem flawed. Cusicanqui puts this lucidly: 'just as the global market for material goods, ideas leave the country converted into raw material which becomes regurgitated and jumbled in the final product. Thus a canon is formed for a new field of social scientific discourse, postcolonial thinkers' (Cusicanqui 2012: 105). This can be best exemplified, in the new genre of tribal studies, which provides a critique to the developmental practices that the neoliberal State indulges in. However,

in this genre of critical Adivasi studies too, we need to question, how many of these studies are real-life testimonies rather than well worded arguments within the "state versus community" framework and perpetuating the stereotype of the Adivasi either being anti-development or too naive. It is necessary to be cautious that the Adivasi is not used as a mouthpiece to simply critique environment-degrading practices and the capitalist system's excesses.

Context: A socio-ecological setting

Struggles over forests are simultaneously struggles for power over symbolic representations and material resources. To the south of the Eastern Himalayas lie the Duars[1;] it is part of the *Terai-Duars* savanna and grasslands ecoregion known for its rich biodiversity and wildlife, marked by the presence of three protected areas – Gorumara National Park, Buxa Tiger Reserve and Jaldapara National Park. The Duars, forests permeate the being and becoming of Duars' landscape and people, as well as their relationships with the State. The region is inhabited by diverse indigenous and tribal communities including the Bodo, Rabha, Mech, Toto, Koch Rajbongshi, Lepcha, Tamang/Murmi, Limbu, Majhi, Mangar, Oraon, Munda, Kharia, Mahali, Lohara and ChikBaraik. Tribal communities like the Majhis, Tamangs and Mangars are from Nepal, and so are the Sharmas, Chhetris and Pradhans who belong to the general category and the Vishwakarmas who belong to the Other Backward Castes category (OBCs). Oraons, Mundas, Kharia, Mahalis, Loharas and ChikBaraiks are tribes from Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. Apart from them, a significant Bengali population, mostly those displaced from East Pakistan (present Bangladesh), also make up the demography of the region. Each of the settlers apart from the autochthonous Bodos, Meches, Rabha, *Garo* and Koch and Toto, have come in during different waves of migration. Revenue villages and tea gardens are almost interspersed with these forest villages, except for some which are quite cut off from the rest and lie in the deep jungles.

The history of the landscape becomes an amalgamation of the histories of all these communities. However, this research will discuss in detail two communities i.e., the Rabhas and Oraons (who are referred to as Adivasi in this paper as that is how they refer to themselves as well) since they form the major population of the forest villages. Among them many have converted to Christianity and those who have not, identify themselves as Hindu. The paper sticks to this terminology as well since the discussion of religio-ethnic changes is not taken up elaborately in this paper.

A forest village setting provides a long unique history of tensions between Forest Department and forest community. The presence of a peoples' movement (*Bon Jon Sromo Jibi Manch*[2]) prior to the coming of Forest Rights Act[3] (FRA), 2006, provided the scope of forest communities' to take up the role of political subjects in a new form.

Forest villages (FVs) which form the field setting of this research refers to 'the settlements which have been established inside the forests by the forest department of any State Government for forestry operations or which were converted into forest villages through the forest reservation process and includes forest settlement villages, fixed demand holdings, all types of *taungya* settlements, by whatever name called, for such villages and includes lands for cultivation and other uses permitted by the Government' (2 (f) FRA 2006). Simply put a forest village is a descriptive term that refers to a village situated in a forest. More importantly, the forest village is an administrative term that refers to villages situated within a Reserved forest and under the administration of the Forest Department. As per the Forest Department estimates there are 170 forest villages[4] in the state, however, people working in the area for long, say there are almost 300 FVs.

The British fought and defeated the Bhutias in 1865, and in the same year the Indian Forest Act was enacted and in 1864 the Imperial Forest Department was set up. This marked the changing socio-ecological landscape for millions of hectares of forest land and forest dwellers. The Duar forests were mostly "open" but between 1874 -1884 they were "reserved" by the British. Sheabbeare[5] (1920) mentions that in 1894 the first forest villages came up and in 1904 it had become a regular policy of the department. The semi-nomadic communities were thus forced to 'settle down' and the practise of *begari* (free labour) became the chief source of revenue generation and forest planting labour of the Duars. *Begari* was abolished only much after independence(70s) and even after that the questions of rights were not brought up by the State. Additionally, the influx of the Western driven 'fortress conservation', only further deprived the forest villagers of their access to the forests.

Gaps in Existing Literature

A brief mention of few selective texts from the existing literature on forest villages of the Duars and the communities (mainly the Rabhas), establishes the pattern and perspectives which have been dominant epistemologically

and ontologically. In one of the earliest colonial accounts, Hunter's Statistical Account of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Sikkim (1877)

 there is no direct or detailed mention of the Rabhas. Again, H. H. Risley in his extensive volume of the Castes and Tribes of Bengal (1892), makes no mention of Rabha. But in the Census records we find mention of the Rabha specifically, firstly as Scheduled Caste and then Scheduled Tribe. An account by Dr Wangyal in the Journal of Bhutan Studies[2] casts doubts over the mostly unchallenged records of colonial historiography. While Hunter's accounts describe the Bhutanese as ruthless barbaric invaders and responsible for the deplorable conditions of the 'frontier' people, along with the Bhutanese disrespect for the British, as the reason for the British to fight and become sole rulers of the frontiers; Wangyal's paper in the Journal quotes accounts of other travellers to Bhutan who wrote more favourably about the Bhutanese kingdom. Apart from Wangyal's paper, Charu Chandra Sanyal in his work on the Rajbansis (1965) documents testimonies of those belonging to the Mech community who have memories of the times of the Bhutanese rulers and these testimonies do not testify against their rule but rather provide an account of a certain decline in their conditions post the British conquest. Though accounts of the British-Bhutanese disputes and the deplorable living conditions of the inhabitants living in this region, is not completely false, it is certain that the British had vested interest in annexing the Duars due to its strategic geopolitical and ecological importance. With respect to anthropological works, Karlsson's (2001), account on the Rabhas, remains most intensive. However, he does not dwell much into the dynamics existing between the other communities and the Rabhas in the forest villages. True to his style he offers a broader critical perspective on the indigenous identity and cultural transition of the Rabhas (much of which this paper draws from as well) but there is not much mention of intra or inter community dynamics. An 'insider's account is also offered in M. K. Raha's work, *Matriliny to Patriliny: A study of the Rabha Society* (1989) but this monograph, though enormously rich with ethnographic details regarding the community's lifecycle and social system, does not provide reasons for the transition that Raha claims is happening among the Rabhas. He attributes the change from matriliny to patriliny in the village Rabhas, due to their contact with the patrilineal Rajbanshis. But the crucial questions of the micro-processes involved in such a major shift, the levels of resistance and/or co-option, the question of their larger ethnic identity, of which matriliny is a crucial factor, all such deliberations remain untouched in this work. Even further, no narratives of any women inform his study.

Research Design

Ethnographically studying three forest villages, this paper argues that there exists a gap between how most academics (including anthropologists) view and portray "tribes" and how these communities view and express their lifeworld and everyday. Such gaps lead to contestations over resources, histories and epistemologies. The paper articulates this gap by using two different frameworks - the Adaptation-Negotiation-Freedom (ANF) and Assimilation-Integration-Isolation (AII), and argues that most perceptions in academics and policy are driven by the respective framework that is selected. This paper has initially drawn from Bodhi and Jojo's edited work *Voices from India's Alternative Centre* (2019), and simultaneously drawn from other writings on decolonial methodologies.

The Frameworks

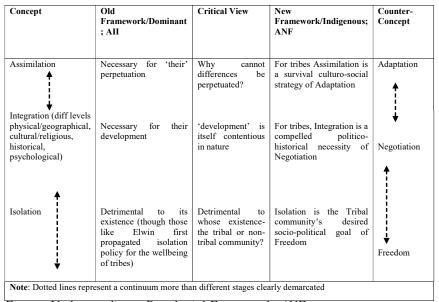| Concept	Old Framework/Dominant; AII	Critical View	New Framework/Indigenous; ANF	Counter-Concept
Assimilation	Necessary for 'their' perpetuation	Why cannot differences be perpetuated?	For tribes Assimilation is a survival culturo-social strategy of Adaptation	Adaptation
Integration (diff levels physical/geographical, cultural/religious, historical, psychological)	Necessary for their development	'development' is itself contentious in nature	For tribes, Integration is a compelled politico-historical necessity of Negotiation	Negotiation
Isolation	Detrimental to its existence (though those like Elwin first propagated isolation policy for the wellbeing of tribes)	Detrimental to whose existence- the tribal or non-tribal community?	Isolation is the Tribal community's desired socio-political goal of Freedom	Freedom
Note: Dotted lines represent a continuum more than different stages clearly demarcated				

Figure: Understanding a Decolonial Framework- ANF

To understand briefly where this new frame of reference - ANF arises from, it is necessary to understand the three broad possibilities, which are not mutually exclusive of each other, in the multiple narratives of Adivasi/ indigenous; these are, an adaptation to new political structures dominated by non-Adivasis, challenging political dominance of non-tribal society and thirdly, subtly oscillating between or surrendering to the political will of larger caste society. The older AII framework meanwhile has been derived from the Indian casteist society and the epistemology of the West, where the 'West' is not just a geographical location but rather a colonial mind-set.

What is conceived as "isolation" by theorists/dominant society is perceived as "freedom" by tribal/Adivasi society. Hence the tribal communities see 'assimilation' as a survival culture-social strategy of "adaptation"; "integration" as a compelled politico-historical necessity of "negotiation" and "isolation" as a socio-political goal of "freedom".

Findings and Analysis

1. **Adaptation / Assimilation:** The Rabhas had adapted from a semi-nomadic life into settling down in forest villages. They were forced to transform from hunter-gatherers to sedentary lifestyles. They slowly adapted to agricultural practices. The ANF framework gives the space to explore how not only their ways of life adapted to the changes that colonialism brought with it but also how their very own knowledge systems were often adapted by the colonial system. This landscape provides a wonderful example of such a phenomena-adaptation of their system of production - *taungya*[7], by the colonial forestry system as "scientific forestry". E.O. Sheabbear, Deputy Conservator of Forests during the early 1900s, provides a detailed account of how the *taungya* method of intercropping Sal with the swidden (shifting) cultivation that the *jhumma*[8] had always practised, was used to artificially regenerate *Sal,* and by 1921 all the Sal plantations in Duars were brought under the *taungya* system. This uptake of ecological knowledge from the colonised by the colonisers can never be recognised under the AII framework.

   In the process of Assimilation, the community experiences a loss of control over their own labour/bodies and capital (land). Through the system of *begari* they got assimilated into the colonial system of capitalist means of production. Further, loss of their rights over the landscape and its resources (especially forests) led to their de-facto rights becoming conditional concessions or privileges.

   Thirdly, assimilation involves a loss of their "original" cultural and traditional practices. But we also find an adaptation to the dominant group's non-tribal way of life; in this case the Bengalis, by learning their language and few of their customs and rituals. The Hindu Rabhas and Hindu Adivasis have adapted the major Hindu festivals to suit their customs and beliefs. They celebrate Durga and Kali puja but with their own deities and also on different dates than

those of the Bengali Hindus. The dominant explanation of Sanskritisation would not explain this situation.

All the Rabha and Adivasi families speak in their own language among themselves, i.e., Rabha and *Santhali* or *Kurmi* respectively. Hence a complete 'loss' of their language had not taken place but instead they are using a different language for their private and inter-community life, and a different one in their public space.

When it comes to the social institution of religion, the Assimilation framework uses the vocabulary- "converted to Christianity" and "assimilated into Hinduism" or "returned to Hinduism." The term "converted to Hinduism" is barely used, hence propagating famous nationalist anthropologists' ideas, that tribes were simply "backward" Hindus (Ghurye). In this way again, the AII framework deprives the indigene of having an independent identity apart from a residual identity (Xaxa: 2008 74).

Many non-Christian Adivasis and Rabhas answer the question of which faith they belonged to, by saying Hindu and on further discussion and probing it would be found that many practices of theirs, with slight modifications perhaps, were much closer to animism and naturalism. For instance, the most common puja among the Rabhas is the *Runtuk* puja which they now sometimes referred to as the puja of Shiva and Parvati but there were still no images/ deities of Shiva and Parvati. They worshipped two earthen pots of rice and considered one a male and the second a female- *Runtuk* and *Basek*. These gods are found in every Rabha household and any family member travelling outside the village would take a handful of rice from these pots since they believed it would offer them protection by their Gods. Again, the Adivasi (Oraon) Hindu, shared how their main festivals were *Karam* and *Sarna*, both of which comprise of forest rituals and practices and also involves their traditional priest, the *Pahan*. Another determining factor as per the sociological study of Hinduism, is the caste system, and this is something which was not observed among the Hindu Adivasis or Hindu Rabhas. Similar arguments have been made by Xaxa (2008:78) in his early essays as well. These practices of fluidity and duality and co-existence, can only be articulated in an adaptation process, not assimilationist.

One of the common "critical events" which is taken up for study of tribal communities is their religious conversion. As per the AII framework, this process has been viewed as a passive process in which the tribal individual lacked any sort of choice or informed agency. On a closer examination one finds that conversion was often an individual based choice. Many forest villages are interspersed with both Christian and non-Christian families, belonging to the same ethnicity. When many were asked what were the reasons for them converting to Christianity, they related stories of either someone being very ill in their family when their earlier methods of healing had not worked and they opted for the new types of medicines which were accessible from the Christians and hence turning to Christianity. Many others (mostly middle-aged Rabha women) shared how in their younger days their fathers wasting money on alcohol and hence the family took up Christianity since drinking was forbidden by the Church.

2. *Negotiation /Integration:* Similarly, under the integrationist framework one tends to look at a mainstream religion as homogenous and religious conversion as a mass movement in which the converting populations do not have much of a role. But there are finer nuances in different denominations in the same religion. In this landscape the major denominations of Christianity are – the Roman Catholic(RC), the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), the Baptist and the Protestant. The Adivasis were mostly part of the RC and had a *padree* from Ranchi side where most Adivasis sought their roots from. The medium of prayer and communication was *sadri* (a language from Jharkhand-Bihar-Odisha, spoken mostly by the tribal populations hailing from there, though they each have their own language as well) and Hindi. Whereas, the Rabhas were mostly part of the Baptist church which is believed to have come from Assam to this region. The language they followed was Rabha/Koch and their Bible and songs were all composed in the Rabha language. In terms of other social norms and practises, the Baptists were comparatively more accommodating as they permitted the earlier practices of the Rabhas rearing and consuming pigs, and the Rabha women are allowed to wear beads and other ornaments. The RC and SDA do not allow any of these practices. Hence there is a level of negotiation involved even when they are selecting which denomination of a religion, to take up. There is also the possibility that after joining a particular

Church there have been negotiations within it to shape few practices as per the community's comfort.

"Integration" is mostly defined as a process more politically correct than 'assimilation' as it involves not losing one's own identity but rather combining one's identity with the other (considered more dominant /superior). Hence not only researchers but policy makers and national leaders have widely spoken of 'integration' of tribal communities.

Returning to the ANF framework, one can understand that access to forest and forest resources becomes an outcome of the negotiating capacity of communities. In this negotiation process the community might use a number of tools and strategies. While coping mechanisms of indigenous communities to natural calamities, has started to draw interest of anthropologists as well the communities coping mechanism with institutions like the Forest Department and legislations like Wild Life Protection Act, finds very little space for analysis. Scott describes one such strategy commonly used – hidden transcripts. Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of both hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantial new way of understanding resistance to domination (Scott 1990: 7). Though a number of transcripts can exist. This paper proposes one from each side. The communities' hidden transcript is their belief that the Forest Department is completely incapable of raising successful plantations and forests. Their hidden transcript is framed in reference to the British times and the colonial Forest Department. As far as the hidden transcript of the FD is concerned, it comprises of the departments' awareness of the internal strength and weaknesses of the communities. Often this knowledge is used to create rifts between the communities. However, the Forest Department's alliances is very strategically placed with the relatively powerful groups/individuals in the villages. This strategy facilitates a smooth daily functioning and fulfilling of their own duty/job. A comparison between the two transcripts, throws up some interesting

observations; first and foremost, even if the FD cannot ever openly confess its transcript, the community seemed conscious enough to be aware of it. Whereas the communities' transcript might not be suspected by the FD. Secondly, the communities' transcript seems to address a larger consciousness in terms of ecological wellbeing and not just their wellbeing; the Department's transcript is narrower in scope and more immediate.

More recently, another form of negotiation is being exercised in the forest villages. Through the Gram Sabha (formed as per the Forest Rights Act), the community is negotiating with the Forest Department regarding what will be planted and where. Instead of the commercial species such as teak and eucalyptus which the communities claim, are harmful for the environment and of no use to them, they are instead proposing more local and useful species.

Another defining characteristic of Rabha society was that they are matrilineal but emerging the AII framework, is the general impression that they are no longer matrilineal and have been integrated into the mainstream patrilineal system. This paper had taken up a closer examination of the present status of the matrilineal system among the Rabhas and finds things to be a bit different. The matrilineal system followed by the Rabhas comprised of three elements- the location aspect post-marriage, the property rights, the following of (clan) lineage. With respect to lineage which is derived from *husuk* (could be considered the clan name), both Christian and Hindu Rabhas still follow their mother's *husuk* ie the children adopt their mother's *husuk* name and marriages cannot take place within the same *husuk* (as was always the custom). The matrilocal system which involves the man moving to the woman's household post-marriage, is something which is rapidly changing. On talking to people it was found that the reason for this is the changing times and men refusing to go to the wife's house anymore. The practise of matrilocal was justified on practical grounds that many times when there was no son in the house, the son-in-law would be bought to work on the land and perform similar duties associated with a man. Now, people felt there was no need for such an arrangement anymore. However, few men gave a more truthful reason that the insecurity of a man in terms of property was what had driven men to start refusing to relocate. This point is related to the third feature of the institution, i.e., property rights.

The property, in most cases here, the land was passed on and/or divided among the daughters and not sons. This system was what supported the matrilocal practise. At present, with a decline in the practise of matrilocality, the question of land division remains upon personal discretion; i.e., two options existed either if there were all daughters in a household then at least one daughter's husband would be bought home and the land would be given share-wise to her and her sisters only if they bought husbands home too but if they were marrying and moving out of the village then their share would be forfeited. The second option was one where there were all sons, then the daughter-in-law would be brought home and the land would be divided equally among the sons of the household anyway; thirdly if there was a son and daughter, in that case, the decision would be mutually dependent on the siblings' respective marriages, if the son married and went to his wife's household he would lose his right over his property, and in such a case the daughter's husband would be brought home.

It is hence safe to argue that the matrilineal system has not been given up completely by the Rabhas, in spite of the AII framework wanting us to believe otherwise. M. K. Raha unfortunately seemed to be limited to this framework and offers the explanation that village Rabhas compared to the Forest Rabhas, have given up matriliny due to the influence of their   neighbours, the Rajbanshis (non-tribal Hindus). Hence like numerous other social practices in the lives of the tribal and Adivasis, the change is simply attributed to the process of Sanskritisation. The argument that the paper makes in this case is that the community is very much conscious about which practices to hold on to and which to change. On interacting with many Rabha men, they expressed that the matrilineal system was a unique feature of the Rabha community (and hence their decision to not let it fully disintegrate).

Another interesting feature of the Rabhas which comes to life through the ANF framework and not the AII framework, is the scope for negotiations not only between the community and the State but within and among communities themselves. The Rabhas are caught in a dilemma as they try to fix one day in the calendar as their *Runtak* puja. As mentioned earlier in the paper, the puja is a traditional indigenous one and hence does not depend on the western calendar. However, since the Christian Rabhas now have

a fixed day – 25th December to celebrate Christmas, the non-Christian Rabhas feel that they too need to have a fixed date for Runtak puja. This type of negotiation leads to a very different type of assertion and freedom which the old AII framework fails to perceive.

The community begins to experience epistemological disintegration as they negotiate to retain their ground in the structure of the dominant group. This can be seen in the matrilineal system, the traditional pujas, or the everyday negotiations with the FD. AII framework has no place to "fit" these dynamic and multi-layered micro processes.

We see a fluid back and forth movement between "adaptation" on one end and "freedom" on the other with capacities for "negotiation" with the powers based on given contexts defined by ethnicity, population, religion, geography, history, etc. Further while being in a state of "negotiation", a tribal/Adivasi community can also begin to experience degrees of freedom, when they are able to overtly negotiate with the dominant group (State and non-State) in the realms of power.

Epistemological Disintegration and Distortion

In the case of the forest villagers and the Rabhas, a deeper ethnographic study is required to be able to recognise and describe the processes and points of epistemological disorientation. This paper aims to cite only a few critical moments which could be gathered and analysed within the limited scope of engagement.

Brouwer (2000: 2) offers an anthropological understanding of the concept of 'indigenous knowledge' as constituent of- indigenous knowledge systems and indigenous technical knowledge. He briefly describes each, where indigenous knowledge systems comprise of theories and perceptions of Nature and Culture; and indigenous technical knowledge (ITK) as the operation of local thinking in agriculture, health, fishery and other technological fields. The two cannot be seen as mutually exclusive of each other. The cognitive and empirical nature of interaction that takes place when an indigenous system comes in contact with a non-indigenous one is when the disintegration begins to take place. The paper proposes that epistemic disintegration is a point where the empirical starts to undergo

certain changes to a larger extent than the cognitive i.e., the forest communities begin an uptake of settled agricultural practices and get co-opted into the neoliberal economy and market forces. In this process, ITK gets modified or sometimes completely lost and sometimes even appropriated.

With respect to the concept of epistemological disintegration, it has happened among other reasons, for the changing relationship of the communities with forests and the influence of dominant non-tribe groups, mostly the Bengalis. For both Rabhas and Adivasis, the forests were the mainstay of a symbolic and not just materialistic foundation. The Rabhas described how in the forests they would make temporary shelters out of mud, bamboo and leaves for each of their deities (not idols) and then worship them; one of their main religious customs was to worship the elephant and the river Teesta before the harvest season began. The decline of this system of belief and practices was brought about by a combination of both ecological and social changes. Apart from the physical change and assault that the large scale commercial forestry brought in, the use of European statistical methods of census, cadastral maps, surveys, land settlements, and even the Forest Management Plans had the deeper effect that dislocated the ecological and physical landscape from the social relations of the communities.

Hence the distortion begins with the further interaction and consolidation of a new way of life over the old. This would require an active and conscious though sometimes subtle attack on the older existing cultural systems of the communities. One Rabha interlocutor shared that the declining number of their traditional priests (*hujji, dhammi, kaviraj*- each with a separate set of skills and knowledge) was brought about by the fear instilled in them during the times of the Christian missionaries. The British and other Christian missionaries would brand these people as evil, *dayans* (witches etc.)*,* and in the fear of being persecuted, many of these traditional healers and practitioners of medicine and ecological knowledge, stopped public disclosure and practise anymore. This was accompanied by a robust system of providing the indigenous and local peoples with an alternative form of medicine and healing at no cost.

This is a classic micro-example of what imperial colonial powers did in places they wanted to conquer and control; by carrying out systematic assault on the local indigenous systems of knowledge and practises. An extreme form of this attack leading to the complete destruction of a community/race's history is recognised as epistemicide within the ANF framework. In this particular landscape the process and moment of

epistemicide might not have occurred the way it happened in Africa, where entire towns and centres of excellence were wiped out, and in the 15th century in Spain – destroying structures of culture and knowledge- libraries, museums etc.

The indigenous knowledge systems and hence their worldviews, is what starts changing as distortion begins to creep in. It is interesting to explore when do communities embark from the moment of epistemic distortion to epistemic stability and though this paper does not attempt a complete understanding, there is an attempt made. One of the factors in this field, leading to this movement was the repeated threats of eviction from the Forest Department. The climax was when in 2019, the Supreme Court's decision[9] of evicting millions of forest dwellers whose claims had been rejected under the FRA, brought together all the communities from across forest villages and even revenue villages living close to the forests, in a peaceful protest. At this moment - the communities create the path for confrontation i.e., beyond negotiation and hence embark on the movement from epistemic distortion to epistemic stability.

In a more generic sense this moment of transition needs be described. Till a certain point, cultural and social interaction-adaptation and to a certain extent negotiation accompanied by a degree of epistemic disintegration leading to distortion, are directly proportional to each other. But there reaches a climax, a moment of saturation and disintegration after which a new process working towards epistemic stability, unfolds. This reminds one, of what Ber Berochev says and Wolf quotes, 'why, on the one hand, the capitalistic system appears as international, and destroys all boundaries between tribes and people and uproots all traditions, while on the other hand, it is itself instrumental in the intensification of the international struggle and heightens national self-consciousness' (Wolf 1982: 308). It is a strange inclusive-exclusive dialectics. While there is the fear of being left off the band wagon of 'development' there is a greater fear of being forced onto it through violent means that will be destroying their cultural and natural resources. Hence the attitude of the State to integrate only those aspects that pleases it and exclude the rest, is well reflected in the major academic discourses around tribal studies as well. Cusicanqui, calls this 'co-optation and mimesis, the selective incorporation of ideas and selective approval of those that better nourish a fashionable, depoliticised, and comfortable multiculturalism…' (Cusicanqui 2012: 104).

Epistemic stability in the sense of political and cultural autonomy, for different communities, could adopt different methods and demands. The Northeast

in itself can be seen as host to a number of tribal movements displaying a variety of ethnic politics and movements for autonomy. While those like the Nagas and Mizos, demand for a complete freedom from the Indian State, Khasis, Jaintias, *Garo*, Bodos, Koch Rajbangshis, demand for a separate state within the Indian Union, and Tiwas and Misings, demand for a separate administrative arrangement within a state. The Rabhas' levels of political autonomy seem to fit in the last group. Through the Rabha Development Council (RDC), the Rabhas of the Duars are attached to the Rabhas in Assam and participate in all their politico-cultural activities and decisions. The Rabhas are also in the process of formalising a script for their language. The "freedom end" of the spectrum may also involve re-asserting rights over their environment in ways other than territorial rights. In the forest villages this movement can be seen through the engagement with the Forest Rights Act. Both the Rabhas and Adivasishave been coming together since the past decade and have formed the Gram Sabhas and other institutions. Armed militant struggles are mostly the only form of action associated with indigenous and tribal movements and demands for 'Freedom' but further research on different processes and expressions of "freedom" is vital since these projects of modernity and freedom demand concepts and institutions of a decolonial nature.

Conclusion

The struggles of the forest communities have to be seen beyond resources, the struggle of tribal institutions like the Rabha Development Council) RDC has to be seen even beyond territorial autonomy and a distinct script for the Rabhas; the struggle of the Adivasis has to be seen beyond the State's exploitation of natural resources excesses; these struggles are part of a larger war, a war of paradigms (Mander 2006). Similar to the indigenous discourses arising from other parts of the worlds- former colonies in Latin America, Africa etc. these struggles then need to be theorised beyond expressions to reclaim territorial and language rights, to a reclaiming of epistemologies. However, most often, in our country, these movements take place within the structures of the post-colonial apparatus and hence are not free from colonial epistemologies. Hence the question remains to understand how and to what extent the Adivasi/indigenous communities are being able to establish a decolonial discourse and what is it ontologically. The paper would like to appeal to co-researchers that we are responsible for forwarding the above in our country. The ANF framework provides an opportunity to do so by challenging the dominant AII framework not only in

academics but in policy as well. The paper has attempted to argue that this war of paradigms comprises of endonyms as they replace exonyms, and the ANF perspective is one such space. Even if the author of this paper is not an 'insider', but it is crucial to realise that this alternative framework provides the researcher, a theoretical vigilance and a moral duty.

Notes

1. Deriving their name from the Sanskrit word meaning doors/ gateway.

2. Forest People and Forest Workers Platform

3. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, FRA; provides for tenure security at both individual and community level, along with management rights. The institutional foundation of this Act is the Gram Sabha.

4. Annual Report 2014-15 (Forest Department, Govt. of West Bengal)

5. E. O. Sheabbeare, British naturalist and forester, Chief Conservator of forests for Bengal.

6. Dr. Sonam B. Wangyal is an Indian doctor running a clinic in Jaigaon, a border town abutting Phuentsholing. He was a columnist for *Himal, The Himalayan Magazine* (Kathmandu) and *The Statesman, NB Plus* (Siliguri & Calcutta). He currently runs a weekly column in a Sikkim daily, *Now* and a Kalimpong fortnightly *Himalayan Times.*

7. Bhutanese word meaning hilltop, it had been practised by the hill and forest tribes since long. The British Forest Departments had started using it in Bhutan under their supervision. In this case it primarily involved the inter-cropping of Sal and with other crops.

8. Colloquial term used for those practising *jhum,* i. e., shifting cultivation

9. There was a case filed by certain conservationists (in 2008) against the Forest Rights Act 2006 challenging the validity of the Act in the Supreme Court on the grounds of it being unconstitutional and anti-conservation. In 2019 the SC passed an

order that all those whose claims had been rejected (over 16.3 lakh families) could be evicted. There were large scale protests across the country and ultimately it was put on hold.

References

Bodhi, S. R. and B. Jojo. 2019. *The Problematic of Tribal Integration Voices from India's Alternative Centers*. Hyderabad: The Shared Mirror Publication.

Brouwer, J. 2000. 'Practices are not Without Concepts: Reflections on the Use of Indigenous Knowledge in Artisanal and Agricultural Projects in India.' *Journal of Social Sciences*, 4 (1): 1-9.

Cusicanqui, S. R. 2012. 'Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization'. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 111(1): 95-109.

de Sousa Santos, B. 2015. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. New York: Routledge.

Hunter, W.W. 1877. *Statistical Account of Bengal*. Vol X. London: Trubner and Co.

Karlsson, B. G. 2001. *Contested Belonging: An Indigenous People's Struggle for Forest and Identity in Sub-Himalayan Bengal*. London: Routledge.

Raha, M. K. 1989. Matriliny to Patriliny: *A Study of the Rabha Society*. Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Rangarajan, M. and K. Sivaramakrishnan (eds.). 2014. *Shifting Ground: People, Animals and Mobility in India's Environmental History.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Risley, H. H. 1892. *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Ethnographic Glossary* (Vol. 1). Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press.

Sanyal, C. C. 1965. *The Rajbansis of North Bengal*. Kolkata: The Asiatic Society.

Scott, J. C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Shebbeare, E. O. 1932. 'Sal Taungyas in Bengal.' *Empire Forestry Journal*, 11(1): 18-33.

Sundar, N., R. Guha & J. P. Parry. 1999. 'The Indian Census, Identity and Inequality'. In N. Sundar et. al. (eds.) *Institutions and inequalities*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 100-27.

Tauli-Corpuz, V. & J. Mander. 2006. *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Wangyal, S. B. 2006. 'A Cheerless Change: Bhutan Dooars to British Dooars.' *Bhutan: The Journal of Bhutan Studies.*

Wolf, E. R. 1982. Europe and the People Without History. Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press.

Xaxa, V. 2008. *State, Society, and Tribes: Issues in post-colonial India*. Delhi: Pearson Education India.

7

Bed Rest at Childbirth: Exploring Empirical Dimensions of Support and Vulnerability

Rukmani Sharma
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Ghoshpukur College
Email: <u>rukmanijnu19@gmail.com</u>

Abstract: *The phenomenon of childbirth is a social event, whereby women hailing from both conventional and modern societies bestow substantial credence upon their social counterparts for the provision of emotional and psychological sustenance. The established importance of obtaining social support from one's biological kin has been widely recognised. It is of utmost importance to adopt a discerning perspective when dealing with this reliance and evaluate it from a sociological standpoint, rather than simply acknowledging it as a mundane occurrence. The inquiry into the selection process of women beneficiaries and benefactors in times of vulnerability may shed light on the uncharted rules and norms governing social support. A comprehensive evaluation of the care dependency of expectant mothers mandates a meticulous examination of the sociocultural milieu in which they are positioned. The ongoing inquiry pertains to a specific cohort of women who give birth within a biomedicalized urban setting, wherein modern techniques enable the detection of potential risks with unparalleled efficiency. Expectant mothers are often troubled by the possibility of being classified as high-risk throughout the duration of their gestation period. Pregnancies that present a heightened risk are subject to meticulous oversight, diagnostic evaluations, and targeted pharmacological interventions. Although bed rest is a commonly prescribed intervention for the management of pregnancies with a high risk of complications, its effectiveness cannot always be assured. It is widely acknowledged that a considerable segment of the women lacks the requisite resources and capabilities to comply with the recommended protocols of prolonged antenatal and postnatal bed rest. The present study endeavours to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the organizational culture of Prakash Hospital, with a*

specific emphasis on the impact of unique social and economic determinants on the assimilation of bed rest norms among women. In a general sense, the discussion regarding the notion of bed rest pertains to the capacity of women to alleviate potential risks via reliance on their maternal kinship networks (baper bari).

Keywords: Childbirth, risk negotiation, bed rest, *baper bari* and mother's care, social support.

Introduction

The amalgamation of technology and the process of childbirth resulted in a multitude of conjectures regarding the intricate relationship between the human anatomy and technological progress. In the first half of the 20th century, the traditional practice of childbirth involved the assistance of midwives and birth attendants within the domestic setting. In the latter half of the 20th century, a conspicuous upswing in the bio-medicalization of childbirth was observed on a global scale. This phenomenon can be ascribed to the swift industrial and technological progress that transpired during that epoch (Rattner 2008). As per the research conducted by Johansan et al. in 2002, it can be inferred that the biomedical paradigm postulates the inherent precariousness of the process of childbirth. The emergence of technological advancements has enabled the detection of plausible dangers. According to Johansan's research, a considerable percentage, varying from 20-30 per cent, of pregnancies in India are classified as being of high risk. This particular cohort of gestations is accountable for a remarkable seventy-five percent of adverse health outcomes and fatalities during the perinatal period. According to the research conducted by Johansan et al. (2002), there has been a notable increase in the employment of electronic foetal monitoring on a global scale, encompassing both low and high-risk populations. Although this phenomenon may appear unsettling at first glance, it is worth noting that women do not universally perceive these anxieties in a negative manner, nor do they view them as being especially severe or intrusive. One could argue that these elements are essential to the process of gestation.

The current investigation delves into the utilization of bed rest as a biomedical intervention suggested to assist pregnant women in mitigating potential health risks. The investigation is conducted at the prestigious Prakash Hospital, located in the urban vicinity of Siliguri. The objective is to explicate the rationale underlying the choice of a particular birthing milieu by women of a discrete socioeconomic class, with the intention of experiencing a few

childbirths over the course of their lifetimes. The study aims to emphasize the conventional practice within institutions of recommending bed rest for pregnant women and the resulting consequences for these women. The following document represents a self-reflective investigation into the organizational culture of Prakash Hospital. More specifically, it explores the impact of social and economic factors on women adherence to bed rest protocols. Thus, the paper asserts that a majority of financially stable women who visit Prakash Hospital choose to avail themselves of medical attention and recuperate at their natal domicile during their antenatal period.

At this particular juncture, it is evident that the crucial interplay of social support and the consequential involvement of social supporters are integral components throughout the process of childbirth. According to Oakley's (1984) perspective, the concept of social support extends beyond mere material resources and encompasses a profound sense of interpersonal connection that involves both the provision and receipt of support. According to Oakley's (1984), the conventional professional paradigms surrounding pregnancy, which dichotomize medical and social perspectives, have impeded the acknowledgement of this evidence and its pertinence to policies concerning maternal healthcare. It is becoming increasingly evident that the provision of appropriate social support during the phases of gestation, parturition, and the postnatal period can yield favourable outcomes from a purely biomedical standpoint. For instance, the provision of appropriate emotional support may lead to a decrease in the quantity of interventions necessary during the childbirth procedure.

Oakley (1984) suggested a similar notion that women may manifest decreased dependence on technology and encounter improved neonatal outcomes when provided with sufficient social support. According to the argument posited by midwives, the provision of social support prior to conception, during gestation, and following childbirth presents a feasible alternative to pharmacological measures, aiding women in the management of both physiological discomfort and emotional distress. The phenomenon known as "baby blues," which is marked by feelings of depression and emotional instability, has been expounded upon by Oakley (1984). Contrary to popular belief, this condition is not solely attributable to hormonal changes following childbirth; rather, it is closely associated with the awareness of the attendant responsibilities of motherhood and the dearth of support available to new mothers. Hence, it can be inferred that social support not only serves as a coping mechanism for women in managing physical

discomfort and emotional distress, but also plays a pivotal role in mitigating the risk of postpartum depression.

Methodology

In the present investigation carried out at Aakash Hospital, a cohort of 43 women was selected, consisting of 31 women who had given birth in Prakash Hospital and 12 pregnant women, from whom data was gathered. The demographic feature of this cohort consists of women spanning from the ages of eighteen to forty. Among the cohort of 43 female individuals, a significant proportion of 31 are situated within the age bracket of 21 to 30 years. In the interim, a trifling faction of 3 women either surpass the age of thirty or descend beneath the age of twenty. Among these 31 women, a considerable proportion of 26 individuals underwent a successful cesarean delivery, whereas a comparatively smaller subset of 5 mothers experienced a natural childbirth. In order to provide a comprehensive depiction of the hospital, a total of 8 nurses, 7 Mashi (paid care givers), and 3 physicians were subjected to inquiry. The approach employed for the identification of respondents was a fusion of both random and stratified sampling methodologies. The investigation was limited to female individuals who willingly granted their permission to participate in the interviews. A noteworthy fraction of the female population underwent the surgical procedure of caesarean section, and it was noted that they frequently displayed a state of drowsiness subsequent to the administration of potent analgesic agents. I was afforded the privilege of conducting an interview with them within a scant 48-72 hours following parturition, a period during which their physiological condition had largely mitigated the impact of drugs interventions. All of the interviews were conducted on the premises of the hospital. Subsequent to childbirth, the maternal subjects were subjected to interviews during their recuperation within the confines of the obstetrical wards or cabins. Pregnant women were subjected to interviews within the confines of the hospital's outpatient department (OPD). The individuals in question originate from a socio-economic tier that may be categorized as middle-class, with a monthly household revenue spanning from Rs. 40,000 to 100,000. All the mothers conceived via the conventional biological method, with the exception of the two mothers who underwent in vitro fertilization. The study cohort comprised of women who were both prim parous and multiparous. Despite the institutional focus on Siliguri, the study conducted at Prakash Hospital included mothers from diverse localities who utilized its services.

In the interview held in Siliguri from another hospital, Dr. Jha, 70-year-old obstetrician and gynecologist, explained the ramifications of technological progressions within the realm of obstetrics. As per the analysis of Dr. Jha, the progressions in medical technology have enabled the timely identification of potential hazards, consequently resulting in a surge in the frequency of caesarean deliveries. The facilitation of diagnosis provided by these technologies has been pivotal in this respect. Moreover, Dr. Niranjal Mondal, a renowned obstetrician who practices at a public maternity hospital in Siliguri, contends that there is a dearth of unanimity among medical professionals, patients, and their families with regard to addressing probable hazards linked to childbirth. Consequently, patients and their families tend to exercise caution and rely on the sound guidance of their doctors in selecting the most appropriate delivery method. The esteemed Dr. P. K. Majhi, who serves as both the proprietor and principal obstetrician and gynecologist at Prakash Hospital, has offered a perspective that is appropriately proportionate to the matter at hand. The potential risks of childbirth are not an inevitability. Women who regularly visit Prakash Hospital tend to hold unfavourable views about their physical appearance and experience concerns about the gestational and postpartum stages, perceiving them as an unavoidable challenge. The term "risk" in this context pertains to a pregnancy wherein the woman, her foetus, or both are predisposed to a greater probability of encountering complications during the gestation period or childbirth, as compared to a typical pregnancy.

The proprietor and obstetrician, Dr. P. K. Majhi, has provided his verbal agreement for the utilization of the premises by the researcher. In order to gain further insight into the biomedical methodologies employed by Dr. P. K. Majhi at his esteemed maternity hospital, I arranged for an additional consultation with the distinguished obstetricians and gynecologists. In accordance with its institutional ethos, every establishment customizes and accommodates the encounter of women visitors. The model of organizational culture has been employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the institution in its entirety and its impact on the nature and placement of convalescence beyond the hospital setting. It is conceivable to observe the disclosure of risks and the advocacy of bed rest throughout the diverse stages of women's reproductive journey. By elucidating the preferred site for bed rest, we shall proceed to explicate the manner in which institutional culture impacts birthing practices beyond its confines.

Bed Rest and Risk: A Sociological enquiry

Bed rest is a common treatment for women with high-risk diseases such as multiple pregnancies, premature labour, hypertension, antepartum haemorrhage, and foetal development retardation, despite contradictory evidence regarding its efficacy (Crowther 1995). The study conducted by Maloni et al. in 1993 revealed that the process of bed rest resulted in a deceleration of postpartum recovery due to the deconditioning of the muscles and cardiovascular system. The spectrum of bed rest recommendations spans from a modest few hours of reclining at home to a more rigorous regimen of spending the entirety of one's day in a hospital bed. In the study conducted by Josten et al. (1995), it was observed that a significant proportion of high-risk expectant women were subjected to varying degrees of bed rest. Specifically, 20 percent of the participants were prescribed total bed rest, while 38 percent were advised to engage in partial bed rest, which entailed reclining on their side with their feet elevated during the day and limiting their bathroom privileges. As a result of their childcare duties, sound health, household commitments, lack of assistance from their significant others or kin, unease, and occupational obligations, over 33 percent of these women failed to comply with the directive to remain in bed throughout the day. Hence, we can establish a correlation between the significance of adequate rest and the provision of social reinforcement.

When examining the consequences of bed rest, one may also consider the research conducted by Maloni et al. (1993), which revealed that women subjected to complete bed rest exhibited heightened dysphoria, weight loss, and gastrocnemius muscle dysfunction in comparison to those who were subjected to partial or no restraint. As per the findings of Josten et al. (1995), there existed no discernible variance in the pregnancy outcomes of expectant women at high risk who complied with prescribed bed rest guidelines vis-à-vis those who did not. Furthermore, it has been observed that the consequences of pregnancy, such as gestational age, birth weight, and perinatal mortality, were found to have no correlation with customary hospital bed rest during twin pregnancy, as reported by Hartikainen Sorri and Jouppila (1984). The present investigation delves into the female perspective regarding the practice of bed rest, without engaging in any debate regarding the effectiveness of the medical practitioner who recommended it. The focal point lies in the socioeconomic status of women belonging to the middle-class stratum, who possess the financial means to avail themselves of the privilege of bed rest.

Bed rest and Place of bed rest

Women are aware that pregnancy and childbirth may entail a certain degree of risk; thus, they utilise psychological and societal adaptive strategies or coping mechanisms to mitigate their apprehensions. For a woman to fully appreciate the advantages of bedrest, it is imperative that she possesses significant social reinforcement, whether it be derived from her natal family or in-laws' sources.

The term "bedrest" connotes a state of complete physical repose within the confines of one's home, characterised by an absence of physical exertion or labour, and a preponderance of time devoted to reclining, dozing, or sitting upon a bed. The concept of bed rest stands in stark contrast to that of physical exertion and activity. Dr. P. K. Majhi advocates for the implementation of bed rest at home as a precautionary measure to mitigate the likelihood of potential complications during pregnancy for his antenatal patients. He recommended that women at different stages of pregnancy adopt bedrest as a measure to mitigate potential risks. A significant proportion of the female population experienced the ramifications of heightened blood pressure and anaemic conditions. Additional complications during pregnancy encompassed indications such as heightened sugar levels, thyroidal anomalies, insufficient amniotic fluid, and discomfort in the abdominal or limb regions. The medical recommendation of bed rest was also extended to women who have previously experienced miscarriage or neonatal mortality, yet exhibiting no accompanying complications. Throughout the gestational period, the physiological augmentation of thyroid activity, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels, in conjunction with the concomitant reduction in haemoglobin concentration, are deemed usual biological occurrences. Whilst these commonly observed physiological alterations are often perceived as troublesome and potentially implicated in the emergence of risk factors, they constitute the fundamental basis for the prescription of bed rest. Consequently, we can ascertain the manner in which the incidents situate all females within the risk classification and how the prescription of bed rest ensues.

The practice of bed rest can be categorized into three distinct classifications. Given our current understanding that bed rest is a recommended course of action for women, it is imperative to oversee adherence to this prescribed regimen. Henceforth, the state of bedrest is bifurcated into three distinct classifications, necessitating women to elect a singular option:

(i)   Total Bed Rest (TBR)- when women spend the majority of their time resting in bed,

(ii)   Moderate Bed Rest (ModBR) - when a patient complies with the recommendation for bed rest but also engages in other physical activity,

(iii)   Minimal Bed Rest (MinBR) - when women do not take daytime bed rest.

The analysis of the data reveals that out of 43 women, 22 (51.16 percent) followed TBR in good faith. Such a figure is reflective of women and their conception of childbirth, which is entangled with bio medicalised childbirth. There were 17 women out of 43, or 39.53 percent, who were able to combine moderate bed rest (ModBR) with other physical activity. These women chose ModBR or were constrained by factors other than their own will. Minimum bed rest (MinBR) mothers comprised 14 of 43 mothers, or 32.55 percent. This number is the bare minimum, though it is not a far departure from ModBR. MinBR reappears under two conditions: first, by choice, and second, by necessity.

There are three categories of place of bed rest:

1. Natal family (*Baper bari*),

2. In-laws' residence, (*Sasur bari*) and

3. With spouse

Quantitative analysis is important to evaluate sociological events and their correlations in greater depth. Following that we find 51.16 percent of women stayed with their natal families, 37.20 percent with their in-laws, and only 11.60 percent with their spouses. As the paper contends the effective correlation between TBR and place of bed rest, the results indicate that 72.72 percent of women took their TBR at their natal family, 22.72 percent at their in-laws' home, and 4.54 percent with their spouse. The above quantitative analysis suggests that the majority of mothers take bed rest in their natal family, where they can adhere to total bed rest (TBR).

Ethnographic Narrations

In the following section we would discuss by employing the ethnographic narrations the relationship between bed rest and place of bed rest. The case of concerning TBR in natal family is only referred to considering the limited scope of a paper.

Let us begin with the case of Nabanita Bhattacharya. At the age of 29, she has already taken on the role of a mother. Subsequent to her marriage in 2017, she has been living with her spouse, as well as her paternal and maternal in-laws. She planned to commence the process of procreation and bear offspring for the first time in the year 2022. Nabanita pursued her academic endeavours until the tenth grade, a level of education that falls beneath the normative standard of the female demographic that visits Prakash Hospital. She currently occupies herself with the duties of a homemaker. Her spouse is gainfully employed within the governmental sector of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation, and is situated within the middle echelons of the socio-economic stratum. Upon receiving Dr. P. K. Majhi's recommendation for complete bed rest, she went to her natal home to bed rest and receive attentive care. The individual in question presented with high levels of both blood pressure and blood sugar. She exhibited a significant weight and experienced symptoms of nausea and morning sickness. During her pregnancy, she expressed a consistent sense of exhaustion. The various physiological alterations that occurred during her pregnancy phase rendered her eligible for prescribed bed rest. She gave an evident expression and answered when enquired about the sharing of household chores during pregnancy:

> No, because I was there in my mother's place, I was not required to labour. In my third month, I went to my mother's house. Then, two months later, I returned to my in-laws' home to celebrate the ritual of Punchamittra, which can only be observed there. I returned to my mother's home after the celebration because I needed bed rest. In your mother's place, you do not need to labour, and as I am also to avoid strenuous labour. If you remain at your mother's house, you receive the care and affection you desire. She cooked all of my favourite meals. Although you cannot continue to relax at your in-laws' home, you must complete some household chores.

Her mother was sitting close during the interaction and interested to give her opinion. She stated her version in this way:

> After realising that she is pregnant, she came to me because she, too, required rest. A pregnant daughter feels comfortable staying with her mother. Regardless of what others may think, there is distinction between *Baper bari* and *Sasur bari* (natal and in-law's family).

The case of Litika Dutta Talukdar can also be taken up to understand the link between TBR and place of bed rest. She is a *secondi gravidae* (mother

who is giving birth for the second time) at the age of 31. She was married in the 2016 and became a mother to a boy in 2018, and in 2022 she again gave birth to a baby boy. She has a degree of graduation and is a home-maker. Her husband is a bank employ and earns around 50,000 per month. Her natal family as well as her in-laws' family is in Siliguri.

Having known that she is pregnant in July 2021, she went to the doctor who suggested her to take all possible care since she had an abortion on her previous conception.

She narrated her experience:

> I was advised by my doctor, P. K. Majhi, to take complete bed rest because I was extremely feeble. He prohibited me from performing any type of physical labour and instructed me to eat well from the beginning of my pregnancy. I have completed all the testing he suggested, including those for haemoglobin, sugar, HIV, and thyroid. All the results were negative, only I had a problem with high blood pressure. The ultrasound was performed in the 2nd, 5th, and 7th months, as well as the 9th month. I performed an ultrasound at the 7th month because I became ill and was haemorrhaging due to a low-lying placenta (placenta pervia). I spent two days in the hospital after being admitted. I was given saline and administered medication. Then I travelled to my mother's residence.

She stayed at her in-laws' place till 7th month during her period of gestation, but when asked for a total bedrest after hospitalisation, she shifted to her mother's residence. She informed:

> I stayed with my in-laws throughout my entire pregnancy, but I returned home when I began to fall sick in the seventh month. At my maternal residence, I have my mother and brother. My sibling has never been wed. At my mother's home, the toilet facility is good. It is inside the home, whereas at my in-laws' it is outside, so it is more comfortable at my mother's house. In addition, at my mother's house we have a commode and at my in-laws' house there is an Indian toilet. As the doctor also advised that I not apply the pressure below, I decided to stay with my mother. Although foremost, the care aspect is more significant. When I shifted to my mother's home, I also limited to perform domestic duties. If my mother-in-law is working at my in-laws' home, I am unable to just sit and take rest, and I must labour alongside her. In my *baper bari*, my mother takes care of everything, allowing me to take rest

entirely in bed. I will return to my mother's home and stay there for two to three months and only return after I have totally recovered.

The third case study is Montai Mahato Sharma who was also a secondi gravida at the age of 34. She was married in the year 2015 and had her first girl in 2016 and had her second child (boy) in 2022 (April). She is a graduate and a home-maker. Her husband has a business in transport and earns around 50,000 a month. Her natal family is from Siliguri, however, her in-laws place is in Dalkhola which is 131km to Siliguri. Even with a history of normal delivery Montai was also suggested the same. She narrated:

> From the start, he told me I should take bed rest all day. This is because I had problems, such as chest pain and high blood pressure. Although, my other tests were fine. I had a normal birth in my first pregnancy, and the pressure wasn't that high. When I was in my fourth month, there wasn't enough fluid in my womb, so I went to the hospital. Even my haemoglobin is low. Both sugar and the thyroid are fine. My blood pressure was high, but the doctor didn't give me medicine to lower it. Instead, he told me to observe salt intake. He told me to take calcium and a few other medicines that I can't remember right now. I stayed with my in-laws until the first trimester (the third month), and the only time I went to Siliguri was to see the doctor. Later, when the doctor told me to take bed rest, I came back to Siliguri with my mother around the third month. In the meantime, I would go to Dalkhola every 15 days or in a month. My last visit was during Diwali in November, and I didn't go to my *sasur bari* after that. I did not do any kind of heavy chores or physical activity because I had to take complete bed rest. When I was pregnant with my first child, I was in my *sasural* for seven months. After that, I went to my mother's house and had the baby in Ramkrishna Seva Sadan, (another hospital). Because I had a C-section this time, I have to stay at my mother's place for a longer time, until I am fully cured and can work on my own.

In the next case study, we will discuss about Pushpa Prasad. She was married in 2017 and in 2023, at the age of 26, she became a *primi garavidae* (a mother who gives birth for the first time). She has lived in Delhi with her spouse and is a graduate. She took medicine for her infertility issues. She relocated to her natal family in Siliguri after two years under continual medication and after successful conception. In her second month, she visited

a female doctor, but in her fourth month, she switched to Dr. P. K. Majhi for better care. She narrated:

> My cousin suggested I switch to Dr. P. K. Majhi because I had problems conceiving and could get better care and therapy there. Although my in-laws' home is in Bihar, I decided to travel to my mother's house for care and rest. I did not stay back with my husband as there were no one to take care of me. My doctor advised me to rest and eat well every three hours. Even though my mother and in-laws advised me to work a little, I preferred to rest the majority of the time, as the doctor had advised the same.

Her natal family bore the cost for her pregnancy. The interview was being conducted while her spouse was still in Delhi. She added the following:

> Since I had stayed with my natal family from the start of my pregnancy, they were the only ones who had to pay for everything. My spouse is currently in Delhi and it would take him some time to come to Siliguri, thus the expense of hospitalisation and delivery will also be covered by my natal family. The admission was based on an emergency, therefore he wasn't informed about it until the day before yesterday, just before admission.

The case study also illustrates the financial cost bearing along with care bearing. In her research of pregnant women in Tamil Nadu, Hollen (2003) used a similar narrative and referred to the child bearing women as an "auspicious burden". According to the customs, in her study, the natal family will be responsible for paying all their daughter's pregnancies and deliveries, as well as any antenatal rituals and ceremonies costs.

At the age of 34, Moumita Saha Das is a mother of two. Both the residence of her in-laws and her birthplace are in Siliguri. Due to a family ritual that bans her from visiting her natal family before the designated period, she only came to stay in the natal family after seven months of gestation. I have had significant hypertension since the beginning of my pregnancy, the narrator said. She narrated:

> I had to take 4-5 medications to control my high blood pressure because of the extreme hypertension. Before seven months, I wanted to go see my birth family, but I stayed because of the ritual. Although the ritual can be modified when women are in critical condition. I must observe the customs of my in-laws' family even though there are no such practices in my natal family. After I came to my natal family in the seventh month I did not return. I

> have come to the hospital from my natal place and go back again. Only after a couple of months I will return to my in-laws' family.

Conclusion

The present investigation conceptualizes bed rest through the lens of a patriarchal paradigm. The familial bonds that exist within society provide the fundamental structure for the conceptualization and implementation of bed rest practice. The woman is perceived by her in-laws as an industrious worker, yet her gravid state renders her incapable of fulfilling domestic functions. Women cohabiting with their affinal kin perceive themselves as indispensable caretakers, and accounts of ethnographic nature evince their disinclination towards availing care from their affinal relatives. In an effort to circumvent the patriarchal expectations imposed by the family of their spouse, women may opt to pay a visit to their natal kin during this juncture. The societal conventions have normalized the practice of women delivering offspring at their natal family. Certain customary traditions forbid the visitation of women to their consanguineous kin until the completion of the certain gestational period. As a result of this entrenched custom, a considerable number of expectant mothers who had planned to visit their natal family during the initial phases of their gestation were precluded from doing so. The ritual can also be interpreted as a poignant reminder of the woman's ongoing obligation to render her services at her husband's family residence during this period. Subsequently, she may opt to transfer to her biological kin for further bed rest and care. This predicament may also be perceived through the lens of circumventing the phenomenon of role reversal. The practice of bed rest presents a unique opportunity for a paradigm shift in familial dynamics, wherein a daughter-in-law may assume the position of a beneficiary and in-laws may adopt the role of a benefactor. However, such a deviation from the established patriarchal norms and gender-based expectations may prove to be disruptive to the customary cycle of familial roles. The concept of gender is a dynamic and fluid construct that is in a constant state of flux and subject to transformation. The concept of gender is not a static construct, but rather a dynamic and iterative process that is continually revisited and redefined. Judith Butler endeavours to unveil the ostensibly inherent assertions of gender, and explicating it through the lens of socio-cultural context facilitates her pursuit. As posited in Butler's seminal treatise, Gender Trouble (1999), the act of contravening and dismantling gender norms represents a subversive means of exposing the inherently constructed nature of gender and debunking its purported naturalness.

Women perceive the act of bed rest as a means to mitigate the probability of risk associated with pregnancy and childbirth. The medical community commonly prescribes bed rest as a medical act, yet women interpret and navigate this recommendation through sociocultural norms. Given that their societal position is deeply entrenched within broader patriarchal familial structures, the act of being confined to bed poses a plethora of supplementary normative predicaments.

References

Butler, J. 1999. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Crowther, C. A., & S. Han. 2010. 'Hospitalisation and bed rest for multiple pregnancy'. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews,* 7: CD00110.

Davis, Floyd. 2004. *Birth as an American Rite of Passage*, Second Edition. California: University of California Press.

Elizabeth Cartwright and Jan Thomas. 2001. 'Constructing Risk: Maternity Care, Law, and Malpractice'. In Raymond Devries, et al. (eds.) *Birth by Design: Pregnancy, Maternity Care, and Midwifery in North America and Europe*. New York: Routledge: 218 – 239.

Hartikainen, Sorri and Pentti Jouppila. 1984. 'Is routine hospitalization needed in antenatal care of twin pregnancy'. *Journal of Perinatal Medicine*, 12 (1): 31–42.

Hausman, Bernice L. 2005. 'Risky Business: Framing Childbirth in Hospital Settings'. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 26 (1): 23–38.

Hollen, Cecilia Van. 2003. *Birth on the Threshold*. New Delhi: Zubaan Publications.

Johansson, P, M. Oléni & B. Fridlund. 2002. 'Patient satisfaction with nursing care in the context of health care: a literature study'. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences,* 16(4): 337–344.

Josten, L. E., K. Savik, S. E. Mullett, R. Campbell & P. Vincent. 2007. 'Bedrest Compliance for Women with Pregnancy Problems'. *Birth*, 22(1): 1–12.

Maloni, J. A. 2011. 'Lack of evidence for prescription of antepartum bed rest'. *Expert Review of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 6(4): 385–393.

Maloni, J. A., J. E. Brezinski-Tomasi, & L.A. Johnson. 2001. 'Antepartum Bed Rest: Effect Upon the Family'. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing*, 30(2): 165 – 73.

Maloni, J. A., B. Chance, C. Zhang, A. Diane Cohen, & S. J. Gange. 1993. 'Physical and Psychosocial Side Effects of Antepartum Hospital Bed Rest'. *Nursing Research*, 42(4): 197 – 203.

Oakley, A. 1984. *The Captured Womb: A History of the Medical Care of Pregnant Women*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Rattner, Daphne. 2008. 'Humanising Childbirth Care: A Brief Theoretical Framework', *Interface* 4: 1–12.

8

Mountains, Modernity and Nature: Reconfiguring the aspects of Himalayan Mountaineering

Debaditya Dutta
Assistant Professor in Sociology, Government General Degree College, Mangalkote
Email: debaditya.dutta23@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper traces the genealogy of mountaineering from its origin in the Alpine mountains to its manifestation in the Himalaya through the mechanisms of colonialism in the late nineteenth century. Mountaineering and modernity coincided with each other and conquering the Himalayan mountains became a colonial project. The paper attempts to show how the entanglements between nature and humans were (re)organised as mountaineering unfolded in the high Himalaya. From records on the early Himalayan surveys and expeditions the paper tries to comprehend the reconfiguration brought about in the Himalaya through colonial survey and mountaineering in its early days of inception.*

Keywords: Mountaineering, modernity, nature, Himalaya, colonialism.

Introduction

About 45 million years ago, the Indian tectonic plate collided with the Tibetan tectonic plate, giving rise to The Himalaya; the highest and the youngest mountain range in the world. Himalaya used in its singular form instead of Himalayas means "abode of snow" in Sanskrit. It's a 1,500-mile-long range bounded by Indus on the west and Brahmaputra on the east (Isserman and Stewart 2008). The Himalaya range has fourteen mountain peaks that are higher than eight thousand metres from sea level and are still rising. Mt. Everest being the highest. Similar geography is not found anywhere else on planet Earth. Mt. Aconcagua, which is the highest peak outside of the Himalaya, has an elevation of 6,961 metres. Between Everest and Aconcagua, there lie more than a hundred mountain peaks that are higher than Aconcagua, all located in the Himalaya.[1] With such incomparable

geography, these mountains have become the core of high-altitude mountaineering and trekking in today's world.

Mountaineering in the Himalaya is a rather modern phenomenon that began in the late 1890s.[2] Mountaineering initially has its roots in the Alpine Mountains and was then transferred to the Himalaya by the British Empire. The high Himalaya have been drastically transformed by mountaineering and trekking which are based on notions of nature and the ways we interact with it. Scholarships in Himalayan mountaineering have mostly focused on the dynamics between a Sherpa and a non-Sherpa mountaineer or the major feats of the Himalayan Giants.[3] Rarely, studies on Himalayan mountaineering have gone beyond a mountaineer and Sherpa binary and made nature the focal point of social enquiry. Mountaineering facilitates various forms of entanglements between humans and non-humans (mountains)[4] which are embedded in the lifeworld of the participants.[5] It directs us towards the societal comprehension of the ontological ideas of nature, mountains and non-humans.

Through various discourses on mountaineering, this paper seeks to critically engage with the imaginations of the Himalaya and Himalayan mountaineering that took shape in the late 19th century. It traces the genealogy of Himalayan mountaineering, which had its inception in the Alpine mountains and was transported to the Himalaya through colonialism. The paper attempts to show how the entanglements between nature and humans were (re)organised as mountaineering unfolded in the high Himalaya.

Pre-Colonial Era: Period before Mountaineering

To contextualise the changing dynamics between humans and non-humans, we need to begin our discussion from the period when mountaineering didn't exist in the Himalaya. 'The high places across the globe have often functioned as multivalent heterotopias, spaces of otherness', imagined as pure and natural in opposition to the impure lowland (Simpson 2019). With such a binary in place, there lies a tendency in academic scholarship to imagine these mountainous spaces as being devoid of indigenous people or occupied by people fleeing state-making mechanisms. Himalaya is considered a space where modernity and valley-centric state formation has failed to penetrate. Studies on the Himalaya have labelled these regions as 'non-state spaces' (Scott 2009). According to van Schendel, the Himalaya falls under the categorisation of *Zomia*, a space that lies at the periphery of multiple states but lacks strong centres of state formation, is politically ambiguous and therefore fails to produce significant scholarship under the

area studies banter (Schendel 2002). Recent scholarship on Himalayan studies has challenged such a determinism.[6]

The high Himalayan regions as imagined were never sedentary nor did the people residing here had escaped modern state governance. Matter of fact, these regions were controlled by various states, each knowing its boundaries and alliances. Home to many fluid and settled communities, the high Himalayan people were mostly pastoral and engaged in trade across the Tibetan and Indian sub-continent. Most people knew their way around the mountain passes mainly for trading and herding yaks. Tibetan Buddhism was and still is the dominant religion of the region. We find the presence of Buddhist monasteries that were built around the smallest villages which substantiates permanent settlements of communities. The lifeworld of the local population residing in these areas was primarily guided by religion. Knowing the exact altitude of where they reside and the mountain peaks in quantifiable units were insignificant to them. The summits were the abode of Gods to the local people as well as to people far off.

> For Hindus it is not simply the abode of snow but of the gods, and beginning from the mythical journey into the mountains of the five Pandava brothers and their wife Draupadi in the *Mahaprasthanika Parva* of the epic *Mahabharata*, pilgrim routes have drawn believers to the ice-caves, glaciers, and lower peaks of the Himalaya (Chaudhuri 2018: 299).

Nature and religion have a close interconnected history. Nature-worshipping was the first form of primordial religion as humans were unable to tame and comprehend the exterior world. 'To know Nature was to know God…' (Williams 1980). Once humans could utilise and put nature to work, certain spaces such as mountains, lakes, and forests. etc. retained the sacred element. Mountains inherently possessed attributes that made humans feel minute in front of their gigantic structure. According to Arne Naess, mountains are solid, stable, unmoving and retain a certain greatness, calling forth "modesty" from the people who interact with them (Naess 2008). It invokes notions of divinity that draw people towards it. Almost in all religious discourses, mountains constitute this form of embodiment. God is the first absolute and Nature is its deputy or minister (Williams 1980). Consequently, Himalaya attracted a large number of pilgrims from various parts of the world to it and continues to do so even today. One could say that the earliest trekkers to the Himalaya were the pilgrims. Nature to them was a place of worship and travelling to them could help them connect to the Gods. There are numerous peaks and lakes in the Himalaya which are

considered sacred by many religions. Some mountain peaks like Mt. Kailash have never been summited to date because of the significance of the mountain to multiple religious faiths. Moreover, we find no oral or written record of anyone summiting a Himalayan peak in the pre-colonial era. A pilgrimage was the only form of the material connection between the mountains and the humans with religion as the primary mediator of the modalities of the relationship.

The calling of the mountains to the pilgrim and the mountaineer is based on a similar notion of mountains possessing transcendental awe. But a pilgrim doesn't have the desire to summit the peaks whereas a mountaineer is only there to reach the summit. Here lies the fundamental difference between a pilgrim and a mountaineer. The pilgrim's lifeworld is guided by religious faith which forbids her/him to summit a mountain. Pilgrimages are mostly collective ritualistic procedures that are systematically guided by religious doctrines and are often periodical. Ideas of nature are produced for them through the various religious scriptures. Mountaineering on the other hand began with overcoming religious superstitions (Hansen 2013). It symbolised the modern individual man[7] who is not bounded by any religious structures. Mountaineering began in the European Alpine mountains and got associated with the Eurocentric ideas of modernity. A mountaineer was required to rid oneself off the religious beliefs that stopped a pilgrim to summit a mountain and embrace scientific temperament. Mountaineering got associated with conquest and mastery of human superiority over nature through science.[8] Colonialism was also based on similar notions of modernity and mountaineering became a prominent feature of the colonial legacy. With the beginning of mountaineering in the Himalaya through the colonial intervention of the British Empire, Himalaya ceased being just a site for a pilgrim, but also for mountaineering.

Origin of Mountaineering

Mountaineering in any form didn't begin in the Himalaya. It has its roots in the European Alpine mountains. Mountain climbing is a cultural practice that has a social and political background and its origin was undeniably an outward expression of mid-Victorian middle-class life (Isserman and Stewart 2008: 28). Climbing a mountain to reach its summit, or in other words- mountaineering, appealed to a specific class in Britain. Eighteenth-century Europe witnessed major structural changes such as industrialisation and urbanisation. It reshaped human activity which got localised indoors from pastoral to industrial. Along with the domestication of individuals, it also

generated a lot of wealth and power in the hand of the new professional middle class. The basis of masculine identity that had dominated agrarian society was fading away along with access to pastorals and wild places (Taylor 2010). It was under this environmental and cultural context that mountaineering erupted as a new form of outdoor masculine activity.

Taylor notes that 'organised play offered young men a way to perform socially acceptable acts of dominance' (Taylor 2010). Sports offered young middle-class men the mobility to move beyond work and family and assert masculine identity through mountaineering. British middle classes viewed mountaineering as a character-building exercise (Hansen 1995). According to Hansen, 'climbing was preeminently a masculine sport. Scrambling provided exposure to bodily risk and danger for men whose daily life were governed by safety and security' (Hansen 1995). The wealth and the imperial culture got manifested into this new professional middle class, mainly composed of university-educated professional men who aspired to be mountaineers and become symbols of national pride. The new middle-class culture avoided traditional patterns of consumption and enhanced their standard of living by segregating themselves through leisure activities such as mountaineering. This form of recreation could set them apart and nature was the preferred setting (Taylor 2010: 20). A particular nature that symbolised aspects of a space that is still untouched by modernity, nature that is still pristine and natural. Nature that could allow the men to showcase their masculinity. That no human has ever been before or very few. In accordance, mountain tops could be classified under the Foucauldian concept of "*heterotopias*", a place outside of all places but can be indicated in reality. They reflect and speak about absolutely different from other places, which Foucault calls *utopias* (Foucault 1984). But unlike *heterotopias*, utopias are spaces without places, more like a mirror which takes an individual to a space which doesn't exist. Heterotopias on the other hand are real sites that are universal, cultural and temporal with a 'system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable' (Foucault 1984: 6). Along with the creation of wealth, technological developments, new forms of leisure activity, and masculine character-building exercises. The Alpine mountains were the closest *heterotopias* for the new middle class in Britain.

Mountaineering became a significant part of the imperial status and culture of Britain and railroads provided the means for quick transportation to the Alpine settings (Hansen 1995). Accelerated production, improved transportation and increased leisure time enabled the emerging middle class

the means to pursue play and reach the European mountains sanctums quickly through the railroad (Taylor 2010: 19). It almost gives an essence that mountaineering coincided with modernity, in other words, mountaineering was an enactment of modern sport. A mountaineer was modern and therefore could summit a mountain which was impossible earlier for various previously held obstructions.[9] Altogether, the growing popularity of mountaineering in Britain led to the formation of the Alpine Club, the first of its kind, a mountaineering forum founded by British mountaineers in London, in December 1857.

> The Alpine Club was an exclusive society open only to those with considerable means and a certified record of climbing achievement. Of the 823 members admitted between 1857 and 1890, not one hailed from outside the university-educated middle class (Isserman and Stewart 2008: 31).

Mountaineering is a *serious play*[10], often life-threatening. The climber's engagement with nature produces an intimate knowledge that cannot be experienced through the distant gaze of the sublime (Taylor 2010:20). Unfortunately, not many could afford to travel to distant locations, trek to the base camps and then try to summit a peak. The expenses of climbing[11] are unlike any other sport, hence, only university-educated middle-class men could afford to experience nature intimately through climbing. The Alpine Club functioned as a gatekeeper in regulating and maintaining this class composition making themselves part of an exclusive group of climbers. It also formulated formal codes and ethics of how a climber should interact with the sublime. There have been contestations to the techniques and style of climbing from other European countries which led to the formulation of their nationalist mountaineering clubs.[12] The efforts of the Alpine Club and other subsequent national clubs that were formed in Europe institutionalised mountaineering as a formal sport. A series of books and journals began to be published under these clubs where the human entanglement with the non-human mountain was described from a mountaineering vantage point.[13]

The Alpine Club was exclusively male-dominated till 1974. This doesn't imply that women were absent, but they were marginalised leading them to form women's exclusive mountaineering clubs, such as the Ladies' Alpine Club, founded in 1907 (Morlado 2020: 728). Similar to most modern sports, mountaineering too was based on patriarchal notions as the public being androcentric. Hence, during its inception, mountaineering was primarily a male-dominated space. Alpine mountains became the 'Playground of

Europe'[14] and climbers from various nations and clubs came to test their climbing approaches and skills in the Alps (Stephen 1871). Along with climbers, there were also guides. Guides were climbers and porters fused into one who was mostly from the neighbouring villages around the summit. They can perform various types of functions, such as carrying bags, cooking food, setting up tents and also guiding the way. 'Like twentieth-century Himalayan Sherpas, nineteenth-century European peasants accepted this fitful dangerous work because it was extraordinarily profitable' (Taylor 2010: 22).

Setting the stage for Mountaineering in Himalaya

Mountaineering as a formal sport was already in place by the early 1900s and had undergone numerous contestations for us to categorise it into a homogenous category would be futile.[15] But one can trace dominant trends and major shifts in patterns. After summiting almost all major Alpine peaks, the mountaineering community were greatly allured to the Himalaya. Firstly, Himalaya was unclimbed, no human had stepped foot on the summits. Unlike the European mountains, the indigenous farmers and shepherds living close to the mountains never thought about climbing these peaks or formulating a sport around them. Secondly, Himalaya had the highest of all mountain peaks in the world.

> All the terrors of high mountain region which, seen in the great peaks of the Alps, the Weisshorn, Dent Blanche, Matterhorn, Schreckhorn, and their like, gave them for so long the credit of inaccessibility, are here found in double, nay in treble, force and number. It is this appearance of inaccessibility which–more particularly in the eyes of the practised mountaineer–raises the impression caused by this chain to a loftier and severer pitch, and also, I may be allowed to add, perhaps increases its charm (Dechy 1880: 7).

Monsieur Dechy made the above remark during his travel to Darjeeling and Sikkim during the 1880s (Dechy 1880). The Himalaya was by far the toughest and highest European mountaineers had ever seen or faced bringing new dynamics to the sport itself. Leslie Stephen marks by calling this shift from the Alps to the Himalaya the end of the "glorious days of mountaineering" as a certain standard of colonial imagination of mountaineering was fading away (Stephen 1871). Common to cricket and football, mountaineering was no longer exclusive only to the British Empire. On the contrary, a major portion of the Himalaya was directly under the

British Raj which would give them exclusivity in terms of accessibility. It would allow the British mountaineers to be the first ones to set foot in the Himalaya and claim the Giants.[16]

Mountaineering in Himalaya has a distinct beginning compared to the Alps or Japanese mountains, where it began internally with a certain middle-class culture of sports and leisure.[17] Since the local indigenous people considered the Himalaya sacred, climbing was a completely foreign intervention. It was initiated by the British Empire with the Great Trigonometrical Survey as the mountains first required themselves to be legible to modern humans through a positivist nomenclature. According to Moore, 'The job of science was to make nature legible to capital accumulation–transforming it into units of Nature and counterpoised to the forces of capital and empire' (Moore 2016: 86). Only then the Himalaya can be the highest mountain range in the world. Though the Himalaya was assumed to be the highest and Tibet was the roof or the third pole of the planet, its first exposure to the quantitative classificatory system of modernity was done by the British Empire.

The Himalaya overwhelmed any stable imperial gaze during the nineteenth and twentieth century (Colley 2010). Imperialism through colonialism along with euro-centric modernity in its crudest form was achieving mastery over global nature and its people (Smith 2012). Almost a common thread to colonialism, the British Empire was obsessed with mapping and classifying these mountains into fixed quantitative units. This process was initiated by first surveying the regions, leaving no space as *terra incognita*. The Himalaya holds exceptional romantic parallels of a lost homeland to the colonial imaginations.[18] Mountains perceived as places for transcendence and divinity also came to be seen in science as sites of purity and vision (Dora 2016). Unlike the plains, which the colonials thought of it as diseased and unproductive, the high Himalaya were considered an excellent stage for various scientific experiments. However, the entire land mass of the Himalaya was inaccessible to the colonials. It could only carry out surveys till the boundaries of its empire, leaving out a major portion of Nepal and Tibet unexplored, which also included the highest peak in the world. Hence, to access these regions, they started training indigenous people in surveying techniques to record measurements. One could say that these indigenous surveyors were the first indigenous mountaineers or trekkers in the Himalaya which enacted a completely different form of entanglement with nature(mountain).[19]

As mentioned earlier, there were pilgrims even before the category of trekkers or mountaineers in the Himalaya but the way the surveyors interacted with the mountains was purely for scientific-cartographic exploration. Their main intention was to map the routes and find the base of the mountains. These indigenous people[20] were multilingual and could easily cross state-defined borders. It also accounts for the fact that people living in the high Himalayan regions were accustomed to long-distance travellers and seasonal migrants who traversed through the length and breadth of the mountain range making the state-centric borders extremely fluid. Rather, rigid boundaries were only applicable to the British. People were used to crossing the mountain ranges through high passes, facilitating trade between the Indian Sub-Continent and the Tibetan Plateau. Therefore, for colonials to engage indigenous people to survey the entire region was not surprising. What did change was the nature of interaction with the mountains or the form of work with nature was altered. For the very first time, indigenous people were made to go to regions that were considered sacrilegious for them culturally. Finding the base of the mountain to record its altitude was never necessary, forget climbing. The form of entanglement with the mountain for these indigenous surveyors changed from a distant adobe of Gods to a modern technological-driven motive to tame and conquer nature. It also symbolised the modernisation of indigenous people through these survey explorations. Because, often the colonised "other" and nature were grouped in the same category, conceived of being savages and required to be civilised/tamed/modernised (Smith 2012).

Nature to the local people ceased to exist just as a personified abstract God once viewed through the lenses of modernity. Humans right from primordial days have always been utilising and working with nature and it's fallacious to consider the engagement as harmonious, rather it was regenerative and self-sustained. Modernity derived from euro-centric discourse on Nature, was solely to determine the underlines positivist laws that govern it and unshackle the human from its domination. Once these could be discovered, the next process would be to overcome any difficulties that would impede its utilisation for a capitalistic process. The major hindrance for the indigenous people in viewing the Himalaya through this modern lens would rest on their religious beliefs about these mountains. The pilgrim's faith will never allow her/him to climb a mountain whereas the reasoning of the indigenous surveyor had undergone modernity's rationalisation. Himalaya, since the late 1800s started to have two parallel forms of entanglements with the mountain.[21] Along with pilgrims, there were also surveyors. Explorations to the base of the mountains were in

search of scientific purity, towards the advancement of human knowledge and the potential to conquer and comprehend the all-natural process. Himalayan Giants were exposed to scientific explorations for the very first time by the colonials through indigenous surveyors. Along with techniques to measure altitude and distance, the surveyors were also trained to record anomalies in pressure, gravity and other variables. All these were done, to set the stage for British mountaineers to travel to the mountains with ease and attempt at conquering them.

Early Days of Colonial Mountaineering

After the height of *Chomolungma* or *Sagarmatha*[22] was recorded by the British Great Trigonometrical Survey as the tallest mountain on planet Earth, the mountain was given a new name- Mt. Everest. Andrew Waugh, then the superintendent of the Survey named it after his predecessor, George Everest (Isserman and Stewart 2008). The formulator of the new nomenclature also required the mountain to have a human figure on top of it which was not the case for the indigenous people. This human figure represented a typical type form of power, primarily of European modernity and industrial state, of reason and rationality and hence being in a position to create history over indigenous people who never imagined climbing *Sagarmatha* or *Chomolungma*. It symbolised victory for civilisation over nature and showcased the true human potential of modernity. Mountaineering was based on European perceptions of rationalism, individualism, and capitalism which contrasted the modern industrial state with the pre-modern colonised world (Smith 2012). Also, as a sport, mountaineering was a part of nationalistic projects. Therefore, we can understand the angst of Mallory[23] when he made his famous remark about climbing Everest because "it's there".[24] Climbing Everest would prove the superiority of Western modernity and justify the need to civilise the 'other', along with making British mountaineers the first ones to claim these mountains. It would show the indigenous people that the mountains can be climbed with mountaineering being the expression of modern human potential.

> Thus, it fell to the English barrister William Woodman Graham, whose Alpine record embraced almost every notable pass and summit, to make the first trip to the Himalaya for purely climbing purposes, "more for sport and adventure," as Graham himself unapologetically put it, "than for the advancement of scientific knowledge." (Graham cited in Isserman & Stewart 2008: 33).

In 1883, Graham along with his guide Josef Imboden attempted to climb Mt. Kanchenjunga, the closest Giant which was the closest to the British empire and could be easily approached and viewed from the colonial hill station of Darjeeling, announcing the arrival of the high Himalayan mountaineering. He did climb an unnamed peak and came close to viewing the mountain before cold and illness took over (Isserman and Stewar 2008: 33). They would soon realise that the Himalaya is unlike the Alpine mountains and that conquering them would require a larger intervention. For mountaineering to exist in the form of sports or adventure required these Giants to fall. Mountaineering became a nationalist project for the British Empire through large expeditions and almost military-style seizes to claim a living God. Though Graham was the first mountaineer, the credit was given to William Martin Conway as the pioneer of colonial mountaineering in the Himalaya Isserman and Stewart 2008: 34). Conway fitted perfectly with the British middle-class professional who was also a member of the Alpine Club. Unlike Graham, Conway was a mountaineer who possessed the Victorian ethics of colonialism and his entry into Himalayan mountaineering was a complete colonial enterprise in search of scientific exploration. The Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Botanical Gardens granted Conway funds for his climbing expedition as 'some satisfactory sort of scientific return' along with the delivery of some high-level plants (Isserman and Stewart 2008: 37). Mountaineering, as imagined by the colonials and Alpine club, in the initial days was still based on the drive towards scientific explorations than what it exists in today's contemporary form of adventure, sports or tourism.[25] Even though Graham was the first to summit a Himalayan Mountain, his achievements were never recognised by the Alpine Club which we already know has acted as the gate-keeper in protecting a particular breed of mountaineering ethics which coincided with Victorian modernity.

Conway decided to climb Mt. K2, located on the Western side of the Himalaya in 1892. He wanted to take an artist and a scientist along with him to the Karakoram to make sketches and perform scientific experiments as the entire expedition was being sponsored. But the "most important requisite" for a climbing expedition, according to Conway, was a guide (Isserman and Stewart 2008: 38). Though Mattis Zurbriggen, a Swiss-Italian was the formal guide, the services of Pabir Thapa and three other indigenous Gurkha soldiers were used by the recommendation of Charles Granville Bruce of the Fifth Gurkha Rifles (Isserman and Stewart 2008: 39). In the long history of Sherpas[26] as guides and porters in Himalayan mountaineering,

this was the first time in history that indigenous people were used directly to climb a mountain and help during expeditions. It is difficult to accurately come to a definitive causal explanation of the change in the mentality of local people that had allowed the Himalaya to be unclimbed for so many years. One plausible explanation rest on the fact that financial return was extraordinarily high for the local people as compared to other employment services they could fetch during that period. Throughout the expedition, Conway was more interested in scientific surveys and romantic explorations than climbing a mountain. Once viewing the mountain up close, he decided not to climb K2 and rather settle for a high point naming it *Pioneer Peak*, marking the expedition as a success (Isserman and Stewart 2008: 44).

Even though Conway was not successful in climbing a Himalayan Giant, he was the pioneer of the notable expedition/military style of mountaineering that facilitated the interaction between humans and mountains for another fifty years. He was also the first person in Himalayan mountaineering along with Charles Granville Bruce of the Fifth Gurkha Rifles (part of his climbing team) who 'hit on the enduring idea of native mountaineering support' (Isserman and Stewar 2008: 44). An institutionalised form of mountaineering began in the Himalaya after Conway's intervention. It was mostly carried out by the British Empire as they had unconstrained access to it. Summiting a peak became a nationalistic project for the empire and like any nationalist project, it wanted to conquer the other. Therefore, the style of mountaineering was analogous to a war where a military was sent for its seizure. Unfortunately for Himalaya, the abode of Gods, where no humans might have ever stepped, became the world's highest battlefield. The same was also true for the indigenous people who were used as pawns for sacrifice during the battle. One can say, the lifeworld of the high Himalaya was completely altered by Conway and his expedition. What followed him was a series of military-style expeditions to summit the Himalayan giants and like all wars, there also lies a long list of fatalities.

Conclusion

Himalaya, to the indigenous people living around it had always been sacred. The mountain tops were regarded as an abode of Gods. Even to the people far off, Himalaya was a place of pilgrim. Therefore, travelling to the mountains was mostly because of religious significance and climbing the top was considered sacrilegious. With the advent of colonialism and their positivist surveys, the height of Himalaya was recorded which made it the highest mountain range in the world. By then, mountaineering was a well-

established form of sports carried out mostly by the university educated upper middle-class professionals in Europe and America and had already summitted the major Alpine peaks. This made the Himalaya as their next mountaineering challenge. But before mountaineering could take place, the mountains required to be surveyed and routes needed to be discovered. Hence, the colonial government started to train indigenous people to survey these mountains and later to assist them climbing the mountains. The religious significance what had forbid the indigenous people to climb a mountain was overthrown, thereby, slowly altering the entanglements people had with the Himalaya. Mountain climbing, be it for whatever motivation was not a reality nor a necessity in the lifeworld of the indigenous people. The colonial empire was able to tap into the pre-existing knowledge system and network of the indigenous people in order to survey these peaks. They also realised their worth if at all they were to succeed in climbing the mountains. Thus, employing them for these mountaineering expeditions were held on notions of being able to get labour for an extremely cheap price. On the flipside, the cheap price was internalised by the indigenous people through deeds of heroism for the colonial masters. Religion, which had mediated the relationship between the humans and the mountains was replaced by notions of modernity. Nature was no longer just a place of pilgrim but a place for adventure and conquer where the modern human can showcase the true human potential. Therefore, climbing a mountain would not only signify success for the mountaineering community but also a justification of colonialism's civilising project, based on domination of nature.

The Himalaya, once viewed through the modern lens of mountaineering would never be the same again. Conway was just the beginning. Following Conway, the later expeditions resulted in many deaths of mountaineers for the sake of climbing the world's highest mountains. These mountaineers were both European along with their fellow guides who were mostly Sherpas. The death tally of Sherpa mountaineers exceeds by far compared to their European counterparts. Today the Himalayan Giants are unimaginable, with people flocking in numbers to climb these mountains, resulting in the world's highest human traffic jams. Along with all its glory and pride, we also hear stories of multiple deaths every year during mountaineering expeditions. This ratio will only increase as mountaineering today has gone beyond exploration or sports; it is a part of global tourism mediated through heightened commodification of nature and exploitation of labour.

Notes

1. Though geographers have classified the Himalaya as having various ranges; Karakoram, Hindu Kush, etc. Some of the mountains fall under these ranges and might not be labelled as Himalaya. But they were created by the same orogeny as the ones falling in Himalaya. The problem is how we categorise and understand them. Therefore, many a time, Himalaya is written as Himalayas. The plural usage of the form is primarily derived during British Imperialism and their obsession with classifying and quantifying the "other".

2. Martin Conway and his 1892 expedition of Karakoram is given the credit of the first Himalayan Mountaineering expedition. See, Isserman and Weaver, *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes* (London 2008).

3. 'Giants' is taken from the title of the book, Isserman and Weaver, *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes* (London 2008).

4. I have used non-human, mountains and nature interchangeably as it conveys the same meaning. Though in various discourses humans and non-humans are considered one, still there exists a thin line of difference between the two which acknowledges the presence of each other.

5. The participants are not just mountaineers, hence there lies a necessity to account for the various subjectivities of mountaineering. The paper will try to engage with a few of them.

6. See, Sara Shneiderman, *Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some scholarly and political considerations across time and space.* (2010): 289-312; Bengt G. Karlsson, *Theory from the hills.* (2019): 26-30; Swatasiddha Sarkar, *Himalaya as Method.* (2023) in *The Routledge Companion to Northeast India* editors Wouters & Subba: 215-220.

7. Though there were many who had climbed Alpine Mountains, the credit for the first mountaineer and the first modern man is often given to Francesco Petrarch for climbing Mont Ventoux on 26th April 1336 (Hansen 2013).

8. Modernity and mountaineering are not singular monolithic concepts. They are the product of the various discourses that are in constant flux based on the time frames and points of reference while one reflects on them. These were the understandings of it during European imperialism.

9. The reasons for not summiting could be both religious or technological advancements.

10. The term used by Taylor and Ortner to describe the type of play involved in mountaineering. Serious because the risk of losing one's life is extremely high in climbing.

11. The expenses vary based on the climber. There lies a category of mountaineers called dirtbag climbers because their way of living is close to a hippie or a vagabond. Mountaineering is an expensive sport and there lies no such monetary reward for summiting a peak.

12. For more, see Taylor, *Pilgrims of the Vertical: Yosemite Rock Climber and Nature at Risk.* (Cambridge 2010).

13. This is still in the initial days of mountaineering where it doesn't fall under the category of adventure tourism.

14. For more on Alpine mountaineering, see Leslie Stephen, *The Playground of Europe. (*London 1871).

15. It will take another paper to discuss the internal changes and distinct approaches to various forms of mountaineering.

16. Being the first in the mountaineering community is an esteemed position. Not just the first to summit, but they have created multiple types of 'firsts', for example, the first to climb alone, the first to climb without supplementary oxygen and many more. For more, see Mazzolini. *The Everest Effect: Nature, Culture, Ideology.* (Tuscaloosa 2015).

17. See Karen Wigan. (2005), *Discovering the Japanese Alps: Meji Mountaineering and the Quest for Geographical Enlightenment.* Journal of Japanese Studies 31(1): 1-26.

18. From setting up Hill Stations and tea plantations. For more reference on colonial representations of mountains, see Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj.* (London 1996);

Pradhan, *Empire in the Hills: Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund and Mount Abu, 1820-1920.* (New Delhi 2017).

19. Some of the notable names include Nain Singh, Sarat Chandra Das and Hari Ram. Nain Singh was able to cross Nepal via Kathmandu and went to Lhasa, where he also managed an audience with Dalai Lama.

20. Included people from various ethnic groups. They were further segregated based on the survey they were going to undertake.

21. Only in terms of a pilgrim and a surveyor as these were the only ones to travel close to the mountains. Normal human life processes were carried out in other regions but people never ventured towards the summit. Primarily, because it was never required and going there was difficult. Secondly, because of religious sentiments.

22. Already existing names of Mt. Everest before it was surveyed.

23. George Leigh Mallory was a British Mountaineer who tried summiting Everest various times and died attempting it in 1924, along with his climbing partner Andrew Irvine.

24. A newspaper report by The New York Times, March 18th, 1923. Titled 'Climbing Everest is work for Superman: A member of former expeditions tells of the difficulties involved in reaching the top- Hope of winning in 1924 by Establishments of Base Camps on Higher Levels'.

25. The contemporary forms of mountaineering are a much later project in the Himalaya.

26. Sherpas are an ethnic community mostly from the Solu Khumbu region. Today the word has gone beyond its ethnic categorisation. Sherpa is also an occupational category which is associated with high-altitude mountaineering. It includes multiple kinds of jobs, like porter, guide, cook etc.

References

Chaudhuri, Supriya. 2018. 'Pilgrim, Pundit, Photographer, Spy: The Ambiguous Origins of Himalayan Mountaineering'. in Daniel

O'Quinn and Alexis Tadie (eds.) *Sporting Cultures, 1650-1850.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 297-314.

Colley, Ann. C. 2010. *Victorians in the mountains: Sinking the sublime.* London: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Collie, Norman. 1902. *Climbing on the Himalaya and other Mountain Ranges.* Edinberg: Edinberg University Press.

Dechy, Monsieur. 1880. 'Mountain Travel In The Sikkim Himalaya'. *The Alpine Journal,* Vol. 10, No. 69: 1-11.

Dora, Veronica della. 2016. *Mountain: Nature and Culture.* London: Reaktion Books.

Foucault, Michel. 1984. 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias'. *Architecture, mouvement, continuite,* Vol. 5: 46-49.

Hansen, Peter. H. 1995. 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain'. *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3: 300-24.

Hansen, Peter.H. 2013. *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering after the Enlightenment.* London: Harvard University Press.

Isserman, Maurice, and Weaver Stewart. 2008. *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes.* London: Yale University Press.

Karlsson, Bengt. G. 2019. 'Theory from the hills'. *The Highlander,* Vol. 1, No. 1: 26-30.

Kennedy, Dane. 1996. *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj.* Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Mazzolini, Elizabeth. 2015. *The Everest Effect: Nature, Culture, Ideology.* Tuscaloosa: University of Arizona Press.

Moore, Jason.W. 2016. 'The Rise of Cheap Nature'. In Jason. W Moore (ed.) *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland: PM Press: 78-115.

Morlado, Delphine. 2020. 'Women and Excellence in Mountaineering from the Nineteenth Century to the Present'. *The International Journal of the History of Sports,* Vol. 3, No. 9: 727-47.

Naess, Arne. 2008. *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess.* New York: Catapult.

Pradhan, Queeny. 2017. *Empire in the Hills: Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund and Mount Abu, 1820-1920.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sarkar, Swatasiddha. 2023. 'Himalaya as Method'*,* in T.B. Subbha and J. P. Wouter (ed.). *The Routledge Companion to Northeast India.* New York: Routledge: 215-220.

Schendel, Willem van. 2002. 'Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Vol. 20: 647-68.

Scott, James C. 2009. *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shneiderman, Sara. 2010. 'Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some scholarly and political considerations across time and space'. *Journal of Global History* Vol. 5, No. 2: 289-312.

Simpson, Thomas. 2019. 'Modern Mountains from the Enlightenment to the Anthropocene'. *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 62, No. 9: 553-81.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* London: Zed Books.

Stephen, Leslie. 1871. *The Playground of Europe.* London: Longmans, Green.

Taylor, Joseph. E. 2010. *Pilgrims of the Vertical: Yosemite Rock Climbers and Nature at Risk.* London: Harvard University Press.

Wigan, Karen. 2005. 'Discovering the Japanese Alps: Meji Mountaineering and the Quest for Geographical Enlightenment'. *Journal of Japanese Studies* Vol.31, No.1: 1-26.

Williams, Raymon. 1980. *Ideas of Nature.* London: Verso.

9

Indigenous Therapeutics, Public Discourse and the Politics of Practice in 20ᵗʰ Century Colonial Bengal

Anuradha Gupta
PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University
Email: anuradhag633@gmail.com

Abstract: *State sanctioned archival documents on indigenous medicine is reflective of the practice of forgetting and foregoing in constructing an "Indian Medical System". These documents not being the only one in public discourse bears open an elite practice of institutionalisation of a dynamic field with possibilities in voices and vocation that transgresses such elite and authoritarian definitions. The public discourse is a space that not only accommodates the "official" but also a wide range of documents that have an official charge but does not fit into the restrictive scope of the statist registers of qualifying as officially sanctioned knowledge. The article attempts to make a close reading of public policy of documents of indigenous medicines in the late colonial period in India and the vast circulation of printed matters, especially Bengali periodicals publishing on the same, that were being published in those years and reading them together in a dialogue. Unlike reading them as existing dichotomously, the article attempts to study what Henry Lefebvre calls the "present" in understanding the everyday life. The task of policy makers around medical matters and practitioners in constructing an authentic charter overlooks these periodicals that supplements the former's nationalist cause as well as circumvent it. Grihachikitsa and Mustiyog, that the article will focus upon, dotting these periodicals continue to pose itself as an epistemic conundrum refusing to settle indigenous therapeutics into any dominant discourse and disciplinisation. Methodologically, everyday life of therapeutic matters will unfold the problem of knowledge formation around the historicity of these medicinal materials and also how it remains a contested field due to the policies that overlook the identities around caste, regional, linguistic and gender diversity in contributing to the epistemic repertoire of "national medicine".*

Keywords: Indigenous therapeutics, *mustiyog*, *grihachkitsa*, public policy, Indian medicine.

Introduction

The article aims at upholding a problem - a problem of location and categorisation of forms of knowledge. According to Bernard Cohn, the epistemological construct of the "Indian" has been through a classification, categorisation and containing the social world in defined boundaries. The creation of these categories has constructed a misplaced discipline of the "official", the "popular" and the "simple" form of knowledge, materials, practices and the practitioner. It has also overlooked the flawed assumption of creating a dichotomy of location in so far as putting different phenomena and objects as central and constructing a space for the relegated as "peripheral" or "at the margins". This spatial hierarchization that shifts the objects, practices and identities, identifies them as a disarrayed and amorphous body of practice that lies at margins both in terms of spatial location (the rural space, the family) as well as the problem of embedding it in any specific knowledge regime that is ratified by the dominant elite voice.

The preface to the establishment of post-colonial indigenous medical institutions and indigenous medical regulation was marked with debates about creating policies and accommodating, regulating and cataloguing therapists and therapeutics according to standardisations. It creates universal discourse of categorizing drugs and training authentic experts in the field of Ayurveda, Unani and Homoeopathic medicine. The Bengali periodicals and magazines on the other hand, kept publishing and devoting sections under the name of *oushadhtottwo*, *mustiyog*, *grihachikitsa, totka* and *bhesajtottwo* that were neither coming from the space of antiquity of Indian medical texts, a state designated *vaidya* or *hakim* nor a definitive "scientific" validity of tested medical matters. Yet, these were co-existent in the public circulation of assertion of indigenous voices in bring together a coherent and robust reservoir of indigenous medicines that had a diverse provincial history of practice and knowledge. The policies were putting forth a universal system of indigenous medical knowledge, the practical realities stemming from a range of co-terminus therapeutic works on the other hand were subverting and displacing the essentialist claims of the policy makers and elite institutions around thinking of Ayurveda, specially, as a well-rounded a priori institution that fits its antiquity well into the registers of modern medicine.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the decade long debates around institutional reorientations of indigenous medicine, heavily focussing on Ayurveda and focussing on drug regulation and procurement, in the quest to form a national collection of codified indigenous medicine. The second section will enumerate on the Bengali periodicals dealing with matters on indigenous medicine and even pages including indigenous medical practices in periodicals related to home, women, agriculture and the Bengali community's nationalist assertions. The third section gives a detailed account of *mustiyog* and *totka*, what were they indicative of, who was prescribing them and the relation of its existence to the popular proponents of *kabiraji* medicine in those years. The fourth section deals with the problem of nomenclature in settling these therapeutics and whether they can be justified as "simple" and amorphous. It also interrogates questions of medicines as subversive categories which reconstitute the idea of the indigenous and expressing themselves as possibilities that confront the essentialist therapeutic domain of the sanctioned drugs and medicines. The central argument of the paper is to show how indigenous therapeutic matters through their everyday existence has seldom been understood as an epistemic space itself but has nonetheless been a formidable force in challenging elitist nationalist narratives and forming an independent voice in public discourse.

Indigenous Medical Policies, a Nationalist Assertion and Public Memory

The Report of the Committee on Indigenous System of Medicine, was compiled in three volumes. The first official release of the first volume was in 1948, co-emergent with the Indian national state emerging as a sovereign body. It however, precedes two decades of debates and deliberations among government appointed *vaidyas* and *hakims*. The report being the first documented publication claimed a "national" voice that was not collating the provincially distributed histories of Ayurvedic practices but was trying to put forth a coherence between ancient textual precepts and modern forms of scientific knowledge. The policy's thrust was neither condescension nor reinvention and revival that we find among colonial and subsequent nationalist discourse in late 19th century. It was rather the problem of practice that was seeking to standardize medicine and regulate medical practitioners so that the epistemological lack which the policy makers were facing could be settled, amidst a constant clamour for asserting and empowering the indigenous. The members who formed the committee, the progress meetings,

arguments on drugs and rural Ayurvedic practices, showed unilateral process of institutionalising Ayurveda, but a continuous struggle in containing and disciplining the same.

The report was prepared under the chairmanship of Col. R. N. Chopra, with the members being Vaid Bishagratna, Dr. Balakrishna Chitamani Lagu, Dr. B. A. Pathak, Hakim Shifa-ul-Mulk, who were spearheading boards on indigenous medicine in Bombay, Madras, Benaras and Dhaka. Also Dr. B. N. Ghosh, a pharmacologist from Calcutta was appointed.[1] The late colonial period was now seeking a form of knowledge system for elite administrative medical practices to be established that could make indigenous medicine bereft of its diverse independent existence and reorient it as a science that could easily merge in matters and methodologies of the modern medical science. To quote from the report itself, the functions to be discharged by the appointed personnel, was 'an enquiry as to whether the three systems, Ayurveda, Unani and Modern cannot be combined into one all-comprehensive system' and responding to it, stating, 'the heritage of India, coupled with discoveries of the West, should produce a system, universal in its application and general in benefits' (Chopra 1948: 9). The policy also validates the state sanction by quoting from the Sushruta Samhita, one of the early textual compendium on Ayurvedic medicine that a practitioner after training should only begin the practice after permission from the king.

The close reading of the policy in the form of a narrative enables an understanding of those who have been purposively excluded and the practices that have been deliberately erased. The policy looks at appointing registered medical staff and supervisors in provincial and rural spaces, bringing the *vaidyas* and the hakims under the purview of medical registration and one National Board of Governance which would alleviate the positions of the Ayurvedic *vaidyas* who may be practicing under unrecognized and underdeveloped medical conditions. The policy makers also drafted a classificatory scheme of therapeutic materials by bringing them together under the category of drugs and trying to draw an anachronistic classificatory model by juxtaposing the Indological ideas on medicine and modern pharmaceutical objects. The medical and drug regulation required the *vaidyas* to collaborate with botanists and pharmacologists, in provincial and regional centres but co-ordinated under the direction of Central Research Institute and 'possibly to identify correctly most of the crude drugs and classify them' (Chopra 1948: 173). Treading along the path of the colonial botanists and administrators of creating an herbarium to archive plants and catalogue them in a fixed laboratory, under

an authoritarian gaze, like the Botanical Garden at Shibpur, the members of the national committee, Chopra and Budhwar created herbariums in the School of Tropical Medicine in Calcutta, followed by Forest Research Institute in Dehradun and Drug Research Laboratory in Kashmir. The *chikitsak* and *oushadh*, was now formally being inducted into the policy as the pharmacist and the pharmacopoeia. The autonomous body of the *kabiraj*, practicing through knowledge and training handed down through a family vocation, was also being given acknowledgement only to encourage him to get registered under a nationalized regime of Indian medicine. Ayurvedic medical matters were found to be difficult to be brought under specific categorisation and standardisation[2] of purity and potency because not only were the ancient texts on Ayurveda distributed and spread over a vast number of charters on medicine but a collation of all such matters was not easy because of the varying quantities of preparation, everyday regular use of these therapeutic matters that varied from illness to patients and the *kabiraj's* own disposition and decision.

The Report prepared by the committee was the first face of indigenous medical knowledge that was trying, even though fallaciously, to bring together a vast set of practices that involved autonomy and individual therapeutic ethics to be clubbed together as one of the scientific faces of modern Indian nation state. Such kind of nationalist assertion was based on the dubious model of first, imagining the ancient and the precolonial texts to be universalist in nature, containing a unified doctrine that could be easily made compatible with another discipline of knowledge and secondly, these being the only form of practices to which the idea of indigenous therapeutics and Ayurveda could be contained. It also is indicative of nationalisation of the space of memory and identity. Unlike thinking of the official and the everyday as two distinguished discourses, it is argued that both the spaces are implicated in one another and co-constitutive of one another. The nationalisation of public memory entails an attempt to document indigenous history in a monolithic voice that will forge a new relationship of actors, therapists, patients, consumers along a building new institutions and archives that tries to obliterate differences, co-existence and circumventions in history. However, public memory is also fraught with narratives from provincial voices, writings, oral narratives, pictures which uphold the challenges and the non-negotiability of policies and policy makers in categorising and settling a huge repertoire of therapeutic practices existing beyond state control and expressing itself with equal authority in public discourse.

Bengali Periodicals - Nationalism Revisited

In spite of not being in the same tone of the state and elite authoritarian regime in the process of documentation and archiving, a large body of printed materials were simultaneously being published through regional and vernacular bodies[3] and organisation, which were a part of an everyday life, regular readership and forging a space for a non-essentialist nationalism. These publications were either devoted specifically to indigenous medicine or a wide range of topics that contained matters of the community, but eclectically tying up all the different topical issues around identity in an anti-colonial space. The periodicals had an inclusivity of a diverse set of practices, diverse opinions and as a text, circulating in the public domain, gave a context to see co-emergent realities engaging in conversation with each other. Also, it is interesting to note, how in a diffused manner, indigenous medicine was in a dialogue with questions of gendered identity, home and family, agriculture and so on. It brought out the regular, mundane practices but not a celebration of a universalized model of nationalism. Instead, it was an expression of nationalism expressed through the intersection of a multiplicity of native therapeutics in conjunction with ideas of women and nation, children and nation and how to strengthen the space of the indigenous without silencing varied voices. To put it in another way, the epistemic conundrum which the policy makers were unable to settle in, is found to be existing as a formidable existence, punctuating public memory and revisiting the idea of nationalism.

This section will talk briefly about four such periodicals that were regularly published in the late colonial years and the initial years of the 20th century that contained precepts of indigenous therapeutics and its possibilities. *Bangalaksmi* was a periodical that was published by Hemalata Debi and started in 1924 and continued into post-independance years. Devoted to the figure of the Bengali *bhadramahila*, the periodical had issues relating to the moral and religious issues expressed through poems, stories, commentaries on women, family and motherhood. Among these articles, we find an eminent Baidya *kabiraj*, Indubhushan Sen's piece on *Shishu-khadya*, as a directive to the mother for a healthy childhood. Child health, ideal motherhood, ingestion were ideas through which nationalism gained an immense momentum, but the state authorities failed to use this register as a distributed field of looking at indigenous therapeutics. Moreover, a standardisation of pharmacopoeia often overlooks categories such as *khadya* or food as an everyday therapeutic practice that reputed *kabirajs* of that time prescribed. Moreover, food is a much broad register that has been overlooked by modern science as being prescriptive and potent in

healing, which the Ayurvedic *kabirajs* laid great stress on. The policy makers purposively forget and by-pass these forms of medical realities, because it lacks a language that can accommodate these realities. Grihastha was another periodical that was published from Grihastha Publishing House in Kolkata, a monthly periodical chronicling domestic life and rural space, through essays and poems on social and political events. Among the various topics on "Amar Bongobhumi" (my land Bengal), *Chhtrajiban* (student life), appears a column on *mustiyog*, which is a series of remedial measures, therapeutic objects and illness. The editors compile them after a month-long contribution from various sources- written and oral and there are regular contributions of indigenous medical therapies. Along with *Grihastha*, there was *Grihasthamangal*, that began publishing as a guidebook for the rural Bengal, the agrarian sector, explicitly voicing for a self-dependant agrarian and rural sector under colonial rule. The assertions of self-dependence again bring back medicine in the purview of an anti-colonial struggle to establish modes of knowing. Along with advertisements on Homoeopathic medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, mentioned as *totka chikitsa, Grihasthamangal* credits the contributors of *totka chikitsa*, enabling the readers to get a brief biographical account of the contributors, understand that medicines occupy a space of everyday vocation that neither always comes from official training nor a fixed ascriptive caste[4] status and history. It is rather dispersed and exists through remedies that are formed through sudden encounters with matters, a repeated use of them and having entered the therapeutic corpus through trials, intuitions and effectivity. A pictorial representation before every section on *Totka* medicine has a mother and child, which is argued to not only mean a certain relationship but also an intimacy to matters rising from certain domestic institutions along with family. The final periodical to be discussed is *Cikitsa-Sammilani* that was edited by Annadacharan Khastagir, a noted allopathic physician in the late 19th century and *kabiraj* Sitalchandra Chattopadhyay. The monthly journal had debates and discussions around Allopathy, Ayurveda and Homoeopathy, with popular physicians and *kabirajs* from both erstwhile undivided Bengal would contribute. It was also critical of government policies and how it should induct Ayurvedic practices in institutes. The periodical has contribution from one Dr. Mathuramohan Chakraborty of Tangail in present Bangladesh, enumerating on *mustiyog* concerning diseases of the spleen, liver.

Mustiyog, was not just amorphously spread over a non-specialized field of medicine, but also a part of the physician's prescriptions for regular use, that could be validated as a prescribed form of indigenous therapeutic material. It is also indicative of the irreconcilable medicinal practices and

practitioners that the policies on indigenous medicine were struggling to deal with and why. In spite of the nationalist claim of the home, the intimate sphere, the ethics of the native physicians and the possibilities of the body of the therapist, the official sanction does not consider it veracious enough to counter colonial forms of knowledge, since these nationalist claims themselves follow an epistemic frame that overlooks indigenous medicine to be intersected and entangled with everyday modes of identities built around gender, language and caste.

Mustiyog, Grihachikitsa and Totka – Possibilities within and Beyond the nationalist Rhetoric

The Report of the Committee on Indigenous medicine, was faced primarily with two dilemmas that it seeks to settle through a standardisation and scrutinisation. The first one was how to differentiate between an expert and a laity- designating a qualified *Vaidya* or *hakim*, and secondly, how to create an herbarium, catalogue mainly plants and putting medical matters through scrutiny of potency. The identities of the practitioner and therapeutic objects were displaced from their lived realities and socio-cultural contexts and converted into an identity that was created through a formal education structure and laboratory-controlled objects. Such identities were based on an idea of objectivity that modern science claims but in doing so tends to purposely not acknowledge the embedded realties of the daily practice of science through possibilities in time and space.

The periodicals discussed in the above section, were contributions from the Bengali community in bringing together voices supporting the cause of an emergent nation state and the need to realize the full potential of indigenous knowledge. The editors, belonged to the group of small but reputed Bengali men and women, who were publishing and voicing their views and also dedicating spaces in the columns to ideas that were at the risk of getting lost. *Mustiyog* and *totka chikitsa* or even categories like *grihachikitsa*, *khadya* needed to be kept alive through continuous publishing. It is found that the risks, non-verifiability, the gaps and the epistemic conundrum that the policy makers faced is responded through these medical existence as everyday realities among the ill, the debilitated and conveying a guide to a healthy body of a Bengali man, woman and child. These acted as a panacea for the community which was trying to express its agency and autonomy in the face of colonial episteme. It also documents histories of indigenous therapeutics from the rural and the *moffusil* areas. The editors of *Grihasthamangal*, make a plea for a

collection and documentation of *totkas* and *mustiyogs* from the *kabirajs*, physicians and the layman alike. To paraphrase from the editor's note for contributors, it says 'anyone who has any knowledge, can contribute to the propagation, will have their names credited…. Together we have to contribute in whatever amount we can and record them… individual knowledge, collected from friends and relatives will be collated and documented… it is not worthy to lament over medicines and medical knowledge being lost from memory, but to sustain it, we must act as a community to document and preserve our medicines and identities'.

Such a call, was responded from medical practitioners including the *kabirajs*, the laity and the doctors. It also talked about issues of health seldom considered important for public health but involving issues around masculinity, sex and community such as *swapnodosh* (involuntary ejaculation of semen), frailty, poisons and their remedies. *Kabiraj* Nishinath Sen, an Ayurvedic practitioner of the Baidya community, offers *totka chikitsa* for *swapnodosh* by prescribing three anna measure of roots of *shimul* tree bark or root combined with dry *amla* and butter, to be consumed every night before going to bed. Similarly, for debility, the *totka* was warm ghee with some asafoetida and rock salt to strengthen the weak body and for scorpion sting poison, to reduce the pain, tobacco leaves soaked in water was advised to be fed to the patient. The *kabiraj's* prescription was followed by some *totkas* from the supposed lower caste group men from rural Bengal. Bhupendranath Maity from Mongolmari, Midnapore, suggests that to tackle blood dysentery, honey, basil, *thankuni* leaves could act as immediate relief to people suffering from such ailment and Mrityunjoy Maity from Keshibari suggests opium as giving relief to ailments of ears and throat. Apart from the botanical knowledge, many animal products were also a part of the mustiyog. Dr. Mathuramohan Chakraborty of Tangail, Bangladesh, in Cikitsa-Sammilani writes the use of *bhasmas* of snail's shell for the treatment of ailments of spleen and liver. The editors of *Grihastha*, were welcoming contributions to the *mustiyog* collection by introducing some which have been tested and found to be effective through the editor's own encounters with the therapeutic possibilities of certain herbs, fluids and ingestible matters and also by inviting contributions through any walk of life, either to have been collected from any text or passed through aural modes of listening (*sruti*), and verbal knowledge (*moukhik*). As a footnote he credits his *jethima* (aunt), a person named Pitambar Das, who deals in herbs, a municipal *chikitsalay* at a neighbourhood in Calcutta, and a kabiraj Pyarimohan Deb, practicing in Harinavi (a neighbourhood area in erstwhile Calcutta). Kabiraj Indubhushan Sen, one of the most reputed ayurvedic

kabirajs of 20th century, wrote in details about *shishu-khadya* in *Bangalakshmi patrika*, which was a prescription not only for a child's health but also educating the mother as to how she can have remedial matters for her child's illness and how to use the kitchen in an efficient way for a healthy child and a healthy household.

The periodicals, offer an insight into the space of nationalism from the perspective of the Bengali community, upending the idea of the binary between the official, national, scientific on one hand and the domestic, expressive, intimate space on the other hand. These periodicals documented the everyday practices, vocations through aurality, familial ideas, practices in certain government sanctioned institutions, but not particularly practices tied to what the state dictates which also shows that the categories of the state, official and the domain of the layman, the domestic and the popular are implicated in each other. The policies that overlooked these intersections, were struggling to settle with knowledge and practices that were posing themselves as excesses beyond the state control. However, the public discourse, the space of nationalist assertion was punctuated with narratives from the private sphere, the autonomous institutions, medicine makers and even provincial governmental bodies. Intersections of the ideas of womanhood in late colonial years, development of recognition of indigenous medicines and native practitioners of medicine, childhood, agricultural, public health, had the presence of *mustiyog* and *totka* as domains that needed to be archived, to keep alive the quest for self-dependence, sovereign body of knowledge and practices.

Mustiyog, Totka and the Problem of the "Simple"

The meaning to *mustiyog* literally means a handful of something or the offering of handfuls. *Totka* means unverified practices as per the standards of disciplined science, seeking a truthful claim through the practitioner's belief in its effectivity and application in his immediate community. Not only have they been thought to exist in a dichotomous relationship with scientific practices and considered "unscientific", but have mostly been acknowledged as existing in the form of "simple medicines", "quackery" and "folk medicine". It is argued in this section that the social construction of these categories is based on an erroneous assumption of science being exclusively a state practice that is always regulated, whereas practices in medicine beyond it are relegated to the sphere of "irrational" and "arbitrary". The problem of such classification and dichotomy circumscribes all that have therapeutic propensities, from matters and materials that are used for

everyday therapeutics, practitioners and the question of possibilities of codifying the knowledge. As discussed in the above section, such binaries create a hierarchy and an elite form of history writing based on teleology and essentialism. The space of *mustiyogs*, *totkas* and *grihachikitsa* indicate that how the field of medicine and science is implicated in caste, gender and linguistic domain. Medicine and therapeutic matters do not exist a priori but are configured and embedded through these identities and such identities are also created through spatial history of the therapeutic matters. The universalism and the false dichotomy between what are assumed to be science and "non-science" enables a practice of bioprospecting of materials, uprooting it from the socio-cultural contexts. It creates and sustains a false binary of space also between the central and the peripheral, where the peripheral realm is carefully curated by the elites by arranging a body of knowledge assuming to be sacrosanct.

Mustiyog, on the other hand, indicates the lived reality through intersections of the multiple points of therapeutic existence, the home and gendered identity being the primary ones. The home is also the seat of nationalism, a place of sovereign assertion and hence *mustiyog* is a register of practices where such assertions mature. Writing on Homoeopathy and the domestic sphere, Shinjini Das writes that it '…demonstrated a fracturing of homoeopathy's professional identity and domain of expertise… could be written as a science that could be mastered at home and… be most useful while treating their children' (Das 2020: 169). It also was a training ground for the "ideal Hindu wife". The therapeutic matters of *mushtiyog*, entered the Bengali periodicals as training the wife of the Hindu household, to be the seat of panacea not only for the family but also the community and thereby the nation, as found in Indubhushan Sen's precepts to the householder in *Bangalakshmi*. Similarly, it was also voicing the agency of the editor's *jethima*, who constructs a therapeutic repertoire through an offering of a handful.

The marginalisation of medicine has been argued by the subaltern studies of medicine to study these "fragments" which 'reveals the limits to statist knowledge and agenda' (Hardiman and Mukharji 2012: 15). *Mustiyog* and *Totka chikitsa* are completely opposed to the unified concept of medicine tied to a particular ascriptive space either. Studying the contributor's biography, it is spread over multiple caste identities and not just tied to the *Baidya* caste, as it claimed to be the sole seat of Ayurvedic medicine and Ayurveda also was no longer a monolithic body of medicine, but got dispersed and distributed through the topography of caste and gender. Indigenous medicine was now also within the practical application of the *Kayasthas*,

the *ojhas* and even the low caste groups of the merchants and businessman. Another reason for marginalisation within medicine is the way through which documentation has negated orality and aurality as modes of transmission of knowledge, the art of listening as forms of training and practice. It has been instrumental in creating a classical/folk binary and also a dichotomy between a master or a qualified medical practitioner and a quack. But an interrogation into the everyday life of medicines, indicate that these categories are a cultural construct of an elite historiography, statist policy intervention, which is constantly circumvented by the categories of *mustiyog* and *totka* by redefining the boundaries of therapeutic practices. In his study of the cult of *Jwarasur,* Projit Bihari Mukharji confronts the same archival error of a construction of the "folk medicine" standing in opposition to the textually instituted Ayurvedic reference to fevers. Mukharji argues that such divide would only 'naturalise the historically produced divisions between these to, not to mention naturalize the very identities of the social groups involved…. Critical history must unpack the historical contingencies of such divisions… show that classical and folk forms of knowledge have not always been distinctive bodies of knowledge belonging to distinctive social groups…. Instead, these are components of a once connected network of knowledge open to multiple socially, regionally and intellectually elaborate iterations… multiple resonant embedding' (Mukharji 2013: 285). Jean Langford argues along similar thoughts in her article on medical mimesis where she discusses the problem of creating the "quack" vis-a-vis the doctor. Unlike treating illness and therapeutics from the perspective of truth and falsehood, Langford states that it exists in simulations and simulations erode this distinction, if a simulation doctor is able to produce true wellness.

Conclusion

The Bengali periodicals, the diffused identity of the healer and the geographically, socially and culturally contingent therapeutic matters reveal the limiting and restrictive trope through which knowledge, science and identity has been constructed by the statist model of nationalism and its registers. Indigenous therapeutics that the article has spoken about also interrogates the sphere of the indigenous as a stable and settled category of thought. "Traditional" or "indigenous" as David Hardiman[5] argues the modern Ayurveda practiced in the post-colonial curriculum in India, are instance of an "invented tradition" that attempted at binding disparate people within uniform nationalism and the cultural processes not fitting into the narrative were either put into the category of the marginalized or the

excluded. This article has been an attempt in not falling in the trope of studying the "marginalised" or the peripheral, since these categories have emerged through an elitist trope of dichotomous phenomena. However, studying the public discourse of expressions of nationalism from communitarian perspective, different registers of nationalist assertions from the everyday spaces of the household, the dispensaries, the local governments and the hugely popular sphere of the prints, show that these are entangled entities which intersect the ideas of gender, medicine, caste and material realities. Also, medicines as therapeutic objects, dispersed through space, time and cultural forces show that a direct translation of medicines from an Indological study of texts and an attempt to make it compatible to biomedicine is overlooking the vast repertoire of the embeddedness of matters in socio-historical contexts and getting imbued with therapeutic values through the vocations of the agency, senses, intuitions and experiences of the therapist. The social lives of medicine in this way are a subversive reality to what Hardiman calls, creating uniform systems out of a range of eclectic practices.

Notes

1. *Report of the Committee on Indigenous Medicine*, Volume 1, 21-25

2. See, Madhulika Banerjee, 2002, *Public policy and ayurveda: Modernising a great tradition,* 1138-39

3. See, Projit Bihari Mukharji, 2009, *Nationalizing the Body: The Medical Market, Print and Daktari Medicine*, 35-38

4. See, Projit Bihari Mukharji, 2016, *Doctoring Traditions: Ayurveda, Small Technologies and Braided Science*, 61-62

5. See, David Hardiman, 2009, *Indian Medical Indigeneity: From Nationalist Assertion to the Global Market*, 263-265

References

Ramlal Ghosh (ed.) 1917. *Grihastha*. Vol 8, No.11. Calcutta: Grihastha Publishing House.

Ashwini Kumar Chattopadhyay & Jogendranath Gupta (eds.). 1931. *Grihasthamangal.* Vol 5, No. 5. Calcutta.

Banerjee Madhulika. 2002. 'Public policy and Ayurveda: Modernising a great tradition'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37 No. 12: 1136-1146

Chopra R. N. 1948. *Report on the Committee of Indigenous Medicine, Vol 1*. Government of India.

Das Shinjini. 2020. *Vernacular Medicine in Colonial India: Family, Market and Homoeopathy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Debi, Hemlata (ed.). 1931. *Bangalakshmi*, Vol. 6, No.12. Calcutta

Hardiman, David. 2009. 'Indian Medical Indigeneity: From Nationalist Assertion to the Global Market'. *Social History*, Vol. 34, No. 3: 263-283.

Khastagir, Annadacharan, 1894. *Cikitsa-Sammilani*. Vol. 12, No. 4. Calcutta: Sharat Shashi Jantra.

Langford, Jean, 2002. *Fluent Bodies: Ayurvedic Remedies for Postcolonial Remedies*. Durham. Duke University Press.

Mukharji Projit Bihari, 2009. *Nationalizing the Body: The Medical Market, Print and Daktari Medicine*. London: Anthem Press.

- 2013. 'In-Disciplining Jwarasur: The Folk/Classic Divide and Transmateriality of Fever in Colonial Bengal'. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 10, Issue 3: 261-288

- 2016. *Doctoring Traditions: Ayurveda, Small Technologies and Braided Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mukharji, Projit Bihari & Hardiman David (eds.). 2012. *Medical Marginality in South Asia: Situating Subaltern Therapeutics*. London: Routledge.

10

Micro-Entrepreneurial Issues and Challenges of Darjeeling Hills: An Inquiry

Rosan Tamang
PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University
Email: rosansoch@gmail.com

Abstract: *The study provides an understanding of sociological challenges concerning micro-entrepreneurial activities in Darjeeling hills. Historically, micro-entrepreneurship has played a dynamic role in contributing to economic growth, environmental sustainability, and employment generation in different parts of the country. More specifically, it plays a key role in the region where large industries are not viable due to geographical constraints, as it becomes an essential driving force in promoting regional balance, reducing disparities between plains and hills, and preserving the traditional material culture of the diverse ethnic groups and tribes of different regions. Based on fieldwork conducted in different areas, including rural and urban areas of the Darjeeling hills between June and December 2022 through some ethnographic insight. The findings point out that the hills micro entrepreneurs faced several challenges and restrictions, resulting in inadequate opportunities to flourish despite the environment of entrepreneurship that emerged in this neoliberal digital era.*

Keywords: Micro entrepreneurship, challenges, experiences, land rights, Darjeeling Hills.

Introduction

Micro-entrepreneurship has traditionally been significant in promoting economic development, environmental sustainability, generating employment opportunities, and safeguarding the material cultures of different ethnic groups. As an alternative, it acts as a major driving force in creating regional balance by reducing disparities between urban and rural, or plains and hills; it is especially pertinent in regions in which huge industries are not viable

owing to geographical obstacles. Thus, entrepreneurship is one of the key drivers of economic growth. Entrepreneurial development has been a key to the economic growth of any country around the world for the last four decades. While, the definition of "micro entrepreneur(ship)" refers to those who run enterprises with a limited number of employees. To be more specific, these types of entrepreneurship typically employs fewer than ten people because they prefer to keep their businesses small to ensure that the entire entrepreneurial process can be managed without the help of others. Ghouse (2017) explained that the infrastructure, financial, marketing, regulatory, technological, lack of proper documentation, exchange rates, etc. are some multi-dimensional challenges experienced by Indian micro-entrepreneurship in the last thirty years. As a result, other countries' competitors have taken more benefits from export subsidies than the Indian MSME. The micro-entrepreneurship has potential for poverty reduction and national economic development, but in developing countries, it is used only as a tool for poverty reduction strategies (Haghighi 2016). The study of manufacturing micro-entrepreneurs who fulfil the demands of the local market, is more vital in such a circumstance to identify the challenging issues they have to overcome to survive. All of them fall under the regulations of the government's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.

This study aims to underscore the sociological challenges that exist in micro-manufacturing entrepreneurship practises in the Darjeeling Hills (including Kalimpong Hills). The intensive fieldwork conducted in different areas including rural and urban areas of Darjeeling hills between June and December 2022. A snowball sampling has been used to select the thirty respondents who have been engaged for at least a decade in this entrepreneurial field. The ethnographic inquiry has been adopted to gather the data and to gain insights into the micro-entrepreneurs' life experiences, challenges and issues concerning entrepreneurial practices.

Emergence of Micro Entrepreneurial Activities in the Darjeeling Hills

The number of literature inquiries debating the operation of the Darjeeling Hills Station, which consider it a colonial military outpost, sanatorium, leisure place, or new location for commercial trading and entrepreneurial activities hub for the trans-Himalayan nations. However, the roots of micro entrepreneurial and trading activities in the Darjeeling hills emerged with the establishment of the East India Company's colony and their transformative initiatives on the regional economy for the commodification

and capitalisation of tea, timber, and tourism. The East India Company played a significant role in the development and growth of the economy in the hills. The *Treaty of Titalia* (now in *Tetulia*, Bangladesh), which was signed in 1817[1] became the point for the Britishers to enter the Darjeeling hills by 1835, to open up a new landscape of cool-weather sanatoriums, residential quarters, tea plantation and more significantly, trade with the Himalayan nations (Risley 1894; Lamb 1960; Harijan 2019). With the advent of the western model of development in the hills, Britishers began to clear the primeval forest for the commercialisation of Himalayan timber and the operation of tea and cinchona plantations from the 1840s onward. The number of tea plantations rises every decade, from 39 plantations in 1866 to 148 plantations in 1904, with forest clearing from 10,000 acres to 50,618 acres (Griffiths 1967: 88; Pradhan 2009).

Kalimpong hills which were wrested away from the hands of Sikkim by Bhutan in 1706, were brought under the British administration after the victory over Bhutan war in 1764 and signed the Treaty of Sinchula[2] in 1865, which created an impetus for the colonial ruler to formulate new route policies in the Himalayan region (McKay 2007; Harris 2008). The colonial initiation towards the new direction came from the eastern Himalayas, where Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya became the main gateway with an easy access route to reach Tibet via Jalep-la Pass and Nathu-la-Pass for not only trading purposes but also to maintain the diplomatic political mission with central Asia (Sir Richard Temple 1881, McKay 2007, Bhattacharya 2019). In a while, hills converted into a focal point for colonial-run missionary schools, travelers, British army cantonments, and more considerably, a trading hub, where traders and entrepreneurs of Himalayan states such as Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, China, and Europe participated in trans-Himalayan trading (Harris 2008). It flourished as fluid contact zones characterised by economic mobility, urban socialisation, and cross-cultural encounters (Harris et al., 2016: 48) and soon became a vivid example of a contact zone where Himalayan peoples met representatives of the British and Chinese empires, and trade acted as an instigator for contact (Tagchungdarpa 2017; Poddar & Zhang 2017). Colonial authorities had given numerous prominent reasons for the cession of Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills from the Himalayan kingdoms. Firstly, it was beneficial for the Centre of trade with Himalayan nations in Middle Eastern countries; second, it had great strategic significance with Himalayan kingdoms; and lastly, it provided an advantage to establish a sanatorium for military and colonial authorities (O'Malley 1907; Dash 1947). Such entrepreneurial activities continued after a decade of independent

India; however, because of the Indo-Sino War of 1962, the Indian government had to permanently seal the main outpost at Jalep La Pass. Subsequently, many traders and micro-entrepreneurs were forced to shut down their enterprises and move on to other professions. Even today, no leaders or government agencies have taken any further steps to open up the Jalep Pass to resurrect the old market hub of Kalimpong (Harris 2013: 94).

Sociological Understanding of Entrepreneurship

The sociological study of entrepreneurship mainly concerns itself with three broad themes such as, entrepreneurship can both reproduce and challenge the existing social order, entrepreneurship ensures the reproduction of existing organisational populations, and entrepreneurship affects the levels of stratification and inequality in society by shaping the life chances of the founders and the employees (Aldrich 2005). However, concepts related to entrepreneurship appeared with some frequency in the sociological literature of classical thinkers such as Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel. Schumpeter, for example, suggests that being an entrepreneur is only an episode in one's life course, and entrepreneurs can only temporarily be distinguished from managers or capitalists (Schumpeter 1980: 116). As a result, he turns to studying the bundles of activities that make up entrepreneurship and arrives at his famous definition that entrepreneurship is a recombination of production factors (Schumpeter 1980: 214). Weber, as another example, suggests that the spirit of entrepreneurs is largely moulded by their cultural and religious context (Weber 1988). Consequently, he turns to studying the socio-historic conditions that bring about entrepreneurs as gatekeepers in the transition towards rationalised capitalism (Weber 2009 [1921]). The picture conveyed here is that of entrepreneurship as a dynamic and socially embedded process. Ruef introduces the term entrepreneurial groups to encompass more diverse forms of engagement in business creation, including the financial, time, and emotional investments of family members, neighbours, or former colleagues who operate beyond the limelight of the start-up scene, but act as "everyday entrepreneurs" (Welter et al. 2016). This expanded conception also allows for the examination of informal engagement in the creation of a business (such as by the supporting spouse or family helpers). The further understanding of entrepreneurship through the micro sociological perspectives, which emphasise understanding, meaningful interpretation, lived experience, and the constitution of the life-world, inevitably positions the narrative study of everyday life with a strong focus on the micro-processes composing social

reality. What do individuals say, do, and think in the everyday sequences of events and experiences? And how do their perspectives and actions coincide with the wider interactions and expressions of meaning underlying social reality? In this regard, a significant guideline is found in Randall Collins' (1981), remark that empirical reality must be regarded as residing in direct experience. Collins regards 'the encounter' as the basic micro-unit of analysis; it is a 'shared conversational reality' at the basis of all social interaction, negotiation, and exchange (in Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981: 83). For Gharam Crow, Goffman's sociology is a matter of developing one's "eye for detail" and the craft of precise observation to provide a set of key guidelines for approaching the study of everyday life (Crow 2005). Goffman' approach is to first train oneself to pay attention to what is simply ignored as irrelevant. On the other hand, social capital is another significant instrument in entrepreneurial fields, though it may be micro or macro (Collier 1998). It enables entrepreneurs to become more trusting of one another in credit or material exchange, and to circulate information, etc., (Gunakar and Bhatta 2021). There are several of ways social capital which may influence economic action (Lin 2003; Khan 2006; Meccheri and Pelloni 2006). In order to demonstrate these processes, the following paragraphs will now outline three cases, that highlighted micro entrepreneurial everyday life experiences, challenges, and perceptions from the hills.

Challenges and Experiences from the Perceptions of Micro Entrepreneurs

In this section I will portray the experiences of the micro entrepreneurs of Darjeeling Hills and the challenges that face the entrepreneurs with the help of a few case studies.

Case Study 1: Around twenty people have been directly engaged in flower nursery work for the last two decades in the hills. They have transformed the traditional approach of home gardening into an emerging, professionally oriented business, and they mostly cultivate the saplings of diverse flowers/plants and supply them to customers across the country. It might be possible because of the growing concern over pollution and environmental awareness among people across the globe. To practise this business, one does not require sophisticated technology, huge amounts of capital, or efficient management.

James Rai[3] is a 44-year-old B. Sc. graduate and a first-generation flower nursery entrepreneur from a tea plantation under the Pulbazar block of

Darjeeling district. I interviewed him about his eighteen-year entrepreneurial experience. In the whole of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas, flower nursery gardening is common as family-fashion traditional practices that come from many generations. Every family household, whether poor or rich or residing in an urban or rural area, cultivates or buys various saplings of plants and flowers for decorating their home garden. There are religious beliefs that having flowers in the home garden provides positive thoughts, happiness, blessings, refreshing, etc.; besides this, the flowers also provide filtering air as well as psychological benefits from being connected with nature. He recounted that before becoming an entrepreneur, he worked as a clerk on his plantation. After five years, he decided to quit the job and move on to follow his passion for business. He stated:

> It was a tough situation for me to choose a different career because all of my paternal kin were engaged in this plantation work for four generations. With enthusiasm, I opened my first 'flower nursery' on my homestead in 2005. The initial challenges were to convince my family member to discontinue the plantation job rather than to understand the skills of cultivating, raising saplings, researching the plants for weather suitability, managing, and marketing. Although my self-motivation, patience and commitment to work led me to now employ eight full-time workers from my own village, aside from that, my dedicated research skills demonstrated that I could be capable of breeding new and diverse local flowers. Until now, I have created around twenty breeds of local flowers, with a specialisation in cactus plants. The diverse varieties of breed cactus have been found only in my nursery, which is why I am receiving orders on my online site from customers and agents across the country.

James statements highlighted how, on plantations, the generation of workers has continued to remain, pass down their jobs, and attach houses to their kin. It is a relic of colonialists who denied ownership over the land to the families staying inside the plantation and made it mandatory to send one member to be employed in the plantation; otherwise, they lost their residential home (Besky 2017). Even after independence, this colonial legacy has been continued by the state government under the Absorbed Area (Laws) Act of 1954, where land ownership of plantations and forest villages remains with the state, and leases a patch of tea plantation land in the hand of corporations for a period of time to cultivate tea production.

Each post-dinner, James has to prepare the ritual routine for the next day for all workers, including him and his wife, who manage all the financial activities. He usually starts daily work with the workers (including three males and five females), from nine until four o'clock, with a brief respite in the middle of the day where all the workers go home for their lunch. However, the everyday routine varies depending on workload and season. Generally, business goes down in every June to August month of the year because of two factors; firstly, during the rainy season, most flower saplings and cultivating work begin, and secondly, it is the off-season for tourism.

On the experiences of challenges James further stated that:

> This colonial plantation structure never allows us to be free from the colonial notions of thought and practises. See the plantation itself is one of the most neglected areas, where no leadership has thought to change the pattern of livelihood. Two of the plantation's sons became political leaders, i.e., Subash Ghising and Bimal Gurung, who received adoring support from plantation residents and ruled over a decade, yet were unable to enhance the plantation's future. Land rights are one of the significant challenges for all micro-entrepreneurs or self-employed people like me who want to earn a livelihood while residing in their own village. I even received several warning letters from plantation management for operating the nursery without their permission. The management always tries to restrict other employment activities on the plantation because they always want us to live a marginal life.

The plantation's norms always compelled the plantation residents to confine themselves to plantation jobs and prevented them from becoming self-employed through different government policies and schemes. Since independence, a similar pattern of school dropout rate; number of unemployed, outmigration, alcoholism, and political hooliganism/rowdies has been found to be common in every plantation village as compared to non-plantation villages. Chettri discuss that Darjeeling's politics and rowdies are closely associated through a complex network because some of the political leaders evolved their political careers from such local rowdies, and most of the rowdies come from tea plantations where they were once victims of class exploitation and the vicious circle of poverty (Chettri 2018). And the issue of land rights in plantations is serious problem for the entrepreneurs as like James who claimed that the land documentation has always restricted him from getting government schemes to expand the

business. The land rights questions are one of the age-old issues that exist in the entire plantations and forest villages in the Darjeeling hills (Tamang 2022). The material discourse of land ownership in both colonial and postcolonial Darjeeling hills is fundamental to the ethnic determination to establishing their homeland (Tamang and Kipgen 2022).

Case Study 2: In around 1945, Swiss Father Andre Butte was the first person to establish the 'Swiss Welfare Diary' and initiate the tradition of cheese production in the Kalimpong hills (Pradhan 2004, Bhutia 2022). Kalimpong cheese is a popular food ingredient, especially prepared by rural entrepreneurs.

Sameer Pradhan, a second-generation 52-year-old cheese manufacturer in Kalimpong Block II has been engaged in this industry for 26 years. He learned these skills from his father, who worked in the cheese factory at the colonial school, Dr. Graham's Homes, which was built in 1900. This colonial school had its own hospital, workshop, estate, bakery, farm, and central kitchen; it even had its own variety of cheese, locally known as Homes Cheese (Tagchungfarpa 2017). Sameer produced the typical cheddar cheese, which is relatively hard, off-white, and sometimes sharp tasting, similar to the cheese found in the European style that was introduced by the Swiss missionaries. Cheese is a term for a collection of fermented milk-based food items made in a variety of tastes and shapes found around the globe. There are numerous varieties of cheese based on its textures, which are primarily related to the cheese's moisture content. Sameer produced in a traditional manner, mainly with the help of a thirty-litre capacity milk refinery machine. Most of his cheese products are manually delivered to some retailers in Kalimpong town and customers from Kolkata (especially the Anglo Indian Bhutia 2022). Around fifty farmers in his village directly depend on him. While he narrates his past challenging experiences,

> I lost a net five lakh rupees due to the waste of manufacturing products during the political agitation of the long 105-day strikes in 2017. This was the first time in my entire career I had a worst experience, which not only made me economically weak but also frail in my entrepreneurial network. The post-strikes were a quite bitter experience to revive the production again; however, subsequently, two years later, the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic have made me pathetic again, which not only wasted my capital but also made me despondent as my wife, who was the prime adviser, died because of virus infection. At present, I am running the industry only to sustain my livelihood

> because both my children have completed their education and
> my elder son is already on track to become self-employed, and
> soon I am planning to quit the work and shut down this industry.

He indicated that the most challenging experience of his more than twenty-year entrepreneurial career was the unsteady political situation in the hills, which always constrained his progress. The prolonged political tension for four decades has abandoned not only the emerging entrepreneurial spirit of the younger generation but also the arts, skills, culture, music, etc. of the region. He further said hill's youths are motivated either to migrate to metropolitan cities for employment or to get easy, lucrative work through political activities like contracting of construction work rather than to perform assiduous work like him (who can provide jobs to others).

Case Study 3: Robert Kaufmann, a 66-year-old Swiss-born first-generation coffee entrepreneur from a small village in the Kalimpong hills recounted the situation of coffee marketing in the region. He stated that:

> At the grassroots level, we have been putting in our tireless effort to flourish and grow; however, there is no one to pull us, as like the bullock cart. I could produce approximately a quintal of coffee per session, but this wobbly marketing price, intermediaries' agents, the local political environment, costly labour and carrying charges, and the pandemic have severely affected me. At present, I am doing this for time passing and physical exercises because I am not able to make even a little profit from this coffee production.

Kaufmann is a Christian priest, author, and translator of Christian religious texts into Nepali. He eloquently speaks in the Nepali language. After a decade of living in Nepal and Assam, he migrated to Kalimpong for the first time in the late twentieth century. However, due to visa issues, he and his wife Cristina decided to accept Indian citizenship by naturalisation in 2008. Thereafter, he bought a five-acre plot of land from a friend in order to build a home and cultivate coffee. Since 2012, he has been involved in coffee production. He manufactures raw and roasted Bourbon and Arabica coffee in traditional ways with a local staff and sells it in the local market. As he mentioned in his decade of experience in this field, the intermediaries always interfere and exploit the local farmers or manufacturers because of their better business networking. During field visits, the majority of entrepreneurs who engaged in other enterprises also encountered similar difficulties with intermediaries, especially the old market players, who constantly benefited from their hard work. In this context, the role of social

capital contributes an invaluable part to entrepreneurship, such as family business background, membership in a business circle, work experiences, having entrepreneurial skills, etc., which are the key exploring indicators for all intermediaries who have traditionally dominated the market for a long time (Davidsson and Honig 2003). Social capital is defined as the tangible and virtual resources that facilitate actors' attainment of goals and that accrue to actors through social structure (Portes, 1999). Kaufmann further claimed that,

> the government only distributes seeds and saplings to farmers but does not collect the harvest from the farmers. As a result, farmers always have to suffer due to poor pricing structures in the market. The reason behind the thousands of Indian farmer suicides every year is the government's negligence. The government intends to deprive agriculture while thriving service sectors to generate more revenue, as in developed nations. In contrast, the policies of the Swiss government are far more transparent than those of the Indian government because of the 'pre-fixing price policy' on agricultural and horticultural products.

Kaufmann's statement reiterates the point that despite practising entrepreneurship in a neoliberal economy or exercising agency by making a place, the marketing structural adjustment is ultimate imperious. In 2018, the regional administration spent crores of rupees to purchase coffee sprouts from Karnataka and distributed to farmers across the hills (The Telegraph, July 5, 2018)[4]. Ramesh Pradhan, a local manufacturer of the Himali Organic Coffee alleged with regional administration that instead of spending the amount on buying coffee saplings, if they invested it to reform the marketing structure of hills, then they should not be purchased; the farmers themselves would arrange and start to cultivate the coffee plantations. Both shared the similar challenges that, until now, no government support has received, though government officials and local leaders occasionally visit their workshops and take photographs with them to claim credit for their success in the media.

Problems Concerning the Micro-Entrepreneurial Practises in the Hills

Les Back (2015) stated that studying everyday life experiences allows us to attend to the inherent liveliness of social life and its time signatures. It particularly helps to identify the public issues that are alive in the mundane aspects of everyday life and offers the opportunity to link the smallest

story to the largest social transformation. In the context of the Darjeeling Hills, the micro entrepreneurial environment is different in contrast to other plains regions of the state for several grounds. The majority of them have faced numerous challenges to sustain themselves in this neoliberal, digitalized world, while numerous others are running their enterprises in vulnerable conditions. A longstanding movement for subnational autonomy, the exploitative role of intermediary agencies, a lack of digital marketing skills, being unable to switch to a modern approach, negligence from government agencies, etc. are some of the crucial and challenging problems experienced by micro entrepreneurs in the hills. The phenomenon of unequal rights to entrepreneurial resources often frames the differences among ethnic entrepreneurial groups, or among entrepreneurs in different regions or countries (e.g., developing countries). This view of social capital is closely associated with the emphasis placed by Coleman (1993) on community structures as a mechanism of social control, which, in turn, is also linked with the predominant culture in a specific society.

Beside this, one of the strategic experiences encountered by forest villages and plantation-based entrepreneurs was their village structure, which always prevented them from getting all the governmental schemes. The issue of land rights, paying enticements to plantation and forest officials, a lack of financial resources, etc. are some major challenges they have to face. I also noticed that many respondents, like James, who belong to tea and cinchona plantations and forest village, could not achieve their goal of expanding their enterprises despite fulfilling all the criteria for MSME due to an absence of land rights documentation. Tamang and Kipgen rightly observed how the land crisis and the issue of citizenship rights in the hills emerged after Britishers began to intervene in the region with their strategic and diplomatic colonial encroachment. They also claimed that even the voices of the sub-nationalist movement have arisen from the insecurity of land rights at the marginal level for those who have resided in the plantations and forest villages. They further argued that ethnic assertion through the demand for Gorkhaland remains dominant in the region, and individual land rights remain marginal in regional political discourse (Tamang and Kipgen 2022).

Nonetheless, on February 21, chief minister Mamta Banerjee's political moves to provide the land rights documents to the tea plantation labourers and forest dwellers from across the Hills, Terai, and Dooars regions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, and Alipurduar districts took effect. A total of 4,000 land pattas were handed over, out of which 1,246 pattas were given to tea plantation labourers (Feb. 22, Millennium Post 2023). However,

this political initiative has also raised copious questions about the land's documentation in the plantation for providing them land pattas under the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Department of the state. Apart from this, the plantation labourers have provided less than five decimal homesteads instead of the total amount of occupied farming land inherited from their forefathers. The inhabitants who have resided in the plantations since the colonial period (around two centuries) are not gratified with the government's decision to treat them as second-class citizens within the state. Although there are still over six lakh residents of forest villages, tea and cinchona plantations from across the Hills, Terai, and Dooars who are still torn between accepting the government land document with a small homestead decimal and leaving the remaining undocumented farming land or simply ignoring it and waiting to fight for the rights[5].

Conclusion

To sum up, the practises of micro-entrepreneurship at the grassroots level raise numerous questions of marginalisation in their everyday life-experiences. They are mostly restricted by inadequate opportunities to flourish on account of various configurations, such as colonial structural hindrances to land rights and plantation norms, neo-liberal marketing space, prolonged distorting political agitation and negligence from governmental agencies. Besides these, the dearth of social capital is a major impediment for the majority of hilly micro-entrepreneurs, which always forces them to rely on intermediaries (especially the old market players) who seize this opportunity to marginalise them. As a result, they have to bear additional expenses for negotiation, monitoring, litigation, and enforcement of a formal agreement rather than other challenges.

Notes

1. The Treaty of Titalia was signed in 1817 between the Chogyal King of Sikkim and British East India Company Captain Barre Latter. The Treaty guaranteed the security of Sikkim's land, which had been annexed by Nepal over centuries, and in return, the British were given trading rights and the construction of the path up to the Tibetan frontier.

2. The Anglo-Bhutan War of 1864-65 has been concluded under the Treaty of Sinchula signed between Bhutan the king Ugen Wangchuck and Colonial government of India in 11 November 1865. Under which Bhutan would receive an annual subsidy in exchange for ceding some borderland area as Kalimpong.

3. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this article to protect respondents' identities.

4. The initiatives of the Directorate of Cinchona and Other Medicinal Plants of West Bengal, in collaboration with the Agriculture and Horticulture Department of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, had brought 7.2 lakh coffee saplings from nurseries in Chikmagalur, Karnataka, for rupees two crore. As per the official source, the main aim of cultivating coffee in the hills is to offer an alternative means of livelihood to the farmers whose farm produce is unable to provide them with a proper income.

5. As per the online news portal, out of the total 4000 government land pattas, 198 were distributed to Darjeeling district, 437 to Kalimpong district, 150 to Jalpaiguri district, 850 to Alipurduar district, and 2040 to Cooch Behar district. The size of land was a maximum of five decimal homesteads for tea plantation labourer and fourteen decimal homesteads for forest dwellers.

References

Aldrich, H. E. 2005. 'Entrepreneurship'. In N. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (eds.), *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (451-477). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Besky, S. 2017. 'On the inheritance and maintenance of tea plantation houses in Darjeeling India'. *American Ethnologist*, Vol.44 (4): 617-131.

Back L 2015. 'Why everyday life matters: Class, community and making life liveable'. *Sociology,* Vol. 49 (5): 820–836.

Bhattacharya P, 2019. *Bells of Shangri-La: Scholars, Spies, Invaders in Tibet*. New Delhi, India: Speaking Tiger.

Bhutia, A. 2022. 'The Story of Two Cheese in Kalimpong'. *HIMALAYA,* 41(1): 54-62.

Chettri M, 2018. *'*The Rowdies of Darjeeling*'.* In Townsend Middleton (ed.) *Darjeeling Reconsidered Histories, Politics, Environments.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Collins, O. F. and D. G. Moore. 1964. *The Enterprising Man.* East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Crow, G. 2005. *The Art of Sociological Argument*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davidsson, P and B. Honig. 2003. 'The role of social and human capital among nascent entrepreneurs'. *Journal of business venturing*, 18 (3): 301-31.

Goffman, E. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.

Harijan, K. 2019. *Role of trade and commerce in the socio economic conditions of Darjeeling hills 1865-1962.* Unpublished thesis, Visva Bharati University: Shantiniketan WB.

Harris, T. 2013. *Geographical Diversions Tibetan Trade, Global Transactions*. Georgia: The University of Georgia Press.

Harris, T, et. al. 2016. 'Global encounters, local places: connected histories of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the Himalayas—an introduction'. *Toxicological Sciences: An Official Journal of the Society of Toxicology,* 7(1): 43–53.

Lamb, A. 1960. *Britain and the Chinese Central Asia*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

May J Andrew. 2017. 'Our Miniature Haven: Forming Identities at Dr. Graham's Homes'. In M. Viehbeck (ed.) *Transcultural Encounters in The Himalayan Borderlands Kalimpong as A Contact Zone* Heidelberg University: 223-241.

Millennium Post, 22 Feb 2023. '*1246 land pattas given to tea garden workers*'. https://www.millenniumpost.in/bengal/1246-land-pattas-given-to-tea-garden-workers-509582?infinitescroll=1.

Percival, Griffiths. 1967. *History of the Indian Tea Industry*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Poddar, P & Lisa Lindvist Zhang. 2017. 'Kalimpong: The China Connection'. In M. Viehbeck (ed.) *Transcultural Encounters in The*

Himalayan Borderlands Kalimpong as A Contact Zone. Heidelberg University: 223-241.

Pradhan, Reza. 2004. 'Diary Death in Hill Town'. *The Telegraph*, https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/dairy-death-in-hill-town/cid/728179, accessed on 15.04.2023.

Scroll 20, September, 2018. '*Farmers in Darjeeling's tea hub are all set to offer a fresh new brew organic coffee*'. https://scroll.in/article/894821/farmers-in-darjeelings-tea-hub-are-all-set-to-offer-a-fresh-new-brew-organic-coffee.

Tagchungfarpa, A. H. 2017. 'Sacred Economies of Kalimpong: The Eastern Himalayas in the Global Production and Circulation of Buddhist Material Culture'. In M. Viehbeck (ed.), *Transcultural Encounters in The Himalayan Borderlands Kalimpong as A Contact Zone*. Heidelberg University: 223-241.

The Telegraph, 05 July 2018. https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/coffee-to-keep-tea-company-in-hills/cid/1457870.

Tamang, S. 2022. 'Gorkhas and their Land: Reclaiming Land Through Ethnicity in Darjeeling Himalaya'. *HIMALAYA* 41(1): 91-104.

Tamang, S. and N. Kipgen. 2022. 'Land as a site of contestation: Empire, identity, and belonging in the Darjeeling-Himalayas'. *Ethnicities,* (online version first).

Thondup Gyalo & Anne F Thurston. 2015. *The Noodle Maker of Kalimpong*. Delhi: Random House India.

Townsend, Middleton. 2020. 'Provincialising Bengal: The View from Darjeeling'. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies,* 43:1, 32-51, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1696539

UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. 2016. 'Leave No One Behind: Taking Action for Transformational Change on Women's Economic Empowerment.' http://hlpwee.unwomen.org/-/media/hlp%20wee/attachments/reports-toolkits/hlp-wee-report-2016-09-call-toaction-en.pdf?la=en.

World Bank. 2020. *Gender dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic*. Washington: World Bank.

CONTRIBUTORS

1. Dr. Anjan Saha, Assistant Professor of History, Maulana Azad College, Kolkata; Email: saha.anjan76@gmail.com

2. Anuradha Gupta, Anuradha Gupta, PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University; Email: anuradhag633@gmail.com

3. Debaditya Dutta, Assistant Professor in Sociology, Government General Degree College, Mangalkote; Email: debaditya.dutta23@gmail.com

4. Mrinalini Paul, PhD Scholar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Email: pmrinalini2209@gmail.com

5. Pinaki Roy, Assistant Professor in Sociology, Govt. General Degree College, Mangalkote; Email: pinaki.roy88@gmail.com

6. Rosan Tamang, PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University; Email: rosansoch@gmail.com

7. Dr. Rukmani Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Ghoshpukur College, Siliguri; Email: rukmanijnu19@gmail.com

8. Dr. Sanjay K. Roy, Professor, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University; Email: sanroy0015@gmail.com

9. Dr. Sinjini Roy, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Government College, Kolkata; Email: roy.sinjini@gmail.com

10. Sunrita Chakravarti, Assistant Professor in English, Durgapur Government College; Email: azureyearning@gmail.com

11. Dr. Suraj Beri, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Central University of Nagaland, Lumami HQRS; Email: criticalsun@gmail.com