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From the Editor's Pen

The location of the State within a market-society believing in neo-liberal ideology has brought to the fore many human rights and democratic issues. In such a context, the role of media, the fourth pillar of democracy has also been interrogated. It has put administration and mass media to an acid test. New institutions and mechanisms have evolved to address people's concerns. Alternate media has developed to address the issues affecting the socially excluded. The visibility of the practices of social exclusion has initiated debates and discussions on the concept of 'inclusive growth'. These debates have been discussed in the articles of the current issue of the Journal.

The 21st volume of 'Public Administration Review', the Bi-annual Journal of the Department of Public Administration, Utkal University has tried to state these discourses and newer developments through the articles of the authors.

We are deeply indebted to our learned contributors for their valuable contribution to different dimensions of administration. I am also thankful to all members of the Editorial Board for their kind and sincere cooperation in publishing this volume of the Journal.

Prof. Swarnamayee Tripathy
Editor

CONTENTS

1. Exploring the Dynamics of Democratic Decentralisation in Rural India: Old Issues and New Challenges	1
<i>Prabhat Kumar Datta</i>	
2. The Neoliberal World Order in Catch 22! : the Covid Trial	31
<i>Moushumi Pattnaik</i>	
3. Picking Strands of Hegemony in the Media Coverage of Dana Majhi: Gramscian and Gandhian Perspectives	44
<i>Ashish Kumar Dwivedy & Jyoti Prakash Mohapatra</i>	
4. Media Portrayal of Disability Issues: A Critical Overview	53
<i>Aditi Panda</i>	
5. Diffusion of Good Governance Practices Through Documentary Films for Social Change: An Exploration	67
<i>Shiv Shankar Das</i>	
6. A Study on Social Media Activism for Crimes Against Dalits	74
<i>Ms. Archana. N & Ms. Amiya Baratan</i>	
7. Weathering the Storm: Indian Federal Polity Through Trying Times.	88
<i>Srinibas Barik</i>	
8. Maternal and Child Health : A Study of Odisha	99
<i>Samapika Nayak</i>	
9. Impact of Self-help Groups (SHGs) on Socio-economic and Political Development of Women: An Empirical Study of Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Bolangir District of Odisha	116
<i>Suresh Prasad Sarangi</i>	
10. Consumer Justice: A Conceptual Enquiry	128
<i>Dr. Jyotirmayee Tudu</i>	

11. Judicial Activism in India: An Analysis	138
<i>Subhalaxmi Sahani</i>	
12. Social Responsibilities of Print Media: The India Story	144
<i>Alexandar Das</i>	
13. The New Age Media: Digital Journalism	155
<i>Fakira Mohan Nahak</i>	
14. Responsible Media and Heritage Management	161
<i>Swarnamayee Tripathy & Sharbani Das</i>	
15. Anomaly in the Visual Representation of the Natural Disaster in Media	171
<i>Vishal S.S.</i>	

BOOK REVIEW

Ethical Response to Corruption: A Review	183
<i>Review of the book : Ethical Response to Corruption,2020, by Niru Hazarika, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, Number of pages: 175</i>	
<i>Arvind K. Sharma</i>	

Exploring the Dynamics of Democratic Decentralisation in Rural India: Old Issues and New Challenges

Prabhat Kumar Datta

Abstract

The idea of decentralisation is, in a way, embedded in the democratic ideal itself. The difficulty of finding strong and consistent evidence of direct causal linkages between decentralisation and many of the acclaimed benefits suggests that decentralisation can be instrumental in promoting development and good governance but it is not a panacea or an end in itself. Panchayati raj is no longer an idea but a practice in India. Constitutional amendment can not resolve the basic problem of the highly skewed distribution of powers between the centre and the states and the chances of conflict between the centralized system and decentralized local government system. There is a need for bottom-up pressure for lubricating the local government machinery. This requires innovative ways of inventing re-inventing and institutionalizing the interface between the people and their local governments.

Keywords: *Decentralization, Democracy, Panchayati Raj, Rural India*

Introduction

Decentralisation is a term that has, of late, occupied centre-stage not only in the discussion on governance and development in the developing and transitional countries but also in all policy experiments being carried out in these countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The USAID's Democratic Decentralisation Programming Handbook defines decentralization as a process of transferring power to popularly elected local governments with greater political authority, increased financial resources and or more administrative responsibilities" (USAID :2000) It may be recalled that almost in the same vein the World Bank Team suggested that decentralization is in the final analysis, political, and it transforms the structure of governance by transferring power, resources and responsibilities to sub-national units of government

Decentralization is a generic term that covers a number of modes, such as, deconcentration, delegation, devolution, delocalization. Long back in 1983 Rondenelli and Cheema have identified, based on experience in the developing countries, four main forms of decentralization, namely deconcentration, delegation to semi-autonomous or para-statal organizations, devolution

and transfer of functions from Government to NGOs (Rondinelli, D. & G.S.Cheema:1984). Deconcentration refers to the process of administrative decentralization whereby the central government designs a structure that enables its agents to work close to the local people in field units/agencies of the central government. Delegation is the transfer of responsibilities from the central government to semi-autonomous bodies that are directly accountable to the central government. And devolution is the process of transferring decision-making and implementation powers, functions, responsibilities and resources to legally constituted local governments. Another mode identified by the scholars is called delocalization which is the spatial distribution of central government socio-economic development facilities and activities such as schools, hospitals, etc in peripheral regions.

A close study of the literature on decentralization indicates that effective decentralization calls for creating a realm of local autonomy defined by inclusive local processes and local authorities empowered with decisions and resources that are meaningful to local people. Political decentralization concerns the domain of rights that local government can exercise on behalf of its constituents. It is rooted in enfranchisement and democratization

Decentralization is today supported by a diverse array of social thinkers, namely, post-modernists, multicultural advocates, grassroots environmental activists, supporters of the rights of indigenous peoples and technologies, and the like. It may be recalled that in the 1980s decentralization came to the forefront of the development agenda alongside the renewed global emphasis on governance and human-centric approaches to development. Interestingly the practice of decentralization is no longer confined to developing countries. At present both developed and developing countries are pursuing decentralization policies. The Western world sees decentralization as an alternative to providing public services more cost-effectively. The developing countries are pursuing decentralization reforms to counter economic inefficiencies, macroeconomic instability, and ineffective governance(Bhattacharya: 2004),

Reviewing decentralization practices on a global scale the World Bank's '*Rethinking Decentralisation*' document has argued that it is not true to say that the large-sized countries are going for it. Many small countries are adopting decentralization as their developmental policy. The Bank's paper contends that decentralization is particularly widespread in developing countries for a number of reasons, namely, deepening of decentralization in Latin America, the need to improve the delivery of local services for a large population in the centralized countries of East Asia, the challenge of ethnic and geographic diversity in South Asia. Decentralization has gained ground in these countries because the central governments have failed to provide effective public services. The World Bank concludes that some sort of political pressure probably drives most decentralizing countries(Livac,1998).

Pranab Bardhan is of the opinion that the important reasons for the wide spread of decentralization include the loss of legitimacy of the central state and a corresponding belief that decentralization can bring a range of benefits directly to the local people. It is good to have more intergovernmental competition and attendant checks and balances for increasing

efficiency and curbing authoritarian tendencies. Bardhan further argues that technological changes have made it easier to arrange the supply of services in smaller market areas and transaction costs are less in decentralized operations. (Bardhan:2002)

The advocates of decentralization argue that it is a pre-requisite for good governance as it creates conditions for participation and paves the road for transparency. Broadly speaking from the functional point of view there are three perspectives on decentralization, namely, developmentalist, democratizing and centralist. The developmentalists, including the mainstream development donors, support the implementation of decentralization because it will: bring government closer to the people; improve service delivery; educate people to become full citizens; facilitate local participation especially of the poor and thus allow the government to better understand the people's needs; improve public policy design; reduce conflict by helping people to accept government decisions; socially integrate the community; and make local economies more prosperous and more equitable'. (Olum: 2014).

The democratizers argue that 'decentralization: enhances greater citizen input in governance by strengthening both local elites and the central state; opens the way for popular participation in making decisions about policy design and implementation; and yields higher levels of government responsiveness, honesty, legitimacy, and tolerance among citizens because local officials have a better knowledge of local conditions than central government officials and are thus better positioned to respond to local tastes and preferences' (Burki et. al. 1999: 22).

The centralists have tried to identify the lacunae of decentralization. For them, decentralization transfers social conflicts, resources, and responsibilities to the local level where there is greater political inequality. However, they note that 'decentralization reinforces relationships of subordination and pulverization of the relative strength of subaltern actors. In addition, they argue that corruption and clientelism are more prevalent at the local level, making participation unattractive to many citizens as well as making participation itself undemocratic. Finally, they note that decentralization impairs development because local governments are less technically capable than central government because the state loses regulatory capacity and fiscal control'(Olum: 2014).

The difficulty of finding strong and consistent evidence of direct causal linkages between decentralization and many of the acclaimed benefits suggests that decentralization can be instrumental in promoting development and good governance but it is not a *panacea* or an end in itself. In short, decentralization has its political dynamics and is by no means, a universal 'good' (Barkan and Chege: 1989). Thus, if the acclaimed benefits of decentralization, as Olum reminds us, are to be achieved, developing countries should take into account several pre-conditions before implementing them.

The idea of decentralization is, in a way, embedded in the democratic ideal in its application to political organization. (Datta: 2013 and Datta: 2018) Democracy as a form of political organization may be viewed as an attempt at the right ordering of people's partnership not merely in the sovereign power of the state but also the day-to-day conduct of government.

This brings into focus the local government in the scheme of decentralization. Conceptually, while the local government can be regarded as the offspring of administrative decentralization, the local self-government is the manifestation of political decentralization the significance of which received a lot of attention in the nineteenth century. The liberal school of thought felt that the institutions of local government need to be developed primarily for effecting improvement in administration, ensuring participation of the citizens in the processes of government, protecting individual liberty and training the citizens in the art of the democratic government. For Tocqueville, town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach how to use and how to enjoy. John Stuart Mill stressed the educative function of the local government for securing two benefits to the nation: provision of a democratic training ground for the 19th-century town and country gentlemen in the local bodies some of whom might eventually be called upon to perform duties of national importance in Parliament and education for the broader electorate in the complicated task of exercising choices in matters of elections of representatives and allocation of resources. Bryce concurred with Mill in the virtues of local government institutions resulting from the division of labour, political education and community of interests. Local institutions, he felt train men not only to work for others but also to work effectively with others. Bentham's vision of sub-legislative constituting a nursery for the supreme legislative body, a school of appropriate attitude, in all its branches for the business of the legislature, may be referred to in this connection.

Incidentally, Lenin had to lay stress on the participation of all the people in the processes of governance in the socialist state. He argued that a socialist state creates the conditions of participation by all, first, by establishing socialist ownership over the means of production and second, by simplifying the functions of the state). According to his thinking, it is only in the socialist state that all can get the opportunity to participate. In the capitalist state, only one class, the ruling class, participates in the processes of governance (Datta: 1989)

Rural Decentralisation in India: the Ancient Tradition

The self-governing village communities had existed in India from the earliest times as is evident from their reference to the *Rig Veda* the origin of which can be traced back to 1200 BC. The *village sabhas*(village assemblies) and *Gramins*(senior persons of the village) used to act as links between the villagers and the higher authorities. In course of time, these village bodies came to be known as the *panchayats* which remained unchanged even during the mediaeval and Mughal period despite the fact their judicial powers were reduced

Rural Decentralization in India: the Colonial Tradition

In modern India, the first wave of decentralization touched the structures of colonial governance after the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. Decentralisation was felt necessary to promote the interests of the colonial regime. The Sepoy Mutiny had put a serious strain on the colonial exchequer. It may be recalled that the Finance Member of the Government of India,

Charles Trevelyan (1864) had focused on it and it was repeated in the Resolution of Lord Mayo in 1870 in which decentralization of powers was looked at as a tool for administrative efficiency and raising resources to deal with the antagonism and resistance against the colonial rule and meet financial needs and obligations of the government. Successive wars resulted in growing deficits in imperial finances only to be met out of borrowing which amounted to Rs. 98 billion pounds in 1858(Bhattacharya and Datta: 1991)

The village communities under the leadership of the village local bodies played a key role in organizing sanitary work. It was in the last phase of the rule of the East India Company and the period immediately following the establishment of the direct rule of the Crown that consideration was paid, though on a small scale, to the supply of the basic services like health, sanitation, education, roads and the like. This need was highlighted by the Report of the Royal Army Sanitation, 1863. The growing industrial and commercial needs of the people of India and obligations towards the people perceived in liberal terms worsened the situation as it put pressure on the budgetary resources.

Again, it was the time when the business of governance passed almost entirely to the hands of the provincial governments. The other important compulsions included fuller political and economic integration, the need for building reliable information system extending right up to the villages because even after the *Sepoy* Mutiny there were sporadic peasant movements throughout the country and the need for recruiting a new set of collaborators in the countryside apart from the existing *zamindars*. These collaborators represented big intermediaries, traders-cum-merchants and moneylenders. They were developing political ambitions. It was around this time that Andrew Laing eulogized the spirit of local self-government and India's village communities including *panchayats*. Lord Lawrence, another member of the Viceroy's Council, came out with resolutions emphasizing that Indians are capable of governing their local affairs themselves and the village communities were the most abiding of India's institutions. They suggested that local services should be financed out of local taxes. Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1874 led to the birth of local self-government in the villages primarily to harness local interest, supervision and care for the management of funds devoted to education, sanitation, medical charity and public works. Ripon's resolution of 1882 gave a comprehensive blueprint of decentralization in which he conceived local government not merely as an instrument of participation of the people but also as a school of democracy (Tinker: 1968)

Ripon's proposals were given warm welcome by that stratum of society that was active in politics, namely, S.N. Banerjea, G.K. Gokhale. But he was unsuccessful in implementing his scheme because he failed to win the effective political support of the imperial government in favour of his scheme of local self-government. His liberalism drawing inspiration from Hume coupled with his understanding of the need for providing an outlet to the westernized middle class helped him conceptualize local government not merely as instruments of effecting improvement in administration but also as instruments of popular and political education of the masses. A close and critical examination of his resolutions would tend to show that apart

from his liberal democratic consideration he was in fact, guided by the twin colonial considerations of raising resources and co-opting the westernized middle class into the framework of governance to silence their voice against the colonial rule. It was thus political considerations which was the locomotive of local governance in colonial India

Against this background came the Montague–Chelmsford Reforms Act of 1919 in terms of which local government became a transferred subject. Although it meant the transfer of the local government to the hands of the Indian ministers in the provinces local government could not emerge as democratic and vibrant instruments of self-government at the village level. The concept of local government as the agent of the higher-level government remained the guiding premise of local governance in colonial India as it suited colonial economic and political objectives.

Secondly, the local government institutions set up by the colonial rulers were imposed from the above and, as Bandyopadhyay and others observe, remained loosely grafted to the indigenous rural society. They rightly observe that the old community-based self-governing institutions and the newly created and superimposed bodies of local government failed to develop any creative relationship. (Bandyopadhyay:2003)This model of local government was in tune with the three-fold interrelated colonial political objectives of regime entrenchment, regime expansion and regime consolidation

The Nationalist Movement and Decentralisation Discourse

When India was fighting for freedom the leaders were enthusiastic about the introduction of vibrant village self-government. Gandhi talked of *village swaraj* and pleaded for taking the villages as the starting point of India's democracy. He had initially thought of autonomous village republics, which would be federated into a national government having authority and jurisdiction delegated upwards to it from below (1959). (Datta, 2017) He spelt out the formal mechanism for this to his biographer Louis Fischer (1982) thus," There are seven hundred thousand villages in India each of which would be organized according to the will of the citizens, all of them voting. Then there would be seven hundred thousand votes and not four hundred million votes. Each village, in other words, would have one vote. The villages would elect the district administration; the district administrations would elect the provincial administration and these, in turn, would elect the President who is the head of the executive. This would have been a system in which direct voting would take place only at the village level and all the higher levels would be beholden to the villages."(Fischer: 1982)

This framework was a radical departure from the colonial centralized top-down model of governance which was put in place by the colonial rulers and later on, culminated in the Government of India Act of 1935. The Congress Party had participated in the elections and the governments formed under this Act and so most of its leaders were in favour of a centralized system of governance.

Rural Local Government in the Constituent Assembly Debates

The architects of the Constitution were quite hesitant to create a system of a decentralized form of rural governance. It became clear when Nehru expressed his reservations to Gandhi on the question of taking the village as the starting point of India's democracy. In course of his conversation with Gandhi on this issue, he argued that he failed to understand why villages would be the embodiment of non-violence and simplicity. That he was keen to give more focus on individual rather than on community became evident from his speech in the Constituent Assembly while moving the Objective Resolutions for the draft Constitution. Nehru "preferred to maintain silence during this heated debate. Steeped in the history of India -he seemed trapped between the ambiguities of western modernity and the prospects embedded in a rich civilizational heritage" (Mukherji, 2007: 32).

Ambedkar's scathing attack on the villagers 'as sinks of localism, ignorance and narrow mindedness,(Malaviya, H. D. 1956) and conspicuous silence about the place of villages in the objective resolutions and the draft constitution brought out that decentralized village government did not figure prominently in the agenda of the architects of the draft Constitution. The debate following the remarks of Ambedkar indicated that there was a section of the members of the Constituent Assembly who were strongly committed to Gandhi's concept of village *swaraj*. But the fact remains that the consensus that emerged after prolonged deliberation on this subject was that decentralized village government was not the priority and that was why it was given a place in Article 40 of the Constitution which was located in the unenforceable part of the Constitution known as the Directive Principles of State Policy

Rise of the First Generation Panchayati Raj

The results of the top-down community development programme initiated in 1952 were unsatisfactory in the sense that it failed to regenerate the community to take part in the processes of development (Jain,1988), and this led to the formation of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee to suggest means of effective local self-governance in 1957 This committee categorically recommended the devolution of functions, functionaries and funds to a three-tier Panchayati Raj system, and the report was accepted by the National Development Council. Thus came into being the first generation three-tiered Panchayati Raj system which was started with a lot of fanfare.

There is a school of thought which argues that there was a political need to move out from the centralized model of governance to decentralized village governance through Panchayati raj. The leaders of the Indian National Congress realized that as the freedom movement had a strong urban bias, rural people who stayed away from the mainstream were not therefore aware of the role that the ruling party, Indian National Party played in fighting for India's freedom. But as they constitute nearly 70 percent of India's electorate they have tremendous importance in electoral politics. They needed to be roped in through governmental outfits like panchayats for the consolidation of the political strength of the party in the villages.

They would be carrying the political message of the ruling Indian National Congress although the concept of party-less democracy at the village level was the declared agenda. It was not difficult to understand that party-based democracy at national and state levels and party-less democracy at the local level were contradictory and impracticable. It was evident from a number of studies that political parties were active at the time of elections although they had to carry out their political activities covertly and in a hidden manner. (Haldirpur RN and Paramhansha:1970) In fact, the political parties can't stay away from panchayat elections because they have to organize the voters politically and they have to work with them as political entities to gain electoral dividends at the assembly and parliamentary elections. (Datta:1997)

It may be mentioned here that the Asoke Mehta Committee appointed by the Janata Government in 1978 had accepted the reality and recommended open party participation in panchayat elections. The Committee observes "Their participation would make a clear orientation towards programmes and would facilitate healthier linkages with higher-level political processes. It is also necessary to provide a constructive outlet to the opposition parties, parties out of power at the state level may be able to chalk out achievements at the district level. District elections coupled with programme-based contests would offer greater scope to weaker sections for availing of the opportunities offered by the political system. It is also expected that these bodies would become training grounds for the junior political leaders to prepare themselves for taking greater responsibilities in future"(Datta:1992)

The Marxist scholars have argued that the concept of party-less democracy at the panchayat level is an attempt to disarm the poor in their fight against vested interests and landed gentry (Datta,1997)and it makes it difficult for the PRIs to work as instruments of social change in the countryside because social change calls for a transformation in the land relations through effective land reforms And again, given the strength of the landed gentry in rural India land reforms in the sense of restructuring land relations cannot be implemented without 'politicizing the large mass of the rural population as was done in West Bengal during the regime of the Left Front which was succeeded in implementing land reforms programme successfully, Thus the concept of party-less democracy at the panchayat level, according to them, was a well-conceived political attempt to ensure the continuation of the rule of the landed gentry and the vested interest in the villages. Interestingly the concept of electoral consensus without the participation of political parties in open elections is the consensus of caste or class as hinted at in the Santhanam Committee Report. (See, Datta: 2006)

However, the first-generation panchayat system failed to work for long. It had passed through a phase of ups and downs. The Asoka Mehta identified post-1959 panchayat experience into the following three phases: (i) phase of ascendancy (1959-64) (ii) phase of Stagnation (1965-69) (iii) phase of decline (1969-77) The factors such as a) absence of a political will, b) resistant bureaucracy, c) lack of involvement in planning, d) ambiguity concerning the role and status of panchayats, and e) the domination of rural elite on panchayats were

considered responsible for undermining PRIs. The three-tiered institutional structures created had faced challenges from within as they helped develop new centres of power. There were internal contradictions as well because the attempt was made to involve people without replacing the strong colonial bureaucratic structures with democratic structures. The first-generation *Panchayati Raj* system collapsed in all states except Maharashtra and Gujarat soon after Nehru died in 1964.(Datta: 1994),

The Emergence of the Second Generation Panchayats

But the Indian state continued to express concern about the institutions of Panchayati raj as was evident through the constitution of the GVK Rao (1985) and L.M.Singvi Committee (1986). The first committee was concerned about developing *panchayats* as instruments of planning and rural development while the second one focused on participatory democracy for which they recommended the creation of the *gram sabha* as a deliberative body of decentralized democracy and urged on the constitutionalization of *panchayats*.

The most significant development in the career of rural local self-government in post-colonial India took place in 1992 when the constitutional amendments were made to empower the local government in both rural and urban areas. These two amendments (73 rd and 74th amendments) constitutionalized local governance and sought to ensure democratization of the governing processes by making it mandatory to hold elections to local bodies at regular intervals under the aegis of a constitutional body called the State Election Commission. Added to it was the mandate for creating direct democratic institutions in the form of *gram sabhas* in the countryside for the institutionalization of participation of the villagers. They clarified the status of these bodies by defining them as institutions of self-government and instruments of planning for economic development and social justice. The Seventy-Third amendment gave directions to the state legislatures, though not mandatory, to devolve powers and responsibilities to them in order to enable them to function as institutions of self-government for which the Eleventh Schedule was inserted to Act This amendment paves the road for more effective inclusive governance by providing for reservations of seats for women and the marginalized sections of the Indian society known as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Care was also taken to strengthen the financial base of the local bodies through the setting of the Finance Commission at the state level. (Datta:2009)

Gobinda Rao has drawn our attention to five important issues for understanding the legal framework for the decentralization process in the country. 'First, the Constitution assigns through Article 243(G and W) decentralization including funding entirely to the discretion of State governments. It does not assign the functions or sources of finance but leaves it entirely to the discretion of the States. While this may be to evolve the system of decentralization appropriate to a State considering the strength of its history, economy and capacity, it also hinders the process.' Second, The standard or model of decentralization is left to the states third, there are no easy mechanisms to ensure compliance of even the prescribed provisions of the Constitution by the States.'

The Anatomy of the New Crop of Local Government

The 73rd Amendment was a paradigmatic shift in the life of the rural local self-governance in India as it attempted to bring about a fundamental change in the governing process of rural India through the installation of the democratic institutions as a supplement to the bureaucratic institutions at the district level and below. But a close and critical look at the processes out of which the idea emerged and the experiences of working of these bodies after the Constitution was amended, would tend to show that the old colonial and pre-constitution amendment tradition of developing rural local bodies as an efficient delivery system in the countryside remains unabated.(Datta:2003)

It cannot be denied that it has rich political dividends. Added to it were the political exigencies rooted in the political turmoil in the different parts of the country in the 1970s and 1980s and considerations of power politics and compulsions of liberalization. The 1970s and 80s were marked by a series of political upheavals based essentially on ethnic, religious and ethnic considerations. These movements had in fact posed a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the state. Mention may also be made of the militant agitations in the North-East India and in Punjab and separate state movements in many parts of the country and state autonomy movements led by the opposition ruled parties. It became evident that the state governments were not capable of responding to these challenges effectively. Presumably, it was realized by the ruling parties that a highly centralized state system was ill-suited to address the situation and thus the focus was shifted to the decentralized institutionalized arrangements.

All these remind us of the colonial days when the colonial rulers had to accept decentralization under compulsion. Second, the power politics of the ruling Congress Party had also necessitated it because the party was out of power in many major states. The opposition-ruled states came under one umbrella to demand more powers for the states. Caught in the vortex of crisis the Indian ruling classes might have thought of empowering *panchayats* as an effective measure of passing the buck on the constituent states and marginalizing them at the same time by creating a direct linkage with the *Panchayati raj* institutions through a constitutional amendment. Third, the fundamental shift in the policy by accepting liberalization has also necessitated the process of empowerment of local democratic institutions to enable them to act as the messengers of the ruling party or coalition of parties in the villages and to help them absorb the shocks of the policy shift. More resource mobilization for meeting some of the increasing local needs was also on the agenda. One is again reminded of the compulsions and considerations that dominated the colonial phase of strengthening local government after 1887.

Holding Elections at Regular Intervals

One of the primary objectives of the amendment is to democratize rural governance by making provisions for holding of elections at regular intervals as it was found that state

governments refused to hold elections when the ruling party or coalition of parties found that wind was not blowing in their favour. The amendment failed to bring about a fundamental change in this regard. Some of the states have taken years to hold elections. Significantly, elections to *panchayats* have been completed in many of the states after a series of legal battles and interventions by civil society organizations. For example, in Bihar, a series of legal battles led to the delay in the holding of elections. The matter was resolved finally when the Supreme Court intervened to compel the state government to hold elections pending the decision on legal issues before the court. The case of Orissa is more interesting. The elections to *panchayat* bodies were due to be held before February 2002. The SEC had promptly intimated the state government its preparedness to conduct elections on time and suggested delimitation of wards and reservation of seats beforehand if required. The state government had ordered limited delimitation of seats in consonance with the Orissa Gram *Panchyat* Act, 1964. To cause further delay in this regard the state government brought a bill in the monsoon session for the reservation of seats in favour of the Other Backward Castes. The SEC chose to file a case in the High Court. At this stage, the state government decided to hold elections. (Panchayat Update, 2003) In the panchayat elections in West Bengal in 2011, the CEO had to move the Supreme Court to seek Central Reserve Police Force to conduct elections. There was a long battle between the state government and the State Election Commission to ensure free and fair and timely polls. Gujarat has set a unique example. The State Government has announced incentives to the extent of Rs. 1 lakh to those *panchayats*, which would be able to hold elections based on consensus. The scheme called *samrasgram* (harmonious village) is out and out anti-democratic. It is regarded as a recipe for reward-induced guided democracy.

In a divided society like ours, the spontaneous consensus in the interest of a large section of people is a myth. If there is at all any consensus, it is that of caste, religion etc. and basically class. It is a veiled attempt to guide local democracy from the top and in the interest of the ruling classes. The Santhanam Committee (1963) examined the scope of unanimity in *panchayat* elections. The Committee came across villages where the anxiety for unanimity and consensus meant the continuation of the traditional authorities and suppression of the new spirit of the youth. It was felt that the securing of unanimity through cash incentives was not desirable. The silver lining is that the people of Gujarat seemed to have rejected the idea as was evident from the contests that characterized the elections in more than 90 percent of the GPs

Interestingly, what is happening in some states in the name of achieving unanimity is a cause of serious concern. During the *panchayat* elections in Karnataka in 2000, some of the seats were auctioned. The Election Commission could not interfere on the ground that if the voters arranged themselves to ensure unanimous election. In order to augment the resources, some of the seats were put to bidding in Andhra Pradesh in 2001. Even the reserved seats were not spared. The highest amount for the post of the Sarpanch in Velpur village under Guntur district was 10.10 lakh. (Mukherjee:2008). Seats are auctioned in Madhya Pradesh

and Rajasthan. In 2005, auctions were held for the post of *Sarpanch* in at least two *gram panchayats*. In Madhya Pradesh It was a case of trade-off in - the post cost 1.80 lakh In Rajasthan it was the caste factor that mattered most. The panchayat dominated by the *Gujjars* was reserved for the SCs. Disturbed by the sudden loss of power, some of the influential *Gujjar* leaders decided to extract a price for the post. An announcement for open sale was made at the village *chaupal*(meeting place) assuring the unanimous election of the highest bidder. The auction took place two weeks before the day of polling. The reserved price was fixed at Rs.50,000. One person offered Rs.2.7 lakh and the seat was allotted to him. But the effort proved to be abortive because of the intervention of the District Collector who got three of them arrested (Panchayat Update 2005)

The electoral processes have been criminalized in some of the states like Uttar Pradesh (UP) Bihar. In the intermediate panchayat elections in UP, there was a blood bath, which resulted in the killing of 200 persons. *Dalits* were threatened with dire consequences. The Election Commission had to ban the entry of two ministers into their native blocks where their wives were contesting. (Panchayat Update 2005). One contestant for the ZP Presidentship had 42 criminal cases against him. In recent times in West Bengal and Tripura, nearly 70 percent of the total seats remained uncontested.

There was a large-scale distribution of gifts and allurements offered by the candidates in UP elections held in 2005, some of them were financed by non-resident Indian relatives. There was a free flow of money and liquor in many villages. Hand pumps were installed outside each house in one of the villages and voters in one of the villages received silver rings and glasses. A candidate in one village called Pratapgarh promised gold rings to each woman in the GP if he won. In several constituencies, whisky bottles were distributed liberally. There was hardly any serious candidate who did not exceed the expenditure ceiling fixed by the SEC. The local newspapers were splashed with advertisements by the well-to-do candidates. (Panchayat Update: 2005)

Devolution in the Conformity Legislations

The Eleventh Schedule does not list subjects or functions but only matters', as T.N. Srivastava points out. There is no constitutional mandate that rural local bodies would perform these functions or these would be transferred to rural local bodies or the schemes related to them will be entrusted to them for implementation. The legislature of a state is required to endow these bodies with such functions as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. Such law may contain provisions for devolution of powers and responsibilities subject to such conditions as may be specified therein and for the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those mentioned in the Eleventh Schedule. The state legislature is thus a sole determinant of self-government The repeated usage of the word 'may' in the Article fails to make it mandatory on the part of the state government to implement these provisions, thus leaving power-sharing with the state government solely at the disposal of

the political leadership at the state level. (Datta: 2011) Presumably, the Parliament was compelled to use the word ‘may’ because some of the items come under the purview of the state list. Thus *panchayats* cannot enjoy full autonomy as they are set within the states and form part of the state list. Nor can the states for that matter as they are placed within the Indian union. What the Seventy-Third Amendment has done, as Mukerjee¹³ tells us, is ‘to constitutionalize three strata of government’(Mukarjee:1994).

It is found that while most of the states are lagging to carve out a clear path of devolution to PRIs. As per the information available in November 2006, only eight states and one Union territory have formally transferred all the 29 functions or subjects to the PRIs. The Parliamentary Committee in its 37th report submitted in 2003 expressed concern at the pace at which the states are working in this direction. The Report of the Task Force on the Devolution of Powers and Functions to the PRIs brought out by the Ministry of Rural Development has admitted that the mandatory provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act are yet to be implemented in letter and spirit by most of the states/UTs even eight years after the said Act brought into force in April 1993". The conformity legislations of most of the States have not significantly altered the functional domain of *gram panchayats*. Closer scrutiny of the Acts in different states tends to indicate that except in a few states clear functional mapping for the different tiers does not exist. There are states like UP where departmental heads at the district level could function independently of the PRIs.

The lack of clarity in functional allocation and absence of desegregation into detailed activities as *Panchayati Raj* Development Report 1995 mentions, has led to considerable overlapping and duality of control in most cases. It has been argued in the report that the functional autonomy is rendered difficult because, in almost all the states, the state governments retain the power to assign, amend or withhold functions which as per the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, is a job only the state governments are authorized to do.

Transfer of Funds

The transfer of functions without a corresponding transfer of funds does not make sense. But this has happened. Mahi Pal rightly says that before listing the functions to be performed by the *panchayats*, the states have introduced certain qualifying clauses.(Pal:2004) In Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Tamil Nadu it is “within the limits of its funds”. In Punjab “it is to the extent its funds allow to perform”. In Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, it is “as far as the gram panchayat funds at its disposal”.

A critical review of the provisions in the Acts of the different states regarding tax assignments, tax sharing, non-tax revenues makes it very clear that the PRIs at the level of the *Samiti* and *parishad* do not have independent taxing powers. Most of the taxes are assigned at the GP levels.

Provisions for independent budgeting by the three tiers are another prime requisite to ensure autonomy. In some states like Andhra Pradesh and Odissa for PS, Punjab for ZP,

Rajasthan for PS and ZP, Tamil Nadu for all tiers, the preparation and presentation of budgets are left to the executive authority rather than to elected representatives.

The Constitution provides for the setting up of the State Finance Commission (SFCs). By mid-1990s the first SFCs had submitted their reports. Referring to the role of the SFCs the mid-term appraisal of the Ninth Plan pointed out, “more buoyant taxes like sales tax and excise are kept out of the purview of the PRIs. All SFCs have put great emphasis on internal revenue mobilization but none has suggested any effective mechanism for PRIs to generate their revenue. Only two states – Karnataka and Sikkim – have devolved funds to the *panchayats* for 29 subjects.

The States are required to appoint a Finance Commissions every five years and their reports are required to be placed in the legislatures with the action taken reports. Unfortunately, the States’ record in this regard has been pathetic. Their record of appointing the State Finance Commissions and actions on their reports shows complete violations of Article 243 I and Y. The State legislatures are required to make laws to ensure the maintenance of accounts and auditing of such accounts by panchayats and municipalities. The record of experience is that these provisions have been observed in their violation rather than compliance in most of the States.

There is no separate list of tax bases assigned to them in the Constitution and they have to depend on the State governments to levy the taxes that the States choose to devolve. There is also the problem of administrative capacity and interest groups resisting payment of taxes and user charges. Unlike in theory which states that the Wicksellian link is stronger at the local level as the people can relate the tax payments to services rendered, in actual practice, free-rider behaviour permeates and influential groups would somehow like to pass the burden of financing services to the non-residents. (Rao: 2015)

Does the framework allow the Union Finance Commission to act as a champion of decentralization? Rao has answered the question thus. While one would like to think that an organic link is provided to it by seeding an additional term of reference in Article 280, a careful reading of the Article shows that the role is confined to “...recommend *measures* to augment the Consolidated funds of the states to *supplement* the finances...” of local bodies based on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions” (emphasis added). When the Constitution itself does not prescribe any particular type or standard of decentralization and when the language of the additional TOR clearly shows that the Commission is only required to recommend measures to augment the Consolidated Funds of the States to supplement the resources of local bodies, how can the Commission arrogate itself into undertaking a larger mission of championing decentralization? This basic question raised by Rao remains unanswered.

That of course, begs the question as to who will champion decentralization.’ First, it is important to have clarity in the assignment of functions and the local governments should have clear and independent sources of finance. Second, there should be clear mechanisms to

ensure that States comply with the constitutional provisions, particularly in the appointment and implementation of the recommendations of the SFCs. Third, sustainable decentralization comes from the demands of the people and advocacy should focus on a decentralization agenda. Indeed, the framework needs to be evolved to accommodate the demand for decentralization. Even within the existing framework, intellectuals and the press need to pressurize the States to comply with the Constitutional provisions like the creation of planning authorities and appointment SFCs, if necessary through public interest litigations. The SFCs have an important role to play which can be fulfilled only when State governments take them seriously. (Rao: 2015)

Transfer of Functionaries

To function effectively as institutions of self-government the PRIs need to have the power to recruit and control staff required for managing its functions. Staff is a resource that an organization must possess to perform its activities. Strangely, Part IX and IXA of the Indian constitution remain silent on this vital aspect of institutional autonomy. Viewed from this perspective the state panchayat legislations too present an indeed gloomy picture. The state governments still have retained for themselves the power for inspection, inquiring into the affairs of the panchayats, suspension of panchayat resolutions and issuing directions. Besides, in most states, the key functionaries, namely, the secretaries and executive officers at all the three levels of panchayats are state government employees who are appointed, transferred and controlled by the state government. Being under the direct control of the state administrative hierarchy they are often reluctant to work under the administrative control of the elected panchayats. Moreover, provisions for the deputation of officials from the state government to the panchayats have been made in the state panchayat Acts without consultation with the panchayats. The tenure, transfer and promotion of deputationists are also decided by the state government without consulting the panchayats.

It may be mentioned here that the Ministry of Panchayati Raj of the Government of India has been conducting an annual study on The Panchayat Devolution Index (PDI) since 2006. The study is undertaken to assess where each State stands in the matter of devolution of powers to the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) or the rural local bodies. In this study focus is given on three aspects as follows:

- **Functions** – Effective transfer of functions as envisioned in the 73rd amendment
- **Functionaries** – Adequate number of functionaries to discharge the functions under the control of elected leadership
- **Funds** – Commensurate funds to discharge their functional responsibilities

The latest study done in 2014-15 by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) was undertaken in 25 different states and took into account two indices for all the levels. They are known as

- Index of Devolution in Policy (DPO)
- Index of Devolution in Practice (DPr)

The first index considered the following items

- Percentage of detailed functions transferred to PRIs
- Number of functionaries per 1000 population
- Per capita fund available
- Infrastructure of Panchayats
- Transparency in Panchayats like publishing accounts, budget documents, etc

The second index has an empirical base as it at actual practice.

Kerala topped the overall Devolution in Policy (DPO) rankings. Kerala was found as the front runner in all the parameters except funds. Karnataka was the best in transferring adequate funds to the PRIs. Karnataka came second and Maharashtra came third. While Sikkim was found doing well in transferring functions, it ranked low on other parameters.

The study also revealed an interesting facet with respect to the devolution process. There were stark differences in devolution between various tiers of PRIs. In 10 states, the District Panchayats were ranked better than the Gram Panchayats while in 11 other states, this was the exact opposite. Only in Kerala, Odisha & Arunachal Pradesh, there was no difference in the ranking of DPs & GPs. The difference was stark in Punjab, Bihar, Tamilnadu & Chhattisgarh. The devolution has not been done in keeping with expectations of the Act. It indicates the policy-makers at the state levels do not seriously want to share power with grassroots democratic institutions. This problem is as old as the Panchayati raj institutions in India. What is a matter of greater concern is that the constitutional amendment which was expected to set it right, had also failed. It is essentially a political question and cannot be resolved through a constitutional amendment that could not go the whole hog because of inherent limitations ingrained in the centre-state relationship.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

The creation of a large number of programmes sponsored by the Union Ministries has posed a serious challenge to constitutionally mandated democratic decentralization by distorting the multilevel planning process and inter-governmental transfer arrangements within the federal set up. This is mainly because many of the subjects they deal with are either included in the State list or the 'local list' mentioned in the 11 and 12th schedules. The schemes are drawn up at the centre and implemented at the local level. The association of local bodies with the implementation processes does not serve the purpose because the implementing bodies only implement according to the rules laid down elsewhere. The local government has to accept them because the centre has financial clout.

Rise of Parallel Bodies and their Differential Impact

The emergence of a series of parallel bodies in different states is detrimental as they infringe on the jurisdiction of the *panchayats*. Broadly speaking, the functions performed by the parallel bodies can be classified as ensuring user/beneficiary participation, the convergence of programmes and promoting/ensuring efficiency. While these are the basic functions of the *PRIs*, the matters like irrigation, watershed management and development and minor forest produce come under the purview of the Eleventh Schedule which lays down the functions of the *PRIs*. The *Gram Vikas Samity* in Haryana and the Vigilance Committee in Himachal Pradesh, for example, encroach upon the statutory functions of the *panchayat* bodies as spelt out in the *Panchayat Acts* of the respective states. The Task Force on *PRIs* has argued that the Village Development Committee set up by the Government of Haryana negates the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act regarding reservation of SC, woman and seems to replace the elected *gram panchayats*. The *Janmabhoomi* (JB) programme in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh tended to mobilize local people, the entire state administrative machinery and draws upon all the existing central and state government schemes as a resource for development work and thus substituted the functions of the Gram Panchayat. Although the *Sarpanch* was to preside over the *JB Gram Sabha*, the real player was the officer. It created another problem. The Gram Sabha meetings convened by the Gram Panchayat became less important because of the realization on the part of the people that fewer benefits were available through *panchayats*. The Task Force on *PRIs* observes that it has a content of people's participation and social mobilization, but it bypasses *PRIs*. (Task Force on *PRIs*:2001)

It is a veiled attempt to bureaucratize rural governance. Bureaucrats in local governments, especially *gram panchayat* secretaries, continue to exercise considerable influence over elected representatives as they are the repository of information contained in the government orders that may not be readily accessible to the elected representatives who lack an understanding of the official procedures or basic literacy skills. In Assam, the coordination committee of the *PRIs* in the Tinsukia district complained against the block development officers who were keeping the cheque books, ledgers and other important files with themselves. In a couple of states like Haryana, the Act had given the Chief Executive Officer of the *Zilla Parishad* the authority to refuse to implement any of its resolutions if considered by him not to be in the public interest.

There have been cases when the senior officials were found trying to thwart the role of the *PRIs* and curtail the power of the elected *panchayats*. In Madhya Pradesh, it was reported in the newspaper in 1996 that there were at least half a dozen cases of district-level government officials being involved in brawls with the *panchayat* leaders. As a result of this rift, the functioning of *panchayats* in at least 12 villages came to a halt. (The Telegraph: 1996)

The general reaction against the parallel bodies is that they represent processes external to the constitutionally mandated role of *panchayats* and enable bureaucracies to override democratic bodies. Thus they pose serious threats to the effective functioning of local self-governing institutions.

The MP Local Area Development (MPLAD) Scheme

The actions taken by the Indian State after the amendment of the Constitution did not prove that there was strong political support for strengthening decentralized and participatory local governance in rural India. Mention may be made of the decision of the Indian State to introduce the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) Scheme. Under this scheme, a large sum of money per year is placed at the disposal of the MPs. The MPs are allowed to spend the money to undertake local area development schemes outside the purview of *panchayats* and municipalities. In this way, the constitutionally mandated local government institutions are bypassed. Under the scheme each MP can suggest to the District Collector works worth up to Rs. 2 crores (now increased to 4 crores) in a year. The Ministry releases the funds directly to the Collectors who get the works done on the advice of the concerned MP. The funds should be used for the creation of durable assets to be vested in the government. The Central Government has given an illustrative list of 28 items. There is also a list of works not permissible such as the raising of memorials, the building of places of worship and the like.

Incidentally, the State Governments are also not lagging behind in undermining the authority of the decentralized constitutional bodies. Some of the State Governments have also introduced a similar programme for the MLAs.

However, the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (2001) showed that the MPLAD was plagued not only by the inadequacy of funds but also by the increasing underutilization, misuse and diversion of money earmarked for the project. Most of the plans undertaken form part of the 11th and 12th Schedules incorporated in the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution which refer to the functions that are to be transferred to the local bodies. The Report noted that out of Rs. 5018 crores only Rs. 3221 i.e. 64 percent of the released amount could be spent. Also, the release of funds was not linked up to their end-use, with utilization certificates being received for only 29.78% of the projects taken up and completed by the implementing agency. While during 1993- 97, 89% of the work sanctioned by the collector was taken up, only 56.13% of it could be completed. The corresponding percentages further declined to 86.41% and 39.42% respectively, during 1997- 2000. This was due to the fact that the Ministry often released funds without any co-relation with the end-use and it did not insist on the utilization certificates from the implementing agencies.

Similar has been the findings of the sample study of audit in 106 constituencies where it was found that out of total expenditure of Rs.265 crores reported by the Collectors, a sum of Rs. 82 crores, that is, 31 percent of the total money was, in fact, not spent at all. The guidelines seem to have been observed more in their breach. In Nagaland, for example, the money was spent for building roads connecting the Church, in Orissa temples were built, in Madhya Pradesh money was spent for building housing complex for the police officials (Sezhian: 2002)

The Centre for Budget and Governance (2004) in its report, *The Rhetoric and Reality of MPLADS* reviews the working of the said scheme in seven constituencies spread across six Indian states- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Orissa. The report holds the legislators of both houses responsible for the underutilization of funds. While the Lok Sabha members (till 2003) used only 77% of their total entitlement, the amount used by the Rajya Sabha members did not exceed 50%. In sharp contrast to the MPLAD guidelines, the responses of the MPs to the CBGA questionnaire reveal a significant bias towards the construction of conspicuous infrastructural works, especially roads and bridges which leaves room for rampant misuse of development funds along with greater involvement of private contractors in the process of implementation. With water supply, education, health, sanitation and electrification continuing to remain the chief concerns of the masses, these areas are found to attract a negligible investment. The report also studied the scheme's beneficiaries across six states. The overall picture that emerges is that a lion's share of the MPLAD funds is spent in a top-down manner without taking into consideration people's actual needs. Beneficiaries also alleged that they were paid much less than the specified minimum wages in employment works under the scheme and an overwhelming number (62%) agreed that the quality of assets created was either bad or very bad (Tripathy:2004)

Some critics feel that most of the schemes being funded and executed form part of the 11th and 12th schedules to the Constitution which define the functional domain of the panchayats and municipalities. The guidelines authorizing the MPs to exercise their personal choice and decision in funding and executing the scheme lead to the usurpation of the power and responsibilities of the local bodies. It has been argued that in many instances the choice of schemes and amounts expected can significantly alter or distort local priorities as may be decided or desired by the local bodies

Even in the face of widespread public criticism of the administrative and financial mismanagement of funds under MPLADS, continued recommendations for the abolition of MPLADS by the ARC in its successive reports have failed to create any positive impact. As most of the MPs openly expressed their unwillingness on the floor of the Parliament to give up the scheme, it was finally decided to continue the scheme but with new and stringent safeguards. As a result, a set of new guidelines were framed in the middle of November, 2005 to be considered in the subsequent meetings. Several legal and constitutional experts have dubbed the new Guidelines as '*unconstitutional*' on the ground that it defies and distorts some of the basic features of the constitution such as a public audit. For instance, the attempt to do away with the CAG audit of the scheme accounts, as stated in the guidelines, is an attempt to disempower the Parliament in exercising control over the public expenditure. Moreover, the list of permissible works under the scheme still contains items such as roads, sanitation, drinking water, education and public health that form a part of the Eleventh and twelfth schedules of the constitution meant for the PRIs.

Some Controversial Pieces of Legislations

Some states have enacted some legislations which go against the very purpose for which the Constitution was amended to strengthen panchayats and governance more inclusive. Mention may be made of the legislation on the two-child norm and educational criteria. It has been introduced in as many as nine states, the objective being to control the size of the family and it is premised on the belief that that the politicians would be setting an example. It is modeled on the one-child policy of China (1979) in terms of which couples were forbidden to have more than two children.

The critics argue that it is not only coercive impinging on the fundamental principle of human rights. It is also discriminatory because it seeks to penalize only elected representatives of panchayats ignoring the elected representatives in parliament and state assemblies. There is a school of thought which argues that it goes against the rights of the Indian citizens guaranteed under article 14.

Used more as a powerful tool to settle personal and political scores, instances recur in every panchayat, the blackmail and threats to unseat women and men representatives from vulnerable sections if they do not follow dictates of vested interests.

More powerful classes and castes have been better able to circumvent the provisions of this norm; women too have become its unintentional victims. The introduction of this norm should have proceeded in tandem with other much-needed measures of upliftment in backward areas, such as education, health care and the provision of counselling facilities. (Buch: 2005)

The following is in response to a recent judgment of the Supreme Court on October 25, 2018, which upheld the dismissal of a former sarpanch from his post for having three children. Minasingh Majhi of Nuapada, Odisha, had got elected in February 2002 and was disqualified from his post by the Orissa High Court after the birth of his third child in incumbency in August 2002.

There is a need for immediate removal of the two-child norm from the Orissa Gram Panchayat Act as it does not serve the purpose that it originally was intended for. In the run-up to the 2017 panchayat elections in Odisha, the Government repealed a clause that had similarly restricted people who were speech and hearing-impaired and those cured of leprosy and tuberculosis of contesting the elections. So, why not remove the two-child norm also? Is it such a dreadful disease to have more than two children? Or is it more worthwhile to plug the systemic lacunae reinforcing the rural poor's anxieties and helplessness in maintaining a small family?

According to the Odisha Panchayat Act as amended in 2014 one who does not have written and oral knowledge in Oriya cannot contest panchayat elections. Ruben Banerjee writes, "It was Naveen's luck that the knowledge of the local language wasn't mandatory for the state's highest elected position. Though unqualified to be a lowly gram panchayat member, he has had no problem in continuing as the chief minister." (Outlook, May 2018)

In 2014 the Rajasthan government issued an ordinance amending the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 to make education a pre-requisite for contesting panchayat elections. The ordinance seeks to make it mandatory for the contesting Zilla Parishad candidates to have passed SSC and those contesting panchayat Samiti polls to have cleared at least the eighth standard. The present Congress government has done away with the education criteria. True it is that the pre-requisite of educational criteria brought forth some talented first-timers like Chhabi Rajawat, the first MBA sarpanch in the Tonk district of Rajasthan who could make a difference in the performance sheet of the concerned panchayat. But it raised a basic question as it excludes a large number of poor villagers to contest elections. It is undemocratic. It could have been very useful if the state could have ensured that all the villagers have at least eighth standard education.

Participatory Democracy: The Working of Gram Sabhas

Gram Sabha did not figure prominently in the scheme of the *Panchayati raj* introduced in most states in the early 1960s. We find from the report of the Ashok Mehta that the sporadic efforts to revive the institution were not successful due to "the lack of interest on the part of the office bearers and the apathy on the part of the public, the *gram sabha* has not been functioning satisfactorily."

While the constitution makes it mandatory to establish *Gram Sabha* at the village level, it does not stipulate any details regarding the structure, powers, and functions of this institution. In terms of Article 243G, these details are to be spelt out in the *Panchayati raj* legislations passed in each state in compliance with the 73rd amendment of the Constitution. Accordingly, all the state governments have provided for the institution of *Gram Sabha* in their respective panchayat legislations. But the jurisdiction of the *Gram Sabha (GS)* in state legislations is too big to facilitate effective participation of the people. In states like Kerala, West Bengal and Orissa the problem has been resolved by creating another body down the line at the electoral constituency level to ensure effective participation of the people (Datta, 2019).

Hardly any State Acts empower the GS to have control over the GP and to take final decisions in matters of village development. Its role is only advisory. The accountability of the GP to this body has also not been clearly spelt out in most of the state legislations.

In most of the states, the functional domain of the GS is limited to discussions of annual statements of accounts, administration reports, and selection of beneficiaries for poverty alleviation programmes. Only in a few states like Haryana, Punjab and Tamil Nadu do the GSs enjoy the powers to approve the budgets.

The *Gram Sabhas* are yet to take off properly in almost all the states²⁴ Reports from the states indicate that the *Gram Sabha* meetings are not being held regularly. The Institute of Social Sciences team had found in a village in Madhya Pradesh that by December 1995, three meetings were held as against the legal requirement of six meetings.

The MP study was done by the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) group of researchers shows that majority of them did not attend meetings because the people felt that nothing happened at such meetings²⁵. Nirmala Buch conducted a study of 11 Gram Panchayats in MP in December 1997 and found that far from an adequate number of GS members attending the meetings even all the panchs were not present²⁶. To cap it all, there was no quorum in more than 50 percent of the GS meetings. There is a provision for mandatory attendance of one-tenth of members in the Gram Sabha.

The Participatory Research in Asia team has noticed that although meetings are being held almost regularly, the quorum is hardly achieved. And surprisingly, despite the lack of quorum, the proceedings are prepared. While talking to the members present in the meeting, the researchers felt that many of them were confused about the role of the *Gram Sabha*. Some of them perceive the *Gram Sabha* meetings as political meetings and the only function of the *Gram Sabha* is to prepare the list of beneficiaries under the different anti-poverty programmes.

An authoritative survey of Panchayati raj by NIRD reports as follows: almost all the State Acts have provided for *Gram Sabha* but its functions have not been spelt out. Consequently, these institutions by and large continue to function ineffectively, though the meetings are generally held as prescribed. The purpose is hardly served in the absence of a clear and direct mandate. More often than not, there is a tendency to conduct the meetings formally and finalize the proceedings in haste. The prescribed quorum is also not given due importance. The absence of women folk in the meetings has been a common feature. The participation of the people belonging to the weaker section has been marginal. Lack of literacy makes it difficult for many to effectively voice their demands in the meetings. What John Stuart Mill said long back holds good for all time. He argued that universal education must precede universal enfranchisement.

But the fact remains that in some of the States *Gram Sabha* meetings are generating a new atmosphere in the countryside. Social auditing at the *Gram Sabha* meetings has also started yielding desirable results. The *Gram Sabha* meeting in Karnataka successfully combated the time-honoured Devdasi system, which prevailed in 167 villages of the Belgaum district. The UMA Research team of Bangalore had witnessed a *Gram Sabha* meeting at Indore *Gram Panchayat* in Uttar Kanada district (UMA Prachar.) The *Sabha* witnessed an uproarious scene when the people demanded an explanation from the secretary about the activities despite the fact a handful of members were familiar with the Act. Most of the questions were raised by the youth. The elders had hardly opened their lips.

Women Empowerment

Women hold a special place in the current discourse on development and governance in which the spotlight is on inclusiveness. The UN warned as early as 1997 that if development is not engendered, it is endangered. Women development and empowerment form part of

what is popularly known as the Millennium Development and Sustainable Development Goals

During the nationalist movement, women in India took an active part in politics. Women of all classes and walks of life joined picketing, collected donations, courted arrest and were imprisoned in distant jails. The Constitution of India guarantees equal political rights to women and leaves scope for positive discrimination. Women's movement in India has debated the logic of reservation for women as a measure of positive discrimination in political institutions and governance at different points of time. In 1929 women's leadership rejected the idea as a retrograde step. Acceptance of the principle of gender equality in the Fundamental Rights Resolutions in 1931 and the Constitution of Independent India seemed to have settled the issue at that time. In 1939-40 the Women Sub-Committee of the National Planning Committee rejected the idea of reservation categorically. The National Perspective Plan (1988) for women dwelt on the question of the political participation of women at the grassroots democratic institutions. The Core Group set up by the Government of India pointed out that political power and access to the position of decision-making and authority are critical prerequisites for women's equality in the process of nation-building and argued for the reservation of seats for women. The Seventy-Third Constitution Amendment provides for one-third reservation of seats and posts of chairpersons for women in urban local bodies.

The field studies indicate that the increase in the numerical presence of women has led to a marginal change in the status of women elected representatives in their families and society. They have started asserting their rights, raising their voices and organizing themselves to protect the interests of women in particular. They have also started learning how to play their roles effectively and discharge their responsibilities properly in the institutional framework.

But they are experiencing lots of very strong difficulties at different levels. The researchers have identified the challenges at three different levels mentioned below(Datta, 2013)

Level: Individual and family

- Most of them are first-timers—no experience
- Financial dependence on the husbands or the other members of the family
- Domestic duties remain unaltered and pressure on time
- Lack of required education
- Lack of self-confidence

Level: Social and Political

- Lack of adequate political support after the elections are held
- Holding meetings at inconvenient hours and often without notice in time
- Lack of solidarity as women members are divided either on caste, community or political lines

- Social norms and customs constraining women's rights
- General social perceptions about the women
- Lack of strong women's organizations

Level: Legal-Institutional

- Male non-co-operation —males often do not allow to speak—males often ridicule them making them reluctant to speak
- Males arrive at a consensus—women to consent
- Lack of experience to make speeches and hesitation
- Lack of information
- Lack of decentralization through sub-committees
- Allotment of insignificant portfolios
- Bureaucratic resistance
- Arrangement of rotation for the reservation of seats
- Two children norm

There is another set of parallel bodies in some states where exist traditional *panchayats* with different legitimizing sources. They have a fairly long historical past (Kumar, 2012) In Maharashtra, for example, there exist village “collectives” called *gavki*. The *gavki* is constituted by the upper caste elites, the rich and undoubtedly, only the patriarchs of the village, women excluded. Before the amendment of the Constitution, these bodies functioned alongside the elected *panchayats*. Unfortunately, they continue even today. Lele narrates an interesting case of how a *gavki* defied the elected *panchayat*. The *gavki* decided to auction the sand from the riverbed and the money earned was to be a contribution to its fund. The GP objected to it leading to a conflictual situation. The persons who raised objection to this issue were the more informed active villagers, some *Dalits* and women, associated with a local NGO who were in favour of the *panchayats*. However, they do not have the strength to go against the *gavki*. The *gavki* is more effective in areas where women or *Dalits* are in power. Thus, as Lele rightly observes “reservations which intended to empower both these marginalized sections in rural governance are being made ineffective by the established powers in the rural areas”(Lele: 2001).

Caste *Panchayats* in some states have outgrown their functions as local dispensers of justice. Recently a caste *panchayat* in Nauranjabad village in UP's Meerut district ruled that a young woman pregnant with the child of her second husband, return to her first husband who had reappeared after five years. The argument was that the first husband, though assumed dead, had never divorced her. Married off at just 14 to soldier Mohammed Arif Gudiya had barely spent a week with him when Arif was called to duty at Kargil War. Declared deserter by the army soon after he was given up dead as time went by. After four years 'widowed'

Gudiya's parents with the consent of the Community married her off to her cousin Toutiq. Gudiya became pregnant. Now the caste *panchayat* declared her second marriage illegal. The constitutional *panchayat* has nothing to do. (The Outlook, 2004)

The constitutional amendment has given women a political house but back home they do not have an independent space. Long ago in 1929, the issue was raised by Virginia Wolf in her *A Room of One's Own*. The first Nobel laureate in literature Rabindranath Tagore wrote two novels in 1929 *Jogajog* and *StrirPatra* where he portrayed how the lack of an independent house had posed a challenge to women –characters in the novel.

And it is here where the state has to play a very important pro-active role. Will the patriarchal state play this role? The task is difficult. The story of the Pudukutti district in Tamil Nadu bears it out.

The reservation of seats may be said to have brought winter for women. The spring cannot, therefore, be not far behind. How much time it would take? It might take time because it is a civilizational change, a change in the objective conditions of the society and psyche of the society. The experience tells us that women have to prove that they are as efficient and effective as men are and have to organize themselves under one umbrella forgetting their caste, class, religious, political or other differences.

It has to be kept in mind that Indian society does not still seem to have a consensus on the question of the political empowerment of women. It is evident from the fact that the bills for the reservation of seats for women in Parliament have failed to garner the necessary support number of times. It is this hard rock of patriarchy that has to be broken otherwise engendering local politics and governance through the reservation of seats in local bodies would remain a tokenism. Given the situation, this work has to be initiated by women themselves and the state is required to stand by the side of women and to play a pro-active role. Will the neo-liberal state which promotes self-help groups for empowerment and financial inclusion of women, does it?

The Lessons and Directions

The Western liberal concept of local self-government drawing its impulse from the local areas has never been practised in India. The local governance system during the days of colonial rule emerged out of the economic, political and administrative compulsions of the colonial rulers. The freedom movement under the leadership of Gandhi highlighted the need for developing and strengthening rural local governance but the emotions generated died down because of the lack of objective conditions. The new ruling classes (politicians and the bureaucracy together) paid lip service to democratic decentralization because they were essentially interested in strengthening their political support base. The first-generation rural local governance failed to strike firm roots because of the inadequate political support and bureaucratic resistance coupled with the socio-economic realities of rural India. The institutions imposed from the top took shape on the ground in which casteism, communalism and economic

inequality sharply divided the villagers. The institutions were captured by the elites who used them for the distribution of patronage and domination in the villages. One can remark that the colonial tradition of local governance continued unabated in post-colonial India.

The constitutional attempt to break colonial tradition in 1992 does not seem to be working properly on the ground because the old threats to local democracy in rural India lie deeply embedded in the Indian constitution, polity and economy. (Datta, 2009) The demand for a though restructuring of the centre-state relationship was first strongly put forward after the re-organization of the country in the 1950s as it created contradictions between decentralized polity and centralized constitution. The Indian state had to appoint a Committee to review this issue again in the 1980s but nothing substantive has emerged so far. The National Democratic Alliance government in Delhi had taken steps towards this direction but without any results. All these initiatives underscore the need for a though re-examination of this aspect of the Indian Constitution as an essential step to empower the local government in rural India.

The Constitution was amended to strengthen local governance in rural India without resolving these basic contradictions. Local government continues to be on the state list but the state governments in India are very weak. Can a weak state government deliver a healthy baby of local self-government? The point was hinted at by E.M.S Namboodiripad who gave a dissenting note in the Report of the Ashoka Mehta Committee. Another contradiction raised by EMS Namboodiripad relates to the distinction between regulatory and developmental functions. The *panchayat* bodies have been entrusted with the developmental functions but they have been given no control over the regulatory machinery of the state at the village level. This distinction weakens the base of the local democratic body and retards its functioning. The constitutional amendment has not addressed this issue.

It has been repeatedly stressed by the protagonists of local governance that there is a need for bottom-up pressure for lubricating the local government machinery. It calls for adequate awareness on the part of the local electorate. Universalization of basic education as mentioned by J.S. Mill long back, is a *sine qua non* for this purpose but it is still a far cry.

The fact however remains that the constitutionalization of the local governance has changed the legal status of the Panchayati raj system. Panchayati raj is no longer an idea but a practice. Elections can no longer be left to the sweet will of the ruling parties or parties at the state level, as had been the case earlier. The constitutional provisions have laid the foundation stone of local government the superstructures of which have to be built up for which what is urgently needed is a spontaneous initiative on the part of the people. There is some ray of hope following the rise and growth of the civil society organization in India working for democratization of governance. Right to information has strengthened their hands. But one has reasons to be doubtful about the bright future of grassroots democracy because globalization and liberalization are hitting the “local “hard. One may argue that the current emphasis on local autonomy and resource mobilization for financing local services smacks of the colonial brand of local governance.

My submission is that the constitutional amendment did not resolve the basic problem of the highly skewed distribution of powers between the centre and the states and the chances of conflict between the centralized system and decentralized local government system.

One may presume that the political actors who took the initiative to amend the Constitution were aware of the contradictions but carefully and deliberately avoided the issue as the resolution of the contradiction would call for starting the process of decentralization from the top. It meant a restructuring of the existing distribution of powers and functions between the centre and the states as the first necessary step. The Constitution was amended by the centre but the local government continues to be on the state list. This is a basic contradiction.

Secondly, there is no separate constitution for the state governments in India as in the USA. There seems to be a lurking fear among the political actors at the state level in India that decentralization would amount to reducing their limited powers. In a multiparty system of democratic government with a strong unitary bias as in India, it is almost unavoidable. This fear cannot be removed without empowering the state governments as well

Before I conclude let me draw the kind attention of the readers to some of the basic threats to decentralization as identified by scholars in the light of their empirical studies in developing and transitional countries,

First, as democratic decentralization threatens the traditional power holders, higher-level political actors and bureaucracy they would try their best to arrest the process. The traditional power holders and higher-level political actors will fight tooth and nail to oppose decentralization if decentralization changes their power base and the patronage resources. The members of the bureaucracy will join them if they find losing control over resource allocation and decision making powers. They may resist directly or through obfuscation.

Second, it needs to be spelt out in clear terms that political will is not always and in every situation the key variable for decentralization.

- Political incentives shape the decisions of policymakers more than political will.
- Incentives to decentralize may not be “noble” goals such as democracy and development.
- Incentives to decentralize can include maintaining a regime or extending its power, gaining electoral advantages for a governing party, extending patronage networks, and courting donor support.

Third, there are also other threats to decentralization that emerge from its incomplete or poor implementation. Decentralization is threatened when the wrong mix of powers is devolved, encumbering local authorities without giving them sufficient resources and authority to be effective.

Fourth, it is threatened when non-representative or unaccountable actors are empowered, taking authority away from democratic actors or the public arena. It is also threatened when local actors are so restrained by oversight that they have no room to act independently on behalf of local people. It had happened during the Left Front regime in West Bengal

Fifth, when local authorities cannot deliver goods or respond to local needs they cannot gain respect and legitimacy or engage the local population in public action. These threats are playing a big part in delaying decentralization across Africa.

Sixth, the experiences of Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa illustrate that whether decentralization is demanded by the grassroots committees of the blacks as a way of dismantling apartheid as in South Africa, or supply-driven engineered from the top through consultations and pilot programs as in Uganda, or directly driven from the top as in Rwanda, the process of agreeing on the exercise of shared power and authority should not be taken for granted. No matter through which route the journey of decentralization begins, support for decentralization comes through patient and sustained negotiation, sensitization, persuasion, demonstration of positive results and sometimes when necessary, through coercion. In a country like it is possible when the state governments get united.

Seventh, It is a fact that decentralization is not one-shot action but an on-going process that constantly engages the relevant stakeholders and actors to produce the desired results.

Finally, If decentralization has to be successful it needs to be conceived not merely as the transfer of power and authority to local governments but also to the people because it is the initiative of the people which sustains it. This requires innovative ways of inventing re-inventing and institutionalizing the interface between the people and their local governments (Ribot:2002)

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The Neoliberal World Order in Catch 22! : the Covid Trial

Moushumi Pattnaik

Abstract

The Corona virus pandemic has unleashed its deadliest effects on humankind. The virus has engulfed nation after nation consuming lakhs of lives and the numbers are still on an alarming rise. The world is sickened by the virulent effects this current pandemic has wrought. Interestingly, even the developed west is finding it extremely hard to deal with COVID. At this critical juncture, we are boggled with some fundamental questions. Aren't the neoliberal societies resilient enough to face the pandemic? Where are we falling short of? No ventilators! No medicines! A dearth of supplies and treatment! Is the Administration lacking expert leadership or has the rolling back of the state since the 1970's responsible for this present hubris? Is the neoliberal logic of surrendering the society to the whims and caprices of the market forces and considering them as the greatest balancer proving us costly? Where has the neoliberal experiment gone wrong? The paper intends to explore and find answers to such questions.

Keywords: *Neoliberal society, World order, Covid 19, India, Market*

For the last four decades in a row, Neoliberalism has been the most eulogized, pampered, accepted, yet a contested, condemned and slammed creed. Amidst voices of its credit and discredit, the creed has however strongly continued with its omnipresence around the globe appearing almost inevitable and immutable. It has evolved as a self-sustaining ideological project central to the unfolding history of contemporary capitalism. In fact, modern political economies are consequences of the neoliberal ideology. While neoliberalism has acquired many economic, social, political and philosophical definitions, it is usually associated with a general orientation towards a strong market-based approach which emphasizes deregulation, minimalization of the state, privatization and the emergence of individual responsibility (Mladenov, 2015). Neoliberalism is papered on certain logic like – laissez-faire economy, privatization and unfettered markets with a bold assertion of “primacy of profits over people”. It redefines citizens as a consumer, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency. It argues that the market delivers benefits that could never be achieved by planning. Neoliberalism's premise is that free markets can regulate themselves and that government is inherently incompetent.

Contrary to this assumption, in the face of the Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID 19) pandemic, the Neoliberal world order has landed in a quagmire, a Catch 22 situation failing terribly to counter the crisis. The ‘Overton Window’ of the neoliberal regime bereft of public interest and collective good is exhibiting its inertness falling vulnerable to the deadly challenge of COVID 19. The virus has engulfed nation after nation consuming lakhs of lives and the numbers are still on an alarming rise. The world is sickened by the virulent effects this current pandemic has wrought. Interestingly even the developed west is finding it extremely hard to deal with COVID. At this critical juncture, we are bogged with some fundamental questions. Aren’t the neoliberal societies resilient enough to face the pandemic? Where are we falling short of? No ventilators! No medicines! A dearth of supplies and treatment! Is the Administration lacking expert leadership or has the rolling back of the state since the 1970’s responsible for this present hubris? Is the neoliberal logic of surrendering the society to the whims and caprices of the market forces and considering them as the greatest balancer proving us costly? Where has the neoliberal experiment gone wrong? The paper intends to explore and find answers to such questions.

The misgivings of the laissez-faire (free market theory) were crystal clear in the 1930s. The market proved incompetent to face the Great Economic Depression which thereby, necessitated an era of state interventions ranging from progressive taxation to welfare transfers, empowerment of workers, regulation of banks and other major industries to salvage the society. This was a system of state-managed capitalism where the state assumed a progressive role. This predicament of the 1930s and the lessons learnt were soon forgotten when growth faltered in the developed west in the 1970s. Once again, there was a neoliberal counter-revolution where from every aspect of managed capitalism the government got out of the market’s way. But the neoliberal world order devoid of vision could not sense the impending financial meltdown of 2008. Not only this, but the market was also grossly underprepared to deal with it. Further, to make the situation worse market fundamentalism has also been responsible for the climate catastrophe of our times. In spite of all these, the neoliberal world order marched ahead undeterred. Yet again, the COVID trial has exposed the inabilities of the free market forces or the invisible hand to save even the developed world. For Noam Chomsky, the overriding lesson of the coronavirus pandemic is that the crisis represents “another colossal failure of the neoliberal version of capitalism” and the situation is made worse in the United States by “the sociopathic buffoons who are running the government” in Washington (Magdaleno 2020).

Where Has The Neoliberal Experiment Gone Wrong? : Some Conceptual Underpinnings

The British political economist Colin Crouch in his book ‘The Strange Non-Death of Neo-liberalism’, observed that neoliberalism failed both as theory and as policy but succeeded superbly as power politics for economic elites (Kuttner 2019). Its penultimate goal is profit and the accumulation of material benefits. Profiteering has unleashed a corporate world agile

enough to provide goods and services for a pecuniary recompense but insensitive to the needs and care of the people. There is a lot of buzz about disease management catering to the needs of the rich few but hardly concerned about healthcare for the poor and marginalized. We are perhaps in a society where the market is extremely complacent about its capabilities or so to say we are living in a “Dunning Kruger Society” where the market forces believe that they are smarter and more capable than they really are. Therefore in the face of the COVID challenge neoliberal values have crumbled down like a house of cards.

The neoliberal model is losing its sheen and glimmer while showing resilience to the economic and health setbacks produced due to the pandemic. Neoliberalism has heralded a kind of ‘stubborn ignorance’ to collective benefits, a polity obsessed with therapies and filled with distrust of formal politics, chronically skeptical of authority and prey to superstition. The historical choice of departure from the Keynesian Welfare economics to the Neoliberal model plummeted and minusculed the role and functions of the state which primarily aimed at collective good. Since then there has been contracting out and renting out of basic services which was once the stronghold of the state. Gradually the public vision of an all-inclusive society got waned out. The result is that even the developed world is proving incompetent to face the health challenges posed by the pandemic.

Since the 1970s neoliberals have sought to convince us to let private industry control our needs because they viewed collectivism as an assault on freedom. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher claimed that “There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. We have to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours (Steele 2009). A similar idea was echoed by the former President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, “Government is not the solution to our problem, the government is the problem”. Neoliberalism has emerged as a self-fulfilling prophecy deriding the government as ineffectual. The result is that even the most powerful democracy of the world USA could not protect the citizenry on 9/11, anticipate the 2008 recession, or address the threat of COVID with adequate testing, supplies and treatment (Higdon Huff 2020).

Private profit lacks the foresight of the public good and hence grossly undermines democracy. President Franklin D. Roosevelt aptly explains when he recommended to the congress in 1938- “The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself” (ibid). Neoliberalism with its core ideas – laissez-faire economy, privatization, unfettered markets has transformed the nature and scope of the state from serving the public interest to servicing corporate interests. Is it then real democracy? The neoliberal society posits a picture of an undeniable transformation from a republican democracy into a “committee” that manages the common affairs of the Bourgeoisie (Marx, Engels 1848).

Labonte and Stuckler (2016) argue that neoliberal reforms besides having a negative impact on poverty, social cohesion and economic growth, can have severe effects on population health, leading to health inequalities and widening socio-economic disparities. Karanessini (2012) states that "...the neoliberal offensive has had a major disruptive effect on social cohesion, as well as on people's lives and morale especially the most vulnerable (1976)

For Mladenov (2015 p. 446), one "...important element of neoliberalism is the retrenchment of the welfare dimension of the state, which is seen as an impediment to the optimal functioning of the markets". This retrenchment can be translated into fewer, more expensive, less controlled, and of lower quality healthcare services (Owen, Harris 2012). Furthermore, this process of reducing the welfare state moves responsibility for taking care of people from the state to the free market, leading to wide disparities in the level and quality of care people receive (Rotarou, Sakellariou 2017).

Neoliberal reforms can be seen as a form of structural violence, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable parts of the population, curtailing, directly and indirectly, access to basic rights, such as healthcare. (Sparke 2017 p.287) argues that neoliberal restructuring of states leads to a "*biological sub-citizenship*", where people embody in the form of ill health the effects of neoliberalism. The power differentials produced, reproduced, and exacerbated through neoliberal reforms that focus on economic rather than human rights indicators, lead to a category of disempowered people, subordinated to the markets. (Peacock, Bissell, Owen 2014)

Facing The Pandemic

American vs Indian Ways

Pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease with a high burden of morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption. Globalization, with increased global integration and travel, urbanization, and greater exploitation of the natural environment, has led to pandemics spreading quickly, with COVID-19 being the deadliest of all witnessed in our lifetime.

A crisis is a litmus test for a system's resilience. In the case of COVID-19 market forces have proven themselves irrelevant and incapable of providing a solution. But isn't the autonomous market a progressive, messianic force that carries society forward? Seemingly not. In fact, in the wake of COVID-19, it is not only the first institution to collapse and fall apart but its survival also depends on the very state that neoliberalism demanded to recede in a massive rollback. The private system of social spending is not quite fitting into the ways and means of combating the pandemic. Huge donations from the big corporate are no doubt a proactive step but private capital lacks the capacity to use this money to mitigate disaster and enact emergency measures such as travel bans, lockdowns, quarantine, social distancing, contact tracing and public provisioning for the poor. Therefore, it is the state which has the exclusive right and duty to enforce such strategies to limit local transmission.

The best defence against any outbreak is a strong health system (WHO 2020). COVID-19 is revealing how fragile many of the world's health systems and services are, forcing countries to make difficult choices on how to best meet the needs of the people. An epidemic of this proportion needs a certain infrastructure to deal with. None of the countries, whether developed or developing or poor, have such an infrastructure. In fact, the COVID-19 infection has exposed the so-called developed countries' systems to the maximum. Even the most developed state like the USA has a total number of COVID infections as high as 2,007,449 and the total number of death cases is alarming at 112,469. If we compare this figure with India, it is not to say that we have no infections or no deaths at all. But the figures are marginally less compared to the USA. The total number of COVID infections in India stands at 258,090 while the total death cases are 7,207 (Worldometer 2020). America tops the list in the total number of COVID cases as well as the total number of deaths. Now, the fundamental question that worries us is why the most developed state of America is having such a staggering figure (highest in the world) vis-à-vis the Indian state though it leads the world in health expenditure spending approximate 16.9% of its GDP (2018) and India spends an approximate of only 1.28 percent of its GDP. American health expenditure is a result of private health expenditure. To this end, the People's Policy Project (the United States-based think-tank that works on social, economic and political equity issues) pointed that "private social spending is not really social spending" and it does not have any consequential impact on alleviating poverty (Lewis 2018).

Being the superpower, there was no dearth of intent, expertise or dollars to fight the pandemic. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the US was detected on Jan 21 in Washington State. India, a lower-middle-income country, saw her first case on January 30, 2020. India with almost 430 percent of the US population and just 14% of US GDP saw far fewer infections and deaths. There are several learnings here. To explain, the market has got an absolutely free hand in the developed west under the neoliberal framework. Policies and decisions are taken to favour the market. Profit reigns supreme. But this is not the case with India. The democratic socialist structure of the Indian constitution and the principles of social and economic justice enshrined in chapter IV of Directive Principles of State Policy authorizes the state to positively intervene in the economy to redistribute social primary goods based on the principle of equity to the marginalized. Therefore India, though a signatory to WTO agreements and a part of the neoliberal economy plays a larger role in managing the economy and visioning out development which is people-centric.

Unlike America, the Indian Constitution makes the provision of health care in India the responsibility of the state governments rather than the central federal government. There is also a prevalence of centrally funded schemes. The National Health Policy was endorsed by the Parliament in 1983. The policy aimed at universal health coverage by 2000 and the programme was updated in 2002. In order to address the lack of medical coverage in rural areas, the national government launched the National Rural Health Mission in 2005. The mission focuses on rural areas and poor states which have weak health services to improve

healthcare in India's poorest regions. Public healthcare is free and subsidized for those who are below the poverty line. A central government-funded health insurance project named Ayushman Bharat is in operation since 2018. Maternal and infant health has been the top priorities of the government.

The privatization of the health sector in America has catered to the needs of the rich few. Around 27 million people – 10 percent of the non-elderly US population have no insurance at all (Laraib 2020). While most governments limit the price of treatments, there is free-riding of the US market to stimulate investment in medicine. American hospitals and drug companies under the neoliberal caveat have enormous leeway to raise prices (Harford 2019). Therefore insurers have limited bargaining power and uninsured patients even less. Bernie Sanders, an American politician contented that the pandemic exposed 'the incredible weakness and dysfunctionality' of the US healthcare system and called for single-payer reform. There is an absence of a national health programme with unified financing and governance. This is the reason why America soon turned out to be the epicenter of the crisis. Underfunding of Federal, State and Local public health agencies has left America ill-prepared for the Covid 19 challenge (Gaffney 2020). Initially, corona virus tests were charged in America but later the tests were made free but once the person tests positive then the hospital bills could easily cost tens of thousands of dollars even with insurance (Leonhardt 2020). America's lead in health expenditure, an approximate 16.9% of its GDP in 2018, is actually a result of private health expenditure. To this end, the People's Policy Project (the United States-based think-tank that works on social, economic and political equity issues) pointed that "private social spending is not really social spending" and it does not have any consequential impact on alleviating poverty. For decades, industries such as healthcare which relate to safety nets and overall public welfare were rigorously privatized under the neoliberal mandate. As the Corona virus uproots socio-economic life across the globe, states are now scrambling to rebuild or strengthen some form of reliable, resilient social protection systems

As the health care system in the United States is largely private, coordination among different hospitals and public health officials has become more challenging than a nationalized health care system like many countries in Western Europe and as in India also. There is no common national response for containment. This has allowed the virus to leak through these porosities, and full containment has become quite distant. Any well-meaning reform is seen as socialist and is vehemently opposed. The enactment of Obamacare aka Affordable Care Act was a case in point. [Affordable Care Act opponents spent an unprecedented amount of money to convince large segments of the US public of the law's demerits, outspending supporters by about 15 to one- (John McDonough 2015). The profit motive in the health care industry afforded little redundancy for dealing with crises of such nature. Consequently, poor Blacks and Hispanics, compellingly out of the medical insurance net and constrained to work through the crisis are being disproportionately affected by disease and death.

An investment in education and medical care has the potential to engender the research and preparation needed in a time of crisis. Neoliberalism projects taxes as a cost ignoring the

fact that taxes are an investment. Bernie Sanders, the Democratic Presidential candidate (USA) in his election campaign (2016 and 2020) (Wikipedia) batted for a progressive system of taxation, a hike in taxes of a few dollars to provide medical insurance to all, unlike the current neoliberal system. These grand plans are often chucked at and considered unnecessary in normal times unless faced by an emergency like COVID. The medical industry in the US, including the insurance companies, is poised to make profits in normal times but has proven to be grossly under-prepared for a health emergency like COVID-19. Competition is a killer in a time like COVID -19. The ‘dog-cat-dog approach’ to everything makes a tragic situation especially toxic (Comaroff 2011....Private Capital).

Interestingly some smaller countries like Singapore and South Korea were agile enough to stanch the spread of the corona virus as public-health authorities have adhered to a systematic and a planned procedure. Widespread testing in these countries identified the infected and everyone with whom the infected person interacted even before they showed symptoms. Finally, everyone identified was subjected to a mandatory 14-day quarantine. Therefore, the success story here involved an uncompromising approach comprising mass testing, contact tracing, and selective quarantining- all of which the US has failed to do. This helped in containing the outbreak and also lockdowns could be avoided (Haseltine 2020).

Singapore has taken this technology even further, launching a new Trace Together app that people can download to help protect themselves and those around them. If a user passes within two meters of someone who is found to be infected, the app immediately notifies the user of the risk. Since late January, when Singapore reported its first case of COVID-19, more than 6,000 people have been identified through contract tracing and put into proactive isolation and quarantine. Owing to these efforts, infections have been contained; hospitals have not experienced a major surge in new patients. As of now (26.5.20) the number of deaths is 23 out of the total infected persons of 31,960 (Worldometer 2020).

Italy operates a universal public health system since 1978. Health care is provided to all citizens and residents through a mixed public-private system in Italy. Italy is known to have the world’s second-best healthcare system. While Italy has performed more than 230,000 tests, it has failed to put together a comprehensive strategy of testing, tracking and self-isolation, which has helped save lives in countries such as South Korea or Singapore. The same holds true for other nations. France and Spain have waited far too long before enforcing a lockdown. The U.K. has made a dramatic U-turn on an initial plan to pursue a soft containment strategy but is still struggling to take draconian measures to enforce social distancing. In Spain too, a sizeable number of healthcare workers have been infected. The U.S. has only recently ramped up testing and is struggling to catch up with the growing demand for it (Giugliano 2020).

India’s Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

India’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been preemptive, graded and proactive. The present state of pandemonium could have been avoided if we would have seriously

analyzed the contagious nature of the virus and the extent of its spread by taking the Chinese or Italian example as early as the first week of February and announcing lockdowns right then. However, since the last week of March, the Indian government was quick to announce lockdowns and activate its health management system and issue necessary travel advisories. Even when a person with a travel history reported no symptoms, government machinery was activated to track and check his progress for the next two weeks by an at-home visit and phone calls. Though initial directives for quarantine were not taken seriously by some, as the days progressed the government became more and more vigilant and followed up with strict actions. Well-coordinated action plans by the Indian government included careful airport checking, active health laboratories and the quick establishment of quarantine facilities across the country. The strategy of the government has been to stick to the 'prevention is better than cure' model. India embarked to ensure that most of its stranded citizens, especially workers and students stuck abroad in various countries, were flown back.

Despite all these initiatives, there has been a steady surge of COVID infections. The issue of interstate migrants added fuel to the fire. Lakhs of migrants working in different states had a harsh time due to lockdowns. They were left with little or no money and food. Therefore they had no choice but to travel to their home state hook or by crook. At the time the state governments arranged logistics for them many had already travelled on foot and bicycles to reach their home state. This led to a boom in infections. Those who travelled through state support underwent the quarantine process, while there was laxity on part of others who came on their own, thereby leading to the cumulative growth of infections.

Currently, the Indian nation stands united irrespective of political affiliations at state levels to combat COVID. It is one of the most stringent in the world, based on data from 73 countries. India has scored a perfect 100 on the "Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT)" (cnbctv18.com) that aims to track and compare government responses to the coronavirus outbreak worldwide, rigorously and consistently. South Africa, Israel, New Zealand and Mauritius are some other countries that scored a 100 in the tracker. India has thereby debunked one of the sharpest criticisms from the former Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O Neill who said "Thank God this didn't start in somewhere like in India because there's absolutely no way that the quality of Indian governance could move to react in a way that the Chinese have done,.....probably say the same about Brazil too" (ET Online 2020). India is quite better off in containing COVID deaths compared to the USA and other developed countries inspite of the huge number of infections. The top 10 countries as regards the Coronavirus cases are listed below in Table -1

Table-1: Covid-19 Tally of Some Countries

Sl.No.	Country	Total Cases	Total Death
1	Usa	2,007,449	112,469
2	Brazil	691,962	37,312
3	Russia	467,673	5,859
4	Spain	288,630	27,136
5	Uk	286,194	40,542
6	India	258,090	7,207
7	Italy	234,998	33,899
8	Peru	196,515	5,465
9	Germany	185,869	8,776
10	Iran	171,789	8,281

Source: *Worldometer 2020 (8th June 2020)*

India suspended all travel, domestic as well as international, by 20th March. On 24th March, India announced a total lockdown for three weeks which has been extended since then in a phased manner - Phase-1- (25th March- 14th April), Phase-2 (15th April-3rd May), Phase-3 (4th May-17th May), Phase-4 (18th May-31st May), Phase-5 (1st June- 30th June). In Phase-2, the lockdown areas were classified as 'Red Zone' indicating the presence of infection hotspots, 'Orange Zone' indicating some infection and 'Green Zone' with no infection. These zones were created to map the local transmission of the disease and prevent the contagion from spreading. Then they are identified by the Rapid Response Team (RRT) based on the extent of cases listed and mapped by them.

The normal movement was permitted only in green zones but in a limited capacity. Orange zones allowed only private and hired vehicles but no public transportation while red zones remained under total lockdown. In phase 4, the red zones were further divided into containment and buffer zones. According to the Health Ministry (Jagran news desk 2020), a containment zone refers to a specific geographical area where positive cases of coronavirus are found. Strict movement restrictions are put in place in such areas to prevent the further spread of the virus. The adjoining blocks of the affected district or rural districts of the affected city are known as buffer zones.

Amid the Pandemic, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, released Telemedicine Practice Guidelines enabling Registered Medical Practitioners to provide healthcare in remote settings using telemedicine. These guidelines recognize telemedicine as an enabler of healthcare access and affordability through faster access to appropriate interventions and access to services that may not otherwise be available.

There have also been frequent online training sessions for nurses, paramedic staff and primary health workers for the protocol to be followed for detection, isolation and communication regarding suspected infections. Increased use of technology and opening up telemedicine through transparent guidelines will improve access to healthcare even in remote locations in a geographically diverse country like India.

Concluding Observations

The National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) 2019 has already outlined the framework of a resilient health system dovetailing norms and regulations to deal with biological disasters. Therefore, there is an urgent necessity for a legal framework to implement the above to counter future pandemics. This plan envisaged different long-term, medium-term and short-term goals to be fulfilled by 2030, 2027 and 2022 respectively. The major Short Term goals were to effectively deal with Biological and Public Health Emergencies (BPHE) with adequate decontamination systems, critical care ICUs and isolation wards with pressure control and lamellar flow systems” and “Adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all the health workers associated with the responding to biological emergencies”. The various Long Term goals were “Upgradation of earmarked hospitals to cope with emergencies”, “Mobile tele-health services & Mobile Hospitals” and “Establishing and strengthening quarantine facilities”. Some of the Middle Term goals were to “Specialised healthcare and laboratory facilities to address biological emergencies/incidents”, Establishment of an early warning system”, “Establishing and maintaining a community-based network for sharing alerts” and “Develop a clearly defined interagency emergency response plan with roles and information flows clearly marked out”.

Over the last few decades, India has emerged as the pharmaceutical hub of the world, being the largest supplier of generic medicines all over the world with a 20 percent share in global supply by volume and 50 percent of global demand for vaccines. Currently, over 80 percent of the antiretroviral drugs used to combat AIDS are supplied by Indian firms, which is a significant contribution to mankind as otherwise less developed countries would not have been able to afford therapy for this global crisis. COVID19 crisis has again highlighted the contribution of the Indian pharmaceutical industry as India opened the export of hydroxychloroquine to scores of countries that can help save thousands of lives.

However, in the area of medical equipment, India heavily depends on China. During this current pandemic, ventilators, PPE, masks, diagnostic kits and other accessories were imported from China (Basu 2020). In India, several non-medical equipment companies have risen to the occasion and converted their manufacturing to make ventilators and other equipment currently needed. The pandemic has made us realize that efficient stockpiling of equipment over the long term is necessary to improve our healthcare delivery in difficult times. A push through make-in-India for medical equipment can further strengthen this trend. Medical devices can be a natural area for the expansion of pharmaceutical companies.

According to the reports of the Union Health Ministry of India, the number of recoveries in India has exceeded the active COVID cases for the first time (TOI 2020). India's repeated tryst with natural disasters has helped us to perfect a response system where hundreds and thousands of health and other grassroots workers are mobilized swiftly. The acts and rules under disasters are historically tested, effective and free from political influence. Such freedom to take spot decisions and act idiosyncratically to unique ground situations is a strength of the Indian system of governance. Bill Gates presciently said the US and Europe were not well prepared for fighting a sudden pandemic and need to learn from India (Darswal 2020).

The state is in fact, making a massive comeback within public welfare in the developed world. For example, the state of the USA is now actively trying to stop unemployment or wage-cut by funneling hefty sums of money through the stimulus package. The US stimulus package amounting to a staggering \$2 trillion is the largest bailout in country history. At present, the renaissance and reemergence of the state are helmed as a revolutionary moment in economic policy-making. Is then the enchantment with neoliberalism really over?

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Picking Strands of Hegemony in the Media Coverage of Dana Majhi: Gramscian and Gandhian Perspectives

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Abstract

The present paper questions the role of mainstream media during the latter's reporting of the Dana Majhi incident. It argues that the media reporting of the given incident was biased towards the hegemonic ruling elites. In doing so it borrows from Gramsci, the founder and chief proponent of the concept of cultural hegemony. The paper also revisits the Gandhian perspectives to build a ground for counter-hegemonic media practices. The paper analyses the development discourse and the role it plays in cornering the dreams and concerns of those who fall at the periphery. It doesn't rule out the possibility of counter-hegemonic tendencies in the future media landscape.

Keywords: *Dana Majhi, Development, Hegemony, Mainstream Media*

An entire nation watched, with anger and disbelief, images of Dana Majhi, a tribal from Odisha, as he carried his dead wife right on his shoulders, after being denied a hearse by the hospital where Amanga (Majhi's wife) had succumbed to tuberculosis. The whole incident was seen as shocking, inhuman and bizarre, to say the least, by most media audiences. The state of Odisha had once again grabbed the national (nay this time international!) attention, for an explicit display of abject poverty coupled with administrative apathy. The Prime Minister's Office was prompt in asking for a detailed report on the incident. Even more prompt was the reply from The Government of Odisha. Dana Majhi never sought any help from hospital authorities before leaving for home with his wife's body, informed the then Minister of Health and Family Welfare of Odisha. The person to blame, Rajendra Rana, a contractual staff nurse. He was terminated from service on grounds of negligence in duties.

This was not all. Follow-up reports carried details of the financial assistance that came on the way of Dana Majhi from various national and international agencies, including the much-publicized cheque of Rs 8,87,000 from the Premier of Bahrain Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa (Mohanty, 2016). Money, thus, came as compensation for the wounds that Majhi bore. The same man, at one point in time, might simply have sought, or at least expected, an ambulance to fetch his wife's body to his home at Melghara in Rampur Block, 62 km from the district headquarters hospital at Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi.

The media never really gave up on Dana Majhi. It still hasn't! A year after the incident Hindustan Times came up with a consolatory note, "First a house, then a wife, and now a motorbike. Dana Majhi, the poor Odia tribal, who last year shook the nation's conscience after being forced to walk back home with the body of his dead wife on his shoulders, has struck it rich" (Mohanty, 2017). This time it was his spanking Honda motorcycle that Majhi had bought for Rs 65,000, which became the talking point. The remarriage of Dana Majhi was also talked about. While Dana, our protagonist, was never supposed to see a lifetime of poverty and misery, the overzealous press while narrating his transition from rags to riches, failed to realize that, in doing so, it had raised more questions than it tried to answer. Did it want us, the audience, to shed our scepticism towards the state and rejoice over the fact that life for Dana Majhi has moved on?



Dana Majhi - then and now (a transition, media wants us to take note of)

Press is not a monolith, someone said that right. All press didn't speak with the same voice on Dana Majhi. After all, it was the same press that gave us the first pictures of a helpless Majhi. A part of the press did fulfil its social responsibility. The hospital, it was later reported, where Majhi's wife breathed her last, had just one ambulance with one driver. The District Headquarters Hospital at Bhawanipatna, which has only 165 sanctioned beds is burdened with 400 patients at a given point of time. They are attended to by a total of 31 doctors. Doctor's vacancies remain unfulfilled. New doctors quit in no time. The existing lot isn't happy with their work environment (Jacob, 2016).

Kalahandi again, with more than 60 percent of its cultivable land lying infertile, presents to the world a picture of abject poverty. With rain playing hide and seek, small and marginal farmers have been pushed to the brink. Indravati project has been cited as a failure. Nearly 63 percent of the district population lives below the poverty line (Pani, 2016).

Kalahandi, Dana's district, happens to be one of the poorest districts of India. It is more in news for its crippling drought, hunger and related deaths as well as child sales. Many blocks in the district are migration-prone. Something which has also been in news is the plight of the labour migrating from the district. There have been stray news reports of quite a few migrants having died and several others being untraceable over the years. Dana Majhi, probably had never migrated. He chose to stay back. May be he was relatively well off, not feeling the need to migrate. May be he was too rooted in Melghara and saw a life ahead of Amanga (Daaan's wife) or may be he never anticipated his wife catching an infection. Between the devil and the deep sea, Dana chose the deep sea. Well, in a way!

True, media is not a monolith. Indeed, a few sections of the press have tried to highlight the near absence of welfare schemes in the district. An utter lack of accountability has been hinted at as being one of the prime reasons behind the gross neglect of Dana's district. Everything exists in pen and paper and there is no social audit.

But our question remains unanswered. One still wonders why a bulk of the press, barring a select few, wanted a happy ending for Dana Majhi? Why did the press go overboard in trying to make us believe that life has indeed moved on for Dana Majhi? Why this deafening silence on the present condition of the hospital at Bhawanipatna, or similar hospitals where Dana Majhis across the state visit? Isn't it time now the press starts debating on its role in ensuring that Dana Majhis don't occur in the future? Or was the media, all this while, busy engineering consent from the civil society that the state, here in this case at least, hasn't failed in its duties towards citizens?

Odisha, the land of Dana Majhi, claims to be one of the fastest-growing state economies in India. The state's agriculture-based economy is making a quick transition towards industry and service-based economy. Odisha, for a long time now, has been branded as the most preferred FDI destination in India. In short Odisha, as a state on the move, dominates the political discourse today. Who, for heaven's sake now, can afford to let an insignificant tribal hijack such a wonderfully crafted growth tale? There could be so much at stake now to allow a Dana to play the spoilsport. Dana desperately needed a facelift. Our protagonist had to look good again. His life had to move on. For unless it did, the same posed a serious threat to the dominant discourse of the day, that of development.

Gramscian Perspectives

Antonio Gramsci rendered some highly suggestive insights into the question of dominance and subordination in modern capitalist societies. His most interesting ideas cluster around the concept of cultural hegemony or simply hegemony which he employed to address the relation between culture and power. Hegemony, in one way, can be seen as the spontaneous consent given by the masses to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group (Lears, 1985). This consent is mainly caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. The

above constitutes just one way of looking at hegemony. Ruling groups don't maintain their hegemony merely by giving their domination an aura of moral authority through the creation and perpetuation of legitimizing symbols; they may also seek to win the consent of subordinate groups to the existing social order. Unlike traditional Marxists, Gramsci realized that a class interpretation of history doesn't entail a fixation on the struggle between oppressors and oppressed rather it may reveal a process by which a given ruling class successfully avoided such confrontations. And the source of that success, according to Gramsci, could well be in the realm of culture. The smile on Dana Majhi's face had to be won back simply to reinforce people's faith in the existing social order. People's consent, employing media as an instrument, had to be won, for the restoration of hegemony by successfully avoiding a confrontation.

Gramsci departed from orthodox Marxism in certain significant ways. His preoccupation with consent led him to recast the 'base-superstructure model of classical Marxism. He narrowed the economic base to include only the material and technical instruments of production. While on the other hand, he broadened the superstructure to include political society, civil society (which includes media) and the state. To Gramsci, the state is no more or no less than hegemony protected under the armour of coercion. It witnesses the hegemony of one group over the entire nation, exercised through so-called private organizations like religious bodies, trade unions, educational institutions and even media.

None other than Gramsci probably laid the foundation stone for our present-day efforts in critically examining media content instead of accepting it at its face value. Grasping the latent and not just the manifest content becomes important in view of media coverage given to certain sensitive issues. The manifest content, here for instance, contends that Dana Majhi is relatively well-off today thanks to the financial assistance received from the benevolent rich and the structures of the state and capitalist society that are well in place. It is, thus, a relatively pointless exercise, says the latent text, however, to conduct a post-mortem into the socio-economic circumstances that might have eventually crystallized into a Dana Majhi. While the news of Majhi's remarriage could act as an antidote to losing one's wife, images of his swanky motorcycle could put to rest the poverty and underdevelopment debates that followed.

Dana Majhi has also contributed profusely to the development discourse of the day. The fact that development and poverty can and do co-exist has long been ignored. In the case of individuals, development and poverty do not have to walk hand in hand, but nations are not individuals. The general notion is when nations develop they get rid of poverty. This may not be true always. On the other hand, it is the nature of the development process to cause greater poverty (Melkote, 2000). The ambulance that Dana Majhi was denied was the only ambulance in the hospital that was severely plagued by a serious shortage of staff. Doctors quit such hospitals in search of greener pastures in the form of metropolitan centres that have developed at a far greater rate compared to Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi.

Blaming the victim, here in this case our protagonist, for never seeking any help from hospital authorities before deciding to act on his own, constitutes an age-old ideology strategically

employed to justify inequality and human suffering in developing societies (Ryan, 1976). It tries to locate the shortcomings within the victim. In doing so, the victim-blamer turns a blind eye to the repeated onslaughts of the victimizing social forces on the individual. In fact, it is a brilliant strategy for justifying a perverse form of social action designed to change not society, as one might expect, but rather society's victim (Ryan, 1976).

Development theorists could also interpret Dana Majhi's plight as a derivative of the latter's affiliation to the 'peasant culture' (Rogers, 1969). Talking about peasants in the Third World, Rogers (1969) contended that the former is responsible for their misery. Certain traits were attributed to the peasants (and downtrodden) of all societies. Some of these traits constitute mutual distrust in interpersonal relations, dependence on and hostility towards government authority, familism, lack of innovativeness, fatalism, limited aspiration, limited view of the world and low empathy. The above traits, development theorists might like us to believe, are responsible for the sub-human conditions experienced by Dana Majhis around the world. The reasons for their underdevelopment were thought to be the socio-psychological makeup of individuals or the 'traditional' culture of peasants in the Third World. These theorists had a blueprint for the speedy development of all those stagnating in the backwaters of underdevelopment. The approach was inherently top-down. It apportioned a significant role to be played by mass media in educating the downtrodden. The interpersonal networks of communication were considered to be supportive of traditional structures and authority and hence were called anti-development. Mass media, however, was free from such control, and hence was best suited for the job. The question of whether the mass media were instruments of exploitation, tools of a small coterie of elites was not considered to be important. The approach showed scant regard for the Third World audiences or for the possibility that it might conceivably have a vested interest in viewpoints and social attitudes. Questioning the media was, thus, questioning development itself. Media being the vehicle of development, was, henceforth, to be considered as immune from public scrutiny.

Gandhian Perspectives

Being an Indian, talking about Indians, seeking Indian solutions to societal problems, one can at his peril ignore the Gandhian perspective. How would Gandhi view the whole situation? He would empathize with Dana, no second thought on that. But how does one expect him to deal with the dominant media discourse that, as the present paper suggests, trivializes human misery?

In ways more than one M. K. Gandhi was counter-hegemonic. To understand what that means one needs to understand the life and times of Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi lived in difficult and different times though. Gandhi's enemy was a form of colonialism that thrived on the subjugation of original inhabitants and indigenous people by their colonial masters. The deprived during Gandhi were probably more deprived than Dana. The anatomy of exploitation during the British Raj was laid bare by Dadabhai Naoroji, who in his meticulous research constructed an economic critique of what he called the un-British rule in India.

Naoroji, in his book, *Poverty and un-British rule in India*, brought attention to the draining of Indian wealth into Britain. In it, he explained his wealth-drain theory. Naoroji is regarded as the 'Grand Old Man of Indian Nationalism'. "The Indians look up to you as children to the father. Such is really the feeling here", wrote Mahatma Gandhi to Naoroji in a letter in 1894.

Gandhi in 1908, mounted in Gramscian terms, a counter-hegemony, a war of positions, in the form of *Hind Swaraj* (Pathak, 2019). Gandhi's struggle against the Britishers was aptly described by Antonio Gramsci as the 'war of position'. Gramsci believed that while the 'war of movement' was the strategy required to fight against a non-hegemonic state, 'war of position' was the adequate strategy to fight a hegemonic state form (Joshi & Josh, 1992), such as British India of Gandhi's times.

The hegemonic aspect of the colonial state was reflected in the civilizing mission: the claim that the British were in India not to rule it but to uplift it. It could, thus, be seen, as a corollary, that the liberation of the indigenous population lay in the furtherance of the benevolent British rule. That the English education system, the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy and the Railways were meant for the emancipation of Indians and not that of the colonial masters, who had an ultimate altruistic mission to civilize the oriental world. In line with Naoroji, M.K. Gandhi set out to challenge, through pen and action, the hegemonic discourse of his times. *Hind Swaraj* could be seen as Gandhiji's counter-hegemonic force. Gandhi rejected the claim of paradoxical colonial modernity, arguing that not only British rule but the modern civilization championed by the latter posed a serious problem to the Indian social fabric. Living in the 21st century, we may not agree with him fully though. Modern medicines, an improved work culture, Information Technology, enhanced agricultural produce, rapid growth in media can all be ascribed to modern civilization. However, Gandhi's opposition to colonialism seeking to present itself as modernization, a dominant discourse of his times, confers on him an anti-hegemonic tag, much similar to the one worn by scholars who decry the development discourse of our times, seen as responsible for the plight of Dana Majhis around us. The only difference, Gandhi's counter-hegemonic stance was against the colonial outsiders; that which we hear today are against the ruling elites of a modern democratic state. The development discourse which excludes a vast majority can be likened to civilizing mission of the colonizers which in reality led to a massive draining away of the wealth of their colonies. Textually speaking, the *Hind Swaraj*, was a transformative text challenging colonial claims the way they hadn't been challenged before.

Perhaps nationalism was the only aspect of modernity that Gandhi unhesitatingly accepted. Here again, he rejected a centralized nation-state and argued in favour of de-centralization with local self-government and village republics. This was in line with his counter-hegemonic urge.

The sheer brilliance of Gandhi, as a political leader, in mobilizing the masses against a well-heeled state authority has been well acknowledged by neo-Marxists as well as non-

Marxists (liberals) alike. A Weberian, for instance, saw in him a charismatic leader who commanded the respect of the masses. As befitting a charismatic leader, Gandhi was referred to by the Indian peasantry as a saint, *avatar* (incarnation of God), *Bapu* (father), *guru* (teacher) and *mahatma* (great soul). According to Max Weber, charismatic leaders are set apart from ordinary men and are treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional qualities. The qualities of a charismatic leader are thought to be of divine origin, i.e. not acquired through training or erudition. In addition to rumour and imagery, some real-life data about Gandhi also helped the peasantry build a saviour-image of him. He started the *Navjivan* paper to highlight the pitiable condition of the peasants. Gandhi's *Ramrajya* concept envisaged the ideal peasant community. He adopted the *ashramic* way of life and dressed like an ordinary peasant. He spoke a simple tongue with such religious overtones that he could instantly strike a chord with the peasants.

To the neo-Marxists, the ultimate talent of Gandhi lay in his matching the hegemonic moves of the colonial state with counter-hegemonic politics. He did so by slowly building nationalist hegemony over wide sections of Indian people. The Gandhian strategy was characterised by periods of mass movement with intervals of truce. The intervals were judiciously used to perform constructive works among the masses. Congress workers religiously undertook tasks of the village and *Harijan* uplift, Hindu-Muslim unity, education and campaigns against untouchability etc. Gandhi's method was to take hold of the proclaimed liberality of the colonial state and expose its hollowness to the masses. Thus, as against the hegemony of British rule, the nationalist hegemony of Gandhi manifested in a peaceful mass movement. Mobilization of the masses to join the freedom struggle was accomplished largely due to its peaceful nature. The major movements launched by Gandhi, namely the Non-cooperation movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement saw large-scale participation of peasants.

Gandhi could be credited for perfecting certain counter-hegemonic tools that may teach a lesson or two to development scholars of our times. The part of the press, interested more in the Dana Majhi carrying the deceased Amanga on his shoulders, than the remarriage of Dana, will indeed benefit from a thorough reading of Gandhi. The hegemonic voices of mainstream media needn't be silenced. A true Gandhian may simply advise you not to take the mainstream media at its face value. He may simply tell you to resist the urge to believe the development discourse as propagated by mainstream media. Wait, he may silently suggest you quit being an audience of mainstream media and focus on some kind of alternative media. Gandhi might have put his weight behind a media that acts as a voice for the voiceless. A counter-hegemonic media.

Conclusion

How many of us know the actual Dana Majhi and not the one that was mediated to us by the mainstream press? What really are the problems confronted by the people of Melghara? How did Amanga (Majhi's wife) catch tuberculosis? Why did he have to travel all the way

to Bhawanipatna to seek medical help? Wasn't there a hospital at Rampur block? How is it that the District Headquarters Hospital, with 165 sanctioned beds, functions with just one ambulance? And how do we ensure that Dana Majhis don't recur in the future? Can we rely on the mainstream press to seek these answers? Or is there an alternative to mainstream press?

The overall picture that Gramsci provides is not that of a static, closed system of ruling class domination. Rather, it is a society in a constant process where the creation of counter-hegemonies remains a live option. Hegemony, given its massive scale, is bound to be uneven in the degree of legitimacy it commands, thereby leaving some room for antagonistic cultural expressions to develop. Extending the same to media practices, one can't rule out an increased reliance on counter-hegemonic media by future media audiences to seek authentic answers to questions like the ones posed above.

Lessons can also be learnt from Mahatma Gandhi and his counter-hegemonic politics perfected during the freedom struggle. A silent refusal to obey the commands of a hegemonic overarching state and a relentless pursuit to build a nationalist hegemony that had the support of the masses was Gandhi's one-point agenda throughout the freedom struggle. Extensive use of alternate media, be it in the form of *Hind Swaraj* or *Navjivan* was the Gandhian way to beat the loud hegemonic voice. The strategy if perfected today may lead to a plethora of community media sprouting overnight to throw an ultimate challenge to the legitimacy enjoyed by a hegemonic mainstream media – the one that trivializes Dana's pain.

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Media Portrayal of Disability Issues: A Critical Overview

Aditi Panda

Abstract

A society, be it medieval or modern or post-modern has always been a platform to create awareness or raise a voice on numerous issues. Earlier the issues were limited to families or few people but after the birth of a new segment named Media things slowly changed. It so happened because Media plays a very projecting role in highlighting issues and present-day matters in society. It is the mirror of what people think about the whole issue and echoes the needs and desires of the vulnerable cohort, which also includes the trials and tribulations of persons with disabilities.

However, the representation of the disability population by media, especially in India has invited a discussion since it has many flaws and lacunae. Because Media has a far-flung reach and the ability to influence the thought process of the society towards looking at an issue, the onus on media is very important to address the concerns of the disadvantaged sections bringing to the forefront all the dimensions. But in reality, the focus continues to be naïve, shoddy and biased, with more emphasis on sympathy and the miserable condition of the disabled as if they lack the ability and are pathetic or feeble to achieve whatsoever in life.

Keywords: *Media, Disability, post-modern, society*

Approximations of the size of the population with disabilities in India differ greatly. India's Census 2011 reports that 2.21 percent of India's population or 26.8 million people live with disabilities. The World Health Organization and World Bank Report 2011, show that 15 percent of the global population lives with some form of disability; 12 percent are men and 19 percent are women. This inconsistency between Indian and international estimates can be attributed to discordant definitions of disability, lack of awareness and stigma, especially for women and girls which results in under-reporting. Under-representation in Indian census data contributes to exclusion from other government data sources. The National Family Health Survey and the National Crime Records Bureau do not include disaggregated data for persons with disabilities (Human Rights Watch Report, 2018)

Data in both developed and developing countries indicate that persons with disabilities are unreasonably represented among the world's most poor and be likely to be poorer than their peers without disabilities. Commercial and societal marginalization is a part and parcel

of the life of almost every person with disabilities, which is essentially a breach of human rights as well as a significant obstacle towards an inclusive development change. Our society has a rich diversity and it should have an inclusive attitude towards its members, including persons with disabilities, to strengthen vital human rights and contribute to equal development for all.

Information energizes the progress of transformation and development because it is only through communication that one gets evidence related to our close environs. To get information on national/international news, politics, innovations, sports, health facilities, science, or trade, the most popular form of media are Television, Radio and Telephones that are used directly or indirectly. Therefore, media is the leading source of broadcasting information which noticeably influences the judgment of the mass. Opinions or behaviours are based on what an individual identifies, understands and relates to from material collected through the different sources of information given by the media.

Media is referred to as the fourth pillar of democracy as it has a pivotal role to sway the progress of society as compared to any other mode of communication because of its direct connect with the thinking of the common man. Being the tool to act as a mirror of the society, it is expected from the media to reflect on the needs and aspirations of weaker sections and give equal focus to both their challenges as well as success stories in close relevance with their circumstances and issues since the discussions carry a lot of weight. However, the shortfalls in the representation of the disabled in media in India have invited even more deliberations and a placid response as the discussions continue to be immature, insufficient and incomplete with realistic flaws. Because of this the real situation and concerns of the disabled are yet to be understood and addressed (Haller, 2015).

A newspaper or television channel is a very significant form of media that makes people retrospect and see who they are, what they do and why their actions have consequences. It regulates difficult occurrences rooted in human hopes and struggles to help people, communities and the nation to move forward towards better daily lives (Kothari, 2004).

To develop an understanding of disability media must know about disability and various interrelated dimensions connected with persons with disabilities. The United Nations Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD-2008) defines disability not as a permanent state that is inherent in a person but a physical, intellectual, mental or sensory impairment that can be more or less disabling depending on the context in which it occurs. Disability is not an 'all-or-nothing' as we often use one single word, "disability", to cover many situations. Some disabilities can be highly visible, some are not; some are mild, others are more severe. Some forms of impairment or health conditions may result in temporary loss of function, while others are permanent. Some disabilities can be present at birth; others may occur at any time. During his/her life-cycle a person can experience any or all of these situations. The United Nations is committed to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all persons including persons with disabilities.

The first Rights of persons with disabilities Policy 2012 specifies that persons with any physical, mental, intellectual, developmental or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others come under the category of persons with disabilities.

According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) that is currently followed in India, 'person with disability' means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equivalent with others. It also states that a "person with benchmark disability" means a person with not less than forty percent of a specified disability where specified disability has not been defined in measurable terms and includes a person with a disability where specified disability has been defined in measurable terms, as certified by the certifying authority.

Each person has a different understanding towards looking at disability but on the whole, the persons with disabilities are thought-out as an entity of trouble, sympathy and consequently cut off or quarantined in the family as well as in the community. Civil society prefers to keep a forbearing distance and many times ignore them, thus pushing back the development of persons with disabilities. In India out of the 121 crore population, 2.68 crores are persons with disabilities, which is almost 2.21% of the total population (Census-2011).

Data has made it obvious that the disability population in India and the rest of the world is high, which makes it even more necessary to protect their interest, and in particular the women with disabilities as they face triple discrimination on basis of their gender, disability and vulnerability. Since the population is substantial, their contribution can be in reality utilized for nation-wide development. Needless to mention, it makes it even more necessary for the media of a democratic nation, to highlight their barriers and issues as it is their major responsibility to address the weaker sections including disability (Biswal, 2015).

Society and Mass Media

Mass media plays a very noteworthy role in determining public views on important issues through the information emanated and filtered from its various channels. At the same time media contributes to shaping modern culture and public judgment by choosing and depicting a specific set of theories, standards, and customs. It tries to make extensive efforts to contour truth to be more in line with that elucidation, by portraying a definite description of realism (Lorimer and Scannell, 1994; Webb, 2008).

Not only persons with disabilities, the Indian media, in its preliminary thirty years post-independence, ignored women or merely focused on middle-class domestic problems. But later, in the late seventies when women organizations started movements, media invariably played a key role in spreading information and ideas about the status of women in society and the need to improve it. 'The crucial role of media for transmitting the development information was well perceived in Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-99) when a separate Chapter

on “Communication, Information and Broadcasting” was included in the planned document. In this Chapter, mass media has been highlighted as, ‘A vehicle of education and extension to narrow the information gap between different target groups like youth, women, children and weaker sections’ (Roy, 1994).

However, currently, media is prejudiced, class-oriented and pro-advertisement leaving persons with disabilities in complete denial. Coverage of disabled-related issues in media is most minimal as media has become a lapdog instead of a watchdog and concentrates more on the page-3 kind of news that has scandals, glam and big names to get more readerships. The presence of the disabled has been ignored and their human resource to national development is undermined. Media in a democratic country like India is not performing its role properly and in the context of addressing disability issues is found unproductive. Its time media should pay more attention to the issues of the socially and economically disadvantaged sections including the disabled (Biswal, 2015).

Media in general and later social media as an intrinsic part of media is a motivation that satisfies the hunger for information of the people to widen their horizon and therefore it makes it even more essential that this information is dispersed undiluted (Guleria, 2012). Descriptions and stories reported by the media can intensely influence public opinion to set up partial societal customs and behaviour.

It’s very disappointing to see that today media in India is not conscious of the issues faced by persons with disabilities on basis of different dimensions like gender, geography, types and human rights. A person with a disability staying in the rural pocket has to face double discrimination than a disabled in urban areas. Women with disabilities face more discrimination than their male counterparts. Similarly, discrimination is different when the problem of diverse types of disability is taken into consideration. However, the media is yet to cover these aspects to resolve the issues (Mukherji, 2010; Nair, 2015). This indirectly results in media creating a wrong imprint about the persons with disabilities which the society accepts without cross-checking the actualities and genuineness of the situation.

To bring out the truth Media must have a closer look at the society in all its manifestation with a penetrating eye as the onus lies on the media to reflect the aspirations of the people and to spread good ideas. It must expose social evils and help to eradicate them. It is its responsibility to critically examine facts and objectively project them without apprehension or partiality. A journalist is a trustee of society and must not betray the trust reposed in him (Khosla, 2002).

To get correct news it is obligatory to comprehend the perception that the media has for persons with disabilities and to understand the main reasons behind the low depiction of disability representation on the Indian media front. It is also imperative to put forth the prejudice and prevailing approach that the media, even today registers towards looking at disability and weaves together an insight into the success stories of persons with disabilities from the grassroots who have managed to stand tall despite the war against disability.

Media and its Diverse Groups

India is an expanded country with a colossal populace therefore media is distributed in several categories. Message through media varies from common methods of communicating to satellite broadcasting, from a local two-page newspaper to multi-edition dailies, and right now is subjected to the escalating influence of the internet, especially on the next genre.

India has jumped in leaps and has come a long way in the field of communication and the use of media. Research confirms it by providing evidence that five decades back the level of literacy in India was only 18.33 percent (in 1951); whereas in 2001 the literacy level was 64.84 percent (Global Monitoring Report, 2007). As per the Census Report 2011, the literacy rate of India is 74% showing an upsurge (Census Report, 2011)

The two most popular and commonly used types of media are print and electronic. The role of media is to echo events taking place in society to provide a platform for dialogue and debate on issues that can generate social changes by letting the common man know about them. While electronic media carries more instant weight on focusing attention on various issues, it is print media that has a more insistent and long-term effect (Kumar, 1995).

Print media consists of newspapers, periodicals, newsletters, books and journals with an extensive acceptance of the people as a plausible source of information, edification and enjoyment. It is also well-known for speaking on different issues and updated knowledge on every happening in the world.

Today's techno-savvy generation prefers digital media communication as it is available hands-on and has both commercial and entertainment value. Since the youth is addicted to social media, they are niche users of social websites like Twitter and Facebook for not only interaction but also for communicating. Media plays a very prominent role in highlighting issues and current subjects in society by providing new subjects of thinking and analysis to society. With stress and overburden of work as a part of life, media helps to divert the minds and provides a stress buster to get away from personal worries and think of others who are in a worse situation.

Earlier in 1952, in a population of 1000 people, the newspaper was circulated among eight persons and only 2 persons out of 1000 had radio sets (Singhal, 2001). Television and radio are two other traditional types of communication media and have the potential to influence a huge number of audiences. In today's technologically savvy world and hectic schedules, Television and radio is the biggest source of entertainment and information which is easy to access and reaches a bigger audience.

In 2000, AIR programmes could be heard in two-thirds of all Indian households in 24 languages and 146 dialects with over 120 million radio sets (AIR, 1996-Ibid). Radio now covers almost the entire population of India. It has a great ability to inform, educate and entertain the people (Wadia, 2007) whereas Television is considered to be the most powerful persuasive mass communication medium having the power to bring any kind of transformation (Evertt, 2001).

Over the years, media has climbed steps of digital representation on diverse subjects but one thing has not changed much and that is the media reporting on issues related to disability, with a very impassive attitude and with more focus on issues using the gender perspective with a disadvantage.

Nevertheless, the depiction of the disabled by media, especially in India has invited a debate because of many flaws and voids. The role of media is very important to address the concerns of the disadvantaged sections bringing to the forefront all the dimensions as such deliberations measure a lot to bring a change in the approach of the civil society as well as the policymakers at the same time. Progressive and out of box thinking is needed to relate to authentic trials that the disabled face to survive to bring out a balance of good reporting.

The Portrayal of Disability Issues by Media

The twenty-first century is an age of information and technology boom. This century media is witnessing a transition to the age of social media and fast spread from a period when the print media comprising of newspapers and magazines ruled the roost. Today the old methods of disseminating news have been replaced by sting operations and data exploitation from social networking sites which are a huge reservoir of social and behavioural information available on the virtual world of the internet (Dhar, 2015).

In an egalitarian country like India, pro-active involvement of each citizen is necessary and that is possible only if they are well informed because of the sincere efforts of the media through its mammoth network. Steadily, media has become an integral part of daily life as it directly influences people's capacity to correlate in the public, intellectual and political fields. In the fast make-over seen in Indian society, print media holds a big contribution in shaping the attitude of the people and more so in terms of vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities.

Media is a vast public domain with no boundaries with a remarkable gift to reach people irrespective of age, sex, education, terrain and economical background they come from. But despite so many facets, the issues and news related to persons with disabilities are seldom covered in media and if at all they manage to squeeze in, they are habitually inept to break the negative stereotypes surrounding them, consequently resulting in inappropriate representation. This incessant surge of information has been instrumental to bring about a paradigm shift on different brainstorming developmental issues such as open defecation, several causes related to the environment, right to access information, protection of rights of women and children, social justice, etc. but so far its evident that media is unable to use its power to change the societal misconceptions and myths connected with disability and persons with disabilities and build a bridge between exploitation and disability.

All said and done, even in the present situation we find women journalists still trying to change the sexy distorted image of women in print media but until and unless developmental stories are given preferences and the readership profile changes, it's a difficult task ahead

and much remains to be achieved. Similar assumptions and myths shroud the thought process of the media towards persons with disabilities and thus an attitude of sympathy, dependency or helplessness dominates the content in the stories reported.

Even in those regions and communities where the social and religious taboos can no longer be enforced other aspects like poverty, illiteracy, prejudice and patriarchy keep a vast majority of women away from the print media even as readers. As regards the electronic media, even where the community radio and television are available, are manipulated by men viewers or on account of social inhibitions, women are unable to view or listen (Chopra, 2008). It is exactly on the same grounds that reporting on persons with disabilities, takes a back seat assuming that it will be read by only a few people who are closely associated with disability and the society would like to read some juicy gossip on a corrupt politician or a page 3 news which can entertain them over a cup of tea.

Secondly, it's sad to see that the persons with disabilities are never questioned and considered while writing stories about them assuming that they will not be able to talk and details, even though distorted are collected from others which hurts the sensitive minds of the persons with disabilities as their opinion is completely ignored while writing about them. The second-hand story, many a time fails to divulge the real incident and the focus of the reader is diverted leaving the reality behind or unsaid, thus dissolving the crux of reporting. The terminology used is inappropriate, derogatory and careless that hurts the esteem and individuality of the person with a disability.

There is more to persons with disabilities than abuse, poverty, discrimination and seclusion and it's time that media also concentrates on the achievements, their journey of life taking along disability as well as their fight with a disability to become a role model for others. There is no dearth of inspiring stories that can encourage not only other persons living with a disability but their non-disabled counterparts as well. Presently one of the most intelligent people and brilliant scientist Stephen Hawking was diagnosed with a rare neuron disease at the age of 21 with the doctors declaring that he would not live more than 3 more years at the most. By the age of 35, he became Cambridge University's first professor of Gravitational Physics. In 2009, he became paralyzed after losing control over all his body parts. He currently communicates through a specialized machine. His novel, titled "A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes", was an international bestseller.

In the context of India, the country is proud of internationally acclaimed and talented Para Olympians like Deepa Malik, Devendra Jhaharia, Thangavelu Mariyappan bagging gold medals for the country. Forty-year-old Swapna Augustine was born with no arms. This confident woman from Ernakulam stands out with her phenomenal achievements because of her unimaginable talents, including painting and drawing with her feet. She does everything including eating her food with her feet. But very few people are aware of these gems, who not only have achieved their goal but have conquered their disability to carve a niche for themselves in this competitive world.

Preethi Srinivasan, a person with Quadriplegia was a champion swimmer and has won a state-level gold in 50 meters breaststroke. Boniface Prabhu is a Padma Shree awardee wheelchair tennis player from India and has won a gold medal in shot put and a silver medal in the discus throw at the 1996 World Wheelchair Games, UK. He is the first Indian to win a medal in the International Paralympic Games. Arunima Sinha is the first female amputee to climb Mount Everest. She was pushed out of a general coach of the train by robbers wanting to snatch her bag and gold chain. As a result, her left leg had to be amputated below the knee. But she bounced back with sheer grit and determination. Girish Sharma, a badminton champion, has proved that no matter whatever the circumstances are, you can still be a champion in your preferred field in your life. This determined boy did not allow his disability to become an obstacle in achieving his goals.

Even in the film industry, we have seen persons with disabilities reaching heights of glory on basis of their ability and not sympathy. Ravindra Jain was born blind but has given music in hundreds of Hindi films and TV serials like Ramayana, which is still very popular. Sudha Chandran an accomplished Bharat Natyam dancer met a car accident at the tender age of 16. As a consequence, her right leg had to be amputated but she did not look back and showed the world that if a person has the will god will show the way.

Not only in sports have we have a wheelchair user Anjlee Agarwal working as a disability rights advocate, and an Accessibility expert well-known in the Asia Pacific region. She co-founded Samarthyam and works to promote, ensure and uphold the rights of girls and women with disabilities. How many Indians know about Jeeja Ghosh, born with cerebral palsy but completed her school education in India and later completed her second Master's Degree in Disability Studies from Leeds University, UK. In Odisha, Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, CEO of Swabhiman, a wheelchair user is famous for organizing the first Anjali Children & Youth Festival with the main focus on children with disabilities.

The incidence of disability changes life completely and can happen anytime to anybody. In an accident Mr. Ajit Jogi was affected due to severe damage to his spinal cord, paralyzing all his four limbs but that did not deter him four limbs paralyzed due to whip-lash injury to the neck and serious damage to the spinal cord from becoming the Member of Parliament from 2004 to 2008 from Mahasamund seat in Chhattisgarh. Dr. Suresh H. Advani is a reputed oncologist who is credited with pioneer hematopoietic stem cell transplantation in India. A Padma Bhushan awardee, Dr. Advani became affected with Polio at the age of eight years. He went on to study at the Grant Medical College, Mumbai where he earned the degrees of MBBS and MD.

There are a plethora of success stories available but the onus lies on the competent shoulders and the right attitude of reporters to scout for the right incidents with a fair mindset, which is correspondingly to highlight their challenges but at the same time also showcase their talent, aspiration, strengths and voices.

Steady Transformation in Attitude

Presently the lens through which disability was judged has changed for the better but it would become more welcoming and positive if it gets the correct and encouraging support from the media. Attention should be drawn to the image of disability by the media with a view to a careful and balanced portrayal of disability as a part of everyday life. Media can play an important role in presenting disability issues in a way that could dispel unconstructive typecast news in addition to depressing updates and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, options should be developed on how to represent persons with disabilities in various media and the importance of supporting the work of the United Nations to build a peaceful and inclusive society for all.

The United Nations Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities is a good guideline to enhance the effort of the media in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and their access to education, employment, health and other areas of development on an equal basis with others.

Use of Appropriate Terminology

It is extremely imperative to use the correct and sensitive words and language while writing about persons with disabilities. The reporters have to take proactive precautions to be thoughtful and evade words that might hurt the sentiments or respect of the concerned person with a disability when referring to them. The selected words should reflect dignity and respect. Because the media lack awareness and compassion on disability per se, they have no idea on the appropriate terminology that must be used while writing about persons of disabilities, as they are individuals first followed by disability.

The print media especially has to be even more careful when they pen the article or report a story. The most common words that cause hurt can be replaced by more courteous, thoughtful and self-respect which can unquestionably produce a good variance.

Inappropriate	Appropriate
The disabled, the handicapped	People with disabilities, the disability community
Crippled, suffers from, afflicted with, stricken with, a victim of, invalid	Has a disability, is a person with a disability
Normal person, healthy, whole	People without disabilities, able-bodied, person who can walk, a person who can see, etc.
The blind,	A person with visual impairment
The deaf	A person with hearing impairment
Wheelchair-bound, confined or restricted to a wheelchair	A person who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Handicap parking	Accessible parking, parking for people with disabilities
Dumb, mute	A person who cannot speak, has difficulty speaking, Person with a speech impairment, who has a speech disability,
CP victim, spastic	A person with cerebral palsy
Crippled, lame, deformed	A person with a disability walks with a cane,
Epileptic	A person with epilepsy, a person with a seizure disorder
Crazy, maniac, lunatic, insane, nuts, deranged, psycho, demented	People with emotional disorders, mental illness, mental health disability, psychiatric disability
Retard, mentally defective, moron, idiot, slow, imbecile, feeble-minded, Down's person, mongoloid	A person with a developmental disability, a person with mental retardation, person with a developmental delay
Slow learner, retarded	A person who has a learning disability
Paraplegic, quadriplegic	A person with spinal cord injury, a man with paraplegia, a woman who is paralyzed
Dwarf, midget	Short stature, little person
Birth defect	Congenital disability, birth anomaly
A post-polio suffered from polio	Has had polio, experienced polio
Homebound	Stay-at-home, hard for the person to get out
Senile, demented	A person with Alzheimer's disease, a person who has dementia

In today's world, the competition to report the news with chewy gossip of celebrities added with scams and scandals are more in demand because the public enjoys reading them

and hence the reporters are in a race to lay hands on them. But in this tug of war somewhere the real onus of media gets lost and encouraging stories are ignored. In the case of persons with disabilities, the media does not have to hunt for chances to write about them because the United Nations have already declared important days of global observance when positive and encouraging stories on persons with disabilities can be highlighted.

It will also create a positive impact if public figures, senior government officials, high profile celebrities from sports and entertainment can work together or be roped in to change societal perceptions about disability and raise awareness about the concerns of persons with disabilities. It is significantly necessary to include persons with disabilities and their organizations in concocting any media and communications strategy or event. A common slogan that echoed through the halls of UN Headquarters during the drafting of the Convention was ‘Nothing about us, without us’. Multi-stakeholder partnerships that include governments, UN system organizations, civil society organizations, as well as organizations of persons with disabilities are the way forward to advance the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

Media can be a vital tool in raising awareness, countering stigma and misinformation. It can be a powerful force to change societal assumptions and present persons with disabilities as individuals that are a part of human diversity. By increasing awareness and understanding of disability issues the diversity of the persons with disabilities and their situations, media can actively contribute to the effective and successful integration of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social life. Indeed the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities requires states to raise awareness and combat stereotypes related to persons with disabilities including by encouraging all media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with respect for human rights.

Sensitive Reporting

It is more important to analyze how the persons with disabilities want to be called, as the emphasis on the person should be more and not the disability. Society including the media does not realize that the disabled are disabled, not because of their disability but because of the barriers the society has put in front of them. More concentration is given to sympathy or abuse when the biggest atrocities, especially on women with disabilities like Forced sterilization and forced abortion are happening in large numbers in society. The media should pay to concentrate more on the positive, the genuine and give a natural picture, while reporting disability.

More than the reporters the editors or publishers stop these stories because of sustainable reasons. There is heavy competition and the electronic media has to achieve the TRPS as well as cater to public demand. More demand is given to gossip and commercial value. Empowerment and success stories on persons with disabilities are ignored and less written about. More focus on sympathy and pity is shown while writing on persons with disabilities

Concluding Observations

Media does not only influence the social image of persons with disabilities but also their personality because a lot of people follow the view of the media blindly as they believe in what the media states without reasoning or any qualms. Media affects their socialization process; it influences the general public about the status of the persons with disabilities, how they behave and their social acceptance, what they learn, and what they ultimately want from society.

The intersection between gender and disability itself is a social, monetary, health and human rights issue. Persons with Disabilities are neglected but women with disabilities face triple discrimination in society. Because of isolation and stigma, women with disabilities continue to be neglected both in disability-specific and gender-specific programs and policies with even lesser chances to share their vision and apprehension. They face violence within the security of their homes or in society and a majority of their voices stay unheard and their issues unaddressed. Disaggregated and discriminated data on correct numbers of women with disabilities facing violence both at home and in the community, disgrace and lack of suitable machinery together increase the number of unreported incidences with media only concentrating on disability and not on the real incidents. Fewer cases get highlighted and that too with a sporadic readership because of unprofessional narration. Since media has a very strong role to bring a change in this issue and, proper perceptive and understanding can produce better reporting on atrocities on women with disabilities with more weight on the reality and not fictitious facts to create a buzz.

The reporters are saddled with loads of work that they stick to the regularly available stories than hunt for out-of-the-box stories that require more time and effort to report sensitive issues, including persons with disabilities. Even if the reporters do a good story more energy is spent on convincing the media heads to publish it because it lacks the glamour and juicy gossip.

According to the Social Responsibility Theory, the onus is on the media persons and portals to put into practice self-regulation along with state regulation as well as high professional standards to create content. The majority of the experts also approve that with the Social Responsibility Theory, the content has to be self-censored and must be in agreement with the laws of the state and country.

This action on the persons of disabilities and especially the women with disabilities by the media, in its place of decreasing their isolation, increases it further. Instead of empowering them, it deteriorates them both emotionally and mentally. They remain unheard, unrepresented and more inexpressible than before. The print media succeeds in depoliticizing their miseries and issues. Nevertheless, the media is duty-bound to endorse impartial and non-stereotype representation of persons with disabilities in their numerous roles. A collaboration of the UN mechanism, government, NGOs and private sector should come together and forge joint strategies to promote balanced and unbiased representation of the persons with disabilities to help them become an integral part of the mainstream.

In its pristine unrestrained role, media should cultivate a broad ethical content and moralistic desire in the society which is very essential for the emergence of civil society by including persons with disabilities. Moreover for society's abiding advantage media must cultivate a change to send out the right message by helping the overall development of persons with disabilities by giving the right message. Media must play the positive role of a shield and advocate for human rights by depicting disability decorously to create an inclusive society to attain the mandate of the Sustainable Development Goals, 2030.

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Diffusion of Good Governance Practices Through Documentary Films for Social Change: An Exploration

Shiv Shankar Das

Abstract

Documentary films being based on actuality have become a powerful tool for raising awareness about real-life issues and calling individuals and groups to action. It conveys an informing logic that has the ability to impact and reframe public attitudes about happenings in their socio-ecological system, thus serving as a strategic communication intervention for social change. Simply put, good governance is all about the process of right decision-making and its implementation for nation-building. Its key characteristics are participation, transparency, consensus-orientation, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency. Social change is a natural outcome of good governance and both have a strong symbiotic relationship. Realising the potentiality of documentary films to galvanise people into action, the government machinery has been producing them on good governance practices in different parts of the country and disseminating them for replication. Textual analysis of two documentary films on good governance initiatives produced by PIB and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India will be done to further our understanding. This paper will delve into the why and how documentary films can act as agents of change for social good and affirmative governance.

Keywords: *Actuality, informing logic, public attitudes, strategic communication, transparency*

Good Governance and its Facets

For truly democratizing Indian democracy, we must embark on a continual and systematic process of governance for social good. Fundamentally, it has to be broad-based and inclusive, thus ushering in socio-economic equity through administrative mechanisms. Strengthening collaboration, trust-building, and confidence among citizens on the state machinery is the guiding philosophy of good governance. The identifying features of good governance architecture are participation, transparency, accountability and effectiveness. A normative concept can be understood as the ability of the social actors to perform efficiently and responsively for the common good of society.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific points out that good governance assures corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Effective governance is the prime instrument through which egalitarianism can percolate into all strata of our society and open new vistas for them. Miriam Wyman (2001) in her paper 'Thinking about Governance' says that good governance addresses certain central issues: Universal protection of human rights; non-discriminatory laws; efficient, impartial and rapid judicial processes; transparent public agencies; accountability for decisions by public officials; devolution of resources and decision making to local levels from the capital; and meaningful participation by citizens in debating public policies and choices.

Good governance can take democracy closer to people, empower them and create the desired social capital. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK has highlighted the various dimensions of good governance. First of all, there's a *technical dimension* of the concept, which refers to the economic aspect of governance, namely the transparency of government accounts, the effectiveness of public resources management, and the stability of the regulatory environment for private sector activity. Secondly, the *social dimension*, i.e. to build, strengthen and promote democratic institutions as well as tolerance throughout society. And thirdly, the *political dimension* refers to the legitimacy of government, the accountability of the political elements of government and respect for human rights and the Rule of Law.

Documentary Films and Social Change

The operating principle of real governance is creating blueprints of innovative practices and implementing them on the ground for perceptible changes in society. Transformative social change espouses stimulation through initiation and adaptation of governance practices that can lead to empowered citizens. Sharing a symbiotic relationship, social change is a natural outcome of affirmative governance. The rapid diffusion of new ideas, services and practice can help accelerate real and positive social advancement.

Audio-visual media especially 'Documentary Films' are effective mechanisms to create meaningful connections with its viewers. There is evidence that documentary films are considered to be more realistic than fiction cinema. Higher perceptions of reality and factuality positively affect learning and engagement among the public. They can amplify the messages and can be an effective instrument of good governance by building credibility, and trust among the targeted audience. A documentary film possesses the exceptional ability to transport us to new places, play with our imaginations, test our senses, challenge our conceptions, educate us and entertain. They can transform our realities for hours at a time. It can push our boundaries of thought and experience and introduce us to people and places we never imagined we would meet. The film has become a significant socio-cultural text in the contemporary public sphere, a medium for producing meaning, and informing citizens.

Documentaries build coherence by weaving facts and evidence into a concrete whole that has a resonance in life. They do so by repairing the “directionlessness” of the social world. (Spence and Navarro, 2011). To understand documentary films, some kind of theoretical device will be useful. A leading methodology is the *Five Modes of Documentary Representation*, devised by Bill Nichols (2010). The first mode is *expository* in which the films directly address the viewer. They produce an argument about the occurrences which help solve the problem. In the *observational mode*, there is a direct representation of life as seen through the camera. There is an interaction between the filmmaker and subject through interviews in the *interactive mode*. Here the filmmaker overtly participates with the subject in the examination of the issue. *The reflexive mode* analyzes the process of representation through the documentary convention. The final mode which is termed *performative* emphasizes the emotional impact of documentary films on the audience. Techniques associated with fiction films such as restaged events or edited montages are used.

With contents derived from real events, persons and places, along with formal filmic elements like composition, lighting & sound, documentaries provide information, reason and argument for a penetrative insight into different issues that plague our society. ‘When is fiction as good as fact? Comparing the influence of documentary and historical reenactment films on engagement, affect, issue interest and learning’ - a study by Heather L. LaMarre and Kirsten D. Landreville (2009), analyse the influence of a political documentary with that of a historical engagement film in terms of narrative engagement, affect, learning and interest. The Rwandan genocide has been taken as the context, a documentary film- *The triumph of evil* and a historical reenactment fiction film- *Hotel Rwanda* were compared. The study found that documentary films evoked emotion just as much and at times more than a fictional account of an occurrence. Real footage, real people and no scripts are used for presentation in the documentary film. This helped in eliciting strong emotions in the audience. A direct outcome of this is the increase of interest and knowledge about the issue. As a result, socio-political documentaries can play a pivotal role in both informing and engaging the electorate. Such evidence also suggests that documentaries as a form of political information have the potential to strongly influence public opinion. Thus, a documentary film interprets reality by recording real people and settings. Embodied experience, character empathy and consequentiality are defining characteristics of documentary films that can create the ground for the desired transformation.

Production of Documentary Films on Best Practices in Good Governance

The Press Information Bureau (PIB) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India have been producing documentary films on good governance practices across the country. Some of them are Bangalore Agenda Task Force, Lost World Regained (Kutch Rehabilitation in Gujarat), Vadodara Wins (One Day Governance in Vadodara, Gujarat), Bridging the Digital Divide (Akshaya Project in Kerala), Khushiyon Ki Manjil - A documentary film on Integrated Odisha Treasury Management

System, Eco-Tourism in Himachal Pradesh, People's Movement against Throwaway Plastics in TamilNadu, Bhoomi (Online Delivery of Land Records in Karnataka), E-Seva –the one-stop Shop (Andhra Pradesh), MEGHDOOT- A Film on Cloud Telephony and IVRS based daily monitoring system of Mid-Day Meal in Uttar Pradesh, Window of Joy (Citizen Facilitation Centre in Kalyan Dombivili, Maharashtra and Bhagidari – Partnership Redefined (Govt. of NCT of Delhi).

These films play a pivotal role in acting as a canvas to showcase success stories as well as motivate others for replication of best practices elsewhere also.

Documentary Film Analysis

Textual Analysis as a research tool

It is useful for researchers working in media studies, cultural studies and sociology. Fundamentally an interpretation of texts (films, television programme, advertisements and so on) it is applied in order to find out how people interpret reality around them and their sense-making practice. The purpose is to describe the content, structure and functions of the messages contained in texts.

Textual analysis of a film involves observing and analysing all the filmic elements such as narration, camera angles, sound and sequencing that create meaning for the film. It also involves understanding how the film fits into the historical, socio-cultural and political environment. Thus, leading to a thorough understanding of the film and the impact it creates on the audience.

Two documentary films *Khushiyon Ko Manjil* - A documentary film on Integrated Odisha Treasury Management System & MEGHDOOT- A Film on Cloud Telephony and IVRS based daily monitoring system of Mid-Day Meal in Uttar Pradesh on good governance initiative produced by PIB and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India have been analysed to further our understanding.

Khushiyon Ko Manjil - A documentary film on Integrated Odisha Treasury Management System. Produced by PIB India Running Time: 14 minutes, language: Hindi

iOTMS, launched in Odisha on December 12th, 2009, is a ground-breaking measure for transforming the financial services of the state. An innovative initiative by the Department of Administrative Reforms, it has acted as a springboard for the development of Odisha. Be it pension money or payment of taxes, this e-governance system has proved to be a boon for people in urban as well as in far-flung areas. Without any hassle, money is being transferred to their bank accounts directly from the treasury and tax payments are being made with the click of a mouse. It connects the state's Directorate of Treasuries & Inspection directly to 30 district treasuries, which is connected with the Bhubaneswar-based cyber treasury. This online treasury system serves 6967 DDO (drawing and disbursing officers). Also, in addition to the 40 administrative departments, they now use online transactions seamlessly from the allocated

budget. Being accessible from anywhere across the globe via Internet 24 x 7, public works has fastened and human error has been removed. This treasury portal is now attached to thirteen public sector banks and three private sector banks facilitating online tax payment. 80% of the taxpayer have benefited from the simplified e.payment system. The commercial tax department has gained a lot too. The built-in online grievance management has proved to be highly beneficial for the citizens. Toll-free numbers with help desk, free download of important forms, notices circulars etc and online tracking system of applications and complaints has brought a sea change in Public Service Delivery. It has ushered in transparency and made the process of accounting and planning smooth for the higher echelons of Administration. Any citizens after surfing the treasury portal, can see any department's budgetary allocation, expenditure and money unspent for work. All data are now in the public domain. The receipt payment and disbursement of cheques have increased 5 times saving 68 lakh 28000 and 12 man-hours along with 20000 reams of paper. The end beneficiaries have vouched for the efficacy of the system. The Government of India has awarded the iOTMS with the National Award on e-Governance in the category of best e-government portal in the year 2012. It was also declared the site of the week in the first week of January 2012 in the Government of India web directory. Computer Society of India gave it a Nihilent e-governance award in the G2G category. Recently it has been declared as Winner of " National SKOCH Order of Merit Award ", 2016, Winner of "SKOCH Smart Governance " for 2016 and Best State in the category of "Subscriber Record Maintenance" in NPS by PFRDA for the year 2016.

MEGHDOOT- A Film on Cloud Telephony and IVRS-based daily monitoring system of Mid-Day Meal in Uttar Pradesh. Produced by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievance, Government of India. Running Time:13 minutes, language: Hindi

The introduction of this system has come about as a game-changer for monitoring the right implementation of the mid-day meal scheme. The overriding principle of the mid-meal scheme is to bring about a holistic development of the children through the availability of both- education and nutritious food. It was launched in Government schools and government-aided schools across the country. Even though Uttar Pradesh launched this ambitious project in 2004 itself, it did not prove to be as effective due to a lack of a dedicated monitoring system that could effectively gauge that on any given day how many students had food, how many students were present in school, in which school food was cooked and in which school food was not cooked. Earlier these reports used to be sent to the head office after a few months or just once in a month. The official had no option but to accept whatever was mentioned in the registers. With the new system, most of these anomalies have been removed. Nowadays information is recorded as soon as the meal is distributed. A call is made from the daily monitoring system and all the information gets duly get registered. Cloud telephony and IVRS's best daily monitoring system have brought about accountability and transparency in the mid-day meal programme. This, in turn, has boosted attendance in school. With just a click of the mouse, the entire data of the state's 1.5 Lakh schools is available on your computer screen through cloud telephone and IVRS. Every day after a mid-day meal is

served, the teacher-in-charge in every school gets a call from a virtual number on which on which they give all required information. This is recorded in the server database and all this information is uploaded on the Uttar Pradesh mid-day meal authority's website. School teachers, block and district officials are also extremely happy with this system as it has eased their job. Being user-friendly, the adoption rate for this mechanism is very high. It indeed was a unique experiment and the biggest evidence of this is that at the time of implementation of the system mid-day meal was not being cooked in a large number of schools but ever since the execution of the system, the number has come down drastically. As a result, every day lakhs of children who were not receiving meals are now getting it. It has also been able to monitor the quality and quantity of the given food. The success of the system has led to it being presented with a Gold Award of national e-governance award 2011-12 by the Government of India.

Cinematic Elements of the Documentary Films and Meaning-Making

The films use both expository and interactive modes of documentary film-making which bring reality and context to the film. Using a number of direct interviews of experts and end-beneficiaries; they help develop an insight into how the systems are strategic interventions for efficient governance.

Utilizing a 'Voice of God' commentary for a more explicit point of view(POV), it clearly aligns the spectators with its central narrative. The films are largely linear, have a close end and provide developmental functionality.

Ideational montages which convey ideas visually by putting them in a specific order and link actions with words have been used in documentaries. The camera moves into the medium close-up for intensity and emotion and is also interspersed with talking heads along with reaction shots, thus eliciting the desired impression on the audience. On the soundtrack, non-diegetic sounds like music, narration and sound effects enhance and work towards creating the right effect. The juxtaposition of these techniques has a profound impact on how viewers read the film.

Epilogue

Documentary films make citizens co-witnessing spectators by submission of evidence. This, in turn, invokes democratic consciousness which translates into the larger goal of nation-building. They project an interpretative frame on different issues by being credible, convincing and compelling. Acting as sparks for social change, they create an attention-gaining perspective, an informing logic through which people see and interpret social affairs. Defined as actualities, they have an inherent ability to leave strong imprints in the psyche of the public. Such films can be powerful amplifiers for best practices in governance and action-inducing civic agents. This thinking is validated by the strong thrust given to the production of documentaries by the government machinery for the display and replication of good governance methods.

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A Study on Social Media Activism for Crimes Against Dalits

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the effect of social media in changing the path of justice for crimes against Dalits and thereby to, understand the status of the Dalit community and find ways to sensitize the human rights issue. In this research, the focus is on finding which medium is focused to report and sensitize the violence against Dalits and the role, social medium is playing to be the voice of the voiceless. As social media are potential influencer among the young generation, and the emerging science of social networks has transformative power, the scope of the medium to bring justice for crimes related to Dalits need to be studied.

Keywords: *Social Media, Justice for crimes against Dalits, Dalit Atrocities, Hathras gang-rape case.*

Living in a democratic nation where the right to freedom of speech is available to all of its citizens, anyone that attempts to rob another of his/her right to speak out and be heard should be punished appropriately and educated otherwise. The struggle for Dalit empowerment has been around for several years and despite the several accomplishments India has accumulated, empowerment of the Dalit caste is not one of them. The dearth of media coverage of Dalit-related issues and the severe mistreatment of Dalits in India is appalling. This study paper delves into the problems faced by Dalits and how Social Media is an effective tool in combating the oppression they face.

Every day, Dalits face severe discrimination at home, in their place of work, and even in general public spaces and many cases go unreported. However, even the cases that are filed go unreported, and instead, media industries tend to focus on the issues concerning people belonging to 'upper' caste families. This scarcity in Dalit news is what is preventing the Dalits from rising from under the oppression that they have been facing for several years. Because we live in the golden era of Social Media, all Social Media feeds are blanketed in posts for "Black Lives Matter" and other important movements that are happening internationally. However, many Indians fail to spread awareness and sign petitions to help people suffering within the nation such as Dalits.

The booming cases of COVID-19 have made the current living environment chronic and frightening. People have been threatened and traumatized by the situation as it only leads to the immense downfall of their livelihood. The harsh reality is that not only are they deprived of basic needs and economic opportunities but they are also facing discrimination in society, domestic violence, the problem of hunger leading to starvation and death, and the drastic increase in rape cases of young Dalit girls and women.

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the effect of social media is changing the path of justice for crimes against Dalits and thereby to, understand the status of the Dalits community and find ways to sensitize the human rights issue. In this research, the focus is on finding which medium is focused to report and sensitize the violence against Dalits and the role social medium is playing to be the voice of the voiceless. As social media are potential influencer among the young generation, and the emerging science of social networks has transformative power, the scope of the medium to bring justice for crimes related to Dalits need to be studied.

The term Dalit refers to an age-old Caste created by the tyrannical caste system in ancient India. Although the 21st century has witnessed a lot of changes for the better, the severe maltreatment of Dalits and the dearth of coverage of Dalit Atrocities combined with the lack of representation via Mainstream Media is appalling. This study paper delves into the problems faced by Dalits and how Social Media is an effective tool in combating the oppression they face. Through an extensive review of literature, a specialized survey, and some case studies, the objective is to prove or disprove that “Social Media attention changes the path of justice for crimes against Dalits.

Crime Against Dalits: a Human Rights Issue

Dalits have faced and continue to face centuries-old caste-based discrimination and continue to be undermined by the so-called developed society. Caste-related violence and crimes have occurred and occur in India in various forms such as atrocities, rapes, domestic violence, abduction, robberies, and so on. The then-recent increase in the cases of atrocities on Scheduled Castes (SC) and other crimes against “backward” castes has unsettled the entire socio-political ambiance of the Indian society. The sad facts are that within the Dalit community women face a harsher reality due to gender discrimination. Since 2005 (to 2016) there have been over 253 cases of violence against Dalit women with the substantial incriminating evidence. Moreover, after reviewing the cases it was recognized that more than 70% of these crimes were committed because the women involved tried to assert their rights and challenge caste and gender norms (Sirswal, Desh Raj. 2015)

Although several Acts and Laws have been imparted, justice is still delayed and most often denied. A shocking reason as to why the Dalits do not experience equity of treatment is because of the continuing belief that there are different sects of people based on where they come from and the belief that they do not deserve the same freedom as the people that

hail from higher caste households. Many Dalits are illiterate, god-fearing, and ignorant and hence they practice caste discrimination among themselves, on a much lower scale compared to the discrimination imparted by the higher caste onto them. During the process of seeking justice via special laws, the victims have to endure a long and tiresome process often involving high expenditure and during this time the accused party tends to indulge in various mischievous activities such as bribing officials, tampering with evidence, threatening victims, and their witnesses and so on. The rights for Dalits cannot be attained if they simply spectate and do not stand up for themselves. Besides, if India wants to become a superpower of a nation and develop them further, there is a lot that has to be done to protect all the people of the nation and they should not just protect and promote the people that come from “higher” walks of life (Sirswal, Desh Raj. 2015).

Mainstream Media and Dalit

Great majorities of the people that are offered jobs in the Media industry are people from forwarding castes and the people from lower castes have a very minor voice in newspapers. Hence there is an under-representation of Dalits in the field of Indian Media has led to the exclusion of Dalit-centered news. Robin Jeffrey, a Canadian-born professor that resided in India wrote “Almost no Dalits worked in the Indian press as reporters or sub-editors. There were no Dalit editors and no Dalit-run dailies.” To diversify the newsroom, all Media outlets must employ and communicate with people from the different castes and religions that tend to be neglected when it comes to the reporting of news. Moreover, the employment process in Media outlets should be transparent to avoid discrimination in the workplace (Balasubramaniam, J. 2011)

Mainstream media is under severe criticism from Dalit reformers for being casteist. Dalits have tried to run their media on par with Mainstream media, be it Print or Audio-Visual since the evolution of mass communication. However, owing to many factors, their media platforms did not survive, and on the rare occasion that they did – they were never on the same level as Media that was spearheaded by the “upper” class. Most of the Indian broadcast media powerhouses are owned by people hailing from “upper” class families and hence, unsurprisingly they give less importance to Dalit issues and seldom recruit Dalits as journalists in their media. (Kumar, C.S., &Subramani, R. 2014).

Social Media Activism

India is home to over 200 million Dalits but their economic, social and political issues are very rarely reported by mainstream media and when it is reported – the articles are short and lack the statistics and information needed to highlight the issues. Hence, the need for an alternative platform for Dalits to speak up was necessary. Social Media has been a blessing in disguise for the Dalit community. Due to the sudden popularity that social media has gained, especially in recent times, Dalits that have access to the internet have taken to blogs and social media applications to share their common concerns and even raise theoretical,

philosophical, and sociological questions against the age-old caste system and the discrimination that followed because of the same (Ippili et al. 2017)

By giving Dalits a platform to express their sentiments on crimes and issues about them they are indirectly forcing Mainstream media to look up and pay attention. Slowly, Print media and Visual media have understood that they can no longer turn a blind eye towards these issues because of the popularity that they have gained on social networking platforms. Therefore, Print and Visual media quote and publish articles, posts, and blogs from Social media in their publication (Ippili et al. 2017).

Research Methodology

The quantitative Random sampling method was applied to collect data from people within the age group of 15-50 years. For this, a questionnaire was used as a tool and was filled by 120 respondents out of 150. Google and Microsoft aid was taken in conducting a survey and compiling facts and condensing the information into statistical data.

The Qualitative case studies were conducted with three cases namely, to understand the role played by the social media attention in changing the path of justice for crimes against Dalits.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from the survey has been graphically represented below.

Of the 120 people that took part in the survey, 57.5% of people were between the ages of 18 - 25, 34.2% of people were below 18 years of age, 3.3% of people were aged 46 and above, 3.3% of people were between the ages of 36 - 45 and 1.7% of people were between the ages of 18 - 25. Out of 120 participants, 65.8% identify as female, 31.7% identify as male and 2.5% identify as gender fluid.

From the data collected, it was noted that 85.8% of people learned more about Dalit Atrocities through Social Media platforms not limited to but including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. The remaining 14.2% of people learned more about Dalit Atrocities from Mainstream Media such as Newspapers and News Channels.

From the data collected, it is evident that 81.7% of people have read/seen the news about Dalit Atrocities via Social Media, 39.2% has read/seen the news about Dalit Atrocities on News Channels, 26.7% has read/seen the news about Dalit Atrocities in Newspapers and only 5.8% of people have witnessed Dalit Atrocities in real-life situations. Of the remaining percentile, 1.7% of people have never read/seen the news about Dalit Atrocities and 1.7% of people have learned about it in educational environments.

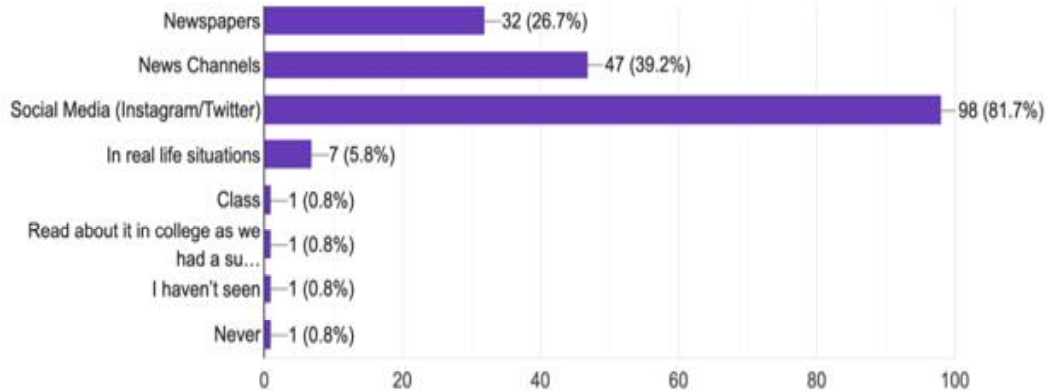


Fig1: Where people have you read/seen the news about Dalit Atrocities

From the data given above we can see that 65% of people have seen ‘#DalitLivesMatter’ on their Social Media feed, 25% of people have not, and 10% of people have maybe seen ‘#DalitLivesMatter’ on their Social Media feed.

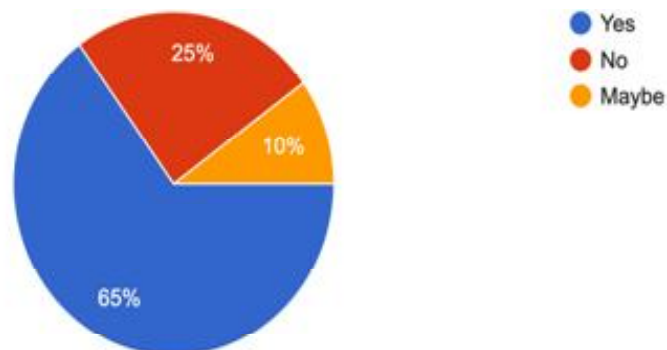


Fig 2: Percentage of people seen #DalitLivesMatter on social media feed.

According to the data collected, 69.2 of people agree social media platforms contain more information on Dalit atrocities when compared to newspapers, 25% of people have a neutral opinion, 4.2% disagree with the statement and 1.7% strongly agree with the given statement.

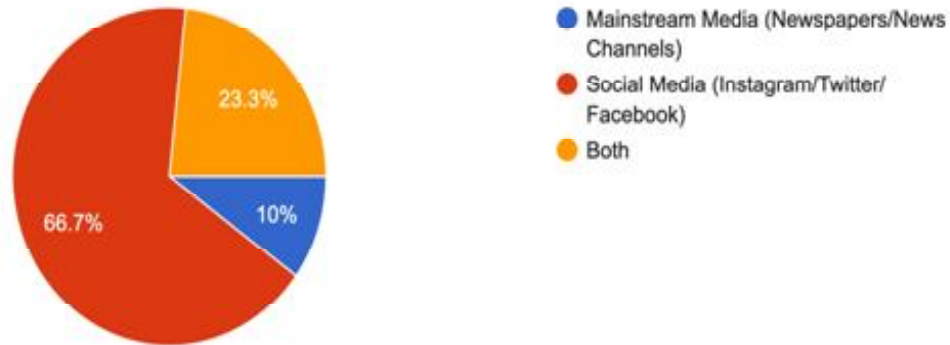


Fig 3: Medium which focuses on Dalit atrocities

When asked about which medium focuses issues related to Dalit, 66.7% of people have paid more attention to Dalit Atrocities because of Social Media not limited to but including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. 10% of people have paid more attention to Dalit Atrocities because of Mainstream media such as Newspapers and News Channels. 23.3% of people have paid more attention to Dalit Atrocities because of both Mainstream Media and Social Media.

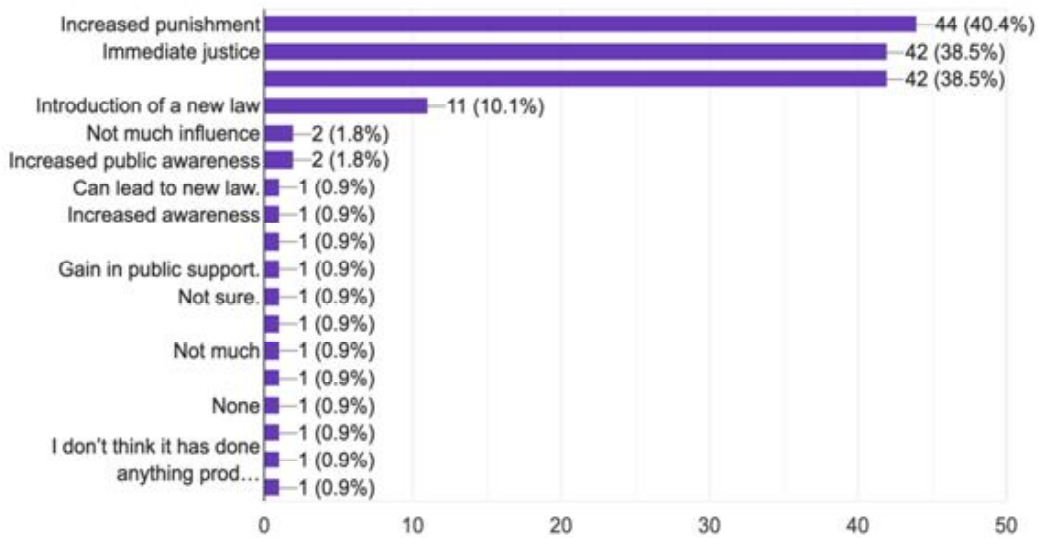


Fig 4: Influence of social media attention in Dalit cases.

According to the data collected, 40.4% of people believe that Social Media attention has increased the punishment that the perpetrators receive, 38.5% of people say that immediate justice is granted because of Social Media attention, 10.1% believe that Social Media attention has led to the introduction of a new law, 1.8% of people believe that Social Media does not have much of an influence on Dalit cases and 1.8% of people believe that Social Media attention has led to an increase in awareness. The remaining percentiles are unsure of the effect of Social Media on Dalit cases and/or believe that Social Media has not affected Dalit cases.

When asked about social media attention to change the path of justice for the crime against Dalits, 64.2% of people believe that Social Media attention helps in changing the path of justice for Crimes against Dalits, 28.3% believe that Social Media attention maybe help in changing the path of justice for Crimes against Dalits and the remaining 7.5% believe that Social Media attention does not help in changing the path of justice for Crimes against Dalits.

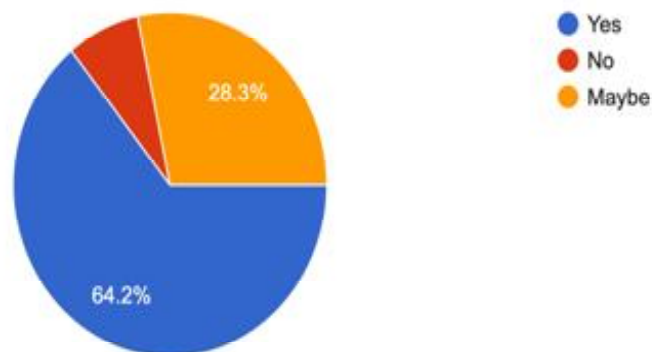


Fig 5: social media attention to change the path of justice for crime against Dalits.

From the data collected, it was noted that 71.7% of people believe that Social Media attention is helping Dalits in their fight for justice and 28.3% of people believe that Social Media attention is not helping Dalits in their fight for justice. The people that believe that Social Media attention is helping Dalits in their fight for justice were asked to state the reason they said yes. The Majority of the people said that Social Media platforms help in creating awareness regarding Dalit-related issues especially among the youth who are avid users of Social Media. They also said that Social Media attention forces Mainstream media to report Dalit-related issues and that the awareness created in turn forces the Government to provide immediate justice.

Case Study 1: Hathras Gang Rape

On 14th September 2020, a 19-year-old girl was gang-raped in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh. The girl had gone to the farm to collect cattle fodder when four men- Sandip, Ramu, Lavkush, and Ravi- allegedly dragged her away using her dupatta thereby injuring her spinal cord which later left her paralyzed. The perpetrators tried to strangle her as she resisted rape. Her cries were heard by her mother who found her on the floor of the barn with her tongue cut off. She was taken to Chand Pa police station, where the police denied her claims and allegedly humiliated the family. It was only six days after the gang rape, on 20th September, that a complaint was registered, and only on 22nd September did the police record the victim's statement. The victim recorded three statements wherein she mentioned that she was raped and strangled when she tried to resist the sexual assault. The victim's mother claimed that Lavkush and Sandip had been harassing her and the victim for months before the crime happened. On 14th September, the victim was admitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital in Aligarh, but she was later shifted to Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi after her condition worsened. The victim died on 29th September 2020. She was cremated by the Uttar Pradesh police on 29th September at around 2:30 am without the consent or knowledge of the victim's family. The brother alleged that they were locked up in the house while the body was forcibly taken and cremated by the police and that petrol was used in the cremation. However, Prashant Kumar (ADG) opposed the brother's allegations and said that the family granted the police consent. Although the four perpetrators were arrested, the victim's brother claimed that no arrests were made within the first 10 days of the gang rape.

Caste discrimination in the Case:

The four men that gang-raped the victim belonged to Thakur/Rajput caste. The Thakur caste is said to own the largest share of land in rural India which makes them immensely powerful in comparison to the victim who belonged to the Dalit community. It is because of the caste system that is still in practice in some places that the women belonging to the Dalit community are treated any way possible despite their rights by castes that are considered superior.

The Involvement of Social Media:

Social Media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram played major roles in the granting of justice for the Hathras Gang Rape. The case received widespread condemnation by the people of India and also led to protests in opposition to the Uttar Pradesh Government. With more than hundreds of tweets and more than 20,000 posts on Instagram excluding the number of shares, re-tweets, and re-posts - this case took Social Media platforms by storm. The Hathras Gang Rape case led to 293 news articles, 798 videos, 2 podcasts, 21 forums, and 271 blogs.

Observations:

If not for the extensive use of #HathrasGangRape and the many mentions of *HathrasHorror*, it is possible that the case would not have been solved as soon as it had been (post the delay caused by the police). It is the use of Social Media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter that not only sped up the process of justice by putting the Government and the Uttar Pradesh police department on the hot-seat but also increased awareness of the horrific crimes that take place due to the living instances of caste discrimination that stems from the ancient Indian caste system. By signing petitions via Social Media and exercising democratic rights, the people of India and their smartphones aided in serving justice to the unfortunate victim and her family.

Case Study 2: Balrampur Gang Rape

A 22-year-old Dalit girl was gang-raped and assaulted on 29th September in Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh. The victim, who was a second-year B.Com student, was returning home when she was abducted by a few men and forced into their car. The men then injected her with sedatives and raped her. The cruel men then broke the girl's legs and sent her back in a rickshaw. The victim returned home in a serious condition and was on her way to the hospital when she passed away. The mother alleges that her daughter also complained about a sudden burning sensation in her stomach despite barely being able to speak due to the frightening happenings earlier in the day. According to the postmortem report, the poor girl was severely tortured even after she was raped. The report stated that there were at least ten antemortem injuries on her body, eight contusion wounds on her cheek, chest, elbows, left thigh, and two abrasions on her left leg and knee. As per some news reports, she was unable to speak and "could only manage to utter the words – I am in a lot of pain, I won't survive." The police were quick to act on the case due to the condemnation that Uttar Pradesh had received for the Hathras Gang Rape that had happened only 15 days before the Balrampur Gang Rape. The victim died on Tuesday but national media picked up the news on Thursday, after facing heavy backlash on Social Media platforms over sexual assault and caste violence in India. The deceased 22-year-old was cremated at night on 30th September in the presence of her family and members of the Uttar Pradesh police department. The Balrampur Superintendent of Police DevRanjanVerma said, "the police acted upon the parent's complaint, and identified the accused as Shahid and Sahil and arrested them". The police suspected that the girl had been raped in the backroom of a grocery store because they had found her footwear outside the grocery store and they believed that the owner of the grocery store was the alleged mastermind behind the crime.

Caste Discrimination in the case:

The girl belonged to the Dalit community which is looked down on in many Indian states even today. Many Dalit women undergo severe discrimination and studies show that Dalit women are raped almost every other day. The inbred ideology that the age-old caste

system has ingrained into the minds of several people in India regarding the superiority of other castes over the Dalit community is a large underlying reason behind the severe assault that Dalit women face every day.

The Involvement of Social Media:

Due to how recently the case is considered and how quickly the case was shut, the social media analytics are not large in number but most of the tweets and posts that are being considered have been shared, liked, re-tweeted, and quote-tweeted several times. When collecting data, the # Balrampur Gang Rape was mentioned 93 times on Twitter since the crime was reported to date (27th October). 110 Instagram mentions in posts have been recorded regarding this case. This data does not include the number of times the posts have been shared or reposted. 33 news articles, 52 videos, and 2 blogs have been posted according to the research conducted.

Observations:

Although the case did not spread as much as other cases, Social Media still helped in changing the path of justice for this case due to the immediate justice provided by the police and the overall working of the case. This is because of the fear of widespread condemnation of the police departments as seen in other cases that occurred in the same month. The awareness created by the posts on Social Media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter affected the case. Many steps are to be taken to ensure that another girl is not brutally raped, especially due to her descent. In the meantime, Social Media platforms are helping in changing the path of justice even if in extremely small ways.

Case Study 3: Dindigul Rape and Murder

On April 16th, 2019, a 13-year-old Dalit girl was raped and murdered at her house in Kollapatti village in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. The victim's mother found the 13-year old lying lifeless on the ground with an electrical wire in her mouth that was plugged into a socket. Shockingly, the perpetrator of the crime was a 17-year old boy. The cunningly cruel perpetrator had raped the girl, murdered her, and then staged her body with one end of the electrical wire running through her mouth and nose and the other end plugged into a socket to stage her death as accidental electrocution. He left the Grade VII girl's notebook, containing a drawing of a battery, a light, and a wire, open beside the girl's body which is what led the parents to assume that she accidentally electrocuted herself while experimenting. The girl's father was a daily wage worker and her mother was employed under MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). Initially, with no obvious evidence pointing to rape or murder, the parents prepared the body for the funeral and the police disregarded extensive investigation due to them being occupied with electoral duties for the then-upcoming elections. Fortunately, the additional superintendent of the police department that was investigating the scene took the extra initiative and further analyzed the scene. She found a few droplets of blood near the body, some blood in her mouth and froth in a nostril.

The autopsy that was performed on April 17th confirmed rape and also showed evidence that smothering was the victim's cause of death. The perpetrator had held her mouth shut to not raise alarm. According to the police, they suspected the 17-year-old from the start but decided to put off the arrest so that they could collect strong material evidence because he was a minor and he belonged to a different caste. The police confirmed that the 17-year-old was the perpetrator when his alibi collapsed. The boy had lied to the police about his whereabouts and after further investigation, they found that he had lured the girl into his trap under the pretense of asking for water. The perpetrator was charged and was in judicial custody at a home for children in conflict with the law in Salem. On October 9th, 2020, the perpetrator was acquitted of the crime and salons all over Salem were shut and the people protested to fight for justice for the deceased.

Caste Discrimination in the Case:

Several reports and studies show that Dalit women have to face discrimination due to gender, descent, and poor monetary background almost every day of their lives. This was one of the few cases that were reported. The 13-year-old girl belonging to the Dalit community was raped and murdered brutally, yet the police did not give the case as much attention as they give cases involving people hailing from families belonging to 'upper' castes.

The Involvement of Social Media:

With less than 20 posts and tweets and less than 10 articles online about this case, it is greatly upsetting to see how little importance is given to Dalit-related cases. If Mainstream Media had reported the case a little more, then maybe the Social Media platforms would have been flooded with information and more details on the case. This case is so badly reported that even Wikipedia does not have an account of the Dindigul rape and murder. The recent trending of the case on Social Media more than a year later due to the acquittal of the perpetrator has proved that Social Media always grants a platform to those that do not have a voice on Mainstream Media. # Justice For Kalaivani has more than 200 tweets on Twitter and more than 1000 posts on Instagram not including the reach caused via sharing, re-tweeting, and re-posting. Due to the recent increase in Social Media attention, the 2019 case is finally getting 1/4th of the attention it deserves.

Observations:

Poor reporting, poor investigation, and a poor 13-year-old girl raped and murdered in the comfort of her own home - a 17-year-old perpetrator, an age-old caste system, and a scarcity of news. This case shatters our illusion of a modern and forward nation. One of the few news articles even mentioned that there might have been more than one perpetrator and that the alleged other two were let off deliberately. Acquitting a boy that raped, murdered, and orchestrated a crime to feign accidental electrocution is terrifying. The 13-year-old girl deserves justice and Social Media attention will help her and many other girls get the equity they deserve.

Discussions

The Hathras gang rape- a case involving a 19-year-old girl who was brutally assaulted by four men, the Balrampur gang rape- wherein a 22-year-old girl was horrifyingly assaulted by two men on her way home and the Dindigul rape and murder- involving the death of a 13-year-old girl who was raped and tortured in her own home. What do all of these cases have in common? All of the victims hail from Dalit families. As previously discussed, Dalits are looked down upon by many Indians and are treated as untouchables. Caste discrimination is alive in several rural areas in India and shockingly present in urban areas as well. The blatant ignorance that Dalits receive is unacceptable, especially in such a modern era. They work in terrible conditions, they are grossly mistreated and severely ostracised. Moreover, they are raped, killed, and tortured very often. What's worse is the evident dearth of news coverage on Dalit Atrocities such as the cases that have been studied. A simple way to solve this issue would be to encourage Mainstream Media offices to employ Dalit journalists and reporters. By doing so, Dalits are not only given a voice but they can also earn their livelihood while doing so. Giving Dalits opportunities in the field of Media is a surefire way to improve and increase coverage on Dalit-related issues. By denying Dalits of their Indian birthright, which is to be treated as an equal, we are automatically favoring the caste system that opposes everything our Constitution promotes.

The most important inference from all three cases is the effect Social Media attention has on cases involving oppressed communities such as the Dalits. An important thing to consider is the fact that we are living in a technology-run world. Even the poorest of people have phones that come with an Internet connection. So when Social Media is used as a tool to combat Dalit Atrocities and caste discrimination, the people that face such issues every day automatically have a space to voice their own stories and troubles. This voice handed to them through Social Media platforms can make a change. A change bigger than any before because of the number of people belonging to the communities who go unnoticed every day. All of the cases studied received a large amount of social media attention within the span of a few days, with the creation of a hashtag of the case such as # *Hathras Gang Rape*, # *Balrampur Gang Rape*, and # *JusticeForKalaivani*. These hashtags created a buzz on Social Media platforms and because of the fear of being publicly trolled and criticized by the youth of India, the Government and Police Departments stand up and take action. If only they didn't need Social Media as a means of motivation to simply do their job but alas, they do. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Reddit, Snapchat, and many other platforms along with Blogs and NGO-run websites promoting equality for Dalits are the main reasons that our country takes at least a few of the 1000s of cases and atrocities seriously. If only there was an inbuilt sense of fear in 'superior' castes that they will be punished if they treat others badly based on their descent, the young females mentioned in the case studies, who had so much of their lives ahead of them would be alive and well today.

Dalit, meaning "broken/scattered" in Sanskrit and Hindi, is a term used to group people belonging to castes in India that have been subject to untouchability. Many years ago, there

was a caste system that divided the Indian people categorically based on their descent. The Dalit community was the lowest of all castes in the ancient system. The people belonging to this caste were ill-treated, raped, murdered, looted, forced to clean human excreta, and so on. They were publicly ostracised and forced to live further away from the main villages. These people that constitute a large amount of the Indian population are subject to such harassment even today. Caste discrimination exists in a lot of forms and the main problem that has been discussed is the evident ignorance towards Dalit Atrocities. Studies show that only a few Dalit cases get basic coverage in Newspapers and on News Channels. The hundreds of other cases go unreported and unnoticed by the people of the nation due to the extreme scarcity of media coverage. Mainstream Media powerhouses don't employ Dalits and hence they did not have a platform to voice their struggles and their horrific journey on their path to justice. Fortunately, the gain in popularity for Social Media platforms came as a boon to Dalits and other oppressed communities all over the world. Because we live in a world run by technology where people who can't afford three basic meals a day splurge on a mobile phone with an internet connection, it is evident that almost everyone has access to Social Media no matter how rich or how poor. This in itself shows how Social Media truly impacts the lives of people everywhere. Social Media platforms serve as an open space for Dalits to voice their opinions and views on all topics. In a world where trending hashtags reach everyone, the #Dalit Lives Matter movement gained a lot of attention and has since helped the Dalit community in many ways. Through online protests in the form of posts and tweets, Dalits are likely to gain support from political parties which will help them change their path of justice. By signing and circulating petitions and creating awareness about Dalit Atrocities and speaking up on important issues, Dalits are more likely to receive immediate justice. Using Social Media, Dalits can expose the people behind their instances of caste discrimination, criticize Governments and Police departments for not doing their jobs properly and inadvertently force Mainstream Media to report Dalit articles appropriately. With the evolution of technology, we have information at our fingertips and we are connected to people all across the world. The power of Social Media is still untapped and its potential is vast and unimaginable. Using these tools, we must slowly pave the way for Dalits and other oppressed communities and create a safer, more just world for them. There is still a long way to go until Dalits are truly free of their maltreatment but Social Media is helping in changing their path of justice.

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Weathering the Storm: Indian Federal Polity Through Trying Times

Srinibas Barik

Abstract

The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 of 5 August 2019 and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 of 2 December 2019 were some fresh irritants in the long-troubled centre-state relationship arena in India. The measures are ambitious and are supposed to right some age-old wrongs that have plagued India by unleashing the divisive forces from time to time. The Union Home Minister Amit Shah observed that the special status of Jammu and Kashmir (J and K) under Article 370 provided the anti-nationals and Pakistan enough ammo to foment trouble in J and K. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, on the other hand, was considered long overdue in solving the long-standing illegal immigrants' issue in the country.

Multi-religious, multi-ethnic, party-based democracy that India is, the two sensitive legislative and political interventions created much consternation. The omission of the term 'Muslim' from the ambit of the communities that can be considered for the legitimization of citizenship (for those migrating to India on or before 31 December 2014) was a potential spoiler of law and order in the country ever since the law (CAA) came into effect. Some insensitive intonations apart, the laws wove strong reactionary foreign policy Gordian knots with countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh (countries so far considered smooth-sailing shores for Indian foreign policy). The 'secular' image of the country was a major plank of attack by the protesters within which was unrelenting until, of course, the global menace (COVID-19) intervened in March 2020.

Federalism, secularism though much-maligned have remained the life force of the cherished constitutional values promised in India. Its upkeep is more daunting than its rupture in a pluralist and complex society like India's. The government of the day can close its eyes to such considerations at the peril not only of itself but the unity and integrity of the country as well.

Keywords: CAA, J and K, federalism, secularism, Gordian knot, Constitution.

The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 (5 Aug. 2019) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 (2 Dec. 2019) have unleashed vigorous reactions

throughout the country coming from both the camps, those supporting the measures and the detractors. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill was passed after intense debate in the Lok Sabha with 351 legislators supporting and 72 opposing it. “The law of the nation does not reach Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan has been using this to instigate separatism in the hearts of people there”¹. These were the words used by the Indian Union Home Minister Amit Shah to justify the action. Revocation of Art 370 of the Indian constitution has resulted in the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir with Jammu and Kashmir becoming a Union Territory with an Assembly whereas Ladakh and Kargil are to constitute another Union Territory but without any separate assembly.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in the Lok Sabha on 2nd December 2019 with 311 ‘AYES’ and 80 ‘NOES’ to pave the way for non-Muslim (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Parsis) refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to get citizenship who migrated to India on or before 31st December 2014. The justification for excluding Muslims from the proposed benefit was that they were not minorities in the three neighbouring countries and were not subject to religious persecution as the six non-Muslim communities are in such places. The two legislations along with the issue of the National Population Register (NPR) / National Register of Citizens (NRC) leave a whole lot of queries unanswered. The government has opened up a Pandora’s box by announcing these measures. Muslims like ‘Shias’ and Madhesis are facing religious persecution in the neighbouring Muslim majority countries and there are non-Muslim migrants from countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka whose problems find no decisive response in the much talked about CAB/ CAA.

What is undeniable is the political atmosphere in the country has been super-charged following the announcement or implementation of the measures. Many foreign countries, neighbouring as well as far off, have not hesitated to voice their concern which has prompted India’s foreign office to be on overdrive to counter such apprehensions. Islamic countries like Malaysia, Iran have openly expressed their apprehensions by making serious accusations like India should stop killing/targeting Muslims during the ongoing anti-CAA protests in different parts of the country. Unpalatable reactions from unlikely shores have left Indian authorities dismayed.

The British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn on August 11 (2019) tweeted, that “the situation in Kashmir is deeply disturbing. Human rights abuses taking place are unacceptable.” The Labour party in its annual conference in Brighton passed a controversial emergency motion which described the situation in Jammu and Kashmir as a “major humanitarian crisis” and the valley as a “disputed territory”. “The motion by Labour party on Kashmir is blatant interference in India’s internal matters, far from ground reality and a reflection of supremacist attitude. We strongly condemn it. Supporters of Jihadi elements within Labour will damage India-UK ties,”² countered Vijay Chauthaiwala, BJP’s foreign affairs department head.

The mercurial Donald Trump offering mediation on the Kashmir issue between the two countries was another irritant for India. But his better-informed demeanour during the February

24,25(2020) India visit can be to the credit of India's diplomacy. The Japanese premier Shinzo Abe's proposed India state visit during December 2019 kept in abeyance was not to India's liking. There is no denying the fact that India's foreign relations during the post-Kashmir, post-CAA phases have been through trying times.

Sadanand Dhume of American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC concurs that India's image abroad has got a beating following the recent developments under the BJP -led government in India because there has not been deft handling of the country's image by those vested with the job to do so. "The Modi government does not face criticism because it's not doing a good enough job of selling its story. It faces criticism because it doesn't have a good story to tell."³ He mentions some of the leading foreign media which have been increasingly critical of the happenings in India during the recent days. As Dhume points out, Gideon Rachman of the Financial Times castigated the Modi government "for threats to minority rights and the erosion of democratic norms." Edward Luce warned that India "is gradually but steadily turning into a Hindu Pakistan". "If you toss in the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Guardian, you could probably wallpaper a small palace with commentary critical of India written in just the past three months," writes Dhume.

No diplomacy would be more effective than what Houston-based activist Sunanda Vashisht testified before a US Congressional panel in November 2019. Describing the story of India "occupying" Kashmir as absurd she went on to assert that Kashmir has always been a part of India. "India is not just a 70- year old identity, but a 5000- year- old civilization. There is no India without Kashmir and no Kashmir without India." Rejecting outright the narrative of Indian oppression and human rights abuse of Kashmiris she asked where were the advocates of human rights when Pakistan-backed terrorists indulged in the targeted killing of Pandits in the 1990s and drove 4,00,000 of them out of the valley. "Where was the saviour of humanity when my feeble old grandfather stood with kitchen knives and an old rusted axe ready to kill my mother and me to save us from the much worse fate that awaited us?,"⁴ asked Vashisht. How come a prominent victim of terrorism like the US has unquestioningly bought the anti -India story despite the fact of Pakistan being behind the training and infiltration of terrorists and that being openly acknowledged by none other than Pervez Musharraf and Imran Khan?

Foreign policy cannot be autonomous from domestic politics altogether, believes Kanwal Sibbal, former Foreign Secretary of India. "The issues, however, also involve Bangladesh and Pakistan principally. Illegal migration from Bangladesh is a reality that had to be addressed. The cut off date in the citizenship law and the Modi Government's acknowledgment of the absence of persecution of minorities under the Hasina government should satisfy Dhaka. Pakistan's jihadi policies towards India and its refusal to give citizenship to Biharis of erstwhile East Pakistan and Bangladesh to express concerns about India's secularism is dishonesty."⁵

‘Neighbourhood first’ was supposed to be the Modi government’s foreign policy. But all three measures are examples of policy actions that are likely to have adverse outcomes for India’s interests in the region. “In the case of Kashmir, Pakistan will try to use the Art. 370 issue to drive a wedge between the US and India. From Pakistan’s stand-point, returning to the India-Pakistan hyphenation era in the eyes of the US is desirable. From India’s viewpoint, the more Pakistan features in India’s foreign policy outlook, the less energy it has for confronting the more significant global challenges”⁶ believes Pranay Kotasthane.

Talmiz Ahmad, former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in cautionary note writes that when you bring three neighbouring countries into domestic politics, the issue ceases to be purely a domestic one. Making negative remarks on these countries will generate resentment. “Bangladesh has a large number of non-Muslims, and many of them have chosen to be Bangladeshi nationals, criticism in the case of Afghanistan is also unfair. The Sikh community has been living there for centuries. The war-torn country is trying to heal itself and the last thing it needs is another country pouring scorn over it on the issue of religious persecution. Pakistan also has a substantial number of minorities. These have deliberately chosen to live there and are attempting to be exemplary citizens.”⁷

Lalit Mansingh, former foreign secretary of India, echoes the sentiment of Talmiz Ahmad “... the Modi government could have taken greater care in handling the situation. The comments made against our friendly neighbouring countries were irresponsible. For instance, Amit Shah, the Home Minister referring to Bangladeshi refugees as ‘termites’ is not acceptable. Passing disparaging remarks about people from a certain country is not how diplomacy is conducted. This may hurt the self-image of that particular country.”⁸

No measure can be either entirely good or entirely bad. So has been the case in connection with these political initiatives launched by the BJP-led government. Protests against the implementation of policies are dragged on for months (since August /December 2019) and more shockingly protesters numbering more than 50 have been killed in firing resorted to by the law enforcement agencies. During March (2020), though there was some noticeable thaw in the outdoor protests against the government due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Shaheen Bagh sit-in, much to the dismay of all, still continues though there is a morbid fear of the killer virus spreading through contagion and infection.

Serious Accusations

Principal opposition political parties (including the Indian National Congress, the left parties like CPM or the CPI) and liberal intellectuals have smelt a rat in the steps taken in Jammu and Kashmir or other parts of the country. ‘Unconstitutional’ (abrogation of Art. 370 and other measures taken in Jammu and Kashmir), attack on ‘secularism’ and ‘federalism’ are some of the serious accusations that have been hurled against the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and its supportive coalition (NDA-National Democratic Alliance) partners.

The President of India (Sri Ram Nath Kovind) issued an order, Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019, under the provisions of Article 370 (1) of the Indian constitution which stated that the provisions of the Indian constitution will henceforth apply to Jammu and Kashmir. Such order cannot be passed without the concurrence of the government of Jammu and Kashmir, as it was stipulated in the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954. The mandatory clause “with the concurrence of the government of the state of Jammu and Kashmir”⁹ was used in the said order and the Governor of the state (then) was the source behind such concurrence as the state was under president’s rule before the promulgation of the order.

The 2019 order superseded the order of 1954 and all the provisions that dealt with the special status of the state and provided for a separate constitution for Jammu and Kashmir stood abrogated. In its place, the order stated that the provisions of the Constitution of India shall apply to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The articles and provisions that applied to Jammu and Kashmir were originally contained in the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954. In order to make all that infructuous, the President of India listed a set of exceptions under Art.35(A) of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir. Art. 35(A) contained the special laws like the bar on outsiders buying a property in the state, women marrying non-Kashmiris losing their property rights etc. The 1954 order stated that the special privileges can be altered only by the recommendation of the “Sadar-i-Riyasat” of Jammu and Kashmir acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers or by the “Constituent Assembly” of the state.¹⁰

For revocation of Article 370, some special measures were taken by adding some clauses to Article 367 of the Indian Constitution. Art.367 deals with ‘interpretations.’ All references to the Sadar-i-Riyasat acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers were made to the Governor of the state, as also a reference to the state government to the Governor. The ‘Constituent Assembly’ [in the proviso to Article 370(3)] was to be substituted by the Legislative Assembly of the State.

Those doubting the constitutionality of the changes made in the status of Jammu and Kashmir argue that Art. 370 stays very much as part of the constitution as there has been no constitutional amendment in accordance with the provisions of Art. 368 and no such bill was moved by Amit Shah in the parliament.¹¹ However, the government (of India) may have taken a cue from section 3 of Article 370 which empowers the President to declare the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir inoperative anytime. President Sri Kovind signed the official notification declaring provisions or Article 370 inoperative. Some cite the Kesavananda Bharati case judgement of a 13- judge constitution bench (1973) in order to declare the steps taken in Jammu and Kashmir as unconstitutional.¹² The judgement made a distinction between a simple amendment to the constitution and rewriting a part of the same and held that the latter was unconstitutional as it amounts to abrogating the basic structure of the constitution. It is also argued that the moves in Jammu and Kashmir or the passing of

the CAA jeopardise federalism or undermine secularism which is also treated as the basic feature of the Indian constitution. “..... these moves portended an ominous threat to Indian federalism. Although the constitution affirms that India is a union of states, it clearly has a federal structure. What is more, this federal structure has several asymmetric features and provisions-Art. 370 was one of them. The government’s move not only cut against the provisions for Jammu and Kashmir but set a dangerous precedent for undermining the federal character of the polity. If a state can be placed under president’s rule and with merely the Governor’s approval divided and reduced to union territories then federalism is a dead letter.”¹³

On the imposition of the president’s rule, governance in India on many past occasions, irrespective of the political dispensation at the centre, has been viewed with suspicion and criticised. Nani A. Palkhivala, an ardent advocate of states’ autonomy, has described the pervasive use of Art. 356 in India as a ‘pretentious curative’. “It is significant that the constitution talks of the Union but not of the Centre. The present all-pervasive domination by the self-styled and popularly called ‘Centre’ is inconsistent with the constitutional scheme of the Union of States. In the exercise of their significant powers, the states have the right to go wrong in freedom rather than go right in thralldom to the “Centre”,¹⁴ opines Palkhivala. He further asserts that “The day is bound to come when the states will repudiate the wrongful subjection by the Union and will awaken to claim their legitimate status under the Constitution. The day of nemesis may come sooner than we think. We do well to remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘The man who thinks he may live as freely as his unconsidered desires prompt him and yet not carry the burden of an eventual reckoning is binding his life to a hollow dream. Whoever sins against himself pronounces his sentence thereby... Justice still rules the world with exorable weight, though its operations are often unseen and though it is not always to be found in the stone-built courts of law.’ “¹⁵

With due respect to ace constitutional expert’s stature and acknowledging own limitations, perhaps it would be no exaggeration to state that the pendulum of power sometimes in favour of the Union or sometimes in favour of the states, should be a statusquoist approach. The weight of public opinion in India which has stood the test of time on many occasions will determine which course should be selected. The state governments with the popular mandate in all probability may scantily be targeted to be toppled. In the other case, when there is a challenge to the unity and stability of the country, the constituent states are doubtlessly disadvantaged to perform that role. The Union government in such a case has to be voluntarily cooperated by all territorial governing units of the country to run the governance single-handedly.

The present developments in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be judged by ignoring the state’s past. Instead of the views of any Indian expert, Billy Perrigo’s take on the issue has been purposive here. “Kashmir’s status as a semi-autonomous state is complex. It has its roots in the partition of British India in 1947 when Kashmir’s Hindu ruler decided to join

India rather than Pakistan on the condition that it was granted a level of autonomy. Over the years, that autonomy was worn down by the central state, writes Professor Sumantra Bose in his book, *Secular States, Religious Politics*. But opposition to Kashmir's 'special status' has only increased since, in tandem with the rise of Hindu Nationalism."¹⁶

Hypothesis or theory-building on social phenomena cannot be a close-ended proposition. The inverse relationship between Kashmiri autonomy and Hindu Nationalism may have something to do with the 4,00,000 Kashmiri *Pandits* rendered homeless and turning refugees in their own country; the separatist leaders' extractive policy of sucking special privileges from India but turning handmaid of Pakistan, and above all Pakistan's endless futile efforts to create trouble by fomenting insurgency and infiltration (of terrorist elements) in the Kashmir valley.

A plebiscite in Kashmir, from the standpoint of India, is illegal and unacceptable. Let there be a hypothetical situation: if at all there is a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir, how many Kashmiri Muslims would volunteer to side with Pakistan? Ever since the days of signing the Instrument of Accession, Jammu and Kashmir have already become part of the territory of India. No state worth its name would ever accept that a part of its territory should be sacrificed in the name of autonomy.

Secularism Undermined?

Secularism has been ingrained into Indian political culture since the time of independence. The inclusion of the terms-justice, liberty, equality, fraternity- in the Preamble to the constitution of India can be a testimony to that. Thanks to the progressive leadership cutting across all artificial differences and the wise Constituent Assembly members, India could manage to create a distinctive identity of its own both in form and performance. Pakistan created on the premise of hate has earned epithets like a 'failed state', 'rogue state' 'deep state' and an epicentre of Islamist terrorism. India, in no way, is going to derive anything by carrying the Pakistan bogey despite the latter's dogged anti -India tirade.

The secular image of India has been tarnished time and again by vested interests on both sides of the Radcliffe Line. Scratching of the communal wounds has deliberately been done to distance and antagonize the two neighbours. The wording of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 has provided grist for the mill (of India-bashers) not only to flare up the communal passions within the country but also to damage India's image outside its borders. Some glimpses of unprecedented, unfavourable opinions on India post- CAA have been discussed in the earlier part of this article.

In a multiverse country like India, intervening assaults on maintaining unity, stability, harmony are quite likely and to withstand such oddities requires seasoned statesmanship. The present and the future leaders have to realise that India's multiplicities are an accepted fact. No minority, in any sense, is less important than the majority community. But the irony is no political party or leader is prepared to forego winnability for lofty ideals. Due to such

compulsion, parties and politicians have slipped into the clutches of opportunism, populism, and have been branded with parochial political colour. The after-effects of CAA (2019) have been largely driven by such a perception of a sizeable section of the population in the country. The Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) and the Union Home Minister (Amit Shah) despite persistent appeals and clarifications have not been able to assuage the anguish and apprehensions of the people.

A suitable citizenship law has been the need of the hour not only in India but in many other or almost all leading states of the world, more so in the days of globalization when migration and transmigration have unleashed unforeseen demographic disturbances. Many developed countries in Europe, North America have been potential immigration hotspots owing to better opportunities available in fields like higher education, employment, research and scope for availing citizenship. As natives have started grudging the benefits taken away by migrants, national governments have been forced to redesign policies no more favourable to outsiders. President Trump's declaration of emergency in February 2019 over the situation at the US southern border and his grand plan of "new border wall system" over the 2000 miles stretch of border with Mexico is the indication of the rising anti-immigrant sentiment brewing in many countries.¹⁷

The political landscape of India has also witnessed enough activity with the ruling and opposition factions trying to malign each other on the immigrants' issue in India. No government in the past has been able to give a clear picture of the number of migrants staying in India. Since the 1990s, conflicting reports regarding the concentration of migrants in India have been a major irritant. The Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) of 1991 reported that there were nearly 7 00,000 Bangladeshis in India. Indrajit Gupta, the then Home Minister of India, stated that in 1997, 10 million outsiders of different Nationalities remained in India. Sriprakash Jaiswal, another former Home Minister of India, put the figure at 12 million in 2004. Kamal Sadiq, a professor at the University of Chicago stated in a book published in 2009 that India had between 15 and 20 million Bangladeshis.

Migrants in India include people from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Afghanistan among others and Bangladeshis constitute the major part of such population. Migration to India has been continuing since 1947 and border states of India like Assam and West Bengal have witnessed the heaviest traffic of intruders there. The National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in Assam, amidst enough of hue and cry, came out with the facts that 33, 027, 661 had applied out of whom 31,121,004 were found eligible and 1,906,657 were left out (by 31 August 2019).¹⁸

What the CAA Conveys

In the Citizenship Act, 1955 (the principal Act), in section 2, in subsection (1) in clause (b), the following proviso shall be inserted, namely, "Provided that any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or

Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December 2014 and who has been exempted by the Central Government by or under clause(c) of subsection(2) of section(3) of the Passport (Entry into India) Act,1920 or from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 or any rule or order made thereunder, shall not be treated as an illegal migrant for the purpose of this Act.”¹⁹ The places exempt from the effect of the CAA(2019) are covered under the new Section 6B(4): “Nothing in this section shall apply to the tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the area covered under “The Inner Line” notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.

The issues prompting widespread protests against the CAA (2019) or its inter-related steps like the NPR or NRC are too complex and variegated. The important fall out of these exercises is that the Indian political system is under tremendous stress and its secular identity is alleged to have been clouded as the major minority community in India has been excluded from the application of CAA (2019). Many accuse the Government of India to have been communal that deprived a sizeable section of the citizens of the Right to equality under Art.14 of the Constitution.

“The critical issue is not of giving something or taking it away. The issue is equality before the law and constitutional justice. A law providing different channels for seeking citizenship based on the religion and country of origin of a person is discriminatory. Any law, trying to subject people of one community to harsher treatment than others, affects their identity. Also, it affects the image of the country,” write Amitabh Kundu and P.C Mohanan.²⁰

The Home Minister, on the basis of irrefutable evidence, may have defended the persecution narrative but India cannot afford to belittle itself by emulating communal neighbours. Any minister of the Union, including the Prime Minister, or even any people’s representative after winning the election must have to educate himself/herself that he/she represents the whole country or the constituency as the case may be, not any section of the population. Vindictive politics or politics of vendetta can only serve narrow political ends; it will not only ruin the future of the country, but it can also spoil the future aspirations of the politician.

Subhash Kashyap, the constitutionalist, makes a meaningful observation. “Our pluralism is not territory-based. Our diversities are within and cut across territorial units and in a sense, they are our greatest strength and a great cementing force for national unity. Diversity is not division and unity does not mean uniformity or conformity. Also, the unity of India and integrity of the nation as concepts are very different from national or political integration.”²¹

Concluding Observations

The Indian political system following the passage of CAA (2019) and the limited application of NPR / NRC came under considerable input overload. Prior to it, there was the challenge posed by the revocation of Art. 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. All structures of state suddenly came under tremendous pressure and the response generated a mixed reaction from the

national as well as international perspective. Such exceptional challenges put the resilience of a system to the test. Hopefully, the system may withstand it. More daunting a political challenge during the imposition of a national emergency in 1975 could not dent the institution of democracy in India.

The Supreme Court of India may prove to be an effective shock-absorber because the people of India have an unshakable faith in it. Numerous petitions have been filed here challenging the CAA / NPR / NRC. The intervention of the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the orientations of the national as well as state administration. But it is only a matter of time. Just before the footfall of COVID-19 in India, Justice Deepak Gupta of the Supreme Court of India had made a meaningful observation while widespread protests were going on in different parts of the country following the Jammu and Kashmir and CAA issues. “Criticism of the executive, the judiciary, the bureaucracy or the armed forces cannot be termed ‘anti-national’. In case we attempt to stifle criticism of the institutions, we shall become a police state instead of a democracy. . . . To the question, to challenge, to verify, to ask for accountability from the government is the right of every citizen. . . .”²² But can shout anti-India slogans, burning the Indian national flag as a mark of protest, ranting pro-Pakistan slogans by living very well within Indian territory be considered within the scope of dissent?

On 5 July 1947, the Union Powers Committee in its second report to the President of the Constituent Assembly expressed that the “soundest framework for the Constitution was a federation with a strong Centre”²³. Subhash Kashyap cites the States Reorganisation Commission(SRC) report in his book *Our Political System*: “It is the Union of India which is the basis of our nationality... States are but limbs of the Union, and while we recognise that the limbs must be healthy and strong. . . it is the strength and stability of the Union and its capacity to develop and evolve that should be the governing consideration of all challenges in the country.”

In the same book, Kashyap by quoting Dr. Ambedkar has shown the distinction between the expressions ‘Union of States’ and the ‘Federation of States’. “The drafting committee wanted to make it clear that though India was to be a federation, the federation was not the result of an agreement by the states to join in a federation and that the federation not being the result of an agreement, no state has the right to secede from it. The federation is a Union because it is indestructible.”

India over these few years (only seven decades and odd years as a state) has so far evolved as a tried and tested democracy. Its gift of ‘yoga’ and ‘namaste’ or ‘namaskar’ is proving to be eagerly accepted preventives against some lifestyle diseases and global pandemics (COVID-19) irrespective of multiple differences in the world. Positives/positivities need not be thrust upon people as they will triumph on their merit. Negativities will crumble under their pressure however daunting they appear to be. Principles of right and justice are eternal. In matters of Indian administration, during normal times autonomy of the units should be respected in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. During exceptional situations, when the challenges either from within or outside are formidable, the state should remain

united. It is pertinent to end with Kashyap, “The text of the constitution does not use the term ‘federal’ or ‘federation’. The Supreme Court has spoken of the Indian Union as ‘federal’, ‘quasi-federal’ or ‘amphibian’ meaning sometimes ‘federal’ and sometimes ‘unitary’.”

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Maternal and Child Health: A Study of Odisha

Samapika Nayak

Abstract

Swami Vivekananda said emphatically once, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing." Based on this understanding, the paper makes an attempt to find out the status of maternal and child health in one of the Indian states. The author has based her analysis on the assumption that unless and until women have sound health they can not realize their best 'Self'. In addition to it, healthy women will contribute towards better child health in the family. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, of 536,000 maternal deaths occurring globally each year, India accounts for at least a quarter of these maternal deaths. This questions the efficacy of health administration in India. This paper interrogates the functional dynamics in Odisha to secure better maternal and child health.

Keywords: Maternal health, Child health, Sustainable Development Goals, India, Odisha

Introduction

Women constitute nearly half (49.6 %) of the World's total population. As such their socio-economic development is a sine qua non for sustainable growth of the economy. Generally, women experience considerable disadvantages and discrimination in society owing to gender differentiation. The gender bias propels disparities in terms of literacy, access to public health services and social development indicators. Women's limited access to and control of material resources and limited decision-making power within the household can produce high fertility rates, under-investment in aspects of family welfare such as child nutrition and education, and sub-optimal allocations of human capital in the economy. Maternal morbidity and mortality along with infant mortality rate are universally considered as human development indicators in a country and determine the health status of the people.

In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development recommended that maternal mortality be reduced by at least 50 percent of the 1990 levels by 2000, and one-half by 2015. Further, from 2000 to 2017, the global maternal mortality ratio declined by 38 percent – from 342 deaths to 211 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to UN inter-agency estimates. This translates into an average annual rate of reduction of 2.9 percent.

While substantive, this is less than half the 6.4 percent annual rate needed to achieve the Sustainable Development goal of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. There are significant variations in child mortality among the various regions of the World. About half of under-five deaths occur in only five countries: India, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan and China. India 22% and Nigeria 11% together account for a third of all under-five deaths (UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, UN Population Division, 2006). Globally, maternal and child mortality are in decline, although the pace of decline is non-sufficient to attain Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries (Lozano et al., 2011).

The high number of maternal deaths in some areas of the world reflects inequalities in access to quality health services and highlights the gap between rich and poor. The MMR in low-income countries in 2017 is 462 per 100 000 live births versus 11 per 100 000 live births in high-income countries. Women in less developed countries have, on average, many more pregnancies than women in developed countries, and their lifetime risk of death due to pregnancy is higher¹.

Due to slow progress in reducing infant and maternal mortality and the moral urgency of reinvigorating efforts to tackle slow progress; the United Nations (UN) launched the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health in 2010 (United Nations. Global strategy for women's and children's health. New York: UN, 2010., 2012). As part of this strategy, India had committed to strengthen maternal and child health services in 235 districts, which accounted for nearly a 70percent of infant and maternal deaths. In 2010, India recorded 56 per 1000 maternal (WHO, 2012) and 1.3 million infant deaths (UNICEF, 2011), the highest for any country. India's target was to reduce IMR by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015, i.e., from 80 infant deaths per 1000 live births in 1990 to '28' by 2015 to realize the fourth Millennium Development Goal. Under this mission, another target was to attain absolute immunization of one-year-old children against measles by 2015. In order to realize the fifth Millennium Development Goal India worked for attaining a Maternal Mortality Ratio of 109 by 2015 (GOI, 2010), while it has also committed to improving the 'proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel. Hence, there is a need to understand the progress and efforts made by India and as well one of its 4th most populous states i.e. Odisha¹ in this regard.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that child/infant survival is intimately related to women's reproductive life. In most developing countries, the women in the reproductive age group constitute a little more than one-fifth of the total population. It is well known that childbirth is more than a biological process. It is like the beginning of a new life of a child. The loss of a mother shatters a family and threatens the well-being of surviving children. It was estimated that worldwide 1500 women die each day or one per minute, in pregnancy or due to childbirth-related complications (WHO, 2007). In India, women of childbearing age constitute approximately 19% of the population and maternal mortality, which is considered as a sensitive indicator of the health status of women maternal mortality, is not only an important index to assess social progress, cultural and economic development of a nation but

also major indicator to reflect the quality of work on maternal and child health care. It is the only indicator that shows the disparities between developed and developing countries, (WHO 2005). Developing countries account for 99% of the global maternal deaths while only 1% occurred in developed countries. At the country level, India and Nigeria accounted for a third of global maternal deaths with India at 19%. Every two minutes a woman dies of pregnancy-related complications like severe bleeding after childbirth, infections, high blood pressure during pregnancy and unsafe abortion (WHO, UNICEFF, World Bank, 2012).

The progress of a country is judged by its level of infant and maternal mortality. In India, these indices are very high. The Government's Health Survey and Development Committee report of 1946, known as the Bhore Committee report, is one of the earliest references to maternal mortality in India. After reviewing the available evidence, the Committee concluded that the MMR in the country was around 2,000 deaths per 100,000 live births. The Mudaliar Committee estimated that the MMR had decreased to 1,000 in 1959. A principal cause for the decline was thought to be the decrease in the incidence of malaria because pregnant women with malaria suffered higher fatalities. During 1984-1985, the first community-based study on maternal mortality in the Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh gave an estimate of 798 for the district. Due to geographical vastness and socio-cultural diversity in India, maternal mortality varies across the states, and uniform implementation of health-sector reforms is not possible. Every year in India, roughly 28 million women experience pregnancy and 26 million have a live birth. Of these, an estimated 67,000 maternal deaths occur each year. In addition, millions more women and newborns suffer from pregnancy and birth-related ill health. Thus, pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity continue to have a huge impact on the lives of Indian women and their newborns. Levels of maternal mortality vary greatly across the region, due to variation in underlying access to emergency obstetric care, antenatal care, anaemia rates among women, educational levels of women and other factors. About two-thirds of maternal death occurs in a handful of states- like Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam and Odisha, all these states being among the 18 high focus states of maternal death in India. Reduction of maternal mortality has become an explicit focus of many programmes of the Government of India, where reduction is targeted and strategies are adopted to address the local barriers since independence². But inspite of government plans and policies, maternal death continues. Knowledge of infant and maternal deaths among different cultural and social groups and their determinants are essential in the context of effective planning and implementation of many developmental programmes in the country.

The maternal mortality ratio of India has declined from 398 in 1997-1998 to 327 in 1999-2001, further 301 in 2001-2003 and from 254 in 2004-2006 to 212 in 2007-2009 (Registrar General of India, 2011). The report of NFHS-3 (2005-06) showed that MMR had not changed significantly from 424 in 1992-93 (NFHS-1) to 540 in 1998-99 (NFHS-2). Approximately, world's one-quarter of all pregnancy and delivery-related maternal deaths occur in India. As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin, released by the Registrar

General of India (RGI) in 2013, India's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) dropped to 42 per 1000 live births during 2012.

The IMR for rural areas dropped to 46 per 1000 live births while the urban rate was found to stand at 28 per 1000 live births. The same report showed that the infant mortality rate for Odisha was 40 per 1000 live births. In the rural areas, it was 41 and in urban areas, it was 32 per 1000 live births. The decline of IMR and MMR in both rural and urban areas started only after 1999 whereas prior to this the change was inconsistent and fluctuating somehow. The overall decline was, however, more in urban areas (75 per 1000 live births) as compared to rural areas (45 per 1000 live births) from 1990 to 2012. The rates of declination in rural and urban were found to be 72 and 94 per 1000 live births from 2001 to 2012. The rural-urban difference in IMR and MMR was also found to be reduced in Odisha.

Decentralized district-based health planning is essential in India because of the large inter-district variations. In the absence of vital data at the district level, the State level estimates are being used for formulating district-level plans as well as setting the milestones thereof. In the process, the hotspots (districts requiring special attention) very often get asked by the State average. This statistical fallacy compounds the problems of the districts acutely, more so in the health sector. The district Level Household Survey (DLHS) conducted with the periodicity of five years mainly focuses on indicators of maternal health and child programmes. There has, therefore, been a surge in demand from various quarters, in recent years, to generate timely and reliable statistics at the district level for informed decision-making in the health sector. Realizing the need for preparing a comprehensive district health profile on key parameters based on a community setup, the Annual Health Survey has been designed to yield benchmarks of core vital and health indicators at the district level on fertility and mortality; the prevalence of disabilities, injuries, acute and chronic illness and access to health care for these morbidities; and access to maternal, child health and family planning services. By virtue of being a panel survey, it has the unique ability to map the rate of change in these indicators on a yearly basis³.

Despite several women and child welfare programmes in Odisha, the state continues to be plagued by the problem of high infant and maternal mortality.

To improve the availability of and access to quality health care, especially for those residing in rural areas, the poor, women, and children, the government launched the 7 year National Rural Health Mission in the year 2005. One of the important goals of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is to provide access to improved health care at the household level through female Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), who act as an interface between the community and the public health system³.

This paper attempts to find out to what extent do maternal and child health care policies influence the health status of women and children in Odisha. question will be answered by studying the following:

- To find out the MCH services available and accessible in the State health care delivery system existing under NRHM.
- To study the status and pattern of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services and MCH indicators under NRHM.

Conceptualizing Maternal and Child Health

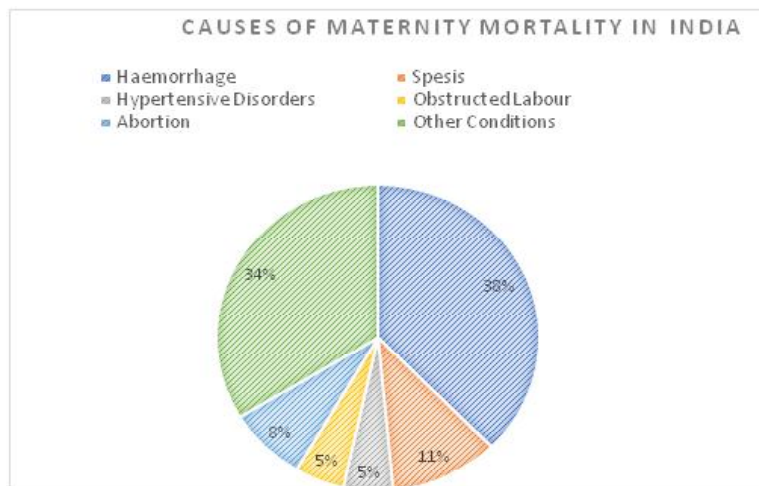
It is very difficult to define and conceptualize health. The widely accepted and popular definition of health is given by World Health Organisation (WHO). According to it, “health is a fundamental human right, inclusive of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity.” The Preamble of the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) states that “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social conditions”¹. In the same vein, the World Health Assembly in its historic Alma Atta Declaration (1978) advocated that the “main social target...” for countries “...in the coming decades should be the attainment by all peoples of the world, ... a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life”. Universal access to good quality maternal and child health care is also pivotal in achieving the fourth and fifth objectives of the Millennium Development Goals. Health is considered a key indicator of human development and one of the important human capital that contributes significantly towards the development of a nation. Health is a basic need along with food, shelter and education. Without good health, no one can enjoy any other⁴.

As per the 2011 Census, the total number of 586.47 million women accounted for 48.46 percent of the total population of the country. Because of the significant role played by women in the overall development and progress of the country, the Constitution of India has enshrined the principle of gender equality in its preamble and through the fundamental rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties, it has not only granted equality to women but has also empowered the State to adopt measures of positive intervention in favour of women. It is pertinent to mention here that women’s health status is very important to understand the condition of women in any society. It is not only medical conditions that cause poor health, but gender and patriarchy play a very important role in women’s health. There are many issues related to women’s health like malnutrition and anaemia, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs), maternal health-related problems and even work-related health issues like aches and pains that women face in everyday life³. All of these can be linked to gender and patriarchy in different ways. Women’s access to food, the decision for treatment, access to proper care, hours spent on work and the kind of work done are often not in her control. These have a lot of impact on their health. So, it is important to study women’s health from this angle. Although there are many issues related to women’s health, maternal health is very important in the context of India. India has a very high maternal mortality ratio⁴.

Maternal health or reproductive health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. Women constitute nearly half (49.5 %) of the State's total population as per census 2011. As such their socio-economic development is a sine qua non for sustainable growth of the economy. Generally, women experience considerable disadvantages and discrimination in society owing to gender differentiation. The gender bias propels disparities in terms of literacy, access to public health services and social development indicators.

Maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes. The maternal mortality ratio is the number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births. The causes of maternal death are determined by gender relations in the family as well as the socio-economic condition of the family to which the woman belongs. Different social factors play an important role in the condition of maternal health of women. Marriage and child-bearing however bring new health problems, especially those relating to reproductive health. While motherhood is often a positive and fulfilling experience, for many women, it is also associated with suffering, ill-health and even death. Indian Women are not the primary decision-maker when it comes to seeking health care in our State. Another very important factor that has an impact on maternal health is availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of services related to maternal health. Maternal deaths are preventable if the woman has access to proper care at the right time. This is the reason that MMR is very low in developed countries where availability, accessibility and quality of maternal health services are very much better⁵.

The major direct causes of maternal morbidity and mortality include haemorrhage, sepsis, blood pressure, unsafe abortion, and obstructed labor. The pie chart below shows this break up⁵.



Source: *Sample Registration System Maternal Mortality in India: 1997-2003.*

On the other hand, Infant Mortality Rate is also one of the most universally accepted indicators of the health status not only of the infant, but also the whole population and socio-economic conditions under which they live in. It is also a sensitive indicator of the availability, utilization and effectiveness of healthcare services. , (United Nations, 1999). It is one of the components of the United Nations human development index (UN, 2007). Immunization of children against preventable diseases is an essential component of child health care. Although, through various health care programme interventions, the immunization status of children is improving, yet the status of immunization in children in rural areas is still low, particularly in the health laggard states. The infant mortality rate is defined as the probability of dying between birth and exactly one year of age expressed, per 1,000 live births. It will not be out of place to mention that around two and a half million children die every year in India. Out of them, anything close to over 4,00,000 children must be dying every year in Odisha alone. This is an alarming situation. On the day of birth, asphyxia and preterm birth emerge as the common most killers. On day one and during the first week of life preterm birth and sepsis or pneumonia emerge as a big killer. From the second week to the fourth-week sepsis or pneumonia emerge as the main cause of child death (Annual Report 2013-14). In the post-neonatal period diarrhea also emerges as a major determinant of child mortality. If we want to reduce Infant Mortality Rates then these big killers will have to be appropriately tackled.

The targets for the reduction of IMR and MMR in the State have been set in line with the 12th Plan goals of 2017. For the indicators, where the State is not likely to reach the 2017 goals with the current rate of decline, new goals have been set for 2020. For the indicators where the State is likely to achieve the 12 five-year plan targets, the State aims to achieve an additional 30 % decline from the current rate of decline. Hence, the projected re-set goals are set to be achieved by 2026.

Table 1: Maternal and Child Health Care

Major Indicators	Current Status as per SRS	12 th five year plan goal	SDG 2030	Current Compound Annual decline rate	Expected status in 2020 (Current Compound Annual decline rate)	Goal 2020
Maternal Mortality Ratio	222	117	70	- 4.7 %	202	117
Infant Mortality Rate	51	33	-	- 5.9 %	33	30
Neonatal Mortality Rate	37	23	12	- 4.7 %	26	23
Under Five Mortality Rate	66	52	25	- 5.8 %	43	38
Total Fertility Rate	2.1	2.1	-	- 2.6 %	1.7	2.1

Many maternal deaths take place in rural areas because of poor access to quality maternal Health Care facilities. Recognising the importance of women's health in the process of economic and social development and for improving the quality of life of the citizens especially for those who are residing in rural areas, the Government of India has launched the programme National Rural Health Mission, where one of the objectives of NRHM is to reduce infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. The maternal and child health status of Odisha is low compared to many states of India. It has many far-flung villages, therefore delivery of healthcare services to inaccessible areas is a challenge. NRHM's innovative strategies and approaches have tried to improve the health status of the population at the grassroots level. Reduction in Infant, both neonatal and post-neonatal components, and Child mortality have been important objectives of NRHM initiatives⁷.

A holistic policy intervention to promote child survival in NRHM comprises newborn care, both home and facility-based, proper counselling and widespread messages on proper breastfeeding practices, and food supplementation at the right time and a complete package of immunization for children. The immunization programme is a key intervention for the protection of children from life-threatening and preventable diseases predominantly facilitates reduction in the post-neonatal component of infant mortality. Thus, proper breastfeeding, nutritional supplementation and a complete immunization package envisage a reduction in infant and child mortality. Efforts are being made to strengthen routine immunization by usage & disposal of auto destructible syringes, community mobilization by volunteers, special IEC activities, alternate vaccine delivery system, strengthening of cold chain etc. In India, children are supposed to be vaccinated for six serious but preventable diseases – tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, and measles. The health of the infant is also linked to the health of the mother. Many of these services will also help prevent maternal mortality⁸.

The maternal healthcare MCH comprises three important types of care, care during pregnancy called antenatal care, care during delivery called natal care and care after delivery known as postnatal care. Many services are required for maternal health. For proper maternal care and related to care of infants there has to be services available not only at the time of delivery but before and after that also. This is called the 'continuum of care'. Care should be available during childbirth also (Intrapartum care), especially emergency obstetric care (EmOC), so that the life of the woman can be saved in case there is an emergency. Other than these services the woman should have access to nutritious food at home along with sufficient rest, which is mostly debarred of in the case of poor women⁹.

Antenatal Care

As per the report of NFHS-4 among mothers who gave birth in the five years preceding the survey, a little more than four-fifths(83%) received antenatal care (ANC) for their last birth from a skilled provider (76%from a doctor and 7% from an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM), lady health visitor (LHV), nurse, or midwife). Six percent did not receive any

antenatal care. In Odisha, more than 90 percent of women who received following antenatal care for their last birth received each of the services needed to monitor their pregnancy¹⁰.

Maternity Waiting Homes (Maa Gruha):- Maa Gruhas are temporary Shelters for the pregnant women residing in hard-to-reach areas coming for institutional delivery. These are established near delivery points to accommodate the expected delivery cases from difficult geographical packets list before 7 to 10 days of the expected date of delivery for having safe institutional delivery. It not only provides facilities of temporary rest shed but also a home counselling services to mothers on personal rising hygiene family planning measures and newborn care etc. So far 80 MWH is operational out of 106 targeted.

Initiatives for Anaemia Control:-IFA & Calcium supplementation: About 07 lakhs of pregnant women were covered during the year 2019-20. Injection Iron Sucrose & Blood Transfusion Services- made at institutional level for pregnant women with severe anaemia.

The PMSMA:-The program focused on screening of antenatal cases by doctors, especially O & G Specialist at least once during the 2nd or 3rd trimester. This activity is implemented on the 9th of every month on a fixed day basis. PMSMA also encourages the participation of private practitioners. The prime objective of the program is to screen for high-risk pregnancies and initiate its management, as appropriate. During the year 2019-20, 608092 nos of antenatal cases have been screened and 30642 high-risk pregnancies were detected. These detected high-risk cases are provided with Red Card as a symbol of high risk for priority treatment as per the advice of the doctor, which is further tracked by the service provider.

ANM Monitoring:-The activity aims to improve knowledge and build defined skill sets of HW(F) for providing quality services in VHNDs and sub-centres. The focus is given to poor-performing ANMs through a different level.

Natal Care or Delivery Care

More than four-fifths of births (85%) take place in a health facility (mostly a government facility) and 14 percent take place at home. Institutional births are more common among women who have received an antenatal check. The percentage of births in a health facility more than doubled in the 10 years between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4, from 36 percent in NFHS-3 to 85 percent in NFHS-4 through the following natal care programmes provided by State Government¹⁰.

First Referral Unit and Delivery Points:-Delivery points and FRUs are strengthened for basic delivery services and secondary care services for mothers and children by providing services through critical care units like SNCU/NBSU/OT with CS facilities and blood transfusion facilities at FRUs. The FRUs functions with specialised manpower for addressing maternal, neonatal and mortality factors. Out of 94 if our use of the state 74 if are used are providing c section services. Specialist manpower with blood banks (51) and blood storage units (44) are also operationalised. States have the target of 1190 delivery points of which 530 a functional and steps have been taken for functionalization of the remaining delivery points.

Janani Surakhya Yojana (JSY):-JSY is a safe motherhood intervention implemented to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among all pregnant women with the provision of cash incentives of rupees 1400 and rupees 1000 for rural and urban areas and rupees 500 for home delivery cases belonging to BPL category respectively. The payment is made to the beneficiary through the direct bank transfer DBT method only. Total 6815 420 beneficiaries benefited under JSY. Due to JSY, the institutional delivery has increased from 28.8% in 2005-06 to 85% in 2015-16 as per NFHS- 4.

Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK):-JSSK assures cashless services to postnatal women up to six weeks after delivery and sick infants up to one year in government health institutions in both rural and urban areas. In the scheme free drugs and consumables, free diagnostics, free diet during the stay in hospitals, free provision of blood, exemption from user charges and free treatment are provided to all pregnant women and sick new-born and infants. 27,27,105 pregnant women and sick infants have availed the free referral transport services through 102/108.

Skilled Attendant at Birth (SAB):-Training was given to the paramedics and AYUSH doctors to examine the institutional delivery. These SAB trained staff are posted in the identified delivery points on a priority basis. During the year 2019-20, 211HW(F) and LHV and 176 Staff Nurses and 29 AYUSH doctors were trained in SAB.

Review of Maternal Deaths:-Maternal death review (MDR) Committees are formed at state and district levels to review maternal death. In 2019, 2471 maternal death have been reported by October 2019 and out of that 204 death are reviewed by Collector-cum-District Magistrate and 381 death are reviewed by CDM and PHO of the district. To reduce the incidence of maternal deaths, every cause of maternal death is analyzed and respective action is taken accordingly at the appropriate label.

Comprehensive Abortion Care CAC:-To provide safe and accessible care services doctors and paramedics are trained in different methods of MTP up to CHC level. Out of 1078 targeted institutions, 328 facilities are in readiness for providing CAC in the state.

Implementation of DAKSHATA:-Objective this activity is to provide quality service in the labour room by developing skills of service providers and upgrading the 80 MWH labour room by developing skills of service providers and upgrading the labour room infrastructure as per standards set under maternal and newborn health (MNH) tool kit. After this initiative, it is observed that the skill and knowledge of service providers like doctors and paramedical staff supplier rooms have improved.

LaQshya:-Under this program the LR and MOT will be standardized for providing quality care services. This will put focus on improvement of infrastructure providing respect full maternity care and ensuring regular supplies of labour room and maternity OT. The target is set to standardize all medical colleges and FRUs used as the prospective target. During year 6 facilities had been certified under Laqshya at State and National levels.

Postnatal Care

Postnatal care for a mother helps safeguard her health and can reduce maternal mortality. In Odisha, 85 percent of mothers had a postnatal check after their last birth, and 79 percent of mothers had a postnatal check within two days of the birth, as is recommended. Postnatal care is most common following births in a health facility; 82 percent of births in public health facilities and 89 percent of births in private health facilities were followed by a postnatal check for the mother within two days of birth, compared with 50 percent of homebirths. The following postnatal services are provided by the State Government to control maternal mortality¹⁰.

Village Health & Nutrition Day (VHND):-These days are organized once a month on a fixed day basis (Tuesday and Friday) with the joint effort of ANM, AWW and ASHA. The VHND provides quality ANC and PNC services for expecting and lactating mothers, counselling on family planning needs, adolescent Health day for adolescents, monitoring the growth of child development provision of essential drugs and micro-nutrients like IFA, albendazole, calcium are given along with counselling and referral of identified high-risk cases to appropriate institutions. So far 4,29,487 VHND sessions held out of which 4,22,889 planned (98%) during 2019-20.

Maternal & Child Health (MCH) wings:-Exclusive Maternal & Child Health (MCH) wing is constructed at institutions with a high delivery load for providing comprehensive RMNCH + A services under one roof. This will improve 48 hours of stay of mothers after delivery and improve post-natal and neonatal care.

It is well recognised that child survival cannot be addressed in isolation as it is intricately linked to the health of the mother, which is further determined by her health and development as an adolescent. Therefore, the concept of Continuum of Care, which emphasizes care during critical life stages to improve child survival, is being followed under the different national programme. The newborn and child health are now the two key pillars of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) strategic approach, 2013. Odisha has been working towards reducing its child mortality rates on a priority basis through various programs and strategies. The neonatal mortality rate in Odisha remains to be a major concern. As per the latest Sample Registration System Reports, the neonatal mortality rate of Odisha is 32 % per 1000 live births and that in India is 23 % per 1000 live births. Similarly, the IMR of Odisha is 41 % per 1000 live births and that in India is 33 % per 1000 live births and the USMR is 47 % per live births against the National USMR of 37. It is observed that the rate of reduction of IMR in the State is highest in the country. Major interventions taken through NHM for the reduction of infant, neonatal and under-five mortality in the State are as follows:

New Born Care Corner (NBCC):-Special corner is established in the labour room of all delivery points with a set of equipment for immediate care of the newborn. Healthcare providers conducting deliveries have been trained in Nabjat Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (NSSK)

for initial newborn care and resuscitation. 560 newborn care established at all functional delivery points. Till 2019, 8% of all live births have been resuscitated and 5% of all live births have been referred to a higher facility for treatment.

New Born Stabilization Unit (NBSU):-The state has established NBSUs in the FRUs with priority in high IMR districts for stabilization of sick newborns which can be managed at NBCC. 45 new-borns tabulation units are currently operational in the state which is being upgraded to special newborn care units (SNCU) in a phased manner based on the caseload.

Special New-born Care Units (SNCU):-The state has established 40 out of 45 special new-born care units (SNCU) for treatment of severely sick new-borns at different medical College and hospitals, the district headquarters hospital, sub-divisional hospitals and selected community health centres, based on the annual delivery load. Further, 5 new SNCUs are under process. During 2019-20, out of 99.7% of sick new born's 74.6 % have been discharged successfully after due treatment. The system has been developed for tracking the cases after discharge from SNCU for follow-up and time management if required along with tracking the exact outcome of a particular admitted newborn within one year.

Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) units:-KMC units are being established in all health facilities with SNCUs used for ensuring warmth and early initiation of breastfeeding in low birth weight, preterm hypothermia and other sick newborns through the skin to skin contact. KMC has been established in all 40 SNCUs adjoining the SNCU.

Home Based New-born Care (HBNC):-All ASHAs have been trained for making a home visit to all newborns up to 42 days for early identification and referral of sick newborns and providing counselling to caregivers on home-based newborn care. During 2019-20 10% of new-born were reported as low birth weight (LBW) and 91% of identified high-risk new-born were referred for appropriate treatment.

Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre (NRC):-This is a special facility for the treatment of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Besides treatment, there is a provision of diet in the NRC for the severe acute malnutrition child and his or her mother along with the loss of wages compensation for a family during a stay at the facility. Mothers are also trained on the preparation of nutritious food and maintenance of hygiene and good sanitation during child feeding. Moreover, for the sensory stimulation of children, there is a provision of indoor and outdoor games and audio-visual aids in the facility.

Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness (IMNCI):-ANM has been trained on IMNCI for identification treatment referral and follow-up of seeking new notice and children up to five years.

Routine Immunization (RI):-Immunization is given to all children against vaccine-preventable diseases such as diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, hepatitis B, Poliomyelitis, childhood tuberculosis and measles. The pentavalent vaccine has been introduced recently for the inclusion of Haemophilia influenza (Hib).

Indian Newborn Action plan (INHP): Under this plan, all newborns are to be administered with K1 for preventing newborn deaths occurring due to Vitamin K deficiency bleeding disorders. During 2019, 81% of all births in the state were administered with Vitamin K1. Similarly, INAP also advocates the administration of antenatal corticosteroids to all pregnant women identified with premature labour to prevent New Born deaths occurring due to respiratory distress syndrome. Till 2019, mothers of 12% of all preterm newborns were administered antenatal corticosteroids in the state.

Integrated Action Plan for Prevention of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (IAPPD): As pneumonia and diarrhoea are major causes of under-five child deaths, community health workers are trained on detection of pneumonia by counting respiration and assessment of dehydration in case of a child suffering from diarrhoea. ANMs identify & treat pneumonia with amoxicillin & gentamycin and diarrhea with ORS & zinc. Recently Rotavirus Vaccine has been introduced to prevent Rota Virus-infected diarrhoea.

Child Death Review (CDR):- Child death review has been implemented in the state during 2015-16 under which committees have been framed at the state and district level for detailed review and analysis of each under-five child death and taking necessary corrective actions.

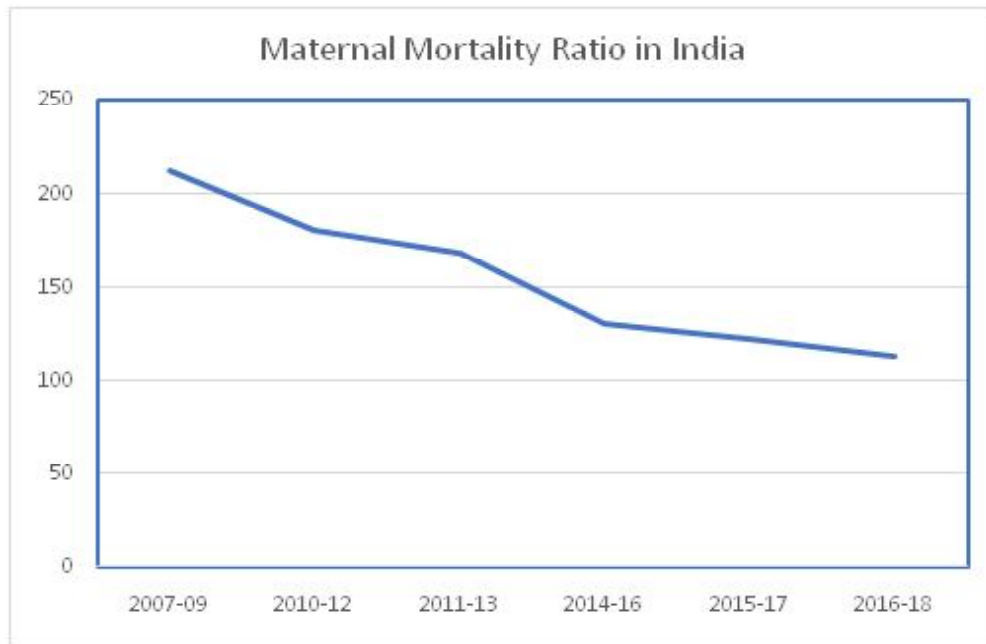
In 2015, the world began working toward a new global development agenda, seeking to achieve, by 2030, new targets set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The proposed SDG target for child mortality aims to end, by 2030, preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Table 2: Mortality Ratio Under 5 Mortality Rate in Selected Countries

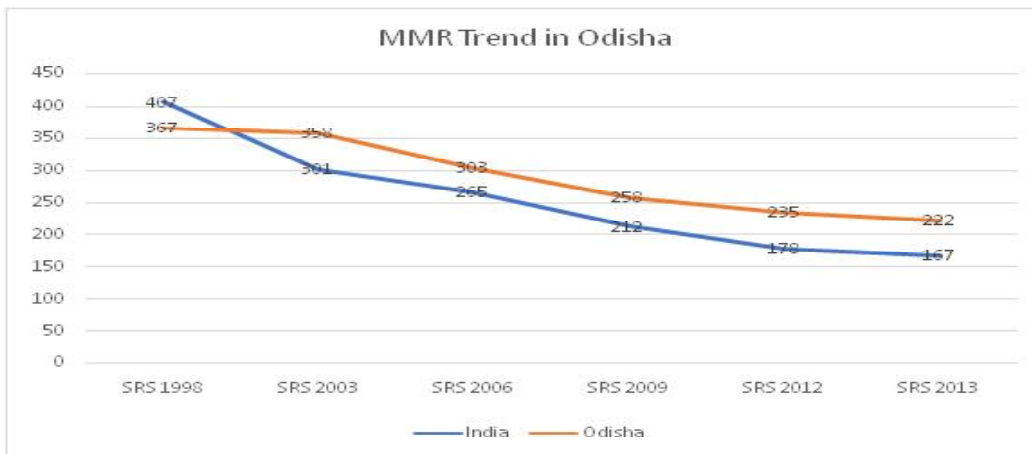
Country	Maternal mortality ratio modelled estimate per 1,00,000 live births	Under 5 Mortality Rate (Per 1000 live births)
Bangladesh	240	49
Mozambique	490	108
Pakistan	260	74
India	200	63
UK	12	5
USA	21	8

Source: *World Development Indicators, World Bank, 2012*

India's MMR declined from 130 per 1 Lakh live births in 2014-16 to 122 per 1 Lakh live births in 2015-17 and between 2016 -2018 it was dropped to 113, almost 100 death lesser than in the 2007-2009 period.



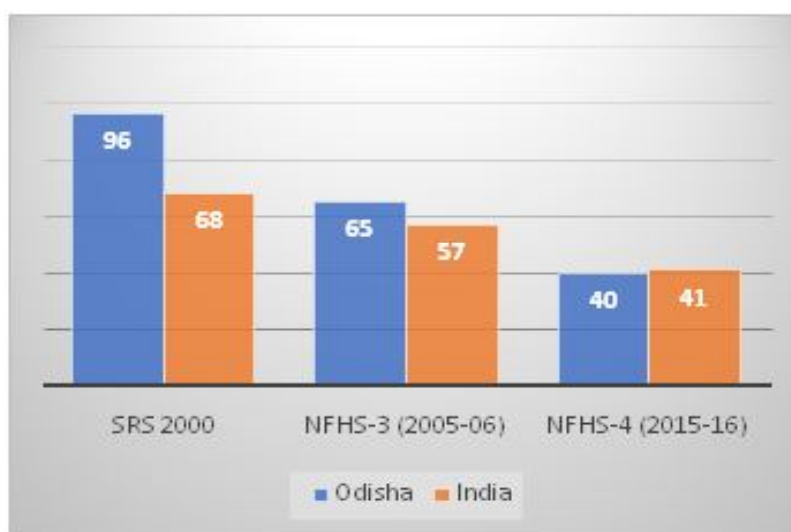
Source- Sample Registration System



Source- Sample Registration System

Infant Mortality in Odisha has made a quantum leap with 56 points decline by reducing IMR from 96 (SRS 2000) to 40 in 2015-16 (NFHS-4) which is the highest point decline in the country far ahead of the national average decline of 27 points and better than major States like Gujarat (28 points), Rajasthan (38 points), Chhattisgarh (25 points), Jharkhand (26 points), MP (36 points), UP (19 points). This translates into 51,000 more children being saved annually compared to the year 2000. IMR in rural Odisha was 43 as compared to 21 in urban areas in 2015-16. At the national level, IMR stood at 41 and varied from 46 in rural areas to 29 in urban areas in 2015-16.

Infant Mortality Rate Point decrease: Odisha-56, India—27



Source- National Family Health Survey

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India launched several National Programmes i.e. Extended Programme on Immunisation (EPI) in 1978; Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) in 1984-85 and Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme (CSSM) in 1992 to strengthen the maternal and child health care in the country. The Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme was launched in 1997 to improve maternal and child healthcare, family planning services and control of STDs and HIV/AIDS among the population. Besides, several non-governmental organizations are also involved in the delivery of maternal and child health care services at the grassroots level. By all such effort, maternal health care has improved in the country though not quite sufficiently¹¹.

Concluding Observations:

Health has remained one of the most priority areas for the state government. The NRHM, Odisha has made continuous efforts on providing quality healthcare services to the people of

Odisha especially those who are residing in rural areas. It has implemented a wide range of initiatives especially in the areas of maternal and child. As NFHS-4, Odisha has registered the sharpest decline in infant mortality rate among the major states of the country. States MMR has fallen below the national average for the first time which is a testimony to various focused interventions in the area of maternal and child health. Odisha's MMR and IMR have seen a decline over the years. Focus on quality and coverage of health services through public health initiatives under the NHM such as Lakshya, Janani Suraksha Karyakram, Janani Shishu Suraksha Yojana, etc have contributed to this decline.

The State government has designed and implemented many maternal health interventions in a very good way but due to lack of proper monitoring expected results have not been achieved. To improve IMR and MMR, the first step should be to establish better coordination among these field staff and it is very sure if they start working as a team many problems and barriers can be removed very easily. Further, it is essential to provide better facilities to ASHAs, who are playing a very important role in maternal and child health care in rural areas, to improve the quality of implementation of various maternal and child health policies.

It is clear from the study that gender has played a lead role during a specific situation such as decision-making for the place of delivery, the behaviour of patients, knowledge of husbands of pregnant women about health of her wife and others. The vision of NRHM is to empower the PRIs at each level i.e. Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad to take leadership to control and manage the public health infrastructure at the district and sub-district levels. This is not happening in reality, still, provisions are there but only formalities are being completed at every level. To build awareness among men regarding women's health issues effective PRI support is very much needed. It is seen that high-performing districts have performed better mainly because of good awareness campaigns so we should think about ways and means to increase awareness in remote districts for decreasing the IMR and MMR ratio to achieve the 4 and 5 MDGs in a given time.

The Directorate of Family Welfare along with the directorate of public health should develop a mechanism to monitor the outcome of the implementations of the schemes relating to antenatal, natal and postnatal and work accordingly for effective service delivery.

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Impact of Self-help Groups (SHGs) on Socio-economic and Political Development of Women: An Empirical Study of Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Bolangir District of Odisha

Suresh Prasad Sarangi

Abstract

Self-Help Groups are instrumental for rural development, poverty alleviation, and social empowerment in our country. Women are an integral part of the development process of any country and to achieve this goal it is necessary to give an equal footing to women with their male counterparts in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities. Due to several reasons like, illiteracy, low work participation, conservative attitude of the male-dominated society, the status of women is very poor in developing countries like India and their decision making power and political participation, as well as income-generating activities, is very low by which they have to depend on men. In recent times, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as the very powerful instrument in India through which women are getting empowered economically and socially. This study tries to address the impact of self-help groups on women in Sikachhida Gram panchayat of Bolangir district of Odisha. The information required for the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The result of the study revealed that SHGs have had a significant role in the economic, social as well as political aspects of the beneficiaries.)

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Self-Help Groups, Income generating activities, Political Participation.*

The empowerment of women is crucial for the development of the country. Empowerment means increased spiritual, political, social, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities.¹ After the seventy-two years of independence, the role of women has been confined to child-rearing and housekeeping having the least decision-making power. Till now, women have been treated as the weaker section of the society and least access to property rights and the services launched by the state and central government.² Our constitution

guarantees equal opportunities for both male and female communities but women folk are given meager chances to get the benefit due to restrictions imposed by them at different levels of family, community and society.³

In recent times, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as the very powerful instrument in third world countries through which women are getting empowered economically and socially. India and Bangladesh are two leading countries in South Asia where Self-help Groups movements are rising very steadily and it has been proved that this movement has become successful in nurturing, maintaining and functioning the Self-Help Groups. Now the Indian administrators, policy-makers and academicians are keeping vigilant eyes regarding the successful implementation of this programme and to ascertain whether the real fruits are reaching the beneficiaries.

Scope of the Study:

The study is restricted to the Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Bolangir District of Odisha. The sample is selected in the study area. Since the objective of the study is to access the economic, social and political impact of SHGs on women and to find out the problems faced by the members of Self-Help Groups, information has been collected from the Group members looking into these aspects only.

Objectives of the Study:

The objective of the study is to find out the socio-economic and political empowerment of women after their involvement in Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Thus, the main objectives of the study are:

- i. To investigate the impact of Women Self-Help Groups on poverty alleviation in terms of additional income generation, saving and investment opportunities, employment generation of the households of the members,
- ii. To study the process of economic empowerment and the changes observed in personal lives,
- iii. To study whether the women self-help groups as a whole are successful in serving as a pressure group at Gram Sabha, and
- iv. To identify the constraints faced by the beneficiaries, the nature of the constraints and to suggest their remedies.

Research questions

The following hypotheses have been empirically tested:

- a) Self-help groups are an effective way of promoting the socio-economic empowerment of poor women.

- b) The members of the WSHG are playing an important role in local politics, especially, in the village panchayats.
- c) The usefulness of SHG's is not up to the desired satisfaction level due to various socio-cultural factors.

Methodology

To understand the impact of Self-Help Groups on empowering women of Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Balangir district of Odisha, a field survey was conducted in the same Gram Panchayat. The most important factor that attracted the researcher to choose this Gram Panchayat is its backwardness. This Gram Panchayat is inhabited predominantly by backward classes (the scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward classes). The universe of the study consists of SHGs registered from January 2016 to March 2019. Based on the list provided by the District Mission Shakti Office, Balangir, 37 Women Self-Help Groups are working in this Gram Panchayat and 20 SHGs are more functional. Hence, these 20 SHGs were approached for the survey and five members from each group were selected randomly. As a whole hundred members were interviewed to know the real development of beneficiaries. In addition to this, few focused group discussions (FGD) are being conducted to understand the general functioning of the groups as well as their socio-economic and political empowerment after their involvement in SHGs.

The present study "Impact of Self-Help Groups in the socio-economic and political development of women: An Empirical Study of Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Bolangir District of Odisha" is primarily empirical research and its area is confined to only one Gram Panchayat i.e., Sikachhida Gram Panchayat only. The information thus gathered from the respondents provided a basis for the analysis of the study. But the researcher faced some amount of constraint in eliciting an adequate and appropriate response from the respondent. A number of women from different SHGs were reluctant to express their views regarding their Group activities for fear of action from the government for revealing negative views. However, the researcher himself is a resident of the Bolangir Sadar Block and has some intimate contacts with many SHGs members, Sarpanchs, Ward Members and general people and therefore, could be acceptable to the respondents. The respondents were assured that the data would be used purely for academic purposes and no action can be taken against them in revealing any fact. But all the revealing facts were based on their memory. Hence, the researcher has also explored other sources and largely depends on personal observations made during the field study.

Origin of Self-Help Groups

Prof. Mohammad Yunus was the founder of Self-Help Groups in Bangladesh whose main intention was to provide credit to rural people of Bangladesh by creating the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh in 1975.⁴ This bank provided loans to the people without asking for any

security deposit and having no paper work. It was a collateral-free loan. Prof. Yunus was successful in his mission and the poor people of Bangladesh were benefited a lot. Soon after, this programme was spread out to many parts of the countries of the world including India. In India, NABARD initiated SHGs in the year 1986-87. But this programme was strengthened when banks were linked to SHGs in the year 1992.⁵

The SHG is a group of rural poor who have volunteered to organize themselves into a group of 10-20 members, for the eradication of poverty of members. They agree to save regularly and convert their savings into a common fund. The members of the group who used this common fund and such other funds that they receive as a group through common management.⁶

The main objective of the Self-Help Group is to alleviate poverty. Increasing employment opportunity and accelerating economic growth along with raising the status of the beneficiaries joining the SHG.⁷ Above all, promoting income-generating activities is the prime concern of SHG.

The Women Self-Help Group is increasingly being used as a tool for various developmental interventions. By the formation of SHGs, rural women in India are getting credit and extension support for various production-oriented income-generating activities. An SHG is treated as a sustainable people's institution which provides poor rural women with the space and support necessary for them to take effective steps towards achieving greater control of their lives.⁸

For the larger interest of women and their empowerment, the Government of Odisha has launched "Mission Shakti" on 8th March 2001 with a target to organize 2 lakhs Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) covering all revenue villages of the state.⁹ The primary objective of this Mission Shakti was the economic empowerment of women by forming SHGs and providing them with loans through banks at a low rate to take up various livelihood activities. The Chief Minister of Odisha, Sri Naveen Patnaik on 5th January 2019 announced an interest-free loan up to Rs.3 lakh for the Women Self-Help Group members, which would benefit around 70 lakh women associated with six lakh Groups who are working actively in WSHGs.¹⁰ The Chief Minister also launched the distribution of seed money (Rs.15, 000 per group) to around three lakh newly-formed SHGs and to those which have not yet received the amount and this package would be highly impressive to be the vibrant SHGs.¹¹ Seed money is the funds allocated to initiate a project that is given to the Women SHGs since they don't have adequate savings. Further, this would enable them to seek bank loans. Mr. Pattnaik also launched the digital empowerment programme of the SHG members by distributing Rs.3000/- to each SHG for purchasing smartphones.¹² This declaration of Mr. Pattnaik would be obvious, an encouraging step in entrepreneurship through SHGs and it would also help a lot in empowering them digitally to grow and to prosper.

The Location of the Study

Sikachhida Gram Panchayat is coming under the Bolangir Sadar Block in the Bolangir

district of Odisha. Based on the list provided by the District Mission Shakti Office, 37 Women Self-Help Groups are working in this Gram Panchayat and 20 SHGs are more functional. Hence these 20 SHGs were approached for the survey and five members from each group were selected randomly. In addition to this few focused group discussions (FGD) were conducted to understand the general functioning of the groups as well as their socio-economic and political empowerment after their involvement in SHGs. All these WSHGs who were working in this Gram Panchayat were engaged in different income-generating activities like, goatery, vegetable productions, dairy farming, Bamboo work, manufacturing of broomstick, seasonal business, spices and rice business, cultivation of mushroom and preparation of candles, etc. Different WSHGs like Maa Durga, Maa Tarini, Maa Mathakhai, Durga Mahila Sangha, Maa Bhabani, Budha Dangar, Triranga, Maa Sarada, Maa Samaleswari, SubhaLaxmi, Maa Laxmi Narayani, Radha Krishna, Maa Saraswati, Maa Manikeswari, Maa Brundabati, Maa Bibapani, Maa Baishnabi, Maa Patneswari, Maa Bhabani, and Shiva Shakti WSHGs were interviewed to ascertain their views regarding the fruitfulness of this Mission.

Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents of WSHGs:

i) Age:

Age always plays a very important role in human activities. It is very often found that the young and middle-aged people are more active and energetic than the old aged. The age-wise analysis of the respondents displays that a high percentage of them are between 20-30 years followed by those in the 31-40 age group. 8 percent of them are from the age group of above 50.

ii) Education:

Education empowers individuals to think, analyze situations and make judgments. It is one of the chief components in the process of empowerment.

Table 1: Level of Education of the Respondents of SHGs :

Level of Education	Number of Respondents	Level of Percentages
Not gone to School	60	33
Primary	28	43
Secondary	10	45
Graduation	02	08
Total	100	100

Source: *Data Collected by the Researcher*

From the sample collected from the Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Bolangir Sadar Block of the district, it is seen that some of the members have not attended the school, though they could read and write. Very few women attained higher education levels. For joining WSHG there is no educational qualification is required, there were some members in the sample

who did not have any formal schooling. The younger women had access to schooling facilities and attained an educational level that was relatively higher than that of aged women. The aged women were of the view that in their time education was not considered to be important for women. They also told that in their time the women were trained in their household work which would help them after their marriage to manage their family. But it was observed that some members of WSHGs could manage to put their signature against their names while some managed by thumb impression. It was also further observed that some members could use the hand watch and also could be able to count money. From the sample collected, only about 2% were graduates, 10% could complete their matriculation while 28% could go up to Class Five.

iii) Marital Status:

Women members in our sample have joined the SHG after their marriage. It has been observed that 87% of married women are working in the SHGs. The sample also represents 4% spinster ladies are also joining in the SHGs followed by 7% of widows and 2% of divorcees.

iv) Social identity:

Caste is an important social institution of our country which gives the citizens a sense of belonging. The intensity of caste hierarchy is visible in social relations. This is more visible in rural areas and the members of the same castes also develop an intimate relationship with themselves.

Table 2: Caste-wise Composition of the Respondents of WSHGs:

Caste	Number of Respondents	Percentage
General	15	15
Scheduled Caste	25	25
Scheduled Tribe	40	40
Other Backward Class	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: *Data collected by the Researcher*

The study of the caste composition of the respondents reveals that the women of the General Category constitute nearly 15% followed by Scheduled Caste women constitute 25%. The respondents of Scheduled Tribes constitute 40% and respondents of Other Backward Classes constitute nearly 20 Percentage. From this table, it is indicated that the Self-Help Groups programme has attracted all sections of women cutting across different communities. Women are wholeheartedly joining this programme to take the advantage of this programme. The prime purpose of this programme is meant for the socio-economic upliftment and empowerment of women.

V) Family Size:

The number of family members has a great impact on the living standards of its members. But both the big and small family has their advantages and disadvantages. If the number of members in the family is big more income is required to provide them a self-sufficient standard of life. But the reverse is not required in the case of a small family. The small family can manage in a low income also and there are more chances of enjoyment in such family.

In the sample, Nuclear family structure was found more in numbers followed by joint and single. Though there were some single families represented in the sample, their percentage is very low. Joint family structure was also found in the sample but their presence is less than the Nuclear family.

vi) Occupation of the Husbands of Respondents:

Generally, employment opportunity is less in rural areas as compared to urban areas. People lack the opportunities to access the field of education, health, sanitation and transport. In rural areas, every family depends on the income of the headman. Besides him, no other members are involved in any profession. They work as coolie, daily wage labor, vendor and a housewife and maintain their livelihood.

In the sample, the majority of the respondents were housewives. The coolies and daily wage labourers in the sample constitute 48% and 18% respectively.

Table 3: Channels of Awareness of the Respondents about SHGs:

Agency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Animator	20	20
Bank Officer	10	10
Village People	50	50
Panchayat Functionaries	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: *Data Collected by the Researcher*

From the above table, it is clear that a majority of the respondents came to know of the programme through Panchayat functionaries. The village people by getting some information discussed with the functionaries about the detailed information about the benefits of the Self-Help Groups and how they can get loan easily from the nearby Banks. A sizable number of respondents got information from Panchayat Sarpanch also. The role of village people and Panchayat Sarpanch in disseminating this information cannot be underestimated. It is also noted that the majority of the respondents opined that they joined the Self-Help Groups for financial assistance and to lead a decent life.

Table 4: Reasons for joining of Self-Help Groups Members:

Statement	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To attain the economic independence	13	13
Meet household expenses	12	12
To start business	09	09
For Savings	10	10
Loan	56	56
Total	100	100

Source: *Data Collected by the Researcher*

Table 4 reveals that the purpose of joining of SHGs, around 56% of respondents joined the SHGs to get a handsome amount of rupees in the form of loan, 13% to attained economic independence, remaining 10% for saving purpose and only 9% of the respondents reveals that their primary motto is to start a business.

Table 5: Annual Household Income of the Respondents (After joining SHG):

Income (Rs.)	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Below 10,000	70	70
10001-15000	11	11
15001-20000	10	10
20001-25000	08	08
Above 25001	01	01
Total	100	100

Source: *Data Collected by the Researcher*

Table No. 5 shows that the majority 70% of the members earn below Rs. 10,000/- per year, 11% of them earn between Rs. 10,001-15,000 per annum, 10% of the members are earning between Rs. 15,001-20,000 Per year, 8% of them earn between Rs. 20,001-25,000 per year and only 1% of them earn above Rs. 25,001 per annum. This analysis firmly speaks that after joining the SHG Programme, the members are able to enhance their earning level by involving themselves in income-generating activities like goatery, vegetable productions, dairy farming, Bamboo work, manufacturing of broomstick, seasonal business, species and rice business, cultivation of mushroom and preparation of candles, etc.

Table 6: Person who is Responsible for Taking Final Decisions in the Family (After joining SHG):

Decision Maker	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Self	10	10
Husband	70	70
Both of them	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Data Collected by the Researcher

From the above table, it is clear that now in this modern world also the society has been male-dominated as the table speaks that 70% of the family decision has been taken by the husband in the family. 20% of the family decisions are taken jointly. From the analysis, we conclude that after joining the WSHGs the women are able to participate in the management of the family and gradually their decisions are also taking into account the affairs of the family.

Table 7: For which purpose are the savings of SHG utilized? (After joining SHG):

Expenditure	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To pay old debt	40	40
Asset Building	30	30
Children Education	07	07
Agricultural Expenses	12	12
Medical Expenses	10	11
Total	100	100

Source: Data Collected by the Researcher

Table No. 7 depicts that the members of SHGs are saving money to pay their old debt which they are borrowed from the village money lenders, followed by asset building, while third preference is given to agricultural expenses, fourth to medical expenses and last is for children education. It shows that the saving habit of the members have been enhancing day by day when they are joining the SHGs Programmes.

Table 8: Do You ever attend the meeting of the Gram Sabha? (After joining SHG):

Participation in Gram Sabha Meeting	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Some times	30	30
Many times	55	55
Never	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Data Collected by the Researcher

Table 8, explains that in a democratic country like India a sizeable number of women are also joining in the local politics and actively participating in the Gram Sabha meeting by raising different demands which must be taken into account.

The study shows that by joining WSHGs the standard of living of their family has been extensively improved ever before and by joining these SHGs they are getting more economic support and in a long run it would be easier for them to run the household chore.

The researcher has interviewed 100 members of the different WSHGs of Sikachhida Gram Panchayat of Sadar Block of Bolangir and obtained their views. The following are the important findings and the results of the study.

- Married young women are actively participating and representing in the SHG programme to meet their domestic demands.
- The study also confirms that the majority of the members of the SHGs are living in a nuclear family and most of them are joining SHGs to cater to the needs of the family and to attend the economic independence.
- The study also observed that the earning capacity of the majority of the members is below Rs. 10,000 per year.
- It is also found from the study that most family decisions are taken by the male member of the house. But, slowly the voice of the women communities is also giving weightage after joining the SHGs the reason thereof is that the SHG women have some financial power in the family.
- Gram Sabha is the most important organ of the Gram Panchayat where important decisions are taken for the overall development of the Gram Panchayat. The study confirms that 55% of members of the Women Self-Help Groups regularly attend the Gram Sabha meetings and participate in the different discussions and raise their voices to incorporate their demands. Thus, the women are directly involved in the process of policy formulation, planning and execution of rural development programmes. This is the positive symbol of women empowerment.
- It is observed that the panchayat functionaries always motivate the village women to form various SHG to improve their standard of living and 80% of the members believe that their standard of living has been improved after joining the SHGs and their savings have been utilized very effectively to meet their domestic and very urgent nature of needs. Day by day the male members are paying due weightage to them in the household work.
- During the time of the interview with the various respondents, the researcher was informed that in the Sikachhida Gram Panchayat the Women Self-Help Groups are very active and they are taking an active interest in the political participation of the Gram Panchayat. All the SHGs members get opportunities to attend a number of

training programmes organized by the government of Odisha. These training programmes enhance their personalities and also develops their leadership qualities. This attracts them to participate in the Gram Panchayat election and to hold different portfolios of Gram Panchayat like Sarpanch, Ward Members and Samiti Members and Block Chairman. The study finds that 2% of women from different WSHGs are elected as panchayat representatives and work in different capacities in the Gram Panchayat.

- It is observed that the members of WSHGs are working as pressure groups in the Gram Panchayat. They are putting pressure on women panchayat functionaries to take up different issues relating to women and children in their villages. They are also very much concerned about the functioning of the Anganwadi Centres which provides feeding to pregnant women, lactating mothers, nutritional support to children up to five years and the old men and women who are deprived of getting old-age pension. According to this survey, the researcher came to know that the members of the WSHGs are very much vigilant about the smooth functioning of these organizations and keep frequent contact with the officials.
- It is also coming to the notice of the researcher that the members of the WSHGs had protested sharply for the liquor shop which was in the middle of the village and drew the attention of the district authority to stop it for the peaceful living of the villagers and to be free from the drunkards and other anti-social elements.
- The members of the WSHGs are very much concerned with safeguarding their rights and liberties in case of any injustice or torture inflicted upon them. In such cases, they are registering their complaint in the appropriate forum for their redress. This is also one of the important symbols of women empowerment.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are offered for promoting the WSHGs in the study area for empowering rural women.

Women Self-Help Groups is a very notable and important scheme for the economic development of women. Through this programme the women communities are engaged themselves in various economic activities like, collection and marketing of minor forest products, which are easily available from the nearest forest. They are also closely engaged in different business activities like preparing pickles, tailoring, making bags, growing mushrooms, dairy, poultry and fishery by getting loans from different commercial banks. The women communities always prefer to engage themselves in this work because for this they have to invest less, no training is also required, and at the same time, there are plenty of marketing facilities in the urban areas. But what is important is that the government should provide skill development training which may include communication skills, computer awareness and vocational skills such as plumbing, stitching and marketing for expanding their business.

For the smooth functioning of the SHG, the Government should develop SHG estates so that infrastructure likes buildings, water, electricity, warehouse, etc. should be made available to the SHGs. Further, the government should directly develop a well-organized market for the products of SHGs.

To bring all SHGs of the country into one umbrella, a separate Act may be passed to provide a legal framework for the functioning of SHGs in the country.

For a better understanding of the shaving habit of the members of the SHGs, financial education needs to be promoted among them. Further, the member should undergo some sort of training to educate themselves about the utilization of money properly.

To develop the leadership qualities among the members of the SHGs, there should be a rotation of group leadership so that all the members of the group get an opportunity to play a managerial role.

It is very often said that “when a woman moves forward the family moves, simultaneously the village moves and finally the nation also moves”. So when the women’s thoughts, values and economic independence will be developed, it would be expected that there must be a good family, good society and ultimately it would lead to a healthy and wealthy and vibrant nation.

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Consumer Justice: A Conceptual Enquiry

Dr. Jyotirmayee Tudu

Abstract

This paper aims to explore how the protection of consumers' interests has been supported through the universal principle of justice. Such development, in fact, evolves in the globalization phase where an attempt has been made at the global level to provide the policy framework to the developing countries. In this process, the role of international organizations has been acknowledged as significant. More particularly, this was reflected through the adoption of the United Nations resolution on the protection of consumers' interests. While bringing the principles of justice for a group of people like the consumer, this article focuses on how agents are crucial to enable it with global characteristics. In this regard, international organizations including United Nations have acted as agents both to initiate and facilitate justice to consumers. There is no dispute about such an attempt that has provided issues of the consumer as a global one. However, the concern emerges about taking a common stand concerning creating an obligation among nation-states to set up not just legal procedures but also the distributional character of consumer justice. Here the later concern of justice has been explored in the context of fair price, trade and a transparent system with regard to the need of the consumer. As a consumer as a category found to be in conflict with heterogeneity syndrome. One could easily identify the above syndrome especially in developing countries where consumers hardly act as a community. The above trend necessitates institutional intervention to deliver justice to them. Such initiative, moreover, suggests that consumers' access to justice is not about his/her responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the state and governments. In order to implement it, all the states irrespective of their socio-economic condition must come together towards the enforcement of common principles of justice.

Keywords: *Consumer, community, Justice, State & Market*

The expansion of neoliberal globalization has been successfully able to generate a shared understanding that irrespective of all identity-based divisions individuals are connected with a common identity that is a consumer. This representation of individual identity as a consumer also informs about the existence of a market society whose scope has been widened in recent years. Sustainability of market is possible through the presence of consumers. Consumers also need to market to fulfill their necessities, may be to get a product or service. In this regard, the availability of consumer(s) is a core requirement in a market society. However,

the issue remains how the relationship between market and consumer needs to be ordered.

Such concern is visible in most of the writings on consumer and their relationship with the market. In critical discourse, a market-driven society has been viewed with a limited possibility to create a just society as it premised its expansion through profit motive criteria. Conventionally, the market is considered to be the sphere of competition not just to make a profit but also to woo consumers. The above nature automatically generates the thinking on how to protect the interest of consumers. The market indeed needs consumers for its expansion. On the other hand, the consumer also requires the market to fulfill her needs and desires. The recognition of mutual needs ought to be equally valued by both of them while shaping their relationship. The core concern here is to assess the extent of 'fairness' or 'justness' in their relationship. As it is about an exchange, the question of trust must be retained. Notwithstanding the above, the relevance of bringing the idea of just relationship among them has got an urgency to be focused on in the phase of globalization. In this regard, concern for consumer justice has attracted the attention of governments, policymakers, law professionals, and civil society organizations.

Taking into account the above concern, this paper intends to discuss how the process of globalization has facilitated the conceptualization of consumer justice both at the domestic and global levels. The central theme of the paper would be on how the consumer's need has been responded through the principles of justice. Is it merely about attending to what is due to the consumer? Or it is about creating a just order where the need of all consumers along with their relationship with the market to be governed through a common principle? What is the crucial factor in making consumers' access to justice a global concern? How the principle of justice was conceptualized to protect the interest of consumers? It is the latter that got huge attention in the phase of globalization. Such attention has opened up the possibilities of further research on how consumer justice as a concept has been operationalized at various levels. The above concerns are explored here through the secondary source of literature. The above discussion has been presented through three sections. The first section provides an understanding of the term 'consumer' as a study of analysis or research category. It deals with the context of how an individual would acquire the status of consumer and why she needs to be treated in a just manner. How has justice as an ideal has conceptualized to protect consumers' interests? The second section deals with how the demands for consumer justice has emerged in the initial phase of economic globalization when international organizations have framed guidelines to safeguard consumers' interest. However, to what extent this demand has advocated for a just relationship among different groups of individuals and their relationship with the market has been addressed in the last section.

The Argument for Consumer Justice:

This section has been elaborated through two parts. The first part focuses on who is a consumer and how her status has been analysed as a research category. The former can be traced through definitional and historical aspects. The term consumer is referred to a person

who gets into an act of pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase actions toward a commercial object for his/her consumption (McNeal : 2007, p.10). In this process, the person concerned is not engaged in manufacturing or resell of what he/she purchased for consumption. Most of the legal definitions of the consumer in different states subscribe to the above idea in their statutes. Further, the consumer may buy a product or service according to his/her needs or choices. What could be taken as a consumable good or transactional nature has been expanded over the years. From the historical aspect, the consumer as a category of people came into the limelight through the speech of John F. Kenedy. In his special message to Congress on 15th March 1962, he delivered for the protection of consumer interest. While defining everybody as a consumer, he emphasized that they are the largest economic group in the economy, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Two-thirds of all spending in the economy is by consumers. Hence, it is necessary to recognize the role of the consumer as the driver of the economy. But they are the only important group in the economies who are not effectively organized, whose views are often not heard. As they are not unified hence it is the responsibility of the state to take care of them.

Here, one thing we need to appreciate is that in a market-driven society when talking about consumer justice we get the dominant thinking it is the individual consumer who is responsible for her or his activities. In liberal democracies, their choice to get something is recognized as right. Hence consumer rights are also part of constitutional rights. In this context, fixing sole responsibility on consumers' behavior as the sole reason for deception by the market automatically constrains the broader scope of justice. Further, in developing states like India, which has already in a stage high market expansion continued with a lack of consumer awareness. Access to consumer rights and justice has been at a nascent stage particularly in the service sector.

Moreover, it is the definitional aspect that motivated some scholars to study consumers through their behavioural patterns. As a subject of research, consumers have largely studied their behaviours. Identifying somebody as a consumer has also been done through her behavior towards a commercial object. The scholars who have studied consumer behavior consider everybody including a child as a consumer (ibid.). They also claimed that developed states could be labeled as consumer societies as the market has already in an expanded form in those localities. Besides the above, there is another group of research that focuses largely on issues associated with the protection of consumers' interests. As pointed out in historical aspects, attention had gained after the Second World War among the western nations on how to protect the interest of consumers. President Kennedy's speech had already expressed the concern that the state should play a crucial role in protecting consumers' interests.¹ He pointed out that each individual has four basic consumer rights. They are; right to choose, the right to safety, the right to be informed, and the right to be heard. These four rights were also adopted by the Consumers Union and were later extended to include the rights to redress, to consumer education, to a healthy environment, and basic needs (Lampman and Douthitt 1997).²

Both of the research directions share the concern about the relationship between consumption and consumers' wellbeing. Such focus invites the scope of justice to the arena of consumer's interest. Most of the mainstream researchers have started their inquiry on consumers towards their access to rights. Concern over how the principle of justice has worked on has got late attention. While not denying the merit of the above argument, availability of rights both in legal- procedural and substantive form requires justice delivery mechanisms. The demand for just claims only could emerge out of the experience of unjust practices. Taking into account the above arguments, this paper has opted to focus on the conceptualization of consumer justice.

It is argued over here that researches on consumer justice require much attention nowadays. The growing concern for sustainability and the crisis continued with pandemics has brought the realization of the limitation of the capital-intensive market economy. Notwithstanding the above, consumer justice has been enquired at the conceptual level and who is responsible to do justice to the consumer has also got some attention. Larsen and Lawson (2013) analysed how different strands of justice have been expressed through U.N. principles of consumer protection. Barnhil (1973) had argued how the market creates unjust practices with poor consumers. It also suggests that there is an unjust relationship among different categories of consumers. These inquiries have not been well investigated in further researches. Besides the above, if one goes into the behavioural aspect of consumers, the principle of justice is found to be visible in the bilateral form. Some scholars offered the argument that consumers' duty towards ascertaining the product or service quality has a significant association with the regulation of business practice and also wellbeing. Here justice is to be guided by contract laws as it is essentially between two parties. Whereas, multiple forms of justice can be ascertained in case of protection of consumer's rights.

This has been explored through two different directions. The first direction takes our attention towards the responsibility and attitudes of consumers towards the market. The other way brings the role of the government regulation which needs to be there as consumers are also citizens and bearers of certain rights. Moreover, both ways of thinking share the common ground that what is due to a consumer must be delivered. The merit of the individual responsibility argument got its strength from the practice that in liberal societies, consumer choice is essentially a fundamental right. It would be effective with the availability of regulatory mechanisms where consumers need to initiate action about the deception, fraud, cheat conducted by the market. The following argument represents the above idea.

Once institutions are established for the purpose (among other things) of delivering justice on a large scale, we can ask what duties of justice individual people have in consequence. Is their duty simply to support the institutions, and comply with whatever rules of conduct apply to them personally? Or do they have further duties to promote justice by acting directly on the relevant principles in their daily lives? No one doubts that *some* duties of justice fall directly on individuals, for example, duties not to deceive or defraud when

engaging in commercial transactions (and duties of corrective justice where behaviour is faulty), or duties to carry out one's fair share of an informally organized project from which one expects to benefit, such as cleaning up the neighbourhood park. Others fall on them because they are performing a role within a social institution, for example, the duty of an employer not to discriminate on grounds of race or gender when hiring workers, or the duty of a local government officer to assign public housing to those in greatest need. (Justice: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice/>)

However, the above argument has also its counter concerns. What would happen, if the above way of imagining justice was not found to be followed in real life? One cannot wait for duty-based altruism. Such concern has insisted on a frame for a common just principle that must abide by not only individuals or groups of people but also across the nation-states. No doubt, the focus on responsibility argument provides the moral basis for individuals to do justice to their due claim as liberal regimes have already established with justice-based institutions. But there is a need to look beyond the individual-specific moral sense to access justice than to the broader one. The very conceptualization of consumer justice emerges when the incidence of due claim to a consumer is not done. In this regard, states and governments are also equally responsible to work for just arrangements for consumers' interests.

The above condition necessitates the globalized character of justice. Rather than focusing on different forms of justice, this paper deals with the role of agents to conceptualize the consumer justice framework. In the initial paragraph as concern was raised with regard to the global character of justice towards the protection of consumer's interests. It is argued over here that the distributional aspect of justice bears the potentiality to provide a just framework not only among different groups of consumers but also could play an effective role in addressing their common needs them. This logic could be applied in the case of choice exercise of consumers as lack of competition fails to provide suitable options many times. The above way of argument has been shaped through different resolutions of international organizations, especially the United Nations (U.N.). The conceptualisation of consumer justice has gained attention due to the intervention of global bodies like the UN in framing policy frameworks to strengthen universal just treatment to consumers' needs across their social groups and geographical location.

Role of International Organizations:

This section is guided by the argument that justice requires an agent whose actions can change the condition or situation of its objects. The agent might be a person, or it might be a group of people or an institution such as the state. This offers the hope that any unjust condition could be challenged through the intervention of an agent. In conducting welfare, the above idea has been the motivating factor for institutional intervention. Here, the agent's effort is considered to be crucial for end results than just the belief that conditions are an outcome of fate.³

The above context also applies in the case of a consumer to access justice. In this initiative, different international organizations have played a significant role. Many scholars have already acknowledged the role of international organizations in strengthening the global regime for the protection of consumers' interests. The following table provides the details about the efforts taken by various international organizations towards consumer protection guidelines.

Table: 1 International Organisations having consumer protection guidelines

Sl. No.	Name of the organization	Details of the guidelines followed with a year
1.	United Nations	United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (1995, 1999, 2015)
2.	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Guidelines for Consumer Protection in the context of Electronic Commerce, 1999
3.	European Union	Consumer Rights Directive, 2011

In this regard, United Nations (U.N.) is appreciated for issuing guidelines for consumers' access to rights and justice at the global level. It was in the year 1985, United Nation have adopted consumer protection guidelines. This initiative has for the first time set of legal provisions at the global level to protect the interests of consumers.⁴ While preparing guidelines, they recognize that "consumers often face imbalances in economic terms, educational levels and bargaining power". (UN: 1985) Considering the above situation, "consumers should have the right of access to non-hazardous products, as well as the right to promote just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development and environmental protection". (ibid: 1985) The above statements cover a wide range of consumer protection areas. It includes health and safety, consumer education and information, promotion of economic interest, and effective redressal of grievance mechanism. This guideline has gradually been referred to by different Member States (e.g., Muniz Cipriano and Santana 2017, pp. 25–37) and other international and regional organizations as well.⁵ Country like Brazil and Australia have framed their consumer laws according to the UN guidelines.⁴

Such recognition has indicated that consumers need to be treated in a just manner. Consumer's relationship with the market is always found to be in an unjust form where the former locates itself in a powerful and dominant position. Hence, consumer needs safeguards with regard to his/her interest. Availability of such safeguards must be supported through the

idea of rights, equality and justice. Larsen and Lawson (2013) provide the argument that the rights framework of UN guidelines on the protection of consumer interest has offered member countries to apply it for policy proposes. A consistent approach to this right-based framework of consumer interest protection guidelines has also opened the door to assess how different ideas of justice are served through it. He also argued that “an understanding of how justice is both ensured and potentially denied may assist in predicting future trends regarding aspects of ethical and unethical consumption” (ibid.). Further, he provided the analysis that how UN guidelines have provided an expanded and comprehensive idea to apply justice in multiple ways. It could be taken as an integrated justice framework that not only included legal procedural but also addresses the distributional aspect of justice.

The scope of UN guidelines includes issues with both business-to-consumer transactions and provision of goods and services by state enterprises and private sector standards in addressing consumer welfare. Besides the above, OECD has also issued guidelines for consumer protection in the context of electronic commerce. The necessity of this kind of guidelines has emerged with the expansion of digital technology. This guideline has offered policy recommendations to its member countries. Such initiative suggests that the relevance of justice has widened with the changing mode of business practices. Similarly, the European Union directive on consumer rights has also contained the common principle for providing consumers to be informed before the purchase of any good and the right to cancel online purchases. It also applies to the entire contract between the trader and consumer.

All the above guidelines bear the international character in setting the policy framework for the member states. It has also been a long time since most of the guidelines have continued and amended to accommodate the changing circumstances of the global economy. Simultaneously, thoughts on justice have also been enhanced and go deep into various domains. This transformation has led to generating concern about how this framework has been working. Is it really working for consumers’ welfare?

Justice is in whose Favour?

At the beginning of the paper, the question was raised how the idea of just order has been evolved to protect consumers’ interests. It has already been discussed in the previous sections that how international organizations, especially the UN have initiated the framework for consumer justice. Now concern emerges about the global character of such framework. While making a distinction between international justice and global justice, Brown (2006) provides the argument that,

The former implies that what we are interested in is the relations of states or nations, the kind of entities that make up the membership of the United Nations; justice, in this case, points us towards the normative principles that underlie such relations, as encapsulated in, or summarized by, the practices of international society, most particularly the discourse of international law. Global justice, on the other hand, does not privilege the nation-state in this

way; here, the referent object of justice is humanity taken as a whole, all the people who share our planet, and it is by no means to be taken for granted that their interests are best served by the normative principles that underlie interstate relations. The procedural account of justice that is represented by traditional conceptions of international law comes up against notions of global social justice. But things are not that simple, because, independent of notions of global social justice, the traditional conception of international relations is under challenge, both by the growth in significance of global social and economic forces and by the position of the United States which has achieved, or had thrust upon it, a degree of hegemony unprecedented in the last 400 years. Between them, globalization and American hyper-power (which may be different aspects of the same phenomena) are reshaping the international agenda, and notions of international/global justice will not escape this process.

The relevance of the above distinction matters in the case of the conceptualization of the consumer justice framework also. One of the ways the above thinking found to be valid when we counter critical scholarship who viewed such attempts by an international organization as a part of globalization agenda. Concern was also raised that the formation of these guidelines by international organizations was a move to rationalize the market intervention. It was claimed that these guidelines lack the legal powers and resources to ensure their full effectiveness (Benhor: 2020). With the growth of trade in the era of globalization, regulation in business practices has emerged as a critical concern. Simultaneously, it has also escalated the complexity of modern goods. Singh and Chadha (2002) offer the argument that

It is only the producer /seller who can assure the quality of goods. With manufacturing activity becoming more organized, the producers/sellers are becoming stronger and organized whereas the buyers are still weak and unorganized. In the age of revolutionized information technology and with the emergence of e-commerce related innovations the consumers are further deprived to a great extent. As a result, the buyer is being misled, duped and deceived day in and day out.

Notwithstanding the above, the scope of UN regulation is considered to be comprehensive and accommodating different principles of justice altogether. There is no doubt that both at the global and national level several initiatives are undertaken. In India, the above has been structured through setting up independent agencies like ministry, departments, quasi-judicial bodies, provisioning for plan allocation, acts and rules. However, the question remains to what extent it offers the opportunity to act with unity against market-led exploitation. Even many scholars have also raised their concern whether the expansion of the market has offered any scope for consumers to exercise citizenship (Micheletti et al. 2004; Zukin and Smith 2004; Soper 2004; Slater 1997; Gabriel and Lang 2006; Scammell 2000). In this context, it is essential that any conceptualisation of consumer justice could be effective when it would be supported with a shared understanding of justice across the member states.

One of the ways this shared understanding could be generated is through effective regulatory mechanisms. UN guidelines have encouraged its member-states to develop, "fair, effective, transparent and impartial mechanisms to address consumer complaints through

administrative, judicial and alternative dispute resolution, including for cross-border cases”. It also insisted on taking care of those consumers who are vulnerable and in a disadvantaged condition like poor. On the other hand, a shared consensus must be drawn among the governments to balance both the need and choice of consumers. Consumer justice is not about creating a framework of just a relationship between the seller and buyer. It should take into account the ethical concerns while setting down its principle for common good.

The way Forward:

Justice would be meaningful when it would reach its fundamental objectives. One among them is its authority to create obligations that must be enforced. It needs to deliver what is due to an individual or group of individuals, either by the recipients themselves or by third parties. However, many times such enforceability fails to occur. In fact, consumers’ access to justice with regard to enforceability continues to be a matter of concern. In this process, nation-states do have a significant role in recongising both the general and particular concerns for different groups of consumers. Moreover, the ongoing pandemic has provided the enormous experience that we are already in a stage of the expanded liberal capitalist market economy. Its limit only can be determined through the agential role of the consumer only. Further, inquiry on consumer justice requires to be researched more to provide policy directions to the governments.

Endnotes

- 1 All these rights are part of Consumer Bill of Rights, 1962.
- 2 Cited by Henry, 2010, p. 671.
- 3 The definition of justice essentially has applied to correct those situation which results out of the societal action or individual action. It even goes further. Like, children who have born with cleft lip definitely not emerged out of the above actions. But they must get surgery facility in order to get remedy from such situation. When the medical surgery is available, it would be unjust if any one denies them to go for it. For details see Justice, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice/>
- 4 This is known as United Nation Resolution 39/248.
- 5 Regional organizations like ASEAN have developed consumer protection guidelines according to UN principles. The status of other regional organizations has not verified.
- 6 Cited by Hearland, (1987,p.246).

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Judicial Activism in India: An Analysis

Subhalaxmi Sahani

Abstract

The present trend of the Indian Judiciary speaks about its activism where it has shifted from its technocratic model to a dynamic interpretation model. The higher echelons of judiciary, particularly, the Supreme court of India and 24 High Courts in different States have not confined themselves in pronouncing their respective judgments based on law rather through pronouncements they make dynamic interpretations of the law to suit the changing needs of India. Thus, the judiciary has explored the areas where the law must look into through its pronouncements. No doubt the various functions have been entrusted to different organs of the government but when the entrusted tasks are not done properly the judiciary starts to play its activist role. The Supreme Court of India has played an important role in addressing various rights issues starting from the rights of labourers to environmental rights through judicial activism. This paper attempts to study the importance of judicial activism through which the Supreme Court of India has tried to address various rights issues.

Keywords: *Judicial Activism, Environmental Protection, Rights, Supreme Court and PIL*

A revolt of the Judiciary is more dangerous to the government than any other even a military revolt. Now and then it uses the military to suppress disorder, but it defends itself every day by means of the Courts..... (Alexis de Tocqueville)

The word Judicial Activism relates to the Judiciary, one of the organs of the government. The primary function of the judiciary is the interpretation of the law but when it goes beyond its jurisdiction of simply interpreting the law, a new phase starts, the phase of Judicial Activism which advocates a dynamic interpretation of the law. This dynamic interpretation leads to the interpretation of the constitutional provisions according to the needs of society. In India, one of the most debatable and controversial topics for constitutional experts is judicial activism. Two views prevail in India regarding Judicial Activism. Both of them are contrary to each other. One view opposes the concept of Judicial Activism because it states that Judicial Activism usurps the known domains of the other two organs of the government. But the view which defends Judicial Activism considers that the court is performing its legitimate functions, it is not crossing its jurisdiction (Sathe, 2003).

According to former Chief Justice of India A.H Ahmadi, Judicial Activism depicts the proactive role played by the Judiciary in ensuring that the rights and liberties of the citizens are protected. The court through Judicial Activism moves beyond its normal role of a mere

adjudicator of disputes and becomes a player in the system of the country laying down principles and guidelines that the executive must carry out (Ahmadi, 2009). According to Subash C Kashyap: Judicial Activism was born as a corrective to the inaction or failure of the executive and the legislature to provide clean, competent and citizen-friendly governance (Kashyap, 2011). According to Kuldip Nayyar: “Judicial Activism fills the vacuum that non-activism of other institutions creates (Nayyar, 1996).

When the court ventures out to make social policies affecting more people and not confining itself to adjudication of legal conflicts, it is known as Judicial Activism. The Judges are considered as judicial activists when they believe that formulating a social policy is a legitimate right and not an exclusive domain of legislature or executive. On the other hand, these Judges are known as advocates of judicial restraints who confine the Judiciary to perform the task of applying to specific case laws and regulation modes by the other organs of the government (Singh, 2007).

Evolution of Judicial Activism in India

The constitutional experts who argue that the Judiciary should remain in its jurisdiction are having a misconception because the constitutional provisions have conceptualized the idea of Judicial Activism no one can ignore it. India has a written constitution with provisions of fundamental rights like equality before the law, ‘equal protection of law’, personal liberty, freedom of speech and expression. Also, the concept of ‘procedure established by law’ as time goes on, continues to acquire new meaning as there are changes in society. In this context, a court cannot remain a mere technocratic court. The Court is bound to play an activist role while interpreting fundamental rights. Judicial Activism is another model of Judicial Review. The first model is known as the technocratic model where the judges simply interpret laws according to the constitutional provisions. The second model deals with the dynamic interpretation of constitutional provisions according to the requirement of time and society (Sathe, 2003).

Phases of Judicial Activism in India

There are many phases of Judicial Activism in India where the Activism of the Supreme Court of India has been reflected in its pronouncements starting from securing fundamental rights to environmental protection rights. During the phases of Judicial Activism in India, a new concept was conceptualized which is known as Public Interest Litigation. The Public Interest litigation also makes the Supreme Court more Activist when public-spirited people filed cases for the interest of downtrodden people who cannot knock on the door of Justice.

The initiation of public interest litigation can be traced back to the liberalisation of the doctrine of standing or ‘locus standi’. The principle of locus standi means that only the aggrieved and affected persons can approach the court in any matter (Fadia, 2010). In locus standi it is the person who must show that he/she is adversely affected by the impugned action or that his/her right has been violated (Sathe, 2003).

Under Article 32 and 226 of the Indian Constitution, any person whose fundamental right has been infringed can move to the Supreme Court and High Courts respectively for the enforcement of his/her fundamental rights (Khan, 1996). But there are some underprivileged poor and deprived people who are unable to move to court if their fundamental rights are violated. This was the reason for which the liberalization of *locus standi* came to the forefront. The liberalization of *locus standi* led to the initiation of public interest litigation. Under the public interest litigation, any party which is not affected by the action or wrong directly may also approach the court if such wrong action involves the violation of public interest. In the year 1982 the idea and practice of Public Interest Litigation were given a practical shape by the then Chief Justice of India Justice P.N. Bhagwati. (Fadia, 2010).

According to Justice P.N. Bhagwati, “Public Interest Litigation, as we conceive it is essentially a cooperative or collaborative effort on the part of the petitioner, the state or public authority and the court to secure observance of the constitutional or legal rights benefits and privileges conferred upon the vulnerable sections of the community and to reach social justice to them. The State or public authority against whom public interest litigation is brought should be as much invested in ensuring basic human rights, constitutional as well as legal to those who are in a socially and economically disadvantaged position, as the petitioner who brings the public interest litigation before the court. Public spirited persons or organizations must be allowed to move to the court and act in furtherance of the group interest even though they may not be directly injured in their rights on interest for enforcement of public duties and the public interest sub-served by their enforcement is to be protected (Sathe: 2003).

The liberalization of the rules of *locus standi* is essential in our country so that the large masses of people belonging to the deprived and exploited sections of humanity may be able to realize and enjoy socio-economic rights granted to them and these rights may become meaningful for them instead of remaining mere empty hopes (Khan, 1996). The new paradigm of the court is envisioned as an affirmative and proactive role of the court for facilitating access to justice for those who do not possess either the know-how or the resources for invoking the judicial process on their behalf and for ensuring greater public participation in the judicial umpiring of the constitutional government.

This new paradigm of the court has to protect the rights of the poor and illiterate people of India and also to ensure that the rules of laws are observed by citizens as well as the rulers (Sathe, 2003). Social Action Groups are helped by the liberal rule of *locus standi* to come to the court on behalf of disadvantaged sections of society. Groups such as the People’s Union for Civil liberties, People’s Union for Democratic Rights, Bandhua Mukti Morcha, Akhil Bharatiya Shashit Karmachari Sangh, Banwasi Sewa Ashram and the Common Cause, a registered society and individual such as M.C. Mehta, Sheela Barse, Shiv Sagar Tiwari and Upendra Baxi were able to come to court because their standing to move the court on behalf of the disadvantaged people was conceded. The court was able to look into the matters of under-trial prisoners, prison inmates, unorganized labour, bonded labour, pavement dwellers

and women in protective custody etc. The court has been approached through the public interest litigation regarding environmental issues such as pollution by tannery industries, protection and conservation of forest, urban and solid waste management and vehicular pollution and protecting conservation of wildlife. The Supreme Court was also approached against degradation of the Taj Mahal, pollution of the river Ganga by Calcutta Tanneries that discharged untreated noxious and poisonous effluents into it and protection of the people from quarrying in the Dehradun region. The Supreme Court of India laid down the principle of Polluter Pays Principles and precautionary measures. The polluter has to pay for polluting the environment. The fine which will be paid by the polluter should carry out all necessary remedial measures to restore the environment in general of the affected area to its former state. The Court has laid upon an emphasis on the precautionary principle that whenever an industry is established at the moment the owner must be concerned with taking precautionary measures so that the establishment of the industry should not have any adverse effect on the environment. The Supreme Court of India has also stressed upon sustainable development as a balancing concept between ecology and development (Sathe 2003).

Some of the cases where Judicial Activism has been reflected in India are as follows:

Golaknath Vs. The state of Punjab was an example of judicial activism of the late 1960s. The court in its pronouncement stated that parliament had no power to pass any amendment under Article 368 of the Constitution of India that has the effect of abridging or taking away any of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The court asserted that an amendment passed in accordance with the procedure laid down by article 368 was 'law' within the meaning of that word as used in Article 13 (2) of the Constitution. Before this case, the Judiciary in two cases stated that law made under article 368 of the constitution is not considered as 'law' within the meaning of that word used in article 13 (2) of the constitution. This was the first case where the judiciary has questioned the parliament regarding its law-making power. The court has restricted the parliament not to go against the provisions of the constitution but to function in accordance with the provision of the constitution (Sathe, 2003).

In **Kesavananda Bharati Vs. the state of Kerala**, the Supreme Court made its landmark judgments stating that the 'basic structure' of the constitution was not amendable, not even by a legislation of the parliament (Ahmadi, 2009).

In **Bandhua Mukti Morcha Vs. India**, the Supreme Court gave as many as 21 directions, spelling out a programme of affirmative action. These directions included rehabilitation of bonded labour, ensuring the payment of minimum wages, provision of pure drinking water and medical facilities. The Supreme Court directed the Central Board of Worker's Education to organize periodic camps near stone quarries and stone crushing to make workers aware of their rights and entitlements (Jain, 2008).

In another case **Sheela Barse Vs. the state of Maharashtra**, the Supreme Court directed A.K. Desai, Director, College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Bombay, to make a visit to

Bombay Central Jail and interview women prisoners there, with a view to ascertaining the changes of custodial violence to women in the public look up and Jail and submit a report (Jain, 2008)

In **Visaka Vs. State of Rajasthan**, the Supreme Court laid down directions for the effective implementation of gender equality, which was threatened by sexual harassment of working women. A social action group Visaka approached the Supreme Court with a request to lay down guidelines for the protection of working women from sexual harassment at the workplace for obtaining the law on the subject the petitioners went to the court and the court entertained the petition and laid down the guidelines. The court felt that it was necessary to fill in the gap as there was no legislation against sexual harassment. In its pronouncement, Chief Justice J.S. Verma said it is the primary responsibility of the legislature and the executive for ensuring such safety and dignity of working women through suitable legislation and the creation of a mechanism for its enforcement. In the judgement, it was stated that whenever under article 32 instances of sexual harassment resulting in violation of fundamental rights of women workers under articles 14, 19 and 21 are brought before the court for redress to fill the legislative vacuum, an effective redressal is required and some guidelines should be laid down for the protection of these rights.

In response to the judgment, the Union of India gave its consent through the learned Solicitor General indicating that these should be the guidelines and norms declared by the court to govern the behaviour of the employers and all others at the workplaces to curb this social evil. Prior to the provision enshrined in Article 32 of the Constitution, directives were issued for the enforcement of fundamental rights and the judge further emphasized that under article 141 of the Constitution the directives issued would be treated as the law declared by this court. In the pronouncement, it was also stated that the directions constitute the law applicable in the future to all cases of sexual harassment of working women in government and semi-government services and they are not just orders. The court also asked the government under Industrial Disputes Act to include the directives in the standing orders to be applicable to the private industry. In the direction of the court, the word sexual harassment was defined. Physical contact and advances were mentioned as essential ingredients of sexual harassment. Continuing mandamus was issued in the fodder scam case in Bihar in 1996. On 20 March 1996, the Supreme Court gave a green signal for a CBI probe into Rs. 500 crores of Animal Husbandary Scam in Bihar under and control of the Patna High Court. Guidelines were issued by the court as to how and to whom the CBI authorities would report about offences under investigation (Sathe, 2003).

In one of its landmark judgments, the Supreme Court of India in 2013 vested powers on the *gram sabhas* to be the final arbiters in the proposed bauxite mining project of Vedanta Aluminium in the Niyamgiri Hill. This judgment led to the first-ever environmental referendum in India. The Gram Sabhas rejected the proposal of bauxite mining in Niyamgiri Hills (Chandra, 2010).

Conclusion

The Constitution of India has specified the different functions and duties of three organs of the government. The fundamental rights have been guaranteed to each and every citizen of India. But unfortunately, the constitutional functions that have been conferred upon the legislature and executive are not seen practically in India in most cases of corruption, inefficiency, criminalization, red-tapism etc. have plagued the political system of India. People are unable to enjoy their fundamental rights as the citizen of the country.

The representatives of people who are elected by them have become corrupt. They are not concerned with the welfare of the people rather they are concerned about their profit. They have indulged themselves in corrupt practices. The administrative machineries have also become inefficient in implementing plans and policies. The aggrieved people have to knock on the door of justice for securing their rights. The Judiciary not only sticks to its jurisdiction as adjudicating disputes and interpreting the law rather it has become proactive. The Judiciary has now become active in redressing the grievances of people and it has started directing and issuing orders to the two organs of the government like the legislature and the executive to perform their constitutional duties. Public interest litigation has become one of the mechanisms of judicial activism. Through public interest litigation the voluntary organization, social groups and NGOs have come forward to take up the cases to the court for those aggrieved and poor people who are unable to move to the court for justice. Different cases relating to environmental degradation, fundamental rights of the people, corruption, etc have come to the forefront. The judicial activism through the mechanism of public interest litigation has enabled one and all to render justice to the people in India. It has tried its level best to bring efficiency and transparency in the administration to a large extent.

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Social Responsibilities of Print Media: The India Story

Alexandar Das

Abstract

India, being the largest democracy in the world, media has a powerful presence in the country. In recent times, Indian media has been subject to a lot of criticism for how they have disregarded their obligation to society. Though media has at times successfully played the role of a watchdog of the government functionaries and has also aided in participatory communication, at times it fails to deliver. This paper attempts to interrogate the role of Indian media in fulfilling its social responsibility in the 21st century.

Keywords: *Democracy, Media, India, Social responsibility*

The role of media in a democratic system has been widely debated in the context of governance failure in the underdeveloped regions of developing nations. It is argued that should media have been sensitive towards these issues of development in underdeveloped areas, policy implementation might have been much more effective as media is deliberated as the ‘watchdog’ of human rights. Media is named as the ‘Fourth Estate’ of a modern representative democracy. Noble Laureate Amartya Sen writes “a free press and an active political opposition constitute the best early-warning systems, a country threatened by famines can have”(Coyne & Leeson, 2009), and because of these elements “potential famines have been prevented from occurring in India since independence”. In other words, democracy, as a form of government is the significant medium for moderately avoiding famines, malnutrition and poverty due to its inherent capability of using a free press. On the other hand, dangerous business practices in the field of media have affected the fabric of Indian democracy. Big industrial conglomerates in the business of media have threatened the existence of pluralistic viewpoints. In the post-liberalization period, transnational media organizations have spread their wings in the Indian market with their own global interests. All these contestations have prompted the present study.

Media Communication for Development

Media acts as a communication link between the state and the citizens. The main aim of communication is to disseminate the information. Development administration uses communication to reach to masses. The most ritualistic function of media is to represent

the shared beliefs conveyed through messages (Carey, 1989) The messages are designed in a way to transform people's behavior and to improve the quality of life. Media, in this context, plays a vital role in promoting development and acts as an empowerment tool in development administration. In a country, both— electronic and print media act as major mediums in development communication. Since the introduction of electronic media, print media has lost its charm. The print medium was the first to be used as mass media for communicating information.

Scientific and technological advancements have brought about fast development in the media world. New media are coming up while the old ones are being improved upon and in this process, their availability has increased manifold. They are now conquering even the remote and distant regions of the world. This multifaceted development has brought about a lot more variety than could be imagined. There has been a growing multiplicity between the media and this process is continuing. As a result, the Indian people are facing plenty of choices. In contrast to this, the new media ecosystem is dominated by increasingly partisan radio, television and social media, exaggerated emotional articulations of the world; quick delivery via algorithmically derived feeds on smart phones and audiences that skim headlines to cope with the floods of information before them (Wardle, 2017)

However, print media is one of the powerful media among the rural people to date. The advantage of print media lies in influencing the reader's mind with in-depth analysis and reporting. Trust in media is built on competence and ethics of representation of contents. Biased misinformation and disinformation can be as insidious and dangerous as food or drug adulteration, mentioned B.G Verghese rightly.

Media and Social Responsibility: The Normative Argument

In the wake of sensationalism in American Press, otherwise termed as 'yellow journalism' the Hutchins commission, constituted in 1947 reiterated that media as one of the pillars of democracy has certain responsibilities to society like other institutions in the State. A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning is the function of socially responsible media. Press is a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism. Media also project a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society; in the process, the goals and values of the society get clarified.

The Social responsibility theory of media argues that media has to consider the issues and interests of the public. The foremost standards of public interest that the media has to consider are freedom of opinion and culture, respect for human rights, universal reach and concern for public order, security of the state and democratic political system (McQuail, 2010). The power and near-monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide and that if the media do not take on themselves such

responsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it. (Siebert et al, 1956)

Professionalism in media is developed with the assistance of normative theory in setting up a high level of information, accuracy and truth. The State is compelled in formulating the code of conduct for the press, standards of journalism to be enhanced, interests of journalism and journalist to be protected, criticizing and imposing a certain penalty on violation of the code of conduct. Through this theory, everyone is permitted to express their opinion or state something regarding the media. The theory accepts that private ownership in media might provide enhanced public service. Based on this theory of social responsibility, media was used as a weapon in nationalist struggles in all countries in the world. Mahatma Gandhi and many other famous leaders had used newspapers for arousing political consciousness in people to participate in the freedom struggle.

Media in a Globalized World

Across the globe, there is a serious concern over the role the media is playing and the way media is being controlled primarily by corporates. Digital media like Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube etc. is the biggest monopoly media in the world today. Monopolizing information, images, and details of individuals by social media houses is a big concern. Many scholars express the opinion that the new media technology, a combination of artificial intelligence, robotics and media would lead to totalitarian capitalization.

Further, in contemporary times, media has been put to an acid test in the rise of ‘fake news’ or ‘paid news’. This news was termed as ‘post-truth’ by a Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich in the Nation magazine in 1992. Post-truth is encouraged and supported by spreading fake content and misinformation on digital platforms with propaganda-based journalism. A mostly political setting debate is framed by appealing to emotions with the repeated assertion of half-truths and outright lies whose factual rebuttals are ignored. Post-truth is a self-consciously grand term of an epochal shift, trading heavily on the assumptions about an area of truth, we once enjoyed (Corner, 2017) Age of post-truth is defined in terms of peddling narratives, framed without employing rationality.

The India Story

Unlike the print media in America and Europe, the newspapers of India are having a rich history. Also, they have acted as a catalyst for giving birth to the Nation. In 1780, James Augustus Hickey had published the first newspaper in India called *Bengal Gazette*. But the paper did not contain any serious contents it simply had advertisements and gossips. Bombay Courier and Bombay Herald were the two next companies that started publishing newspapers in India. After some time, Bombay Courier merged with the Times of India. The first Indian regional language newspaper was published in 1822 and it was printed in the Bengali language called *Samachar Darpan*. The Bombay Samachar, established

in 1822, which is existing even today, is the oldest newspaper in the overall Asian region. Before the independence, reading the newspaper was an important daily work for people and then later it turned into a habit for them. During the pre-independence period, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the nationalist leader used his newspaper as a tool for expressing his ideas related to the freedom struggle. In 1880, Kesari was published in the Marathi language. Before 1947, the newspaper industry had one common goal that is to arouse nationalistic ideology in the masses for attaining independence from British rule.

After getting independence in 1947, the British owners of The Times of India left their business to Indian partners and went back to their native place. Till 1947, all the Indian newspaper companies were having an anti-British strand. In the post-independent years, the publishers continued to expand their market by bringing many new editions as per the location. The pages in the newspaper were increased largely by covering many additional topics. Their circulation also increased. Small and medium newspaper companies of India ventured to increase their daily editions. Daily Sakaal is a suitable example of the above-stated fact and also is the first newspaper in Maharashtra to adopt modern management systems. It used the latest technology by making a partnership with world leaders in every specific field which was required for a newspaper publishing company. Newspapers of very big transnational organizations would always have strong competition from these Indian newspapers. So they began to focus on poverty, superstition, and illiteracy.

A new era ushered in. The newspapers become more attractive after being printed under colour printing. Important sectors in the economy like commerce found an important place in all Indian language newspapers to cater to the needs of various interest groups in our society. The government supported the media by giving advertisements. Consequently, newspapers for their survival refrained from being critical of the government. Only during the period of the 1980s and 1990s, the regional language newspapers started to see the rise as all of them have adopted the latest technology by using which multiple editions were published in a short time (Patil, 2011).

After 1947, all the newspapers in India had two options to select either to align with the ruling government or to critically evaluate the newly formed government. For several initiatives of the government, the newspapers acted as unofficial sponsors. Particularly, the Five Year Plans became popular only by the national newspapers. In the initial years of independent India, the Government of India was enjoying full support from different media houses.

By 1941, India had about 4,000 newspapers and magazines in 17 languages. In its report, the first Press Commission said that at the end of 1952, there were 330 daily newspapers, 1,189 weeklies and 1,733 newspapers of another periodicity in India. Except for some lean years, the number of newspapers has gone up on an average of 5 percent every year. At the end of 1998, there were 43,828 newspapers against 41,705 in 1997. Of these, there were 4,890 dailies, 331 tri-and biweeklies, 15,645 weeklies, 12,965 monthlies,

5,913 fortnightlies, 3,127 quarterlies, 383 annuals and 1,474 publications with other periodicities. It will thus be seen that the number of daily newspapers went up more than 15 times since 1952. The number rose to 51,960 that included dailies and publications of all the periodicities, in 2001. As of 31st March 2006, there were 62,483 registered newspapers with all periodicities on record of Registrar of Newspapers for India (RBI), as against 60,413 at the end of March 2005. In India, the total circulation of all the newspapers in 1998 was 1268, 49, 500 copies. An idea of the acceleration in the growth of circulation had from the fact that while circulation increased by 50 percent between 1987-96, it went up by 42 percent in just two years between 1996 and 1998 and in the recent decade the trend of circulation is showing a positive increasing trend in Asian countries like China and India.

The total circulation of newspapers increased from 15, 67, 19,209 copies in 2004-05 to 18, 07, 38,611 copies in 2005-06. The First Press Commission noted that in 1953 the circulation of dailies per 1000 copies in the population was 5.4 against the backdrop of an all-India literacy level of 16.4 percent. From such a low base, India's daily newspaper circulation climbed slowly to 3.15 million in 1957 and 5.11 million in 1962.³ In India, the total circulation of all the newspapers in 1998 was 1268, 49, 500 copies. An idea of the acceleration in the growth of circulation had from the fact that while circulation increased by 50 percent between 1987-96, it went up by 42 percent in just two years between 1996 and 1998 and in the recent decade the trend of circulation is showing a positive increasing trend in Asian countries like China and India.² The total circulation of newspapers increased from 15, 67, 19,209 copies in 2004-05 to 18, 07, 38,611 copies in 2005-06. As per the annual statements received at the RNI office during 2005-06, the number of dailies being published in the country was 2130. Their claimed circulation figure was 8, 88, 63,048 copies, 12.93% higher than that of the previous year. The 2007 annual report presented by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) on the Indian Entertainment and Media Industry (E&M), titled *A Growth Story Unfolds*, projects that the print media will grow at a 13 percent compound annual growth rate, from the present size of Rs. 85 billion to Rs. 232 billion in 2011.

The 2010 Indian Readership Survey findings show that the largest read local language newspapers to be *Dainik Jagran* (with 16.0 million readers) and *Dainik Bhaskar* (with 13.5 million readers), both published in Hindi. The *Times of India* is the most widely read English language newspaper (7.3 million), followed by *Hindustan Times* (3.5 million), *The Hindu* (2.1 million) all published in English. The *New Indian Express* is another widely-read English-language newspaper (1.8 million). *Malayala Manorama* newspaper which is published in Malayalam from Kerala currently has a readership of over 9.9 million (with a circulation base of over 1.8 million copies) has the most circulation in regional languages.

In the year 2011 According to the information given by the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting⁴, there are more than 74,000 registered newspapers with the

Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) and Uttar Pradesh is leading with 11,789 registered newspapers and it is followed by Delhi with 10,066 and Maharashtra with 9,127 registered newspapers. The government is also trying to bridge the "media gap" by encouraging more newspapers to come up in the northeastern states, the information and broadcasting ministry said in a separate statement. The ministry has also relaxed norms for empanelling newspapers published in the northeastern states and the border areas. This apart, Rs.87.95 corers have been allocated during fiscal 2009-10 for the North East Special Package, the statement said, adding: "An amount of Rs.37.00 corer is to be provided as grants-in-aid and an amount of Rs.50.95 corer as a loan to Prasar Bharati for improving radio and television facility in the North East (Patil, 2011).

In this 21st century, Indian print media is the biggest print media in the world. The Times of India is the 8th most circulated newspaper i.e. 3.146 million newspapers daily. Dainik Bhaskar and Dainik Jagranran occupy second and third place with a circulation rate of 2.547 million and 2.168 million respectively. The Malayalam Manorama takes the 4th position having 1.514 million readers daily.

From the freedom struggle period, the social responsibility theory has earned much reputation. Also at that time, newspapers like *Maratha* by Tilak, Young India by Mahatma, and a few others have performed a lot to satisfy the needs of people and conveyed the power of unification in the post-independence period. Indian media started to expand massively as a result of which today fifty thousand newspapers brand, hundreds of radio and television channels do exist.

During the late 70s, television was introduced in India and it acted as a potential tool for updating the news to people also it has telecasted a few entertaining shows to them. The WWW (World Wide Web) and web 2.0 technologies have shown a great leap in electronic media. Through these, people have benefited a lot by expressing their perceptions and views through website posts, blogs, Twitter and Facebook. By combining the traditional print media with these technologies like AV and Social media, a new media industry was formed. A major role is played by Print media with this concern since it provides the info through a documented form which influences individuals and benefits the researcher in detection nepotism, cronyism, and corruption of institutional machinery. Back to independent India after the Mundra case to the jeep scandal to the Hawala case to the kickbacks acknowledged through various defence deals, Indian media accomplishes admirably in revealing the corrupted highly placed statesmen. More recently exposed scams from Commonwealth Games to 2G spectrum, media was performed as a facilitator towards government action fascinating government to fluctuate into action containing suspending ministers and placing ministers in prison. The cause was taken by Indian media towards the Nirbhaya rape case and determining the public views beside one of the most terrible criminalities the world has ever been seen. The absence of media in reporting the information over government schemes and benefits might not have reached the required individuals.

Indian Media in 21st Century

In recent times Indian media has been subject to a lot of criticism for the manner in which they have disregarded their obligation to social responsibility. Dangerous business practices in the field of media have affected the fabric of Indian democracy. Big industrial conglomerates in the business of media have threatened the existence of pluralistic viewpoints. India's liberalization played a major role in paving the way for foreign broadcasters. It allowed Indian media, to expand its wings and viewers, an option to see the world beyond the good-old 'DD' news channel. This brought a wave of revolution to how news was produced and consumed in India. Since then, there has been no stopping the ways in which the media industry went on to evolve, advance, and expand. It is, therefore, significant to point out that satellite television news networks have not expanded anywhere as they have in India. In less than a decade, between 1998 and 2006, India experienced the rise of more than 50 24-hours satellite news channels, broadcasting news in different languages. This has happened at the cost of Indian media which was initially thought to be an agent of ushering in social change through developmental programs directed at the non-privileged and marginalised sections of the society.

Nowadays, however, the media landscape has moved beyond a few sectoral divisions. With a different structure of activities involving a wide variety of services such as content, distribution, search features, etc., the 21st Century Media is on a path-breaking journey. All mediums—be they print, TV, radio, or digital—are running a marathon against the tides of time and technology. The Global Village, a term coined by Marshall McLuhan, a well-known media theorist who foresaw mass consumption and production of content by media houses, holds great relevance in the present times. His term essentially meant the coming together of the world in one gigantic web of media—no borders, no physical distance; nothing could hinder this seamless connectedness. That is exactly what the media of the 21st century is all about. (Pandey A, Media in the 21st century is on a path-breaking journey, January 9, 2021)

Today, media is an inseparable part of our lives. It mirrors our society and gives a medium to the common man to raise his voice on the prevailing issues around him. It's a strong socializing tool that enables us to know what's going on around us, and to some extent, contributes to our perception formation. More often than not, this perception formation can be accredited to the ever-growing sphere of social media which gives us access to the world at our fingertips. It has become an integral part of our personal lives, and the majority of us have now started viewing our world through the lens of social media. It is so prevalent in our everyday life that it's the first thing we see before sleeping and upon waking up. And this trend is not limited to just individuals anymore; organizations, whether big or small, have started to realize the importance of having an identity on social media. However, there are a number of caveats that concern this medium. The contemporary world is now dealing with an excess of information, creating the menace of fake news.

Falsehoods and rumours are floating around the online space all the time in the guise of news. The medium has inadvertently given a platform to certain individuals to spew hate and violence. And while mainstream media goes through gate-keeping of content, social media is completely devoid of any such sentinel. Thus, the onus is on journalists and traditional media to counter this assault on truth.

The entertainment industry, too, is not alien to the frequent changes that have been occurring due to technological advancement. Earlier, entertainment was only restricted to our television sets or cinema. Now, the rise of the internet has given the entertainment industry a new lease of life and leeway to experiment with content. The Internet has also changed the way audiences used to consume content, with an increased demand for over-the-top media services.

What's more, is that these progressions in the media industry have been openly embraced by organizations as they have allowed businesses to go beyond their scope and limitations to offer greater sophistication and efficiency to marketers and advertisers. Due to these changed mechanisms, broadcasters have also understood the importance of having a regional presence and have therefore started establishing a strong regional identity by jumping into the bandwagon of localization.

Going limitless with the delivery of content, the media industry will now depend a lot on digital penetration for long-term sustenance. The industry is on a transformative journey where experimentation with the latest platforms & technology is indispensable. Indeed, there should be a heavy investment on the technological front to explore the most convenient and cost-effective methods for better delivery and revenue generation. There has to be a proactive approach towards training the employees in getting equipped with the latest technological advances in order to make them future-ready.

The disruptive year of 2020 has been an eye-opener for almost all industries as the year itself was filled with unprecedented challenges. One of the key implications of the pandemic on the media industry was a historic rise in news viewership as audiences trusted news channels as a prime source of information. The minute-to-minute updates by news channels were closely monitored by viewers while the world was under lockdown. In fact, many news channels innovated the news delivery process by hosting shows from their homes, thereby increasing productivity through new combinations of virtual and onsite work. Organizations learnt to work with minimal force but with maximum impact.

On the other hand, the year 2020 also highlighted the drawbacks of the traditional revenue generation model, calling for urgent amendments in an industry which is highly reliant on ad revenue. Nonetheless, the festive season of 2020 ensured considerable growth on news channels in terms of revenue generation. Over the past few decades, with time and technology, cultures, traditions, and beliefs have also witnessed change. But the present time is changing way faster due to the powerful influence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat etc. Similarly, spectacular growth has been witnessed

on OTT Platforms, indicating a transition to direct-to-consumer business models. Advanced wireless technologies such as 5G will play a crucial role in boosting new opportunities in 2021, by radically transforming operations and enabling companies to deliver new products and services. With faster speed and lower latency, 5G has the potential to redefine convergence media. Moreover, the use of multichannel, social, and other platforms will enable broadcast players to create an even more memorable experience for viewers in the near future.

Media in the 21st century, therefore, plays the role of a protagonist in providing greater horizons in the realms of education, general knowledge, and entertainment. It has also made one thing crystal clear—that waves of media cannot be pulled back, but they can be easily modified with changing times. Though media has, at times successfully played the role of a watchdog of the government functionaries and has also aided in participatory communication, a lot still needs to be done. The remedies for the hegemony of media/press said Dr.B.R.Ambedkar is to educate, organize and agitate. He said that based on public reasoning we can expose the narrative paddled by corporates. Technology has now given apt power to people, to influence the world around them, so it becomes important for the media industry to use this power adequately without compromising on ethical factors. The media houses currently have no geographic confinements. It has the power to change, influence, and conquer. This is what truly differentiates the media of the 21st century.

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The New Age Media: Digital Journalism

Fakira Mohan Nahak

Abstract

Journalism has evolved over the years. News on digital platforms have revolutionized the media-products. The wide-spreading popularity of mobile internet and cheaper data packs along with access to information have made this revolution a reality and has given birth to New Age media. The number of internet users in general and mobile internet users, in particular, has been growing exponentially. As a result within the last decade, the scope and penetration of digital media have also witnessed a steep rise. This paper aims at exploring the evolution of digital media.

Keywords: *New Age Media, Digital Journalism, Internet*

Change is the unchangeable law of nature. It applies to all spheres of life and processes. Just like the consumption of news and information and its changing trend. We are not waiting for the Newspaper boy nor waiting till next hour news bulletin on our television set to know the news or instant developments in our territory. Just a message ring or ting-tong sound in our mobile phone alerts us about the new developments. The wide-spreading popularity of mobile internet and cheaper data packs along with access to information have become easy and are available at the fingertips.

The beginning of the “World Wide Web” or “W3” was the beginning of a digital revolution in the world. The British scientist Tim Berners-Lee working at CERN developed the “World Wide Web” in the year 1989. On April 30, 1993, the CERN dedicated the world’s first website to the world for free use. Within these three decades, the presence of websites has reached an unbelievable number of more than 1.8 billion at the beginning of 2018. In 2014 it crossed the one billion mark. The world of the internet is too big, but most of these websites never get any traffic or we can say no one is surfing it. Less than 200 million websites are active and functional.

More than 3.4 billion people in the world are having access to the internet in different forms. In India, the number of internet users in general and mobile internet users, in particular, has been growing exponentially. As a result within the last decade, the scope and penetration of digital media have also witnessed a steep rise. Worldwide there are around 51.89 % of web traffic is generated from mobile internet users (www.statista.com). India is one of the biggest users of the internet. So it is obvious that keeping in view the rising number of internet users, traditional media houses have also spread their wings to

digital platforms. As a result, the scope for digital journalism has also got a wider horizon. Digital journalism has brought a sea change in every existing media sector. The Newspapers, radio stations and television channels not only digitalized their content production process but also converged their content to digital platforms.

In India, digital journalism is around two decades old. In 1996 it took its first step towards digital journalism. The oldest newspapers like The Times of India, The Hindu and The Indian Express are pioneers in this field. But the Dotcom revolution started with the onset of the new millennium.

What is Digital Journalism?

When we use technology to present the traditional media content like news and information on the internet or make it available online for the users can be treated as “Digital Journalism”. This can be text, picture, audio-visual content or an amalgamation of all. Only computer literate audiences can access the content. That is the reason why it is also called ‘online journalism’. Traditionally reported and written news stories are presented in a different form electronically for its users. These stories may come on the website, as a text message to the mobile, a WhatsApp message, a capsuled video or an audio clip on the social networking site.

Multimedia in Digital Journalism

The journalists working for digital media write, curate, prepare and present content from different sources. The dynamism of this digital media is that the content can be read, listened and viewed or in the other words in Digital Journalism journalists create multimedia content. They develop hyperlinks for the content so that it can be shared with others as well as linked to different websites. The content is always website-specific. Unless it is searched by any powerful search engine like Google, MSN, Yahoo it becomes difficult to access it. Otherwise, the content can be accessed only directly by surfing the specific website where it is posted.

The biggest challenge for Digital Journalism is the management of huge data. Every day huge amount of digital data are generated throughout the world. So managing and segregating the data gave rise to another domain of data management.

On the other side, both newspapers and television channels have used the digital platform in a completely different way. Basically with the popularity of smartphones, they have launched their customized OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms as mobile applications. The OTT platforms enable the user to access millions of hours of audio-visual content in their mobile phone or personal computers without the intervention of the internet service provider. Youtube is the biggest OTT platform which contains huge content generated from across the world.

Mobile applications like Hotstar, SonyLiv, Youtube, Jio TV, Voot, AltBalaji, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are some of the most popular OTT platforms.

Digital Photographs for Digital Journalism

Photographs are an integral part of Digital Journalism. After the invention of digital photography and videography, easy editing tools, it has become easy to capture, edit and use photographs and videos on websites.

Each image is a story in itself. It narrates silently yet effectively the underlying scenario. A perfect photograph does not necessarily need an explicit explanation. For example, a photograph of a pigeon quenching the thirst from a tap of water is sufficient to indicate the scorching heat and rising mercury in the nearby area. Every one of us nurtures a photographer inside. That is the reason why in Digital Journalism we focus more on pictures than text. Even there are dedicated websites for digital photographs which depict numerous stories through eye-catching photographs. Every day billions of photographs are captured throughout the world. Smartphones with high-quality cameras are easily affordable and available courtesy of the advancement of science and technology. Social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram made it easy to share these photographs with the world. This is the charm of digital media that just with a mouse click a photograph, video, information, text can reach any part of the world. There is no effect of distance on digital media for the dissemination of information.

Social Media as News Sources

Social media is used by the common man as well as administrators and law-makers. Any posting by a public servant or person in the public office becomes news. It has become a trend that most of the media houses pick the news up from social media sites. On the other hand, the popularity of social media has encouraged the media organizations to go for a different common format for presenting news. Facebook and Twitter are mostly used by the media houses to present their news and draw the public attention. Catchy headlines and status updates along with #Hashtags made it easy to catch the target audience.

The Shaping of Digital Journalism

Digital Journalism depends on its consumption. User Interface and User Satisfaction are two major aspects of digital journalism. How the consumer or the user of the digital media accesses the content and how much his expectations are fulfilled that matters.

Customization and Personalisation: Be it social media or the internet, everywhere the user needs customization and personalization. A user ID and Password is the key to accessing the content. Similarly, the content creators customize the content and categorize it keeping in view different target groups.

Non-linearity: In digital journalism starting from story writing to its presentation no need to follow the traditional rules. Every idea out of the box works here. This is also the flexibility of the medium.

Interactivity: Though the message is intended for the mass, but it can be disseminated to the individual level. Immediately after receiving the message one can react and give the feedback instantly. It is two-way communication between the content generator and content consumer. That is the reason, the websites provide options to the users to access the content and give feedback. Similarly, Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, Google talk has the option to exchange information and interact. These applications have the feature of video calling and live interaction.

Hyperlink: On the internet, any contents are present in the form of links. Once the hyperlink is created, then it can be accessed anywhere, anytime with just the availability of the internet. N number of contents can be linked on one page. A vast ocean of information can be linked with the hyperlink.

Convergence: In digital journalism, the traditional media and the modern technology and forms are converged. No need for newspaper, television or radio, all these formats are converged in digital media.

A platform for all types of content: Starting from investigative journalism to advocacy, social campaigns, broadcasting and photo-journalism everything can be presented in digital form on the digital platforms. It can also be used for yellow journalism.

The Ethics of Digital Journalism

The basic principle of journalism is the same for digital journalism also. There is no space for misinformation. If it is disseminated, then at any point in time it will be unearthed.

- Truth has no alternative. So the content presented in digital journalism must be based on truth.
- Whatever information and content are put on the platform or reported must be time and again cross-checked and verified.
- The journalist must be ready for criticism for his content. It should be open for society to criticize if anything objectionable is presented in the content. Criticism is allowed but criticism of any popular ideology is not acceptable.
- All journalistic ethics must be followed. Whatever may be the medium, journalistic ethics is the same for all journalists.

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- The digital journalist must be responsible for society.
 - This is the era of snippets or we can say the fast news. People have no time to give attention to long bulletins. So the trend is KISS. That means, Keep it Simple and Short. The content must be to the point, short and written in simple language and free from all ambiguity.
 - The lead always catches eyeballs. The spark in it drags the attention. So don't forget to write the lead at the top. Follow the fundamental writing process i.e. the most important point at the top and the least important point at the bottom just like in the inverted pyramid structure.
 - Just like television, where every second is the deadline. So contents must be updated at an electric current speed. If the content is not updated then it becomes stale and the consumer who has had this experience once on the website, then he will never come back to the site. So be fast and present it first.
 - The content should not be manipulated. Present the information accurately which you have gathered, assessed and analyzed.
 - The digital journalist must ensure that there is no error in the content. If the content is completely error-free, then it has the potentiality to drag the target audience, retain them and develop the bonding. Not only this, the error-free content will bring credibility to the site. The error includes spelling errors, factual errors, display text, photographs and video. So utmost care should be taken before putting any content online on digital platforms.
 - The journalist need not be biased and may always give importance to the appropriate content. This will set the trend and help in maintaining neutrality.
 - For every piece of content, one has to fix the target audience and put only relevant things.
 - The journalist should develop credible sources for gathering information.. The source must be reliable and authentic.
 - Digital Journalist is not immune to the jaws of law. If at any point in time his information breaches any moral code of ethics or violates the law of the land, then he will have to face the legal consequences.
 - As the medium is digital, so any violation in the practice will take the journalist and his platform under cyber laws, IT laws and all other media laws in practice.

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Responsible Media and Heritage Management

Swarnamayee Tripathy & Sharbani Das

Abstract

Heritage sites speak for our history. They instill confidence in us and help us to imbibe the feeling of pride. Standing on the floor of a heritage site we feel the pulse of our four fathers. Therefore, it is our moral duty to protect it from the fury of nature and human interventions. In this context, media has a great role to play in the preservation and protection of it. A socially responsible media provides information about culture and heritage and sensitizes the members of civil society. It arouses curiosity in tourists and motivates them to plan for a visit. Thus, media exposure serves two purposes- showcasing the rich heritage and promoting tourism in a country. This paper attempts to map how print media in India has discharged this social responsibility.

Keywords: *Media, Heritage Management, Culture, Society, India*

Introduction

Heritage, in broader terms, is viewed as history. Our heritage sites speak for our civilization and history. Ancient India was a land of philosophical and religious experimentation. Home to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and other cultural groups, India has a rich religious tradition and cultural heritage that goes back more than two thousand years. Our Nation has a vast repository of cultural as well as natural heritage which differs significantly in historicity, scale, association, expression and styles. (NDMA report 2017). Indian culture has seen an uninterrupted and continuous evolution, from the Indus Valley Civilization to the present. It has expressed itself as a fine balance between individual desire and social demand and the ancient heritage forms were the fine expression of human development from that period. (Dhavalikar, M.K.1999).The vibrant and colourful landscape of India, expressed through the age-old archaeological and architectural remains and their dynamic living tradition, is the powerful and concrete expression of Homo sapiens' footprints throughout the various phases of historical development. (Moorti, U.S. 2008).

Heritage is not just a relic of the past but it provides identity to the related community and is increasingly instrumental in steering sustainable development. (UNISDR: 2013).

Heritage generally means the inheritance of things in concrete terms from ancestors (Santhil, Ramya. B (2016). This inheritance from our forefathers is a valuable source that formulates an identity for the nation. This spiritual, moral and cultural tradition, folklore along with ancient buildings and monuments, pass on to the next generation.

Precisely speaking, heritage is the property that we inherit from the past. It speaks for our evolving civilization and instills confidence in us and helps us to imbibe the feeling of pride. Standing on the campus of a heritage site we feel the pulse of our four fathers. A national heritage site is a piece of art having a value that has been registered by a governmental agency as being of national importance to the cultural history of that country.

There are three types of sites: cultural, natural, and mixed. Cultural heritage sites include hundreds of historic buildings in villages and towns, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting. From the magnificent Taj Mahal to the architectural ruins of Hampi, Karnataka India is home to 35 World Heritage Sites, which have been recognized by UNESCO. Established in 1972, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention describes the places as World Heritage Sites that are symbolic of a Nation's art and culture. Therefore, it is our moral duty to preserve it. For this, mass media play a very decisive role in the dissemination of indigenous knowledge and traditional values associated with heritage. (Onabajo, Femi: 2005) In this process, all other developmental work together gets visibility with the media communication. Media has proved as a powerful tool that has been utilized effectively for sharing knowledge and technology with the general public. (Balaswamy. B & Palvai, Ramesh: 2017) It keeps people aware of important socio-cultural issues and generates public opinion.

India is a land with innumerable natural and built heritage. This heritage is not just a thing of the past but it is increasingly significant in providing identity to the related community as well as a driving force towards the country's economic growth because of its potentialities to attract local youth to engage in skillful activities, the management of the heritage in a sustainable way can result in bringing positive results. It helps in reducing rural distress, engages the local population in heritage conservation as well as other self-employable activities. Besides providing opportunities to the local population, heritage helps in substantially developing local infrastructure. As a result, it can attract investment and help in increasing the flow of tourists and maintaining ancient monuments to protect in the better sense. Prioritizing media content for the promotion of heritage sites can take us a long way in preserving our cultural heritage.

Media, Culture and Society

Mass communication influences both society and culture in diverse ways. Media agencies inform people about what is happening. It permeates people's lives by creating their criteria and opinions. In this way the media moves the masses, creating different social movements. In every society, broadcast media play an imperative function in shaping

society through its cardinal role of informing, educating, entertaining, mobilizing and persuading.

Media influences people's voices at the individual and collective levels. It shapes our individual beliefs and cultural norms. Different forms of communication, including messages and advertisements in the mass media, give shape and structure to society. Opinions of experts published as feature articles in newspapers incite desire in art-loving readers to know more about the heritage site and plan a visit to the place. Additionally, mass media outlets can spread cultural knowledge and artistic works around the globe.

In the individual effect, media information about new norms may persuade individuals to accept them. In the social effect, the information creates common knowledge of a norm and enhances social coordination as individuals more readily accept the information if they believe others have also accepted it. Heritage news, therefore, has a spiraling effect on readers. It entertains them by giving information on tourist spots and enhances their knowledge about the rich cultural heritage of their own country in particular and other nations in general.

Broadly speaking, the relationship between culture and the media is one of inclusion. Media reflects the norms, culture and values. It can lead to evolution and revolution of mind and heart of the people fostering information, literacy and awareness in the nation.

Media, Social Responsibility and Heritage Management in the 21st Century

Democracy and media are inextricably interrelated. Its role as a watchdog, the guardian of public interest as well as a torchbearer for healthy democratic order has been recognized in contemporary times. Since the evolution of democracy, from the 17th century, the role of media has acquired a prominent place in society. Its role as a forum for public discussion and debate and as an agent of social change has been recognized. Therefore, media has been named as the 'fourth estate'. Social media is fundamentally changing the global Diasporas by the way we communicate, act, collaborate, consume and create, (Aral, Sinan, Dellarocas, Chrysanthos, & Godes, David:2013).

Media, as a powerhouse, can be effectively analyzed because of its involvement with small public or large audiences at a global platform. Many research studies have found that voters' behavior and election mandate have been influenced through proper and effective utilization of propaganda, disinformation, opinion and suitable media content during elections. (Reisach, Ulrike: 2020). According to Dwyer and Martin (2017) media has a very positive role to play in creative engagement, political participation and cross-promotion culture. Media Information Literacy (MIL) becomes crucial to promote ancient local traditions, culture, heritage for others to know, learn and replicate. Media communication has a tremendous impact on the psyche of large audiences due to its informative character and its ability to grapple users' minds by keeping them engaged on various platforms. It has revolutionized the markets as well as our minds by organizing markets, society and presenting

them as a single entity. Therefore, it has tremendous potential in sensitizing the public by opening up opportunities as well as possibilities in the entire sector of tourism and heritage management.

As media is integrally related to people's lives and culture, democratic ideas, culture, tradition should be used by journalists for creating public awareness and sensitization on issues important to society. (Duncan, Jane, E. & Reid, J. :2013; Karppinen, Kari :2007)

In the process of surveying the literature, it has been observed that there has been substantial research conducted in the sphere of the role of media in a democracy, media as an agent of social change, interdisciplinary study on the role of media and its impact on society, the relationship of media with corporate social responsibilities. Likewise, substantial research has been carried out in the field of media and social responsibility.

With a population of over 1.2 billion, India owns a diverse cultural heritage and has greatly influenced the world through Indian religions, practices, philosophy and local traditions. Each of India's states has its language, religion, dance, music, architecture, food, and customs which differ from place to place within the country. Examples of secularism can be found in its religion, Festivals (paintings, sculptures), Arts, Cuisine and sports, etc. Each element has its impact and circle of influence and thus leveraging through media becomes crucial.

The literature review reveals that not much research has been done in the field of prioritizing media content for sustainable heritage promotion. Significant research has not been conducted to review the media content for prioritizing cultural heritage as an issue in media and very few dimensions had been explored regarding the role of media in promoting culture. This has necessitated this research study. In the era of development administration, micro studies will open the gateway to macro policies. This will result in initiating the process for policy analysis.

India is an ancient land, as one turns the pages of history, the rich heritage of India comes alive with all its fragrance and colour which are still breathing in the Culture, tradition, handicrafts and historical monuments fringed in every corner of the state. Contrary to this, the strength of the state is frequently vanished out because heritage promotion has not taken the front seat. It gathered momentum in recent times only. In this scenario, Significant steps have not been undertaken by media houses for prioritizing cultural heritage as an issue in media and very few dimensions had been explored regarding the role of media in promoting culture. Media as a powerful tool can be utilized effectively for sharing knowledge and technology with the general public. As it keeps people aware of issues and tries to mobilize public opinion.

Role of Print Media in Heritage Promotion

The research study has been based on the following assumptions:

- Media communications on the essence of a heritage site have a greater role to play in inciting proud feelings in the national population in general and the local population, in particular, should have a sense of pride of possession.
- Media has to play the role of an initiator to point out how the heritage site can promote or augment heritage economy which will supplement the income of each household around the site.
- The media–content has immense potential to prick the desire for travel in tourists and the continuous inflow of tourists to a heritage site which in turn will bring revenue for the state from tourism.

The Research study mainly aims to study these three broad areas related to media reporting for promoting heritage, its management, and development of sustainable livelihood of local people emanating from heritage management.

The study has confined itself to the role played by print media in heritage promotion. It has examined the media contents given in the print media. The reasons for limiting our study to print media are obvious. The print media continues to make its presence felt in the living room for a longer period. A few days-old newspapers lying on the table at times generate desire for reading in the reader. Therefore, despite the spread of television as electronic media, the circulation of newspapers continues to make its presence felt in society. Apart from providing news, information to the general reader it binds people into a single fabric of the nation by promoting commonness, national feeling, pride & providing solidarity in its content. Our freedom fighters used newspapers as a platform to highlight issues concerning India, and highlighted the sufferings of the masses under foreign rule and united us against the injustices done by the foreign rulers. During the freedom struggle, these newspapers especially vernacular papers united Indians against the alien rule. Thus, over the decades, the newspaper has proved to be a powerful tool to mobilize the masses and to arouse public opinion in favor.

News editors make decisions regarding the placement of news on different pages of a newspaper intending to attract public attention as different pages and different styles for headlines have differential impacts on the psyche of the readers. To cite an example, a piece of news on the front page in the form of a banner headline easily captures the attention of the readers at the first glimpse. After this, an article on the editorial page attracts the attention of serious readers. Likewise, Bold letters, Banner headlines, sub-headlines signify the importance of the news article.

Our research study has primarily used methods of communication research. The paper intends to find out the nature of the phenomenon of prioritizing media content for sustainable heritage promotion. The research study has adopted a mixed-method research design. In the first stage, it has used content analysis as one of the methods of research. To understand the relationship between newspaper and heritage sites, we have selected 3 leading newspaper

which has a wide circulation in India as well as has regional readers. We examined one national English newspaper and two vernacular newspapers having wide circulation. We examined the contents of Times of India, Samaj and Sambad relating to media highlights on tourist destinations, articles on heritage economy and state initiatives and interventions relating to heritage promotion and heritage economy. To get a clear picture of the matter we have examined the contents of newspapers from August 2019 to January 2021 excluding the lockdown period from March 2020 to July 2020.

In order of importance, the news is placed as banner headlines or sub-headlines, or news on the editorial page or front page. Accordingly, we scanned through the newspapers. Secondly, we wanted to examine the nature of the news published in terms of the following variables.

- o Promotion of culture through special articles
- o Promotion of culture through pictures and news
- o Promotion of culture through news only
- o Promotion of culture through advertisements
- o Photo news depicting a cultural event
- o News feature on Tourist facilities
- o News on impact of mega-disasters on the heritage sites
- o Information about Heritage economy
- o News feature on government negligence of heritage sites.

Besides, the researchers have interacted with the journalists to find out what should be done to engage media in the promotion of culture and heritage by adopting a people-centred approach.

The importance given to heritage and heritage economy in newspapers:

Our study examined three newspapers from August 2019 to January 2021 which comes to 1170 newspaper samples. This includes the national daily, *Times of India*, the highly circulated regional daily, *Samaj* and *Sambad*. Each sample set had 390 items. We examined the positioning of news relating to various aspects of heritage management as media houses try to capture readers' attention through the placement of news in daily newspapers. The most important news finds a place on the front page as a banner headline. Table 1 exhibits the approach of print media to heritage promotion.

Table- 1

Sl no.	Name of the Newspapers	Frontpage	Editorial page	Banner headline	Sub-headline	Bold letter	Total news pieces
1	Times of India	14	05	53	60	19	151
2	Samaj	13	06	37	30	12	98
3	Sambad	08	02	35	36	11	92

Table 1 reveals that in a period of 13 months the national daily had given 151 news, the regional newspaper Samaj had given 98 news and the other Odia daily had given 92 news relating to heritage sites, tourism facilities, heritage management and government policy to preserve and protect the heritage sites. Very few pieces of news had been given on the editorial page and front page which usually catches the attention of readers. When we make a comparison between the national daily and regional newspapers we find that the former has given more news than the latter, though the attempts are negligible. This compels us to conclude that heritage promotion is hardly an important item for the media houses. As a result of this, people have very little knowledge about our heritage sites as people get the information from these newspapers.

Nature of the News

Like the positioning of the news attracts readers. nature of the news arouses interest among the readers. The globalized world which facilitated interconnectivity and promoted a borderless world had opened up opportunities for travelling among the younger generation. Improved transport and communication have made it easier to get information and to travel. Thus, highlighting media content for heritage promotion, heritage tourism, heritage economy, tourist facilities available at the spot, impact of mega-disasters on the heritage sites, and governments' role in preservation and promotion can help in boosting the local economy. It also brings revenue for the government treasury.

Therefore, we examined the content and nature of the news published in newspapers. Table 2 gives a picture of such news and its frequency of publication.

Table 2: Nature of Content of News

Name of the Newspaper	Promotion of culture through articles	Promotion of culture through picture news	News	Photo news	Special issues	Heritage economy	Promotion through advertisements	Tourist facilities	Impact of mega-disasters on the heritage sites	Govt. negligence
Times of India	30	08	50	45	03	27	25	08	12	08
Samaj	48	13	35	19	07	11	27	06	13	09
Sambad	35	14	38	18	09	18	21	02	06	03

Table 2 shows the nature of news presented by the news agency in the three newspapers. To know the ground realities, the content of newspapers was examined as per the variables given in the previous paragraphs. While analyzing media content to know the nature of news, we found that the news reporting on the newspaper is the news relating to various festivals, and other activities related to the culture and heritage at large. Feature articles for the promotion of culture were very few. In a period of 13 months, Times of India had published 30 articles and regional dailies Samaj and Sambad had published 48 and 35 articles each respectively. The given news did not take much space as they did not include picture news. Rather news relating to different meetings held at different places contained the pictures. Sometimes, due to the paucity of places, media agencies give only photo news. Again, such photo news hardly exhibited heritage sites. It is observed that journalists do not give much importance to deliberate on various dimensions of heritage promotion and preservation. It is found that the leading national daily has given a wider space to address the question on heritage economy more significantly than its counterpart in vernacular medium.

During the collection of samples for the analysis, it has been observed that more news on tourist sites is given during tourist season in the form of advertisements by the hoteliers or the government. The government has been advertising eco-retreats developed in different heritage sites. As a result, government advertisements and other promotional activities in the newspapers also acquired a prominent place. Simultaneously reporting on tourist facilities and government negligence and other writing is directly proportional to the season. Lastly, the mega-disaster Fani had devastated the entire backbone of the heritage and tourism industry of Odisha; this led to the appearance of media reports in newspapers depicting the adverse impact of the disaster on the heritage economy and tourism.

What do the Journalists say?

To know the level of awareness of journalists we interacted with them on a few points regarding how media can help promote culture. Their responses are given below:

- a. Media professionals can highlight best cultural practices by using local media (print/digital) and popular press to share and highlight innovative approaches for preserving ancient culture. For example, tribal people in the Purulia district in West Bengal in Eastern India have formed Self Help Groups (SHG), linking to banks for support under microfinance programs to revive their folk art as a means of sustainable livelihood. The key informants of the study shared that government policy on the role of the media must recognise the latter's role in disseminating cultural knowledge and promoting cultural discourse.
- b. Media has a great role to play in creating a cultural confluence. Intercultural dialogue is critical in today's globalized and blended world. It helps to contribute to one's sense of community.
- c. The personalization of culture and cultural events can help create the feeling that the cultural product is intended specifically for him/her or for the community at large. This will motivate people to work for the preservation of local culture
- d. Television and films are perhaps the most powerful weapon that can influence people and culture. The television camera can travel over the length and breadth of the country, into the most remote villages and unearth traditional practices and celebrations and present them forcefully and creatively to viewers.

The journalists share that they find difficult to manage space in the daily publication while working with corporate media houses. These responses by the media professionals do give an idea of how media is crucial to the promotion of culture and can lead to increased social awareness, impact and empowerment through a participative and informative approach. The culture of any society is important because that is what differentiates one society from another and media has the power to affect our relationship with the world and have a transformative impact on culture and the society at large.

Concluding Observations:

The Global Agenda 2030 is seeking a better future for people and the planet. This paradigm shift has inspired all national governments to work for the realization of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It is also reflected in public policies relating to the heritage sector, where the dominant trend is a focus on people. As the present economic development has resulted in jobless growth and rising unemployment, governments are trying to adopt participatory governance in heritage management. As heritage matters to society as a whole, there is a strong call for people to be more engaged in heritage promotion to serve their wellbeing.

This major shift in public policy is not without challenges. The heritage sector must avoid past errors where overtly expert-led heritage processes unfolded in isolation from the wider concerns of society and the environment (Jain S. 2017). A new generation of heritage practitioners must now be sensitized to the benefits of engaging with a range of

audiences in decision-making at different levels. The people-centred approach advocate that the people must connect to heritage sites in their local ecosystem while underlining the dynamic and mutually beneficial role of heritage in society. They should work for its conservation by believing that these places of the past are the ancestral properties of the local community for which they should feel proud.

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Anomaly in the Visual Representation of the Natural Disaster in Media

Vishal S.S.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the massive impact of Ockhi cyclone that caused havoc and destruction in Tamil Nadu and Kerala shattering the life of countless people. In the hapless situation, women become characters of dejected personages restrained from reaching the front line. Media has a great role to play in giving them visibility. This paper examines the anomalies existing in the visual presentation of the natural disaster.

Keywords: *Visual representation, women, media, natural disaster*

Tamil Nadu because of its disadvantaged proximity falls prey to so many natural calamities and the worst affected victims are the majority from the coastal regions who are otherwise the vulnerable community. Apart from their irreplaceable physical, human and economic loss because of a natural calamity, women belonging to those vulnerable communities are subjected to various griefs for which their economic, social and cultural barriers should also be blamed. After realizing that the ground reality of women affected by the recent cyclone was in no way similar to the portrayal by the media so far, it was obvious that the study of the consequential visual representation of situations, especially of women during a natural disaster is unavoidable. This study aims to analyze the visual representation of natural disaster Ockhi by Tamil news channels and Kerala news channels namely Thanthi TV, Polimer TV, Malayala Manorama and News18 Kerala. The content analysis done on 4 channels, two from each state based on framing theory, turned out the importance given to women as a victim was very meagre. Given that women's representation as a victim, is invisible as such, those news stories that have women can be spotted crying, mourning and muted. Here comes the need for gender mainstreaming in covering post-disaster stories. Most importantly the factual stories and portrayal of women in the disaster as gender framing is stereotypical, the actual representation of women in such disasters becomes indispensable for analysis for future betterment.

Natural disasters that surface in various forms have an immediate effect on human life and the environment they live in. As a result, a very transparent impact is observed on their social, physical and economic framework. It becomes difficult to measure the intensity of the widespread damages and the recovery phase is a long time process.

The vulnerable and the rural communities and those regions close to water bodies are easy targets for any natural disaster. Thousands of people are deprived of their livelihood, houses are demolished and routines are shattered.

This paper analyzes the massive impact of the Ockhi cyclone that caused havoc and destruction in Tamil Nadu and Kerala shattering the life of countless people. In the hapless situation, women become characters of dejected personages restrained from reaching the front line. However, the degree of audacity shown by women to voice their miserable situation and basic necessities may differ from state to state.

Media plays a significant role in communicating the information and first-hand stories of the disaster to the audience or public. But the actual concern is how far has been the media successful in effectively portraying the factual situation faced by the victims in such disasters. The Media's focus is not just limited to the miserable life situations of the victims during a disaster but also focuses on the rescue operations carried out by the rescue team and the strategies used by them in transferring sick victims, senior citizens, pregnant women and babies from the affected areas to safer areas.

This paper understands the coverage done by the media post-disaster and their approach towards a victim. The study also focuses on how media frame women victims during natural disasters and the importance given to women-specific issues. Even global data are reinstating that women are the most vulnerable people when it comes to disaster effects. During a disaster, the loss of livestock, goats and poultry has affected the lives of women whose income was solely dependent on them. Alongside the issues women faced post-disaster with respect to loss of livelihood, facing difficulties in running a family with limited stock, limited access to resources and their lower hand in decision making another alarming issue is the human trafficking done for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and debt.

Gender Issues

The gender issues in today's society are issues to discuss because they are tainting the lives of people from an early age. The masculine stereotype is one of the most prevailing causes of gender issues in society. Genders role or the discrimination of women have been the main topics of concern in media and recent journals. Conflict and crisis have a different impacts on women, men, girls and boys. Some may be denied their rights just because of their gender. Others may be exposed to sexual violence and abuse or are at risk of being dragged into illegal armed groups. Gender is an important dimension within disasters, such as in Indian Ocean tsunamis (ILO, 2000). Vulnerability to natural disasters and their consequences is gendered and socially constructed, meaning that women and men face different challenges during natural disasters because their roles in society have been constructed differently (Fordham, 1998; Jones, 2000). Women from developing countries have higher morbidity and mortality than men (Fordham, 1998). Indian women often hold a subordinate

position to men (Rudd 2001) and are socially and economically disadvantaged in everyday life. They can then expect to be more vulnerable to, and more affected by a disaster.

(Disaster in Tamil Nadu India: Use of media to create Health Epidemic Awareness, Sunithakuppuswamy and Dr. S. Rajarathnam, Anna University).

When a disaster strikes, casualties among women and girls are reportedly higher than among men and boys. (Gender stereotypes put women more at risk during disasters, The Times of India, June 17, 2016).

Women, Media and Natural Disaster

The framing of stories is deep-rooted from our history, cultural backgrounds and social constructs. To quote an example, a study by Nadia Dawisha on the media coverage of Hurricane Katrina where the media presented an African American taking food from a store as a looter but the same act done by a white person was said to be “looking for food”. Hence in a culture like ours where women are given backstage in every dimension of life, the way media present them and their issues to us also will be based upon those norms and prejudices.

A deeper understanding and critical analysis from a gender perspective are needed to understand their trauma and sufferings post-disaster. The main reason for women’s issues not getting sufficient coverage is because, in most of the media channels, reports and administration are led by men. Here is a report by TIME (2012-13) that talks about women in media houses:

Only 32% of women appear on camera whereas male by-lines account for up to 67%. Around 65% of political stories, 63% of science coverage, 64% of world politics coverage and 67% of criminal justice news was reported by men.

The scenario is no different in regional channels down south instead it is worse. Women are denied duties where field reporting is involved. Most of the live disaster coverage is done by men accompanied by men technicians. So when the news creators are men how can the women’s issues even be understood to be taken up as a story and allotted a slot for the telecast.

Women’s access to relief resources gets restricted because of the existing patriarchal social structure which affects the distribution of relief efforts. (PAHO Fact Sheet of the programme on Women, Health and Development, pp.2) One of the studies on how these vulnerabilities related to natural disasters are gendered, they blame the socially constructed roles and their subordinate positions in society. Their economic backlash is one of the reasons why women’s and men’s challenges are different from one another. (Fordham, 1998; Jones, 2000). Programme Manager of Disaster Mitigation, Madhavi Ariyabandu argues that women play a major role in risk and emergency management. She talks about the sole reason for women’s risk in securing life, livelihood and maintaining life support systems

during the time of disaster crisis is that of their socially assigned role of caretakers. (Jones, 2000, pp.2).

Even global data are reinstating that women are the most vulnerable people when it comes to disaster effects. Almost 90% of the Bangladesh 1991 cyclone fatalities were women. (Ikeda 1995). Women victims of Hurricane Katrina were more in number corresponding to their poor economic background, low wages and lack of health care. “(Gault et al, 2005; Williams et al, 2006)

A report by PLOS regarding the casualties that happened during the 2004 Tsunami accounts for more death of women. The reason they state is that women were not able to climb trees, run, swim and save themselves as the men did.

The reasons why women are more vulnerable and go through major risks have been addressed by UNDP and they have come out with the following facts: Among the total population that survive on less than a dollar per day, 70% of them are women. This accounts for their low economic disadvantage. London School of Economics conducted a study during the year 2007 across 141 countries from 1981-2002, that says women’s death toll is at a higher rate when compared to men accounting for the low economic status related to women.

These stories reveal the actual sufferings of these vulnerable communities and to be specific about women’s issues, how the debts, loss of boats and other materials on which the men of the family rely when it comes to income affects women big time. Also, the social constructs and norms of our state and the cultural backlashes don’t allow women in decision making, their limited access to resources and a few other barriers contribute to the sufferings of women who also have the added burden of taking care of children and household chores. The above-said data are evident that why women are more vulnerable when it comes to any disaster related to the environment. Another important aspect of a gender perspective is the gender role which acts as a disadvantage for women who are confined to household works and stay indoor which puts them at greater risk when a disaster hits.

Interview Techniques

Interview Techniques can be referred to as a kind of qualitative research technique that involves conducting an intense individual interview with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation.

The semi-Structured Interview method was used in this research which contains the components of both structured and unstructured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer prepares a set of the same question to be answered by all the interviewees. At the same time, additional questions might be asked during interviews to clarify and / or further expand certain issues.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. This Content analysis is observed and documented by analyzing certain media through which the news regarding the natural disaster has been portrayed on the aspects of some parameters. This study bases its premises mainly on content analysis of two leading Tamil news channels Thanthi TV and Polimer TV from Tamil Nadu and News18 Kerala and Malayala Manorama news channels from Kerala. Given that the aftermath of the Ockhi cyclone, the natural disaster that created havoc both in the state of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the visual representation of women by the above mentioned two news channels with regard to Ockhi cyclone related news stories were analyzed. The videos that were telecasted in these channels from 29th November 2017 to 6th December 2017 were taken for analyzing. 60 videos from Thanthi TV and 60 videos from Polimer TV, 60 videos from News18 Kerala and 50 videos from Malayala Manorama were taken for analysis.

As part of my initial stage of research, a field visit was done on 14 January 2018 to Kizlathottam which is a remote village located in the outskirts of Thanjavur district. 7 women victims were interviewed about the disasters that caused destruction over there.

Interview Stories

This is the story as narrated by one of the victims of the disaster Selvi Rani, she relates that the cyclone had occurred late at night when all were asleep and unfortunately they were not aware of the emergency alert. All of a sudden, unaware the deluge had set in and washed out the entire village that extended to 2km from the coastal belt. It was like a river flowing with no sign of a village, ever did exist. The villagers had lost all their belongings and also the lives of their dear ones.

Selvirani's Story

The fisherman community who made a 40% population had lost their boats, fishing nets and other amenities. They did not know any other job than fishing. The natives, NGOs and neighbouring college students had rushed out to help them shift to safer areas. Selvi Rani also laments that no local body authorities ever turned up to them to help nor did they take any immediate steps for their rehabilitation. What aid they received from the authorities was 10kg ration, one matt, one bucket, one milk packet and a utensil. It was painful to think to reset the life once again but all ways were seemed closed. The situation was thus they had to rehabilitate themselves. It was also very difficult to find out a meal for a day. The government schemes are many for the fisherman community but no money has been compensated so far, even for the reconstruction of houses no funds have been dispensed. It was social media communication that was of instant help to the victims.

Another story related to Savithri, is that she was brought there after marrying at the tender age of 15. Now she is 67 and has 3 children (married off) and her husband is no more, she also lost her elder son. She had worked hard to make her living without anybody's help and grew up her children. Her only income was from the small shop that she ran; in shock, she relates that she has never witnessed such a severe cyclone all her life.

Savithri's story

As per Savithri, the cyclone had attacked the coastal area late in the night. The emergency alert that was received an hour back was considered fake. But when the cyclone and the flood had given their way they could not believe their eyes and what they could see was water flowing like a river in the place which was once their village. All her belongings, contents of the house, shop and everything was washed away. It was just water everywhere and all were running hither and thither in panic and days were spent consuming biscuits and water. As per her, no compensation was received so far.

News Channel Analysis

Thanthi TV -Thanthi TV is a news channel in the Tamil language, based in Chennai, catering to the Tamil community spread around the world. It was founded in 2012 with headquarters in Chennai. It is owned by DhinaThanthi.

PolimerTV -Polimer TV is an Indian TV channel based in Chennai. It was launched by Kalyana Sundaram as a local TV station in Rasipuram, later changed its programming to an entertainment network and expanded its coverage area to the whole state of Tamil Nadu.

News18 Kerala - News18 Kerala is a Malayalam language news television Channel headquartered in Trivandrum city owned by Network18. It was launched on July 5, 2016.

Malayala Manorama - MalayalaManoramais a Malayalam language news channel owned and operated by Malayala Manorama. The channel, based at Aror Alappuzha was launched on 17 August 2006.

Upholding the gender perspective in emphasizing how women's opinions get muted, they become voiceless and sometimes adapt to the situation. On the whole, this theory talks about the muteness of women in society.

Another theory on which this paper bases this premises is "Framing Theory". It is known as the second level of Agenda Setting theory. This theory aids people in perceiving certain news in a way that they wish people to consume it by packaging, presenting and also placing them appropriately.

Victim Framing

This frame talks about the post-disaster impact on the lives of the victims who were badly affected. A total of 10 news on Thanthi TV and 20 news on Polimer TV out of 60

videos were based on Victim framing. Majority of the news stories were presented in the form of voiceovers alongside visuals and were concluded with bytes from people. The visuals showed the havoc created by the Ockhi cyclone

The victim framing focuses only on their irreplaceable loss, how their livelihood and routine are shattered and they also open up about their immediate needs. They talk only about the physical damages like natural destruction, buildings being collapsed, damaged boats. All these coverage's of victims happen only at the time of immediate disaster hit. No stories on pre-disaster and a few days post-disaster to track the warnings/preventions and recovery stage.

The coverage of victims mainly focussed on their loss, lack of basic amenities and houses collapsed. Thanthi TV in order to empathize more with the loss and grief used a piece of sad music to start news features. The overall news stories count that used victim frames are more in Thanthi TV than Polimer TV. The coverage news frames based on victim framing was more on Malayala Manorama than news18 Kerala. The news18 channel partially covered victim frames; they rather focused on more coverage of human interest frames and Economic framing.

Economic Framing

This frame is all about the economic impact these disasters create. In the case of the Ockhi cyclone. Voices of men were more when it comes to an economic crisis in both the channels. The women needed food, water facility, clothing, food for their children and cooking materials. Men demanded to resume back to their occupation.

Economic frames were dominant in Thanthi TV (36), whereas Polimer TV focussed mainly on the government's plan of action, their recovery plan after stating the economic consequences of an individual/village. In Thanthi TV, among the 33 news 26 news had men in the foreground and 7 news had women in the foreground talking about their economic consequences. In Polimer TV, among the total news of 45 that spoke about the economic downfall, only 22 had victims opening up. The rest of the news was from the government's angle.

Coping Framing

Coping frame talks about the relief and recovery process post-disaster period. The coping frame was used by both the channels at a moderate level. This frame had news stories about the government's plan in restoring the power supply, clear trees. Polimer TV (52) had more weightage of news using this frame when compared to Thanthi TV (33).

The stories of relief materials being distributed, the contribution of relief funds from various ends such as celebrities, government and volunteers. The rehabilitation camps where people shifted for the recovery phase, how EB workers work day and night to reinstall poles and resume power supply and people's combined effort of sharing the relief

materials. Multiple news was covered by Polimer TV on how their EB workers work day and night, also workers from other districts and cities work on the affected area to restore power at the earliest. They also had a story on the rehabilitation camps set up with people staying with their families with all the needed facilities.

Trauma Framing

This frame is about the mental breakdown that every victim goes through after a natural disaster washing away all their belongings overnight. This framing was also used by both channels. Thanthi TV (29) and Polimer TV (16). The stories were presented in such a way that women of the family cry their hearts out while the men talk about the loss.

The data reveals the presentation of women in a trauma frame. Thanthi TV used the trauma frame more than Polimer TV. There was a story about a family in Mannargudi that comprises two daughters and a son. They lost their parents in the Ockhi cyclone and we could see the helpless elder daughter talking about how her life has now turned miserable being the only bread-earner of the family.

Gender Framing

Both Thanthi TV and Polimer TV lacked this frame uniformly. Hardly very few stories were gender-specific. One news story on Polimer TV spoke about how a woman gave birth to twins in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. While in the case of Thanthi TV, one special program titled “Puyaluku Pin Agathi” focussed mainly on issues concerning women. It looked like the gender frame worked out as bytes from women weighed more in number compared to bytes from men in that particular show.

Among the 43 news stories that feature women in Thanthi TV news stories, 24 stories have women in the background while the men can be seen in the foreground. Among the 51 news that feature women in Polimer TV, 36 news stories had women in the background and men talking to the media.

Visuals of women cooking on roads, feeding their children, working in the houses were predominantly more than women working on fields, clearing the logs, protesting on roads, fetching water which was seen in 5 stories of Thanthi TV and 12 news of Polimer TV. In 7 stories of Thanthi TV, women’s voices are muted which was replaced by the reporter’s voiceover.

A total of 8 news stories on Thanthi TV has women crying/weeping in whereas only in 2 stories of Polimer TV we could see women crying. To quote an example, a 2:15 duration of story that talks about fishermen community that has lost their livelihood, we see the damages shown in the visuals and the men belonging to the community providing bytes to the channel(Thanthi TV) and a group of women mourning rolling on the grounds is framed.

The handful of gender frames was used in stories where a woman lost her husband/ daughter lost her father kind of stories. And in two news stories by Thanthi TV, the victims mention their fear about the future while they talk about having “daughters” which is an add-on worry.

The issues concerning livelihood, economic crisis, occupation, transportation were put forth by men and those related to cooking, food, children care was taken from women. In only 2 news from Thanthi TV, had women talk about their livelihood and debts she owns. But the overall gender frame was missing in both the channels. The representation shows the frames employed to portray the Ockhi cyclone in the comparison strategy of both the Malayalam news channel News18 Kerala and Malayala Manorama. The representation shows that in News18 Kerala they have shown more coverage on news based on Human Interest Frame and Economic Frame and given least importance on the coverage of gender aspect news stories. While in the case of Malayala Manorama they have shown high priority on showing Victim Frame and human-interest frame, here Malayala Manorama has shown partially gender frames.

Thanthi TV and Polimer TV

On close analysis of the coverage focussed by Thanthi TV and Polimar TV, it is observed that both have given the least weightage to gender framing which could have been concentrated at a greater degree since it is an important aspect. Through maximum gender framing, the sufferings of humans could have achieved more transparency. On the other hand, Thanthi TV has given high priority to the human interest frame and economic frame and Polimer TV to the coping frame and victim frame. When expressing about victim frame it is seen that Polimer TV has given necessary priority to victim framing than Thanthi TV.

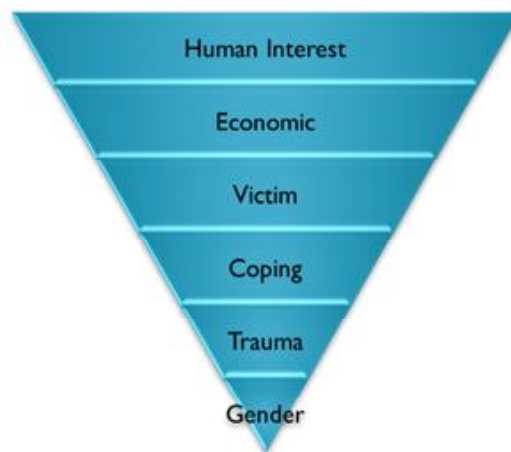


Diagram 1: Gender and Disaster

Issues Expressed by Men and Women

Majority of the women, who were given a chance to speak up express their concern towards their children, lack of food and milk for babies, drinking water, cooking on roads, loss of cattle, no clothes, sanitation issues and migration issues.

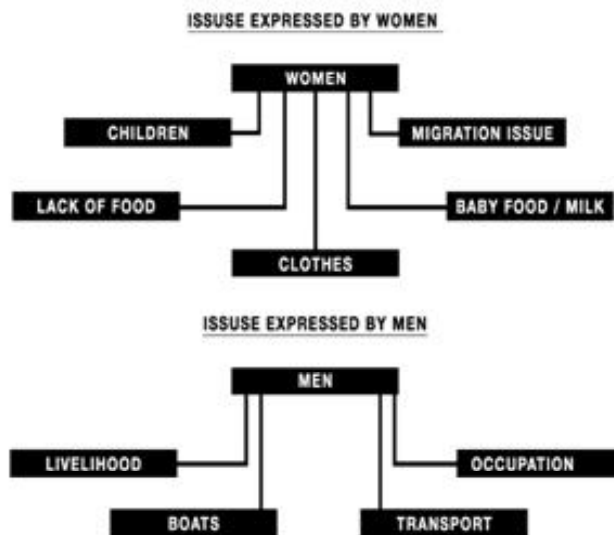


Diagram 2: Issues of men and women affected by disaster

While the men's concern was about livelihood affected, boats damaged, transportation issues, loss of fishing equipment's and so on. There were frames from channels where one could see women in huge numbers protesting in the background (Polimer TV) and in certain cases also in the forefront (Malayala Manorama), few arguing with the officials, chasing the vehicles that carried relief materials, working on fields in clearing logs and fetching water, these visuals were accompanied by a voiceover by the reporter whose speaks about the damages and current situation. No news addressed women's exclusive needs except for those general basic amenities that everyone else quotes and issues. Neither the relief materials nor the government's mitigation plan had gender-centric needs.

Women Framing

The majority of the women were presented in Trauma Frame and Human Interest Frames. Women who had a chance to speak expressed their mental trauma and loss of livelihood due to the unexpected disaster that had completely disturbed their normal life; they spoke in uncertainty concerning their comeback to their normal life. Loss of their homes, loss of their means to live and necessities, disrupted the education of their children, constructing of immediate establishments, loss of documents and above all the loss of

their dear ones-all these had caused them mental and physical trauma. Many had also to say about the government's mitigation plans which their experience had taught them to rely less on.

The predefined and existing gender role prevailing in our society is the outcome of such a portrayal of women even in the disaster impact news coverage. The concept that women belong to the kitchen and the role of the ideal housewife is to look after the family at any crisis is reflected in the way these channels place women in a stereotypical frame. Here comes the dire necessity to bring in gender mainstreaming and gender neutrality in addressing the post-disaster issues and loss. Since women's issues are presented in such a way that their household and children's wellbeing are the issue they face, makes the policy-making process is partial. With women workforce being more in villages where women work on farmlands, harvest crops and so on, the media portrayal of women is contrary by placing them only with households.

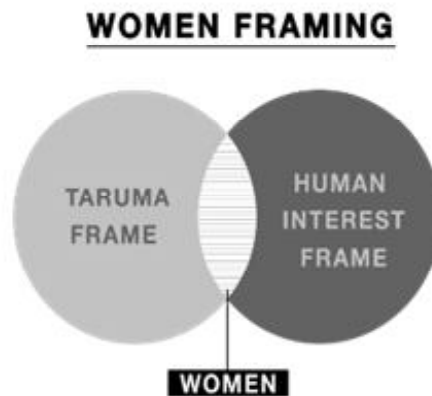


Diagram3:Outline of Women Framing

Taking up news stories where women talk about their actual problems, giving a space for women in the frames to voice their opinion and issues, discussing topics in special programs concerning them with the presence of women panel members and many more will make the government take up appropriate measures in empowering women by considering them while deciding policies and introducing schemes. And special needs of women like pregnancy, menstruation, lactation advice and privacy in the usage of toilets needs efficient coverage, addressing both psychological and social issues that women face alongside physical damages. Stop silencing them, muting them and ignoring their bytes assuming that they will face the same issues like that of men. When the social and cultural

construct differs with gender in a developing country, issues will also vary based on their roles in the society.

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Book Review

Ethical Response to Corruption: A Review

Reviewed work: Ethical Response to Corruption, by Niru Hazarika, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi-110059; Year of Publication: 2020; Number of pages: 175.

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Arvind K. Sharma

This book presents the issue of corruption in an unconventional format. It invokes what one might refer to as the “post-bureaucratic” mode in looking for a solution to the perennial problem of corruption. Whether it is checking corruption in the public domain or private; and whether it is checking corruption at the national level or global; at the state level or local and sub-local levels the solution to the problem of corruption – the author asserts – does not lie in going on expanding the bureaucracy.

The author argues that the expansion of the bureaucratic paraphernalia, say in the form of stricter punitive laws or sturdier preventive measures, did not produce a solution to the growing corruption. And, therefore, proposes recourse to the ethical means to root out the scourge of corruption.

It is because the book seeks solution via means beyond the formal paraphernalia – i.e., expansion of the existing eradication machinery through the route of new offices, additional functionaries, new laws – that it would be in order to designate the same as those in the “post-bureaucratic” mode.

The means beyond the formal domain, that the author proposes, are those that arise from recourse to ethics (the science of morals) in search of a morally defensible solution (pp.104-107).

Ethics is the science of morals. Recourse to ethics shall drive the concerned to search for a morally acceptable course of action. Morality is quintessentially about a choice between right and wrong, between the good and bad (p. 107).

Persons of ethics, driven by morality, shall experience with time the rise within them of the ‘inner voice’ or the ‘soul force’ (125).

It is in this backdrop that the author asserts “ethics generates human power” (104) that will, in the final analysis, eradicate corruption. The argument advanced by the author,

in essence, is that because corruption is a human problem – because it is rooted in their life-style which in turn is driven by their thought process – the “human power” (the rise of ‘inner voice’ or the ‘soul force’) alone shall deliver a viable solution towards the eradication of corruption.

Recourse to ethics, at a tertiary level the author argues, also forms a means that will enhance the efficacy of the formal infrastructure – the preventive and punitive measures - for combating corruption (102).

The book under review is composed of six chapters.

The first chapter focuses on the conceptual issues; and it provides a detailed overview of corruption in India. The preventive measures at the international level and those at the national level form the subject matter of the second chapter of the book. Chapter-3 deals with the working of the ombudsman system in India. Discussion on the working of the institutions of Lokpal and Lokayukta and that of the Right to Information Act forms the major highlight of chapter-3.

The next three chapters, it would be most appropriate to say, occupy a place of special significance in the book under review. The concept of good governance forms a prominent feature of the fourth chapter. Chapter-4 carries the caption the ‘Moral Dimension of Governance’. The fifth Chapter titled the ‘Ethical response to Corruption’ explores the diverse dimensions that collectively form the soul of the present book. The concluding chapter - chapter-6 - examines at length the ideas of and the strategies developed by Mahatma Gandhi, during the country’s freedom struggle, and the relevance these would bear to the war against corruption.

Professor Niru Hazarika is a highly regarded member of the country’s Political Science and Public Administration fraternities. The author, in the book under reference, persuasively argues in favour of the need to integrate the legal and the extra-legal, and the material and the subtle to effectively combat the evil of corruption.

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