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JIR

Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

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Dr. Ghazala Urfi
Md Absar Alam
Dr. Sumbul Samreen
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Governance and Development Outcomes: Evidence from South and Southeast Asia

Dr. Ashti Alamgeer
Alok Ranjan

Status of Muslim Women in India and Their Empowerment
A Critical Analysis of Intersectionality in Indian Eco-feminism

Ammatullah Tasnim
Dr. Archana Gupta

The Problem of Diabetes Care in India; An Investigative Study

Dr Aashish Kr Bariyar
Dr. Md. Jamshaid Alam

India's Foreign Policy - Emergent Challenges and Opportunities with Specific Reference to Maritime Diplomacy

Ms. Seema Choudhary
Ms. Meghana R.
Mr. Sagar Chowdri K.

Economic Growth and Income Inequality in India from 2010 to 2020

Juhi Kumari
Prof. (Dr.) Rajnish Gupta

ICT Based Education: A Tectonic Shift in India

Utkarsha
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Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

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EDITORIAL

Currently political pundits and intellectuals in the US and Europe are in heated debate triggered by the recent book, "How Democracies Die", by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, both well-known scholars. The book published in 2018 raised an alarm after the election of Donald Trump to presidency in 2016. Even the "great" democracy in America is in danger of eclipse, just as many in the world, argued the authors. Interestingly, the prevailing institutions created by democracies, have given rise to the current wave of authoritarianism, dictatorships or majoritarianism, say the authors.

In retrospect, this episode looks like a piece of theatre: For no Indian Prime Minister has neglected Parliament so constantly as he has. On an average, he has spoken 3.6 times a year in Parliament: 22 times in six years (not more than H D Deve Gowda who was PM for two years). In contrast, Atal Bihari Vajpayee spoke 77 times in six years when he was Prime Minister and Manmohan Singh (who was called Maun Mohan Singh by Modi in 2012) spoke 48 times in Parliament during his 10 years in office. But the "regime change" that was brought about in 2014, by undermining the dignity and necessity of secularism, by dismantling federalism in the name "one nation", and by adopting the idea of majoritarianism, the ruling parties themselves have created or expanded the threats to the Parliamentary Democracy.

On this occasion, it makes sense take a quick comparative peek at the functioning of parliament during the ten years of United People's Alliance (UPA) rule under Manmohan Singh and the last six years of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) rule under Modi. Here, The Wire breaks down the number of Bills forwarded to select committees, the number of hours that the parliament had business, and the time devoted to question hour and to discussion on budget allocations. During UPA regime significantly higher number of Bills were sent to a select committee for closer study before they became a law. In a parliamentary democracy, this is considered a good practice. The more Bills are sent for closer examination before they are turned into Acts, better it is for the removal of any loopholes. According to PRS Legislative Research data, "In the 16th Lok Sabha (during the first Modi regime), 25 per cent of the Bills introduced were referred to Committee, much lower than 71 per cent and 60 per cent in the 15th and the 14th Lok Sabha respectively." As per news reports, no Bills have been sent to a parliamentary select committee by the present Modi regime. The Bharatiya Janata Party had been arguing against the Parliamentary form, ever since its Jan Sangh days. Though the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh propagated that it was a cultural organization, it's stalwarts often condemned the Nehruvian endorsement of the idea of Parliamentary Democracy. They are not afraid, nor worried about the Constitutional Constraints. These statistical data illustrate the populist style of communication of Modi, who prefers to communicate directly with the people, either on the radio. These two methods have one thing in common: They reflect a preference for one-way messaging, which obviates the risk of contradiction, and questioning by the receiver. In order to circumvent Parliament, the Modi government has often followed the ordinance route. While ordinances are usually resorted to by minority governments or coalition governments, the Modi government has used it more than any of his predecessors despite the BJP enjoying a majority in the Lok Sabha.

With all the good wishes

Prof. Mohammad Alamgeer
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CONTENTS

1. Governance and Development Outcomes: Evidence from South and Southeast Asia	Dr. Ghazala Urfi Md Absar Alam Dr. Sumbul Samreen Dr. Nahid A. Siddiqi	Page 15
2. Status of Muslim Women in India and Their Empowerment	Dr. Ashti Alamgeer	30
3. A Critical Analysis of Intersectionality in Indian Eco-feminism	Alok Ranjan	36
4. The Problem of Diabetes Care in India: An Investigative Study	Ammatullah Tasnim Dr. Archana Gupta	43
5. India's Foreign Policy - Emergent Challenges and Opportunities with Specific Reference to Maritime Diplomacy	Dr Aashish Kr Bariyar Dr. Md. Jamshaid Alam	51
6. Economic Growth and Income Inequality in India from 2010 to 2020	Ms. Seema Choudhary Ms. Meghana R. Mr. Sagar Chowdri K.	58
7. ICT Based Education: A Tectonic Shift in India	Juhi Kumari Prof. (Dr.) Rajnish Gupta	66
8. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS): An Examination of Perception Versus Reality	Utkarsha Prof. Pankaj Kumar Roy	76

Hindi Section Contents

1. मैथिली नाट्य साहित्यक विकास मे बेगूसराय, जिलाक योगदान	नवल किशोर महतो प्रो.(डॉ.) अरुण कुमार कर्ण	Page 82
-------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------	--------------------

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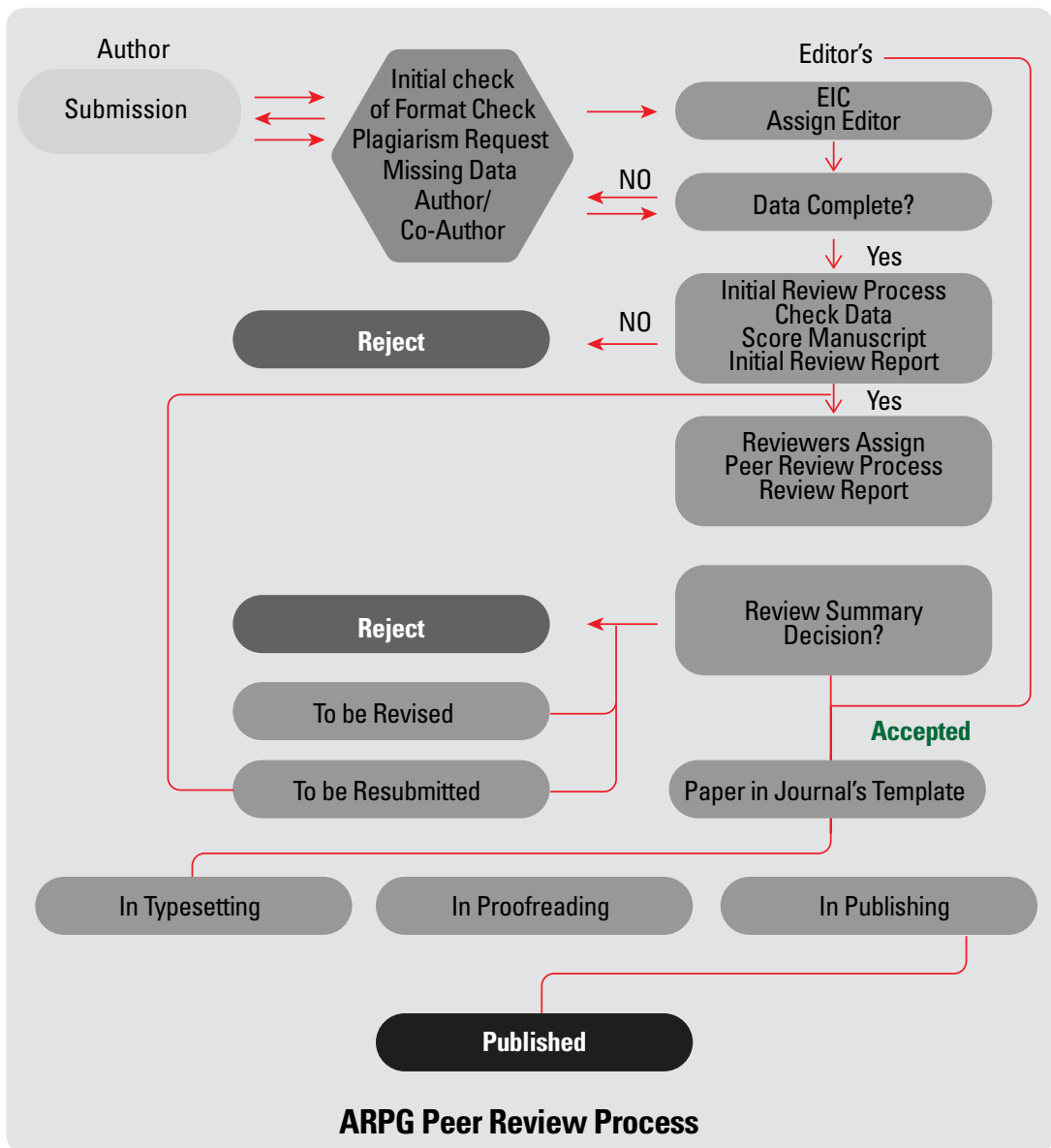
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Governance and Development Outcomes: Evidence from South and Southeast Asia

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Abstract: As the study of institutional economics advances over the years, the correlation between governance and economic development has been widely comprehended and analyzed. Better governance plays a vital role in determining the economic progress of a country. A positive impact of good governance on development outcomes results in more educated, enlightened and governance awared residents. In view of this proposition, the paper analyses the impact of governance on economic progress and identifies the governance indicators that play a vibrant role in achieving developmental goals. The paper focuses on casual analysis between governance indicators and indicators of development outcomes using panel data technique for South and Southeast Asian countries. The model developed for the study considers governance indicators taken from the World Bank's Governance Indicators as explanatory variables, and Human Development Indicators (HDI) taken from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as dependent variables. The study concludes that several governance indicators have statistically significant effects on development outcomes.

Key Words: Governance, development, South and Southeast Asia, Panel data Regression

INTRODUCTION

The synergy between development and governance has always attracted scholars' interest as a distinguished field of research. The two areas show remarkable correlation and a wide range of applicability. The concept of applicability and accountability of governance became a matter of concern and an issue for investigation as new institutional economics progressed. North (1990) points out the importance of institutions and governments in shaping human interactions as governments and institutions are both humanly devised. Better governance plays a vital role in achieving better economic progress in several ways. One of the ways is to promote market efficiency and productive investment opportunities through good governance.

As improved governance positively impacts economic growth, the association between the two is widely studied and accepted. Therefore, researchers have made numerous attempts to statistically test the impact of governance on development outcomes. Campos and Nugent (1999) studied the impact of governance on economic development and established a positive impact of governance on the development process. Governance was studied by Kaufmann as the project at the World Bank. Kaufmann et al. (1999 and 1999a) also established that governance positively and significantly impacts economic development.

Governments in various countries try to stimulate development outcomes in the economy through improved governance and transparency. In this process, the impact of good governance is seen after a given time lag. However, if there is a positive impact of good governance on development outcomes over a passage of time, then the country concerned has more educated, enlightened, and governance aware residents. As a result, residents prioritise their political decisions while choosing representatives. Looking at the prioritization of people, political parties, or institutions also follow a good governance model. Thus, there is a two-way impact of governance and the development process.

Given the above, the objective of this paper is to statistically test the impacts of governance on development outcomes and economic progress in South and Southeast Asian regions. The research question in this context is whether governance plays a role in meeting developmental goals in the regions or not. This paper also tries to answer which of the governance indicators plays a vital role in achieving developmental goals.

The next section of the paper deals with the literature review. Then theoretical framework of the paper is discussed. After the theoretical framework, empirical strategy, data sources, and methodology are discussed. Then the paper discusses the results and presents conclusions based on the empirical results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic objectives of governance are to attain economic development. This relationship has thus stirred the interest of scholars from time to time. Several researchers carried out empirical studies showing a strong connection between the quality of governance and long-run economic performance (Knack and Keefer, 1995; Barro, 1998; Oslon et al., 1998; Kaufmann and Kraay 2002; Dollar and Kraay, 2003; Rodrik et al., 2004; Jalilian, 2006; Kaufmann et al., 2008; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2010). Sari & Prasetyani (2021) recently carried out empirical work for member countries of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) taking data from 2002-2018. The research was limited to establishing linkages between governance indicators and GDP. A Panel Regression

with the fixed-effect model was used and found a significant and positive influence of voice and accountability, regulatory quality, and the rule of law on per capita GDP. Haini (2020) also arrived at the same conclusions with a dynamic panel estimator that institutional development had a significant positive impact on the growth of ASEAN economies during 1995-2017. Further, Prasetyia (2019) found similar results with similar techniques for ASEAN countries taking data from 2014-2018 but emphasized on the rule of law variable having a positive and significant effect on economic growth.

Omer et al. (2021) analyzed the connection between governance indicators and economic development in post-Soviet Eurasia, emphasizing Central Asia using Per capita GDP and World Governance Index (WGI) data with a time-series cross-section (TSCS) model and System GMM during 1992-2018. Results indicated a positive and significant relationship with the substantial impact on political stability among the six dimensions. Kraipornsak (2018) applied a fixed effect model indicated by the Hausman Test using sample panel data of GDP, GCFC and WGIs for 16 Asian countries during 1996-2016 and found a significant positive relationship. Nawaz et al. (2014), using fixed-effect and random effect models under GMM framework for fifty-six countries panel data during 1981-2010, found a positive connection between institutional governance and economic growth for Asian countries. The study found that rule of law plays significant role in economic development. Sen (2014) also analyzed the relationship between governance and economic development for Asian economies using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). However, he took development indicators like Headcount, poverty, human development, gender inequality, literacy, provision of sanitation and concluded a positive relationship for Governance quality leading to improvements in the development indicator. The study of Azam and Emirullah (2014) took corruption as a governance indicator and GDP as an economic indicator; with simple multiple regression analysis, they found a significant effect of corruption on GDP in the negative direction.

Scholars have different opinions regarding the direction of effect between governance indicators and economic performance, whether good governance is necessary for economic growth or the reverse (Khan, 2004). Some studies have found causality running from governance to economic growth; some found another way around as economic growth leads to better governance, and some concluded no significant relationship between the two. Azimi and Shafiq (2020) explored the causal relationship between governance indicators and economic growth in Afghanistan. They used Toda and Yamamoto's vector autoregressive model and the modified Wald test on quarterly economic growth rate and World Bank governance indicators (WGI) from 2003Q1 to 2018Q4. The empirical results showed a causality from the rule of law and government effectiveness to economic growth, but economic growth had a causal effect on all the governance indicators except voice and accountability.

An empirical examination by Bota-Avram et al. (2018) for 136 countries between 2006-2015 with Toda Yamamoto of Granger causality tests using GDP and WGI data found uni-directional causality from governance to economic growth but no significant impact of economic growth on governance. Abdelbary (2018) used the same variables for Egypt during 1996-2016 analyzed with vector error correction model (VECM) and found a bi-directional causal relationship except for corruption control on economic growth. Panel OLS fixed-effect method and GMM analysis of Karimi & Daiari (2018) found a positive governance effect on GDP growth in several ASEAN countries. They detected both short-run and long-run bidirectional causality between the variables during 1996-2007 using the VECM technique. Further, Wilson (2016) also found single direction causality at the provincial level in china during 1985-2005 with the granger causality test but in another direction. He found a significant and positive effect of economic growth on subsequent

quality of governance but no significant impact of governance quality on economic growth. Law et al. (2013)¹⁹ established a bi-directional causality between institutions and economic development after analyzing the panel data of the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG), WGI and GDP for 60 countries. He concluded that causal relations vary as per different income levels. Better institutional quality accelerates economic development in higher-income countries, whereas economic development enhances institutional quality in lower-income countries.

Lee and Kim (2009) used panel data of 63 sample countries between 1965-2002. Using fixed-effects panel and system-GMM estimations, they found a bi-direction causality between institutions and economic growth but institutions effects more in low-income group countries than high-income group countries. The variable affecting most also varied according to income groups. Chong and Calderon (2000) also found bi-directional causality between the two by employing the BERI and ICRG institutions time-series datasets. Their findings also showed a substantial influence of institutions on the economic growth of poorer countries.

After a careful review of the literature, it is found that scholars have undertaken limited research in order to establish the causal relationship between good governance and development outcomes. In addition, there is limited study undertaken up for ASEAN and South Asian countries mostly analyzing the impact of governance indicators on GDP growth. Thus, the present study intends to fill this gap.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

During the past few decades, good governance has become an important topic in development, as it can be applied to an extensive range of issues and relationships. Social scientists are widely involved in identifying the importance of good governance and institutional improvements in the economy as the determinant of human development. Governance represents the set of norms, values, and rules of the game that help to manage public affairs in a transparent manner involving people's participation, inclusiveness and responsiveness. Therefore, governance can be subtle and may not be readily observable. In a broad sense, governance is about the culture and institutional environment in which citizens and stakeholders interact and participate in public affairs. The World Bank defines governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (World Bank, 1992)." Therefore, governance has a direct relationship with political power. As a matter of fact, country-level governance is always affected by the political dimensions of the respective countries. Therefore, while designing the governance indicators, the World Bank identified political accountability, transparency, corruption and rule of law as the essential determinants of good governance. World Governance Indicators are based on the following indicators;

- Voice and Accountability
- Political Stability and Violence
- Governance Effectiveness
- Regulatory Quality
- Control of Corruption
- Rule of Law

The above indicators were designed, considering them as the catalysts of development in an economy. Thus, their global coverage gives premises to analyze the governance process and its impact on the global economy. As pointed out earlier that Kaufmann et al. (1999a) statistically tested a strong and positive causal relationship of improved governance over development outcomes.

Studies of such nature stimulate the interest of researchers to carry forward further the statistical analysis between indicators of governance and that of development. Several research papers are available on the debate of measuring governance (Kaufmann, 1999a and Thomas, 2010). Thomas (2010) brings out a detailed review of the literature on this issue. Despite the issues raised on capturing all the dimensions of governance through the above six indicators, social scientists use the governance indicators developed by the World Bank. This paper also takes into consideration the same indicators.

Smith (1993), McGillivray, White (1993) and Bilbao-Ubillos (2013) have presented a critical evaluation of the debate on measuring development. Considering the objective of economic system, well-being of people remains central to it. It can be noted here that development is nothing but attainment of better well-being in living standards. Income as a dimension to human development is long been taken into consideration. However, Mahbulul Haq designed development indicators that shifted the focus of development from income to well-being (UIHaq 1995, Sen 2000). Thus, literature on measuring development indicates that the development indicators developed by the UNDP are the important indicators and are reliable for empirical research in social sciences. Moreover, the methodology for developing the indicator has been time to time updated. Therefore, this paper makes use of Human Development Indicators as the development outcomes. The following development indicators are taken as development outcomes;

- A decent living standard measured by an income index.
- Long and healthy life measured by health index
- Improvement in the knowledge that leads to change in life measured by education index
- Overall human development index

The economic objectives of good governance coincide with that of the well-being of people (D'Acci, 2011). Scholars argued that mechanisms of both development and governance need participation on the part of the people. Therefore, the following mechanics work together;

- a) Good governance leads to an increase in the level of income of the people, further leads to increased expenditure on better well-being by households.
- b) Governance leads to more tax revenue collection by governments. As a result, the government increases its expenditure on the social sector (Sen, 2014).

These interactions suggest that governance also has direct and indirect impacts on the economic well-being of the people. Thus, recognizing the empirical relationship established by the researchers on the above two aspects, the paper strives to draw a causal relationship between governance indicators and development outcomes for countries in South and Southeast Asia.

Since the participation of the people in the process of good governance and development becomes essential, there is also a possibility of two-way causation between the development indicators and governance indicators. The underlying assumption for this theoretical framework is the impact of governance on development outcomes. Since development relates to better well-being and living standards, people make better political decisions as they experience better living standards. Therefore, development also has an impact on good governance.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In this model, the explanatory variables are governance indicators taken from World Bank's Governance Indicators, and the dependent variables are UNDP's Human Development Indicators. Both explanatory and dependent variables are expressed in values ranging from 0 to 1, indicating that a higher value delivers a better position. GDP growth rate is another dependent variable expressed in terms of percentage.

Dependent variables are Overall Human Development Index (HDI), Health Index, Education Index, Income Index and GDP Growth. Whereas independent variables are Voice and Accountability, Political Stability, Governance Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Control of Corruption and Rule of Law. Our basic model is expressed as

$$D_i = a + b_1 G_1 + b_2 G_2 + b_3 G_3 + b_4 G_4 + b_5 G_5 + b_6 G_6 + b_7 Z_1 + \dots \quad (1)$$

Where

D_i are development indicators like Education Index, Health Index, Income Index, overall Human Development Index and Economic Growth.

$G_{1 \text{ to } 6}$ are governance indicators

Where,

G_1 = Voice and Accountability

G_2 = Political Stability

G_3 = Governance Effectiveness

G_4 = Regulatory Quality

G_5 = Control of Corruption

G_6 = Rule of Law

Z_1 = Control variables

Equation (1) is used to test the causal relationship between the indicators of governance and development outcomes.

DATA

The data for the study is taken from the World Bank's Governance Indicators for South Asian and Southeast Asian countries from 1996 to 2019. Data for governance indicators were not available for the years 1997, 1999 and 2001. For our analysis, we used the respective last year rankings for the missing three years. In the case of Afghanistan, the World Bank database does not include GDP data from 1996 to 2002. Other reliable databases also do not have these indicators. Human development indicators have Estimated Gross National Income per Capita of Afghanistan for the years 1995, 2000 and 2005 in terms of Purchasing Power Parity. In order to estimate GDP growth rate of Afghanistan, we used the CAGR of Estimated Gross National Income per Capita from 1995 to 2000 to estimate the GDP growth of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2000. The same is calculated from 2000 to 2002 using data for the period from 2000 to 2005.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A panel data analysis was used to check the impact of governance on the development indicators. Before running the panel regression using Stata 12, diagnostic tests were carried out. Stationarity was checked using the Levin Chu Test for each variable at lag 1. The test statistics are presented in table 1. The null hypothesis for a series is that the panel contains a unit root. The test was run at 95% confidence level or 0.05 significance level. As per table 2, the P-value of all the series is less than 0.05 implying panels are stationary.

Table 1: Levin Chu Test

Variables	Unadjusted t	Adjusted t	P-Value
Voice and Accountability	-6.0023	-1.7740	0.0380
Political Stability	-6.9372	-2.9281	0.0017
Governance Effectiveness	-8.2943	-4.0061	0.0000
Regulatory Quality (@first difference)	-15.3617	--9.0074	0.0000
Control of Corruption	-7.1353	-1.9292	0.0269
Rule of Law	-6.5003	-2.4760	0.0066
Education Index	-4.6004	-3.4153	0.0003
Health Index	-8.9895	-8.1176	0.0000
Income Index (@first difference)	-23.3933	-19.9157	0.0000
Human Development Index	-6.2175	-5.7973	0.0000
GDP Growth	-12.4108	-6.2846	0.0000

Source: Authors' calculations

We also run other test for stationarity. The results of Im-Pesaran-Shin test and Harris-Tzavalis test is presented in the table 2.

Variables	P-Value of Levin Chu Test	P-Value of IPS Test	Harris-Tzavalis
Voice and Accountability	0.0380	0.7584	0.8083
Political Stability	0.0017	0.0531	0.082
Governance Effectiveness	0.0000	0.0578	0.0018
Regulatory Quality	0.1745	0.3972	0.2806
Regulatory Quality (@ first difference)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Control of Corruption	0.0269	0.0680	0.0052
Rule of Law	0.0066	0.3219	0.0609
Education Index	0.0003	0.9956	0.9989
Health Index	0.0000	0.0000	0.9986
Income Index	0.9383	0.0000	0.9999
Income Index (@ first difference)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Human Development Index	0.0000	0.9972	0.9998
GDP Growth	0.0000	0.0000	0.000

The result of table 2 suggests that regulatory quality index and income index become stationary when first difference is taken into consideration in the panel data. After testing the stationarity of our panel data, we run both random and fixed effect models on our panels. We also used the Hausman test to choose one of the effects on our panel data for all the identified dependent variables. Before analyzing the causal effect through an appropriate model, we need to examine the Hausman test results. Hausman test is carried out to test the null hypothesis that random effect is consistent against the alternate hypothesis that fixed effect is consistent. If the P-value of the test statistics is less than 0.05, then we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the random effect is

not consistent and vice versa. In other words, if P-value is less than 0.05, then it is recommended to use the fixed effect for further analysis or otherwise. Table 2 brings out the results of the Hausman test run for the dependent variables. Hausman tests indicate that fixed effect is chosen for all the dependent variables except for the dependent variable Income Index and GDP Growth, which has P-value more than 0.05, suggesting that random effect is consistent.

Table 3: Hausman Test for Level Data model

Education Index	16.58	0.0109
Health Index	36.07	0.0000
Income Index @ diff 1	-165.04	< 0
Human Development Index	392.21	0.0000
GDP Growth	3.54	0.7380

Source: Authors' calculations

Based on equation 1, we first test the causality between governance indicators and development indices and GDP growth. The results of the panel regression are summarized in table 3. The detailed results of the panel regression is placed in Annexure 1. Regarding the education index as a dependent variable, the results indicate a significant impact of voice and accountability, political governance effectiveness and regulatory quality indices is visible. Variables such as political stability, control of corruption, and rule of law, does not significantly affect the education index. It is noted that there is a time effect in the model (Annexure II). If we exclude Afghanistan and Myanmar from this model, the results are a little different. Control of corruption becomes a significant factor influencing education index (table 4 and Annexure III). Table 4 indicates that both political stability and rule of law are insignificant even after excluding Myanmar and Afghanistan. Both the indicators are interlinked.

The fixed-effect model of the health index as a dependent variable indicates that voice and accountability is the only governance factor influencing the health index significantly. If time effect is included in the model, three factors significantly affect health index (Annexure II). These factors are voice and accountability, political stability and control of corruption. On account of income, only governance effectiveness and rule of law have a significant effect. Time effect is noted in this model (Annexure II). As noted earlier, income index is stationary at first difference, therefore panel model is used taking first difference of income. Excluding Myanmar and Afghanistan, the model is fit for random effect suggesting that government effectiveness and regulatory quality affect income index (table 4 and Annexure III).

There is a significant impact of voice and accountability, governance effectiveness and regulatory quality on the overall outcome of the human development index. Other governance factors like political stability, control of corruption and rule of law have no significant impact on the overall human development index. In the case of time effect in the model, regulatory quality becomes insignificant factor for HDI index (Annexure II). As per table 4 and Annexure III, voice and accountability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality and control of corruption are significant factor for HDI index after excluding Afghanistan and Myanmar from the model.

Economic growth is significantly affected by governance effectiveness and rule of law. Rest of the 4 governance factors are not significant factor affecting economic growth in the two regions. Time effect is noted in the model. The result with time effect indicates that political stability is additional factor that effect economic growth along with governance effectiveness and rule of law (Annexure II). In the case of model excluding Afghanistan and Myanmar, there is no significant change in the results (table 4).

Table 3: Results of the Panel Regression

Independent Variables	Education Index (Fixed Effect)		Health Index (Fixed Effect)		Income Index @ Difference 1 (Fixed Effect)		Human Development Index (Fixed Effect)		GDP Growth (Random Effect)	
	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value
Voice and Accountability	.0212736	0.066**	.0201937	0.014*	-.0001687	0.899	.0188164	0.047*	-.1030062	0.845
Political Stability	-.0080208	0.296	.0049225	0.364	-.0006671	0.448	-.0003767	0.952	.3505367	0.332
Governance Effectiveness	.0418879	0.007*	.013844	0.202	.0053932	0.002*	.0346842	0.006*	3.13466	0.002*
Regulatory Quality@diff.1	.0429575	0.049*	.022802	0.138	.0012431	0.617	.0357993	0.044*	-1.7832	0.723
Control of Corruption	.0005283	0.977	-.0108115	0.414	-.0016301	0.447	-.0012127	0.937	-.9569186	0.369
Rule of Law	-.0025591	0.900	-.0052191	0.717	-.004609	0.049*	-.0040837	0.806	-1.754766	0.004*
Constant	.5234544	0.000*	.7686641	0.000*	.0045	0.000*	.6368123	0.000	4.728086	0.000*
Time Effect	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Region Effect	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	

* significant at 5% significance level and ** significant at 10% significance level

Table 4: Results of Panel Regression excluding Afghanistan and Myanmar

Independent Variables	Education Index (Fixed Effect)		Health Index (Fixed Effect)		Income Index @ diff 1 (Random Effect)		Human Development Index (Fixed Effect)		GDP Growth (Random Effect)	
	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value	Coefficient	P Value
Voice and Accountability	-0.0321211	0.016*	-0.0231324	0.012*	-.0000416	0.959	-0.0277599	0.009*	-0.05219	0.917
Political Stability	0.0002251	0.977	0.0130898	0.016*	-.0000271	0.958	0.0071894	0.251	0.2311547	0.46
Governance Effectiveness	0.0566122	0.002*	0.0264817	0.035*	.0029103	0.016*	0.0484395	0.001*	1.59928	0.033*
Regulatory Quality	-0.1027377	0.000*	-0.0956025	0.000*	-.0025223	0.008*	-0.0854131	0.000*	-1.337375	0.028*
Control of Corruption	0.0531409	0.012*	0.0247054	0.089**	.0002214	0.855	0.0336513	0.045*	0.1633473	0.824
Rule of Law	0.012821	0.534	0.0144723	0.308	-.0022868	0.152	0.0076491	0.64	-1.418306	0.129
Constant	0.5109831	0.000*	0.7599774	0.000*	.0044245	0.000*	0.6264633	0.000*	4.921217	0.000*
Time Effect	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Balanced	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	

* significant at 5% significance level and ** significant at 10% significance level

The panel data analysis also suggests there is a significant time effect noted in the panel

regression. We also try to understand the regional effect on the panel regression. Our panel data is for the two regions, i.e. countries from South Asia and Southeast Asia. Results suggest that there are no regional effects in the panel.

Prior to run panel fixed and random effect model, we run a panel pooled regression for each dependent variable and then used Bruesh and Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier test for heteroskedasticity to identify that panel pooled regression model suitable or not. The result of the test suggest that panel pooled regression is not suitable model for analysis. Bruesh and Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier test indicates that null hypothesis of no random effect stands rejected as its P-value is less than 0.05. A summary of the test statistics of this test is given in table 5.

Table 5: Bruesh and Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier Test

Dependent Variable of the Model	Value of Chi2	P-Value
Education Index	41.95	0.0000
Health Index	19.55	0.0033
Income Index	59.60	0.0000
Human Development Index	46.84	0.0000
GDP Growth	56.45	0.0000

Source: Authors' calculation

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that some governance indicators have statistically significant effects on development related indices. As discussed earlier, the improvement in governance creates an environment for attaining better developmental goals. The South Asian and Southeast Asian region comprises mostly democratic countries keeping aside a few exceptions like Myanmar and Afghanistan facing political turmoil. Pakistan has improved its democratic regime in recent times, whereas Afghanistan is again pushed into political transition. Similar is the case of Myanmar. However, the other countries of both the regions are comparative more politically stable. Therefore, the governance indices are expected to positively affect the development outcomes. However, it is noted that not all the governance indicators have statistically significant causal relationship with development indices for the two regions. This suggests that these countries are still to align its developmental goals with governance practices. In particular, health and education related indices needed to be strongly align with the public policies and governance practices.

This exercise gives a premise for policymakers of South and Southeast Asian countries to prioritize the process of betterment in a given area of governance so that the impact of governance could be maximized on the process of development. As per this analysis, policy planning should effectively address improving governance indicators like voice and accountability, government effectiveness and political stability. In addition, there is also a need to improve effective improvements of other governance indices.

The paper is mainly based on the data for countries in South and Southeast Asia. Thus, the analysis results are limited to give an understanding of the countries in the two regions. The analysis can be extended for all other regions globally, and a better picture can also be visualized. This paper, however, gives a theoretical framework for establishing not only one-directional causal analysis between development indices and governance indices but also gives an ambit to establish

the bidirectional relationship between the two indices. In this sense, the exercise is a new addition to the literature. The limitation of the literature is the limitations associated with the two types of data (indicators of development and governance) used.

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Results of Panel Regression based on Level data

Independent Variables	Education Index (Fixed Effect)				Health Index (Fixed Effect)				Income Index @ difference 1 (Fixed Effect)				Human Development Index (Fixed Effect)				GDP Growth (Random Effect)			
	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z value	P Value
Voice and Accountability	.0212736	.0115455	1.84	0.066	-.0201937	.0081607	2.47	0.014	.0001687	.0013221	0.13	0.899	.0188164	.0094442	1.99	0.047	-.1030062	.5275139	-0.20	0.845
Political Stability	-.0080208	.0076694	-1.05	0.296	-.0049225	.005421	0.91	0.364	.0006671	.0008782	0.76	0.448	-.0003767	.0062736	-0.06	0.952	.3505367	.3610318	0.97	0.332
Governance Effectiveness	.0418879	.0153239	2.73	0.007	.013844	.0108314	1.28	0.202	.0053932	.0017547	3.07	0.002	.0346942	.012535	2.77	0.006	3.13466	.7305567	3.11	0.002
Regulatory Quality @ difference 1	.0429575	.0217087	1.98	0.049	.022802	.0153445	1.49	0.138	.0012431	.0024858	0.50	0.617	.0357993	.0177578	2.02	0.044	-1.7832	1.259335	-0.35	0.723
Control of Corruption	.0005283	.0187054	0.03	0.977	-.0108115	.0132216	-0.82	0.414	-.0016301	.0021419	-0.76	0.447	-.0012127	.0153011	-0.08	0.937	-.9569186	.7988823	-0.90	0.369
Rule of Law	-.0025591	.0203388	-0.13	0.900	-.0052191	.0143761	-0.36	0.717	-.004609	.002329	-1.98	0.049	-.0040837	.0166372	-0.25	0.806	-1.754766	.9983019	-2.89	0.004
Constant	.5234544	.008222	63.66	0.000	.7686641	.0058116	132.26	0.000	.0045	.0009415	4.78	0.000	.6388123	.0067256	94.68	0.000	4.728086	.5127211	9.02	0.000
Time Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balanced	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	414				414				414				414				414			
R2																				
RMSE																				
R2 Overall	0.3485				0.0602				0.0249				0.4858				0.0944			
R2 Between	0.4214				0.0617				0.0364				0.5781				0.3136			
R2 Within	0.0467				0.0548				0.0329				0.0522				0.0333			
Sigma_u	.11388679				.08319612				.00300206				.10128588				1.4521039			
Sigma_e	.05837595				.04312308				.00668452				.04775168				3.4709522			
Rho	.79193056				.78822928				.16784317				.81815032				.14895371			
Number of id																				
F Test	F(17, 390) = 50.92	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(17, 390) = 30.40	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(17, 390) = 3.24	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(17, 390) = 40.52	Prob > F = 0.0000						
Hausman Test	chi2(6) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B) = 16.58	Prob>chi2 = 0.0109			chi2(6) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B) = 36.07	Prob>chi2 = 0.0000			chi2(6) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B) = -834.23	chi2<0			chi2(6) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B) = 392.21	Prob>chi2 = 0.0000			chi2(6) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B) = 3.54	Prob>chi2 = 0.7380		

Regression results when time effect is included

Independent Variables	Education Index (Fixed Effect)				Health Index (Fixed Effect)				Income Index @ diff 1 (Fixed Effect)				Human Development Index (Fixed Effect)				GDP Growth (Random Effect)			
	Coefficient	Standard Error	t value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	t value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	t value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	t value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z value	P Value
Voice and Accountability	.0073764	.003785	1.95	0.052	.0114275	.0033259	3.44	0.001	.0006783	.0012698	0.53	0.594	.0073141	.0027769	2.63	0.009	.2993626	.5100426	0.59	0.557
Political Stability	-.0063777	.0025687	-2.48	0.013	.0081735	.0022566	3.62	0.000	.001046	.0008616	1.21	0.225	.0020206	.0018842	1.07	0.284	.6739215	.354166	1.90	0.057
Governance Effectiveness	.0162047	.0050372	3.22	0.001	-.0052616	.0044251	-1.19	0.235	.0043869	.0016896	2.60	0.010	.0130454	.0038948	3.53	0.000	1.575033	.7072397	2.23	0.026
Regulatory Quality @ difference 1	.0050005	.0075117	0.67	0.506	-.0039891	.006599	-0.60	0.546	.001398	.0025196	0.55	0.579	.0045599	.0055099	0.83	0.408	-.5628655	1.257952	-0.45	0.655
Control of Corruption	-.0082698	.0063606	-1.30	0.194	-.0114289	.0055878	-2.05	0.042	.0000475	.0021335	0.02	0.982	-.0054722	.0046655	-1.17	0.242	-.2757861	.7756433	-0.36	0.722
Rule of Law	.001644	.0066853	0.25	0.806	-.0016984	.005873	-0.29	0.773	-.0036191	.0022424	-1.61	0.384	-.0007887	.0049037	-0.16	0.872	-2.891327	.9589215	-3.02	0.003
Constant	.4166698	.0050166	83.06	0.000	.6925076	.0044071	157.13	0.000	.0040985	.0016827	2.44	0.015	.5506035	.0036797	149.63	0.000	5.464994	.8649849	6.32	0.000
Balanced		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	414				414				414				414				414			
RMSE																				
R ² Overall	0.2031				0.1072				0.1872				0.2538				0.2328			
R ² Between	0.2082				0.1491				0.0302				0.5853				0.3257			
R ² Within	0.9066				0.8540				0.8340				0.9254				0.2082			
Sigma_u	.13071805				.08876366				.00409192				.11610504				1.4760579			
Sigma_e	.01880785				.01652267				.00630851				.01379571				3.2302106			
Rho	.97971812				.96651138				.29613516				.98607813				.17273811			
F Test	F(17, 368) = 487.05	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(17, 368) = 186.25	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(17, 368) = 3.57	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(17, 368) = 476.28	Prob > F = 0.0000						

Regression results when Afghanistan and Myanmar is Excluded

Independent Variables	Education Index (Fixed Effect)				Health Index (Fixed Effect)				Income Index @ diff 1 (Random Effect)				Human Development Index (Fixed Effect)				GDP Growth (Random Effect)			
	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	Zvalue	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z value	P Value
Voice and Accountability	-.0321211	.0133112	-2.41	0.016	-.0231324	.0091639	-2.52	0.012	-0.0000416	.0008058	-0.05	0.959	-.0277599	.0105608	-2.63	0.009	-.05219	.5004643	-0.10	0.917
Political Stability	.0002251	.0078769	0.03	0.977	.0130898	.0054227	2.41	0.016	-0.0000271	.0005133	-0.05	0.958	.0071894	.0062493	1.15	0.251	.2311547	.3128149	0.74	0.460
Governance Effectiveness	.0586122	.0181705	3.12	0.002	.0264817	.0125092	2.12	0.035	.0029103	.0012113	2.40	0.016	.0484395	.014416	3.36	0.001	1.59928	.7501046	2.13	0.033
Regulatory Quality	-.1027377	.0165771	-6.20	0.000	-.0956025	.0114123	-8.38	0.000	-0.0025223	.0009453	-2.67	0.008	-.0854131	.0131518	-6.49	0.000	-1.337375	.6088534	-2.20	0.028
Control of Corruption	.0531409	.0210449	2.53	0.012	.0247054	.0144881	1.71	0.089	.0002214	.0012136	0.18	0.855	.0338513	.0166965	2.02	0.045	.1633473	.7346996	0.22	0.824
Rule of Law	.012821	.0205815	0.62	0.534	.0144723	.0141691	1.02	0.308	-0.0022868	.0015961	-1.43	0.152	.0076491	.0163289	0.47	0.640	-1.418306	.9341242	-1.52	0.129
Constant	.5109831	.0071959	71.01	0.000	.7599774	.0049539	153.41	0.000	.0044245	.0006659	6.71	0.000	.6264633	.005709	109.73	0.000	4.921217	.4353431	11.30	0.000
Time Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balanced	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	384				384				384				384				384			
RMSE																				
R ² Overall	0.0129				0.0833				0.1063				0.0053				0.1196			
R ² Between	0.0353				0.1987				0.6245				0.0186				0.5488			
R ² Within	0.1082				0.1724				0.0052				0.1192				0.0062			
Sigma_u	.15223752				.10785316				.00134657				.13215018				1.1613388			
Sigma_e	.05804363				.03995929				.00541195				.04605035				3.0824507			
Rho	.87308262				.87330007				.05829947				.89171767				.12430246			
F Test	F(15, 362) = 53.41	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(15, 362) = 41.04	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(15, 362) = 40.76	Prob > F = 0.0000			F(15, 362) = 40.76	Prob > F = 0.0000						

Status of Muslim Women in India and Their Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Women-studies is an important field in contemporary social scientific research. Women studies have a great value in generating consciousness about multi-dimensional roles played by women in a society. Its basic objective is to study and collect information on women with a goal to empower them in their struggle against inequality. Further, the status of women and contribution made by them is considered to be the best indicator of social development and progress. But unfortunately, the information on women in different societies is very limited.

There is a general perception that women in the Muslim society have less opportunity to have higher education and job and are deprived of equal rights to participate in decision making process because of tradition and culture. Further, there are many misconceptions regarding status of women in Muslim society. The sanction as well as practice of polygamy and divorce in Muslim society is a controversial issue, specially in India. There has been a notion that the incidence of polygamy and divorce is very high among the Indian Muslims and which has an impact on the status of their women. This stereotyped notion is not only affecting the Muslim mind but also influencing the political and communal situation of the country. Therefore, an empirical study on Muslim women is very much necessary to know their problems and prospects of empowerment.

The present study is a modest attempt to examine the status and role of Muslim women in India in general and West Bengal in particular. Special emphasis shall be given to highlight their social situation, clarify misconceptions, identify major obstacles and formulate ways and means to overcome the problems of empowerment. The paper is based on facts gathered from secondary

and primary sources. Relevant literature was consulted and field studies were conducted through anthropological tools and techniques to get the relevant facts.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

India is known for having the second largest Muslim population of the globe. Muslim occupies an important position in Indian society. They are the principal minority of this country. According to 1991 census Muslim constituted 12.12 percent of India's total population. In Muslim population there were 930 females per 1000 males. Muslims are not a monolithic community in terms of their socio-cultural life and empowerment of resources and opportunities to women, hence there are tremendous social divergences among them. Muslims in India are considered as economically and educationally backward. It is assumed that the development of Muslim society has sustained a setback due to various factors of which the 'invisible' role and 'marginalized' position of women in organization of the Muslim society is very crucial one.

Muslims are the followers of Islam which has a definite notion towards status and role of women. The attitude of Islam bears witness to the fact that, a woman is at least, as vital of life and society as means itself, and that she is not inferior to him. The teaching of Quran and Hadith revealed that the status of women has been taken for granted to be equal to those of men. Islam has given women the rights and privileges which are nearly equal to those of men. But empirically it is observed that like other societies, the women in Muslim society also live and grows in an environment which denies them equal access to economic and political participation, education and other opportunities of life. They are also suffering from imposition of several traditional rules and restrictions which affect their self-esteem and personality. As a result women in Muslim society enjoying a marginal social position and lagging behind in economic independence, education and development. All these go against value system of Islam in respect of status of women. Thus, a serious endeavour is incumbent upon social scientists for a better understanding of this situation.

There exists a diversity of opinion regarding social marginality of Muslim women. Some regard it as the legacy of tradition. While others consider that the women's passivity, seclusion and marginal place in Muslim society have little to do with Islamic tradition, but and are, on the contrary, ideological constructs which are alien to Islam and are effects of the misuse of power by reactionary forces. These aspects are very crucial in the context of theoretical frame of reference in understanding and examining the status and empowerment of women in the Muslim society.

Over last two decades the position of Muslim women has come to the notice of the academicians, policymakers and development authorities of India. The Muslim women, like other women, are more undernourished, more under compensated for their labour and more under represented in formal decision making bodies than men. The marginalized status of Muslim women is not well documented. Therefore, empirical information on Muslim women, particularly on their social position as well as problems and prospects are very much needed for die sake of their empowerment, which is a priority area of India's national development.

Very little information is available on status of Muslim women in India. The available information on Muslim women is mostly on then- stereotyped images leading to debates and counter debates. A description of Muslim women played a very important role in maintaining traditional cultural life of the Muslims. They are the real protectors of cultural heritage of their society. They participate in different rites and rituals around life cycle viz. child birth, marriage, and funeral and thereby preserve Muslim cultural tradition developed in relation to their habitat. Women are the carriers of traditional information of the little traditions of Muslim society. In absence of written records, the oral traditions are cultivated by women who help in continuity of Muslim culture. To learn

this 'hidden perspective' an empirical knowledge on overall Muslim women's social situation is very much needed. This study is an attempt in that direction, which depicts the Muslim women's situation on the basis of empirical evidence. In India there has been a tendency to examine the status of Muslim women from the perspectives of the text and the stereotyped images. But this study has been oriented to see the Muslim women's problem from the perspective of the context i.e. the economic and social framework under which the Muslim women grow and live.

According to 1991 census the total Muslim population in India were 101,596,057 of which 52,631,365 were males and 48,964,692 were females. The economic role of Muslim women is not visible. A great majority of them are confined to homes and engaged in household chores. For various reasons Muslim women's participation in employment is negligible. The economic backwardness of Muslims compelled a section of women to earn a livelihood by involving in home based industries and works to support their meager family income. In Muslim community the participation of women in the labour force is negligible due to rules of seclusion (pardah). As a result a great majority of them are economically dependent on their male relatives. The educational status of women in Muslim community is highly disheartening. The Indian Muslim women do not progress much in formal education. Illiteracy and low education is rampant among them. For various reasons girls and women are discouraged from attending schools the dropout among them is very high. Traditional outlook, poverty, early-age marriage, domestic responsibilities and above all the rules of pardah are considered to be the important reasons behind the educational backwardness of the Indian Muslim women. Only a microscopic section of Muslim women belonging to well to do families have higher education, and a small section of them take up outside jobs. While the others are unemployed for various reasons.

Early age marriage is quite widespread among Indian Muslim women. Marriage by negotiation is a common practice. Transaction of dowry in marriage now a days considered to be very necessary to settle the marriage and which has a lot of negative consequences on the position of women. The prevalence of dowry in Muslim society is not a Islamic practice but a situational development. Divorce and polygamy are prevalent in Muslim society as in other communities in India. But these are not so high as these are believed to be.

Muslim matrimonial issues viz. polygamy, divorce and maintenance of divorcee are considered as very debatable in India. Some laws and statutes have been enacted on these issues in favour of Muslim women. The most important of them are Passage of Sharia Act 1937, dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act VIII 1939 and the Muslim Women Act 1986 etc.

Traditional joint family structure of Indian Muslims and the status as well as role of women therein has also been changing rapidly. The nuclearization of the Muslim family is an ongoing trend. The women in this type of family are enjoying some autonomy but at the same time their work load has been increasing. Attitudinally, the Muslim women are not against family planning. But poverty, illiteracy, isolation, seclusion and prevalence of traditional values do not allow them to participate enthusiastically in family welfare activities. The fertility of the Muslim women is little bit high, but this is not because of their religious values but due to overall backwardness of the Muslim community.

The gender relations in Muslim society is rather unequal. The gender division of labour is very conspicuous. Women are mainly engaged in household works viz. cooking, cleaning, washing, child rearing etc. Actually, women are engaged in indoor works and men in outdoor works. Even in ceremonial and community activities, women have a very limited role to play. Women have a very poor access to control of family resources. Even their own earnings and assets are not under their control. Major family decisions are taken by the senior male members, women are consulted

only in necessities or on domestic matters. Their role in decision making process in the family or society very insignificant. The women have a very poor self-image and lack of confidence owing to the process of socialization and gender construction under patriarchal social set up. However, in recent time, the unequal gender relations in Muslim society have also been gradually changing due to various internal and external forces.

The seclusion or purdah observance is a traditional custom among the Indian women. But Muslim women observe it more rigidly than others. Among the Indian Muslim women the practice of purdah varies from place to place and also among group to group. Muslim women belong to higher social status observe purdah in rigid and fashionable manner than their counterparts of lower social status. The practice of purdah among the Muslim women has both positive and negative consequences.

The Muslim women have a very poor self-image. They are hardly able to think about their dynamic socio-economic roles and contribution to society. They have a mind set that they should do what they are told to do or do what are expected from them. The low or poor quality of human resources of the Muslim women and their traditional mindset take the shape of a vicious cycle that prevents women from developing awareness and strengthening themselves.

Due to lack of education and social isolation the political awareness among the Muslim women is very low. Their participation in political process of the country is of peripheral nature. Due to steady process of politicization of the country the levels of political awareness is gradually increasing among the Muslim women. But for taking the political decision they are still much dependent upon their males for obvious reasons their social situation told by the Muslim women themselves is really a missing aspect of our knowledge.

Like other women of the country, the Muslim women are also changing, but in a very slow process. Education, modernization, development programmes and reform of some laws are considered as the important factors of their change (Ahmed: 1983; Engineer: 1987; Haseena: 1989; Lateef: 1983; Menon: 1981; Mohammad: 1999; Mondal: 1997a, 1997b; Roy: 1979).

Due to lack of authentic data at the national level it is very difficult to ascertain the exact demographic and socio-economic profile of the Muslim women in India. However, the situation of Muslim women as reflected through sample surveys is presented in tables – 1 and 2. Since women are accepted as being the most dis-empowered section of the society the term “women’s empowerment” has come to be associated with the women’s struggle for social justice and equality. The process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power may also be termed as empowerment. Empowerment of women is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic force which marginalize women in a given context (Goswami: 1998).

ARE MUSLIM WOMEN DIS-EMPOWERED?

The empirical study of Muslim women clearly indicates that in terms of socio-economic attributes as well as in respect of social position they are definitely a dis-empowered section of the society. The underlying factors behind their dis-empowerment are many, which are manifested through their status and role as set by the patriarchal social tradition. Hence, the Muslim women are really in need of empowerment for the sake of development and progress under contemporary changing situation.

We may divide the factors behind dis-empowerment of Muslim women into three broad categories which are as follows:

(i) Economic Factors: Muslim women are not economically independent. Due to their non-wage

economic activities majority of the women of land and other capital, forces a woman to depend on men this dependency is a serious obstacle to empowerment of women independence

- (ii) **Social and Cultural Factors:** Most of the Muslim women are either illiterate or less educated. Moreover, in traditional Muslim society the women are socially ignored in many cases. This ignorance has tremendous impact on women's mind and this made them weak in family decision making and outside social activities. There has also been a cultural apathy towards women's empowerment. Some cultural practices of the Muslim society also affect women negatively. This is particularly true in respect to rigidity of social restrictions on the part of women in their day today activities. On the other hand, the system of dowry on the part of bride as now noticed among the Indian Muslims is detrimental to women's position. The institution of purdah, some people argue, prevents women to participate in social, economic and political activities which are considered to be very important to empower themselves. It is now argued that men want to keep women in purdah, so that they would be under their control. In recent time the rise of fundamentalism for petty political gain of a section of political elite has facilitated the growth of fundamentalist political policies. This ultimately affected not only the status of women but also their struggle for empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Their socio-economic attributes clearly indicate that they are lagging far behind in economic independence, education and political participation. They are usually outside the pale of the decision making process due to their peripheral position and social situation. Owing to all these features they may be considered as dis-empowered segment of the society. Hence, the question of empowerment is very crucial to them. Muslim women's empowerment is not only related to nature and character of the Muslim society, but also to privileges and opportunities to be provided to them by government and non-government organizations. The major obstacles to Muslim women's empowerment are economic, political and socio-cultural. The Muslim women's mindset which is constituted under patriarchal social system also acts as a great obstacle to their empowerment.

To empower the Muslim women of India, the society as well as the nation must recognize the productive and reproductive role of women. The process of empowerment should be followed by conscious efforts of both male and female members of the society, which requires following steps.

1. Removal of obstacles that deprive women of the benefits of economic, educational and social development.
2. Encourage the women to develop themselves as effective partners in decision making process.
3. There is a need of change in the attitude and practices of men to motivate women for better production of young girls and unmarried women to cultivate their human qualities as responsible member of today's changing society.
4. Measures to be taken to wipe out the barriers for participation of women in the labour force and to provide women the credit and other monetary assistance for income generating activities. are economically dependent on men. Further, lesser scope of employment and lack of ownership the part of women in their day to day activities. Initiative to be taken to encourage women to take decisions independently to control over their own life and for which there is a need to remove disparities that directly and indirectly affect the women.
5. Measures to be taken both by government and non-government agencies to formulate policies for improving the health condition as well as the economic, educational and social status of the Muslim women.

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A Critical Analysis of Intersectionality in Indian Eco-feminism

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Abstract: As a theoretical framework, ecofeminism investigates the intersection of environmental concerns and gender inequality. It acknowledges that the dominance and exploitation of nature are intertwined with women's subjugation, and it advocates for the liberation of both women and nature. While ecofeminism has acquired popularity internationally, the experiences and perspectives of Indian ecofeminists provide valuable insights into the discourse. Several scholarly works contribute to our understanding of Indian ecofeminism by emphasising the intersectionality of identities, the critique of hierarchical dichotomies, and the contributions of Indian eco-feminists to the global discourse. They provide a solid foundation for the current research, seeking to further investigate and analyse the distinctiveness and lessons of Indian ecofeminism about ethics of care, illegitimate dominance, and processes for demanding justice. The paper critically analyses the argument that Indian ecofeminism offers important lessons for the global discourse on environmental justice and gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism, coined by Francoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974) and developed by Ynestra King in the late 1970s, emerged as a movement in 1980 with the first ecofeminist conference, "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980s," in Amherst, Massachusetts (Rao, 2012).

As one variant of this movement, Indian ecofeminism contributes unique insights and experiences. Commentators like Vandana Shiva provide indispensable perspectives on the definition of ecofeminism, emphasising the inextricable link between the exploitation of nature and the subjugation

of women (Shiva, 1988). Bina Agarwal's 1992 book "A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia" concentrates on the intersection between gender and land rights in South Asia. Agarwal illuminates the experiences of rural women in India and highlights the importance of women's access to and control over land for sustainable agriculture and environmental protection. Her research expands our knowledge of the connections between gender, environmental sustainability, and socioeconomic development (Agarwal, 1994). "Indian Ecofeminism: Women, Gender, Environment" (2004) by Debashish Radha examines Indian ecofeminism and its cultural and philosophical origins. It analyses ecofeminist movements and activism in India and provides case studies illustrating the contributions of Indian women to environmental conservation and sustainable development. Gandhi's philosophy in the context of Indian ecofeminism holds relevance and investigates the intersections between Gandhian nonviolence principles, sustainability, and women's empowerment. It is contended that Gandhi's teachings provide a basis for ecofeminist activism in India, emphasising the significance of local knowledge, self-reliance, and sustainable practices.

Indian ecofeminists provide distinctive perspectives ingrained in Indian traditions, cultures, and philosophies, thereby enriching the ecofeminist discourse. Indian eco-feminists emphasise, through activism and research, the need for sustainable development that considers both social justice and environmental conservation (*Ecofeminist Philosophy - Google Books*, n.d.) Ecofeminism in India is a forum for addressing the unique challenges women confront in India and their contributions to environmental movements.

ELEMENTS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social identities (such as sex, caste, class, religion, and culture) and how they influence privilege and oppression experiences (Narayan et al., 2021). Intersectionality in Indian Ecofeminism acknowledges the complexity and multiplicity of identities that influence women's environmental experiences in Indian ecofeminism. It emphasises the necessity of addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality to achieve a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of ecofeminism (Giri, 2019). By contemplating intersectionality, Indian ecofeminists emphasise the significance of recognising and confronting the multiple dimensions of oppression that marginalised communities face ("Indian Intersectional Ecofeminism and Sustainability," 2022). It provides a framework for comprehending the interplay between social identities and environmental issues in India.

Hierarchical dichotomies perpetuate gender disparities and limit women's participation in environmental decision-making and conservation efforts in India to a greater extent. These dichotomies are critiqued by Indian ecofeminists who endeavour to dismantle oppressive systems and establish spaces where women's voices are heard and respected. Indian ecofeminists seek to establish more inclusive and equitable environmental platforms.

THE 'CHAMOLI AND THE BISHNOI MODELS'

Within Indian ecofeminism, the Chamoli and Bishnoi communities serve as inspiring community models where women have emerged as innovators and leaders, challenging traditional power structures and advocating for sustainable practices.

Recognised for their profound veneration for nature, the Bishnoi community has a long history of conservation efforts. Women from the Bishnoi community have played a crucial role in wildlife conservation and forest preservation. Their dedication to environmental preservation stems from their cultural traditions and spiritual connection with nature. They have empowered women to actively

participate in environmental decision-making and wildlife protection. These community models illustrate the potential for women's leadership and the incorporation of cultural traditions in the promotion of sustainable practices and environmental stewardship. The Bishnoi women demonstrate that ecofeminist activism can emerge at the intersection of cultural values, spirituality, and a profound sense of environmental responsibility.

In 2001, the Indian government bestowed upon them the "Amrita Devi Bishnoi" Wildlife Protection Award in recognition of their commitment to environmental preservation ("Amrita Devi Bishnoi National Award," 2024). The teachings and influence of Guru Jambheshwar, a revered figure among Jodhpur's Bishnoi people hold sacredness. In addition to promoting environmental conservation, Guru Jambheshwar's teachings also address larger global issues. It emphasises the applicability of these teachings in the context of globalisation and capitalism. It examines how Guru Jambheshwar's teachings can provide a counterbalance to the negative aspects of globalisation, such as the spread of superfluous desires and the erosion of simplicity and contentment. He defied societal norms and elevated women's prestige, viewing them as agents of change in environmental protection. He fostered a deeper connection between humans and nature by combining religious philosophy with environmental awareness.

Bishnoi women actively participate in decision-making processes and have helped protect fauna and natural resources. The community's longstanding practice of prohibiting tree felling, hunting, and the consumption of animal products exemplifies their respect for all living things. The Bishnoi women have demonstrated a profound comprehension of ecological interdependencies and have effectively communicated to future generations the significance of sustainable practices. The Bishnoi women's conservation efforts have influenced broader conservation initiatives and policies in India, extending their contributions beyond their immediate communities. Their collective action and dedication to environmental sustainability serves as an exemplary model for both local and international communities. (Mago et al., 2022).

In the context of Indian ecofeminism, the Uttarakhand-based Chamoli community has emerged as a compelling community model. The community is renowned for its strong connection to the natural world. By organising protests and safeguarding forests, women in Chamoli have played a crucial role in environmental movements (Chipko movement in the 1970s). Inspired by the principles of nonviolence and environmental protection, the Chamoli women organised protests and resorted to embracing trees to prevent deforestation and commercial exploitation of the forests. Their courageous actions drew attention to the devastation of the environment and demonstrated the effectiveness of community-led activism. The participation of Chamoli women in the Chipko movement demonstrates their tenacity, knowledge of traditional ecological practices, and ability to challenge prevalent patriarchal norms. Their contributions have influenced policy and inspired succeeding generations of environmental activists.

In the aftermath of the devastation caused by the Chamoli catastrophe, Chamoli women arose as leaders in the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Their participation challenged existing gender norms and exemplified their resourcefulness and tenacity in reconstructing their lives and communities. The Chamoli women demonstrate that ecofeminism transcends theoretical frameworks, as their actions and leadership exemplify ecofeminist principles.

The substantial contributions of the Chamoli and Bishnoi communities to Indian ecofeminism are made clear. Their efforts to protect forests, preserve fauna, and promote sustainable practices demonstrate the potential of community-led initiatives to address environmental challenges. These examples serve as a source of inspiration for other communities and contribute to the discourse on ecofeminism and environmental justice.

CONTRAST WITH THE WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

Western ecofeminism has traditionally focused on the experiences of women within a particular cultural context, frequently ignoring the varied realities and perspectives of marginalised communities (Warren, 1997). In the West, collective action is viewed through a different lens. While advocating for collective action, ecofeminist movements in the West are frequently characterised by a broader spectrum of actors and strategies. Their methods are influenced by a variety of theoretical frameworks, such as feminist theory, environmental justice, and social movements. Collective activism and social movements have been emphasised by ecofeminism in the West as a means of challenging patriarchal and exploitative systems. The comparison with Indian ecofeminism illuminates the various approaches to collective action, as Indian ecofeminism draws on diverse identities and perspectives to nurture a collective spirit of resistance and modification.

Indian ecofeminists contribute substantially to the discourse on ethics of care, discriminatory dominances, and methods for pursuing justice. They enrich Western perspectives on these issues by drawing from their varied backgrounds and experiences. Incorporating the nuances of intersectionality and the realities of the global South, their insights challenge the hegemonic Western narrative and broaden our understanding of ecofeminism. Indian ecofeminists provide alternative frameworks for addressing environmental degradation and gender inequalities, fostering a more inclusive and all-encompassing approach to ecofeminist activism. The experiences of Indian ecofeminists exemplify the concept of “unity in diversity,” which functions as a guiding principle in the intricate social fabric of Indian society.

In contrast to Western ecofeminism, which frequently focuses on the shared experiences of women within a homogeneous cultural context, Indian ecofeminism embraces a diversity of identities, perspectives, and experienced realities. As representatives of Indian ecofeminism, the Bishnoi and Chamoli communities actively combat the oppressive structures engrained in Indian society. Women from these communities face intersecting strata of discrimination based on their gender, caste, and socioeconomic status, necessitating a nuanced critique that challenges dominant power structures and promotes gender equality and social justice. In contrast, Western ecofeminism has centered its critique on gender-based oppression often failing to fully acknowledge the complexities of intersecting identities and the systems of marginalisation faced by women from various backgrounds. Western ecofeminism rejects the nature-culture dichotomy, affirming that humans are both members of and distinct from an ecological community. Both Indian and Western ecofeminism emphasise collective action as a means to effect change and address ecological and social injustices. However, the motivations, strategies, and contexts of collective action vary between these perspectives, as a result of their distinctive cultural and socio-political environments (*Understanding the Relationship Between Sustainability and Ecofeminism in an Indian Context* - Lavanya Suresh, 2021, n.d.).

LESSONS FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD

The Indian ecofeminist movement exemplifies the capacity of disparate communities to coalesce in their commitment to challenge oppressive structures and systems. The Bishnoi and Chamoli communities provide compelling narratives that transcend individual identities and express a collective resistance spirit. The inclusive and intersectional approach of Indian ecofeminism challenges the notion of a monolithic feminist movement and acknowledges the complexity of multiple oppressions. Indian ecofeminism expands the boundaries of feminist discourse and fosters a more nuanced understanding of the interconnections between gender, environment, and social justice by embracing diverse voices and experiences.

The critique of hierarchical dichotomies by Indian eco-feminists transcends the limited confines of gender analysis and encompasses the complex relationship between gender, caste, class, and the environment. This comprehensive viewpoint dismantles the artificial boundaries that sustain patriarchal power structures and emphasises the need for an intersectional approach to ecofeminism. Ecofeminists from India emphasise the need to combat not only the gender-based subjugation women face, but also the systemic inequalities and exploitative practices that contribute to environmental degradation.

The Indian eco-feminists have developed a heightened sensitivity to the ecological challenges facing their communities as a result of their struggles against various forms of oppression. Indian eco-feminists advocate for a holistic approach that includes the well-being of both human and non-human entities by drawing upon their ancestral knowledge and indigenous belief systems. Indian ecofeminists' empathy for nature stems from their personal experiences with environmental degradation and its effects on their communities. The oppressive forces they face daily highlight the urgency of environmental conservation and sustainable development. This empathy for nature is the foundation of their activism and informs their advocacy for environmental justice. In contrast, Western ecofeminism tends to emphasise feminist perspectives within environmental discourse, frequently ignoring the profound empathy for nature that distinguishes Indian ecofeminism. Women's struggles, environmental degradation, and the need for comprehensive conservation efforts are not fully appreciated by ecofeminists from the West, despite their recognition of the significance of environmental conservation.

Deeply rooted in their cultural traditions, Indian ecofeminists offer invaluable insights into sustainable practises and the conservation of natural resources. They emphasise the need to recognise and respect the inherent worth of nature and the interconnectedness of all living things (Devi, 2023). Indian ecofeminists contribute to development of an alternative environmental paradigm that promotes empathy, sustainability, and the equitable distribution of resources by leveraging their cultural heritage. Their empathetic connection to nature informs their activism and contributes to developing an alternative environmental paradigm that incorporates feminist perspectives and the critical need for environmental conservation. The experiences of Indian ecofeminists have instilled a profound appreciation for nature and a sense of the urgency of conservation efforts. Through their struggles against oppression, they have recognised the inherent connection between women's well-being and environmental well-being. Their experiences with oppression and resiliency have instilled in them a profound respect for the natural world and its preservation. Indian eco-feminists offer distinct perspectives on sustainable practises and the coexistence of humans and nature by drawing on their cultural origins and traditional knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The 'Bishnoi and Chamoli communities' model shows that Indian ecofeminism places a significant emphasis on collective action as a response to environmental degradation and gender-based oppression. These communities acknowledge that individual efforts alone are insufficient to combat systemic problems and produce lasting effects. They mobilise collective action based on their shared cultural and communal identities, uniting community members in their fights for ecological preservation and gender equality. Their actions are frequently governed by a collective consciousness and a dedication to preserving their cultural heritage, which is intricately interwoven with the natural world. The emphasis is on collective mobilisation efforts within movements, emphasising the power of solidarity and concerted action to address issues of intersecting gender inequality and environmental degradation.

Indian ecofeminism provides valuable lessons regarding the ethics of caring, unjust dominance, and methods for demanding justice. The experiences and viewpoints of Indian ecofeminists illuminate the complex relationship between gender, identity, and environmental justice (Thompson, 2016) never before has the collective impact of human behaviors threatened all of the major bio-systems on the planet. Decisions we make today will have significant consequences for the basic conditions of all life into the indefinite future. What should we do? How should we behave? In what ways ought we organize and respond? The future of the world as we know it depends on our actions today. A cutting-edge introduction to environmental ethics in a time of dramatic global environmental change, this collection contains forty-five newly commissioned articles, with contributions from well-established experts and emerging voices in the field. Chapters are arranged in topical sections: social contexts (history, science, economics, law, and the Anthropocene. By criticising hierarchical dichotomies and emphasising unity in diversity, Indian eco-feminists challenge existing power structures and provide alternative visions for social and environmental transformation. The community models illustrate how women from marginalised communities can be at the vanguard of ecofeminist movements, redefining leadership roles and advocating for culturally entrenched, environmentally sustainable practices (Mahour, n.d.) the worldwide environmental movements have drawn the attention of many scholars and studies have then been conducted based on varied academic standpoints. However, seldom are there adequate recognition of women's contribution to the conserving of the Australian environment. This may serve as the inspirations for the author to carry out a qualitative research on South Australian women's involvement in the green NGOs and to acknowledge their persistent efforts accomplished in the movement. To portray a realistic picture of Australian women's participation in the environmental movement, this paper has chosen to explore the reasons or the driving forces for South Australian women's involvement in the green non-governmental organizations, in an attempt to discover their perceptions of the woman-nature relationship, of the current environmental problems and women's empowerment in the environmental movement. To look into the subtleness of women's emotion and thoughts, this paper employs the ecofeminist perspective/perspectives which draw upon the oppression and objectification of both women and nature. Supported with the triangulation of three qualitative research methods, namely documentary review, case studies and interviews, this paper highlights. The importance of women's naming of their own experiences as environmentalists and succeeds in obtaining first-hand data of their engagement in the movement. Set in a non-governmental organizational background, women interviewees in this research have been and are still working with the selected green NGOs based in South Australia. With these "third-sector" performers, women have been provided with access to influence, to contribute or even to shine in the fight against natural degradation and preserving of a livable planet. Through a close scrutiny of the interviews, the research finds out that the ten female interviewees identify at a high level with the three groups of ecofeminist thinking—liberal ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism. All women express their serious concerns about environmental problems, and all have particularly confirmed the woman-nature relationship. Their witness an ecofeminist demonstration of perceptions of the cause of environmental problems, care ethics, critique of power and women's rising to lead positions in environmental groups. The contributions of Indian ecofeminists enrich the global discourse on ecofeminism by broadening its scope and promoting a more inclusive and holistic approach to addressing environmental and gender issues.

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The Problem of Diabetes Care in India: An Investigative Study

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Abstract: *Diabetes is a chronic illness that requires continuing medical care and patient self-management education to prevent and reduce the risk of long-term complications. It requires an array of investigations to provide an accurate picture of the condition and its management accordingly by a qualified doctor. This study was conducted to understand the treatment received by type 2 diabetes (T2DM) patients from various categories of health care professionals and awareness about diabetes reversal by lifestyle modification and prevention of complications.*

This was a community-based cross-sectional study. The link of the semi-structured questionnaire in Google form with e-consent was sent to all members in the selected groups of "World free of obesity and diabetes" campaign on their personal Whats App account.

Keywords: Diabetes reversal, endocrinologist, lifestyle modification, Type 2 diabetes mellitus

INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a chronic metabolic disorder characterized by persistent hyperglycemia, due to impaired insulin secretion, resistance to peripheral actions of insulin, or both. The prevalence of type 2 diabetes (T2DM) in India is around 7.3%.¹ Diabetes control in India is supposed to be $\leq 7\%$ as suggested by the current Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines;² however Joshi et al.³ states that, diabetes control in India is far from ideal with a mean HbA1c of 9.0%, which is at least 2.0% higher than global standards.⁴ Nearly half of the people

with diabetes remain undetected, accounting for complications at the time of diagnosis. Once diabetes develops, it is a costly disease to manage because of its chronic nature and severity of complications. Over 70% of diabetes-related cost is attributed to its complications, particularly for macro-vascular diseases that most commonly occur in type 2 diabetics.⁵

It is seen that commonly patients take consultation from general practitioners, mostly MBBS and AYUSH doctors. Also, doctors qualified to treat T2DM, who possess either of the following degrees, i.e., MD Medicine, DNB Medicine, DM Endocrinology, or Diploma/Fellowship in Diabetology are expected to follow the guidelines given by various professional bodies like the American Diabetes Association.⁷ "World free of obesity and diabetes" campaign started by the principal investigator of this study has prescribed a holistic and preventive approach. More than 65000 members from 41 countries are directly connected with this campaign through WhatsApp groups. Simple lifestyle modification with "two meals a day" and "walking at least 4.5 km for 45 min" is advised for weight loss and diabetes reversal¹⁰

Looking at the present epidemiology of T2DM in different geographic locations of India and the scarcity of qualified diabetologists, it is likely that care received by the patients may vary in quality. The present study was conducted with an objective to understand the symptoms of T2DM at diagnosis, treatment protocols followed by various categories of medical practitioners, and awareness among the patients regarding diabetes reversal by lifestyle modification in India. The rationale of this study was to provide an analysis of the quality of diabetes care received by the patients.

SUBJECT AND METHOD

Study design: This was a community-based cross-sectional study conducted at a government medical college in Aurangabad.

Ethical considerations: The study was approved by Institutional Ethics Committee.

Sample size: Considering 7.3% prevalence of diabetes mellitus, a minimum required sample size of 3000 was calculated using Cochran's formula with 1% allowable error.¹¹

Selection Procedure: There were 280 WhatsApp groups of the campaign which had around 65000 members connected with "World free of obesity and diabetes campaign." Their participation in this campaign was completely voluntary and irrespective of their diabetes status. The members were connected to this campaign with the idea of following the lifestyle modification of "two only meals a day and exercise in the form of walking for at least 4.5 km within 45 min daily." These groups were created as Diabetes group, Prediabetes group, and Weight-loss group.

Diabetes group: Members taking anti-diabetic medications and/or with HbA1c ≥ 6.5

Prediabetes group: Members not taking any anti-diabetic medications and/or with HbA1c- 5.7 to 6.4

Weight-loss group: Members not taking any anti-diabetic medications and/or with HbA1c ≤ 5.6 .

Out of these, 100 groups were of patients with T2DM. Each group consisted of 150 to 200 members. To achieve a desired sample size of 3000, 20 groups were selected by systematic random sampling. Each group was having a unique serial number. The first group was selected randomly from the group numbers 1 to 5. Subsequently, every fifth group was selected. All members in the selected groups, who were willing to participate, were included in the study.

Data collection: A pre-formed, semi-structured questionnaire was prepared following the guidelines provided by the American Diabetes Association (ADA) in Google forms.² Link of this Google form with e-consent was sent to all members in the selected groups on their personal WhatsApp account. Total 3150 completely filled Google forms were received out of which 68 (2.1%) were filled by the participants residing in countries other than India. This 2.1% were excluded from the analysis.

Data analysis: All the data of 3082 participants were extracted to Microsoft Excel 2019 and analyzed using online statistical software- Open Epi and IBM SPSS v26.

Operational definition: A “Qualified doctor” treating T2DM was defined as a doctor who was having a degree of either of the following: DM Endocrinology, MD Medicine, DNB Medicine, Diploma in Diabetology, and Fellowship in Diabetology.¹³

Results: A sample of 3082 participants was analyzed. The mean age was 50.26 ± 9.78 years ranging from 18 to 81 years. A total of 75.52% were males and 24.48% were females. About one-third of the participants belonged to the age group 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years each followed by 17.52% belonging to the age group of 31 to 40 years. The mean age of the onset of diabetes was 42.96 ± 9.16 years.

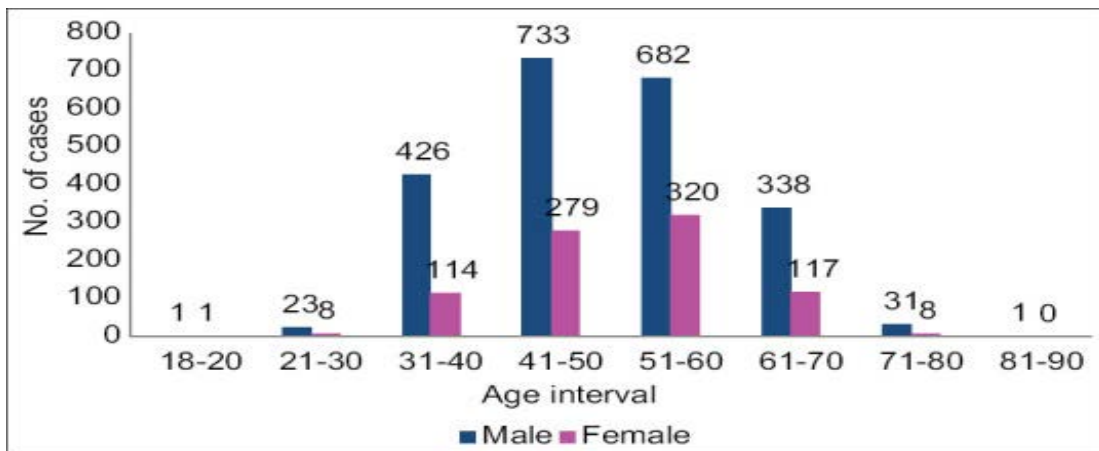


Figure 1: Age and sex-wise distribution of study population (n = 3082)

As per geographical distribution, 89% were from Maharashtra, 3.1% from Karnataka, 2.1% from Gujarat, 1.2% from Goa, and 4.3% from other states and union territories. A total of 86.7% were residing in metro cities and 13.6% were in non-metro cities. Of these, 52.5% from metro cities and 8.5% from nonmetro cities preferred a qualified doctor, whereas 26.6% of the metro city residents and 4.1% of the non-metro city residents chose a nonqualified doctor.

A total of 35.8% of the study population was diabetic for 1–5 years followed by 26% of the population being diabetic for 5–10 years (figure 2). A total of 35.9% of the subjects were diagnosed to have diabetes as a coincidental finding without having any obvious symptoms, whereas weakness and polyuria were reported by 28.6% and 27.9%, respectively. A total of 71.2% reported not having any complications of diabetes, whereas 12.1% and 5% of the population had retinopathy and cardiovascular events, respectively (Table 3)

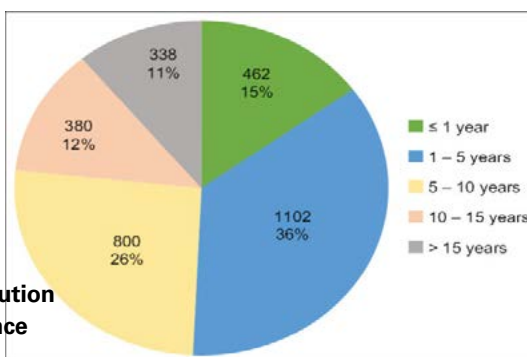


Figure 2: Population distribution with reference to period since diagnosis (n = 3082)

Table 1: Disease profile of study population (n=3082)

Parameters	Symptoms/Signs	N (%)
Symptoms at the time of diagnosis*	No symptoms	1107 (35.9)**
	Weakness	881 (28.6)
	Polyuria	861 (27.9)
	Polydipsia	643 (20.9)
	Polyphagia	623 (20.2)
	Loss of weight	428 (13.9)
	Other	468 (15.2)
Complications*	None	2195 (71.2)
	Retinopathy	373 (12.1)
	Skin lesions	297 (9.6)
	Cardiovascular events	154 (5.0)
	Neuropathy	145 (4.7)
	Nephropathy	80 (2.6)
	CNS involvement	35 (1.1)

(**Figures in parenthesis are percentage). (*Multiple responses are considered)

A total of 19.3% of the study participants received care from doctors having specialization in Diabetology/Endocrinology, whereas 41.5% received diabetes care from an adequately qualified doctor who is either MD or DNB medicine. A total of 30.7% received diabetes care from non-qualified doctors (MBBS/Ayurvedic/Homeopathic). A total of 8.3% were unaware of the qualification of their treating doctor (Table 2)

Table 2: Treatment profile of study participants (n=3082)

Category	Parameters	N (%)
Qualification of treating doctor	DM Endocrinology	176 (5.7)**
	Diploma/Fellowship in diabetology	421 (13.7)
	MD Medicine	1248 (40.5)
	DNB Medicine	34 (1.1)
	General practitioner: MBBS/Ayurvedic/Homeopathic	947 (30.7)
	Don't know	256 (8.3)
Test done at the time of diagnosis*	Fasting blood sugar only	83 (2.7)
	Post-prandial blood sugar only	92 (3)
	HbA1c only	104 (3.4)
	Fasting Blood Sugar + HbA1c	65 (2.1)
	Fasting blood sugar + HbA1c + Fasting insulin	231 (7.5)
	Post-prandial blood sugar + HbA1c	9 (0.3)
	Post-prandial blood sugar + HbA1c + Fasting insulin	1 (0.03)
	Both fasting and post-prandial blood sugar + HbA1c	1174 (38.1)
Tests done before starting medications*	Serum Creatinine/Kidney function test	883 (28.7)
	Blood urea	805 (26.1)
	Lipid profile	1410 (45.7)
	Urine microalbumin	457 (14.8)
	Eye checkup for retinopathy	487 (15.8)

Category	Parameters	N (%)
	SGPT/Liver function test	565 (18.3)
	Serum vit B12	447 (14.5)
	Serum vit D	415 (13.5)
Antidiabetic medication started after diagnosis	On the same day of diagnosis	1693 (54.9)
	Up to 1 month	454 (14.7)
	1-3 months	195 (6.3)
	3 months-1 year	98 (3.2)
	After 1 year	138 (4.5)
	Not started yet	504 (16.4)
Frequency of visits per year	Every month	275 (8.9)
	Every 3 months	1238 (40.2)
	Once in 6 months	819 (26.6)
	Once in a year	750 (24.3)
	Briefed by doctor about diabetes reversal by life style modification	781 (25.3)
	Having glucometer at home	1829 (59.3)
	Briefed by doctor about hypoglycemia	1547 (50.2)

(**Figures in parenthesis are percentage). (*Multiple responses are considered)

A total of 48.2% of the participants were tested for HbA1c at the time of diagnosis. The essential investigations to be done at the time of diagnosis as given by the ADA guidelines, which are both fasting and post-prandial blood sugar and HbA1c were done by 38.1%. A total of 3% and 2.7% of the participants were diagnosed to have diabetes only on the basis of only post-prandial and fasting blood sugar, respectively. Before starting antidiabetic medications, 45.7% got their lipid profile done; 28.7%, 26.1%, 14.8%, and 18.3% got their serum creatinine, blood urea, urine micro albumin, and serum glutamic-pyruvic transaminase (SGPT) checked, respectively. A total of 15.8% were evaluated for retinopathy, 14.5% for vitamin B12, and 13.5% for vitamin D levels. After being diagnosed with diabetes, 54.9% were started with antidiabetic medication on the same day, whereas 16.4% had not started any antidiabetic medication yet (Table1)

A total of 25.3% reported that their doctors had briefed them about reversal of diabetes through lifestyle modification. A total of 59.3% were having glucometer at their home. A total of 50.2% reported that their doctors briefed them about hypoglycemia. A total of 40.2% were visiting their doctor once in 3 months, 26.6% once in 6 months, 24.3% yearly, and 8.9% monthly (Table 2)

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the qualification of treating doctors and the multiple factors associated with it. The association between these variables was significant, ² (d. f. = 4, N = 3082) = 53.7338, P < 0.0001 (Table 3).

Table 3: Factors associated with qualification of the treating doctor

Category	Qualified doctors (n=1879)	Nonqualified doctors (n=947)
Medication started within 3 months of diagnosis	1631 (86.8)	711 (75.1)
HbA1c test done at diagnosis	949 (50.5)	389 (41.1)
Investigations for complications not done	722 (34.4)	500 (52.8)
Briefed about hypoglycemia	1019 (54.2)	454 (47.9)
Patients advised to have glucometer	1186 (63.11)	548 (56.9)

(Figures in parenthesis are percentages)

DISCUSSION

A sample of 3082 participants with a mean age of 50.21 ± 9.79 years was found to have the mean age at the onset of diabetes mellitus as 42.96 ± 9.16 . The mean age of patients with new-onset of diabetes was reported to be 37.6 ± 12.7 as per a study by Rajiv Singla et al.,¹⁶ which might be due to the fact that it was conducted only among the urban population.

As it has been shown to be safe and highly effective, reducing the progression to type 2 diabetes by more than 40%. Although in the present study, only 25.3% of the participants were briefed about lifestyle modification by their treating doctors, 71.2% of the study population was asymptomatic, and 54.9% was started on anti-diabetic medications on the same day of diagnosis. As reported by our study, 39% of the diabetics were treated by a doctor who was not adequately qualified to treat diabetes or whose qualification was not known by them. A statistically significant association ($P < 0.0001$) was found between the qualification of treating doctor and initiation of antidiabetic medications within 3 months of diagnosis, which is against the standard guidelines. This is the condition of diabetes care given in cities where health care facilities are easily accessible and shows that lifestyle modification is not a preferred treatment offered by medical practitioners. A study by Kishore et al.¹⁹ revealed that 29% of the patients in urban and 75% of the patients in rural areas were not taking any treatment for diabetes. In our study, it was observed that 16.4% of the patients were not taking any antidiabetic medication, which might be due to the fact that they were following the campaign guidelines for diabetes reversal by lifestyle modification.

The ADA recommends comprehensive diabetes medical evaluation at diagnosis, follow-up every 3 months, and annual visits for investigating the complications. In this study, 40.82% of the population was investigated for HbA1c, less than half participants were evaluated for lipid profile, less than a third were evaluated for serum urea/serum creatinine, and less than a fifth were evaluated for urine microalbumin, LFT, and retinopathy, before starting antidiabetic medications. Also, only 40.2% of the population visited their doctors every 3 months after diagnosis. In a study on self-monitoring blood glucometer, only 10.7% of the respondents said they purchased a glucometer on their own, whereas others found it either too expensive or too tedious to self-monitor the blood glucose levels. The present study, a statistically significant association ($P < 0.0001$) was found among the patients using a glucometer, awareness about the hypoglycemic episodes, and the qualification of the prescribing doctor. It is also alarming to see that nearly half of the doctors had not informed the patients about hypoglycemia.

There are an estimated 72.96 million cases of diabetes in the adult population of India and only 3.71 lakh specialists of various faculties.^{1, 14} Assuming 10% of them are qualified diabetologists, even then the doctor-patient ratio is not adequate to handle the current epidemic of T2DM. In such a scenario, it is necessary to train the doctors belonging to various medical fraternities regarding management and standard guidelines of T2DM, so as to reduce the resulting morbidity and mortality rates.

Diabetes care is complex and requires many issues beyond glycemic control. The standard guidelines are intended to provide clinicians, patients, and researchers with the components of diabetes care, treatment goals, and tools to evaluate the quality of care.²² These recommendations favorably affect the health outcomes and quality of life of the patients diagnosed with T2DM and, therefore, must be followed meticulously by all the medical practitioners irrespective of their qualification and specialization. One of the important aspects our article infers is that there are parts of India where doctors with specialization are not available, which does not mean that the doctors available in that area should not be allowed to treat the patients with T2DM; however, these doctors must follow the guidelines proposed by various bodies nationally and internationally, instead of following the local trends of management of T2DM.

Lastly, it is not enough to emphasize that cost-effective management by lifestyle modification for T2DM must be promoted for diabetes reversal by all cadres of medical practitioners as suggested in the standard treatment guidelines. However, the availability of numerous lifestyle modifications around the globe, makes

it difficult for the patients as well as practitioners to follow “one regime for all.” The main issue in many lifestyle modifications proposed is the dietary restrictions, which make it difficult for the patient to sustain it. Therefore, “World free of obesity and diabetes” campaign proposes a sustainable dietary regimen with negligible restrictions of “two only meals a day” [the patient has to have a fixed time for meals; with each meal in the order of 6–8 dry fruits (no raisins, dates, apricot), then 1 bowl salad (excluding beetroot, carrots), followed by 1 bowl of sprouted beans/pulses or 2 boiled eggs, and then all food items cooked at home the individual is used to consume (excluding foodstuff containing sugar/sugar substitutes, jaggery or honey, and any sweet fruits). He can only have fluids like water, tea, or coffee without any added flavor (no sugar, jaggery, honey, sugar substitute), or diluted homemade buttermilk in between these two meals and exercise in the form of walking at least 4.5 km within 45 min daily. The regimen proposed in the campaign is based on the concept that, by reducing the frequency of food consumption, the insulin secretion and consequently the insulin level is reduced thereby reversing the effects of hyperinsulinemia. The reduction of fasting insulin levels can be considered as a proxy indicator of reduction in insulin resistance and remission of T2DM from earlier studies^{8,9,10} However, the effect of this lifestyle modification on hepatic insulin resistance has not been studied yet. This regimen can be followed by anyone and anywhere in the world, with a scope of customizing their meal choices in the part where “they can eat all food items cooked at home” and easily doable exercise regimen. In order to propose this guideline in forthcoming studies by the campaign, it was necessary to study the current diabetes care given by various professionals in India.

CONCLUSION

This study has aided in adding to the pre-existing data on diabetes care given in India. The results of this study are found to be barely satisfying the global standards of diabetes care proposed by various bodies, and this is the condition in metro cities of India, which questions the care given in rural areas, where there is a scarcity of health professionals and services. Therefore, it implies the need for training and continued medical education of all the doctors belonging to different fraternities, who practice management of T2DM patients on a regular basis.

T2DM has reached epidemic proportions and is one of the leading causes of premature morbidity and mortality worldwide. Frequent eating, overeating, junk food, and low levels of physical activity are commonplace and are major factors for the global epidemic of obesity. Given that lifestyle modification is safe and cost-effective, its importance should be stressed not only upon the diagnosis of diabetes but throughout the course of the disease. Once type 2 diabetes is diagnosed, it is of utmost importance that patients receive optimum standard of care to avoid complications. Considering the high cost incurred at various steps of screening, diagnosis, monitoring, and management, it is important to realize that cost-effective measures of lifestyle modification should gain importance among all medical practitioners and should be practiced routinely.

Result-oriented, innovative programs like “World free of obesity and diabetes campaign,” are required to combat the current diabetes epidemic in India. A balanced approach to improve awareness about diabetes care and its control among the patients and medical fraternity is need of the hour.

Limitations: The results of this study are based on self-reporting by the patients. We did not verify the facts with the treating doctor. However, it can be presumed that there might not be any vested interest of any patient in providing wrong information as it was a completely voluntary activity. As the survey was conducted using google forms, only patients with the availability of smartphones/laptops/tablets would have been able to answer. This might have led to selection bias.

Declaration of patient consent: The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form the patient(s) has/have given his/her/their consent for his/her/their images and other

clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patients understand that their names and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal their identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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India's Foreign Policy - Emergent Challenges and Opportunities with Specific Reference to Maritime Diplomacy

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Abstract: *India's foreign policy has undergone significant transformations over the years. Through a comprehensive analysis of India's foreign policy initiatives, strategic partnerships, and diplomatic engagements, this paper aims to provide insights into India's evolving role in the international arena and the opportunities and challenges it faces in the 21st century. At the same time, this paper delves into the intricacies of India's foreign policy, focusing on its maritime diplomacy efforts. It explores India's historical maritime connections, its evolving strategic outlook, key challenges, and the diplomatic manoeuvres employed to secure its interests in the maritime domain.*

Keywords: India, foreign policy, maritime diplomacy, strategy, geopolitics

INTRODUCTION

India's foreign policy is shaped by a dynamic global landscape characterized by shifting power dynamics, emerging challenges, and evolving strategic imperatives. It has been considerably influenced and shaped by both external as well as internal factors which have provided the undertone and set the narratives within which India's foreign policy has been formulated and exercised in order to protect, preserve and promote its strategic national interests. It has endeavoured to achieve rapid economic growth and development, ensure peace and security in the region and safeguard the interests of the nation and its people in and around the world. In the process, one marvels at the multifaceted dimensions of India's foreign policy, instrumental in analysing key challenges and prospects in its pursuit of regional stability, economic growth, and global leadership (Bajpai and Pant, 2018).

There is no gainsaying the fact that India's foreign policy in the 21st century is characterized by a complex interplay of domestic imperatives, regional dynamics, and global aspirations. As one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, India's engagement with the international community has become increasingly significant, shaping global geopolitics and influencing regional dynamics. In the wake of the post-cold war world order, the global landscape is undergoing a radical transformation witnessing the emergence of many new threats in the form of global pandemics, environmental changes, global warming, drug trafficking, human rights violations, International Terrorism, Chinese aggressiveness in the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea, emergence of many alternative centres of power besides USA, illegal migrants issues, ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and Israel-Palestine conflicts etc (Bajpai and Pant, 2016). These threats have the potential to bring about a major recalibration of powers and upset the existing balance of powers. The world today is witnessing fissiparous tendencies and secessionist movements which have the potential to threaten global peace and security. On one hand, one sees the movement towards formation of regional and sub regional organisations for promoting political and economic cooperation while on the other hand, one witnesses strengthening of supra national organisations like EU and ASEAN which tend to obliterate the distinctive national identities of member states. It is amongst this backdrop, that India's foreign policy has been able to tight ropewalk to not only assert itself as a sovereign nation state and at the same time, secure its national interests in this global conundrum.

India's foreign policy framework has experienced notable transformations in response to the ongoing transformation in the global security architecture and shifting strategic imperatives. Recent years have witnessed India assert itself more prominently on the global stage, with strategic realignments, policy reforms, and proactive diplomatic engagements shaping its foreign policy approach. It has witnessed significant shifts in recent years, driven by evolving geopolitical dynamics and changing global power structures. There have been radical changes in India's foreign policy approach and their consequent implications for global diplomacy. Through an amalgam of vital policy initiatives, strategic realignments, and diplomatic engagements, India's foreign policy has managed successfully to evolve itself in the international arena and respond to changes in the global diplomacy (Bajpai and Pant, 2021). In the process, it has also successfully managed to not only protect and preserves its vital national interests but also secure its rightful position in the global comity of nations. The world in the 21st century is fraught with threats and challenges and it has been the topmost priority to not effectively deal with such challenges but also make the most of them to serve its national interests.

India's strategic interests have extended beyond its borders, encompassing the vast maritime domain that surrounds it. As a significant player in the Indian Ocean region, India has recognized the importance of maritime diplomacy in safeguarding its security, promoting economic interests, and projecting influence on the global stage. This research article explores India's foreign policy objectives, with a specific focus on its maritime diplomacy initiatives, examining the historical context, strategic imperatives, challenges, and diplomatic endeavours. India's foreign policy trajectory in the coming times is rooted in its historical legacy and strategic imperatives. From its non-aligned stance during the Cold War era to its proactive engagement in the post-Cold War world, India has continuously adapted its foreign policy to navigate a dynamic and evolving international environment. Historical events such as the end of the Cold War, economic liberalization, and the rise of globalization have shaped India's strategic calculus, influencing its approach to regional and global affairs. India's foreign policy has evolved significantly since independence, reflecting changing domestic priorities, external challenges, and global opportunities. Recent years have seen a renewed emphasis on proactive diplomacy, economic integration, and strategic partnerships, reflecting India's aspirations for regional and global leadership (Mohan 2017).

MULTI ALIGNMENT IN LIEU OF NON-ALIGNMENT

India's foreign policy has seen significant changes and developments over the years, reflecting the country's evolving role in the global arena. From its early years as a newly independent nation to its current status as a rising global power, India's foreign policy has become more dynamic and proactive. India's foreign policy has been shaped by various factors, including its colonial past, the legacy of the freedom struggle, and its strategic interests. In the early years after independence, India's foreign policy was characterized by a commitment to non-alignment and a focus on promoting peace and cooperation among nations. This was reflected in the country's leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement and its emphasis on multilateralism. However, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of post-cold war era, India's foreign policy landscape has witnessed a strategic realignment aimed at enhancing its strategic autonomy, promoting economic growth, and safeguarding its security interests. The "Act East" policy, launched in 2014, exemplifies India's strategic pivot towards the Asia-Pacific region, seeking to deepen economic ties, strengthen security cooperation, and bolster diplomatic engagements with countries in the region (MEA, 2015). Additionally, India's growing strategic partnership with the United States marked by the signing of defence agreements and enhanced cooperation in various domains, underscores its efforts to balance regional dynamics and safeguard its strategic interests (Panda, 2022).

NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY

The centrality of neighbours in India's foreign policy stems from the clear understanding that a peaceful periphery is essential for India to achieve her multifarious developmental goals. However, India's neighbourhood presents complex dynamics, with many countries suffering from high inflation, economic instability and popular unrest. Regional cooperation becomes critical as geographic imperative binds neighbours i.e., any challenges faced by people beyond the border has huge potential to spill inside the border. India's 'Neighbourhood First' Policy underlines the renewed primacy that the country seeks to attach to its neighbouring countries and achieve the goal of lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region. India has adopted a multi-pronged approach to diplomacy, diversifying its partnerships and engaging with a wide array of countries across regions. The concept of the Neighbourhood First Policy came into being in 2008. It was conceived to bolster relations with certain priority countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The "Neighbourhood First" policy prioritizes enhancing ties with neighbouring countries, fostering economic cooperation, and addressing common security challenges. India's engagement with its neighbours is driven by multilateral and regional mechanisms. This includes the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. It was observed that the impact of the Neighbourhood First Policy should be felt on the ground in an extensive manner. This requires strengthening of institutional and multilateral/regional mechanisms. Similarly, India's engagement with African countries under the "Africa Outreach" initiative aims to strengthen economic and developmental cooperation, tapping into Africa's vast potential and fostering mutual growth. Moreover, India's participation in multilateral forums such as the BRICS, G20, and SCO underscores its commitment to shaping global governance and addressing transnational challenges through collective action.

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Economic diplomacy is an art of serving economic, political and strategic interests of the country by the use of economic instruments in conduct of international relations. It is designed to influence policy and regulatory decisions of foreign governments as well as those of international organizations. It has emerged as a cornerstone of India's foreign policy, with a focus on promoting trade, investment, and

economic cooperation with partner countries. Initiatives such as “Make in India,” “Digital India,” and “Skill India” aim to showcase India’s economic potential, attract foreign investment, and foster technological collaboration (Panda, 2018). Bilateral trade agreements, regional economic partnerships, and efforts to enhance connectivity through infrastructure development projects further bolster India’s economic engagement with the world, positioning it as a key player in the global economic landscape. India has indeed been focusing on economic partnerships and trade agreements with key nations in recent years as part of its broader economic and foreign policy strategy. These efforts are aimed at boosting economic growth, increasing trade opportunities, and enhancing diplomatic ties. India has been actively within the SAARC and the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) (Singh,, 2021). These agreements aim to promote intra-regional trade and economic cooperation among neighbouring countries. Trade and investment prospects have grown significantly as a result of the India Act policy. While economic diplomacy has always been an integral part of India’s foreign policy, it has received greater emphasis since the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s. With the onset of the 21st century, Indian business enterprises started playing a more crucial role in advancing India’s economic interests abroad. India under Prime Minister Modi has significantly increased the role for economic diplomacy in its foreign policy agenda.

SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY

Soft power as contradistinguished with hard power is the ability to co-opt rather than coerce. It involves shaping the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. Soft power is non-coercive, using culture, political values, and foreign policies to enact change. PM Modi has sought to embed India’s political values in a larger geopolitical context and has put special emphasis on the idea that India can be the ‘Vishwaguru’ or world teacher to bring global peace and stability. As the ‘Chennai Connect’ between India and China demonstrates, Asia, the largest continent in the world, is bringing the message of peace, brotherhood, coexistence and prosperity to the rest of the world. India’s soft power assets, including its cultural heritage, democratic values, and knowledge economy, play a crucial role in shaping its foreign policy outreach and global image (Singh, 2018).

The ‘Indian diaspora’ has emerged as a potent force in enhancing India’s soft power influence, serving as a bridge between India and its host countries and contributing to economic growth, innovation, and cultural exchange. India’s cultural diplomacy initiatives, such as the International Day of Yoga and the promotion of Indian classical arts and literature, showcase its rich cultural heritage and contribute to fostering goodwill and understanding among nations. Cultural diplomacy is an important dimension of a country’s soft power. The international impact of India’s soft power was felt long before the term found place in popular parlance in the 21st century. Indian arts, culture and spiritualism have attracted people from all around the world for centuries. The five pillars of this soft power as outlined by PM Modi are Samman (dignity), Samvaad (dialogue), Samridhhi (shared prosperity), Suruksha (regional and global security), and Sanskriti evam Sabhayata (Cultural and civilizational links).¹

MARITIME DIPLOMACY

India’s maritime connections date back centuries, with trade and cultural exchanges shaping its interactions with various civilizations across the seas. The Indian Ocean, often termed as the “cradle of globalization,” has been integral to India’s historical engagement with the world (Roy, 2014).

1. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. “Act East Policy.” 2015, www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Act_East_Policy_January_2015.pdf.

Ancient maritime routes facilitated trade, disseminated ideas, and fostered cultural exchanges between India and other civilizations, laying the foundation for enduring maritime linkages. India's strategic outlook has evolved in response to changing geopolitical dynamics and security challenges (Chander 2018). The Indian Ocean, once a theatre of colonial rivalry, has emerged as a vital strategic space in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. India's maritime interests encompass securing sea lines of communication, combating piracy, promoting maritime trade, and enhancing regional stability. With the rise of maritime threats such as piracy, terrorism, and power projection by external actors, India has recalibrated its strategic focus to safeguard its maritime interests effectively. India's maritime diplomacy faces several challenges, both conventional and non-conventional. Traditional security threats such as maritime disputes, piracy, and arms proliferation pose significant challenges to India's maritime security (MEA, 2015). Non-traditional security challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and maritime pollution further complicate the maritime security environment. Additionally, geopolitical competition and power dynamics in the Indian Ocean region necessitate astute diplomatic manoeuvres to safeguard India's strategic interests. India has pursued a multi-faceted approach to maritime diplomacy, engaging with regional and global stakeholders to advance its interests in the maritime domain (Singh, 2015). Bilateral and multilateral engagements, naval cooperation initiatives, and strategic partnerships form the cornerstone of India's maritime diplomacy efforts. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and initiatives such as the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) underscore India's commitment to fostering cooperation and addressing common challenges in the Indian Ocean region (Panda, 2013).

PROACTIVE DIPLOMACY

India's foreign policy initiatives in the current global socio-political and economic milieu are marked by proactive diplomatic engagements aimed at strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties, fostering economic cooperation, and promoting regional stability. Strategic partnerships with countries such as the United States, Russia, Japan, and ASEAN nations underscore India's efforts to balance regional dynamics and safeguard its strategic interests. Additionally, India's participation in multilateral forums such as the BRICS, G20, and SCO demonstrates its commitment to shaping global governance and addressing common challenges through collective action.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

India's foreign policy is increasingly shaped and re-shaped by a dynamic global landscape characterized by challenges and opportunities. As India seeks to assert itself as a major player in international affairs, it must navigate a complex web of geopolitical rivalries, regional conflicts, and transnational threats (Moha, 2019). By leveraging its economic growth, strategic partnerships, and diplomatic engagements, India has the potential to emerge as a key driver of global peace, prosperity, and stability in the coming times. India's foreign policy in the 21st century faces a myriad of challenges, both domestic and international. Domestically, India grapples with socio-economic disparities, political instability, and security threats, which pose significant challenges to its ability to project power and influence globally. Internationally, India confronts geopolitical competition, regional conflicts, and transnational threats such as terrorism and climate change, which require adept diplomatic manoeuvring and strategic foresight to address effectively. Despite the challenges it faces, India's foreign policy is also characterized by significant prospects and opportunities. As a rising global power, India's growing economic clout, demographic dividend, and strategic location make it an attractive partner for countries seeking to enhance

their engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.² Moreover, India's commitment to multilateralism, democracy, and inclusive development positions it as a key player in shaping global governance and addressing transnational challenges.

CONCLUSION

Despite the strides made in its foreign policy outreach, India faces several challenges and opportunities in navigating the complex global landscape. Geopolitical competition, regional conflicts, and transnational threats pose significant challenges to India's security and stability, necessitating astute diplomatic manoeuvring and strategic foresight. Additionally, economic vulnerabilities, domestic political dynamics, and societal issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change underscore the need for comprehensive and inclusive foreign policy strategies that address multifaceted challenges and leverage emerging opportunities. India's foreign policy and maritime diplomacy play a pivotal role in shaping its engagement with the global maritime community. With a rich maritime heritage and strategic imperatives driving its maritime engagements, India continues to navigate the complex waters of international relations with prudence and foresight. By leveraging diplomatic engagements, strategic partnerships, and maritime cooperation initiatives, India aims to safeguard its maritime interests, promote regional stability, and contribute to the collective prosperity of the Indian Ocean region.

India's recent foreign policy changes reflect its evolving role as a key player in shaping global diplomacy and governance. Strategic realignments, diversification of partnerships, economic diplomacy, and soft power projection are central to India's efforts to enhance its influence, safeguard its interests, and contribute to global peace and prosperity. As India continues to navigate the complexities of the international arena, proactive diplomacy, strategic foresight, and effective multilateral engagement will be critical in advancing its aspirations for regional and global leadership.

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Economic Growth and Income Inequality in India from 2010 to 2020

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Abstract: *This paper examines the relationship between economic growth and income inequality in India between 2010 and 2020. During this period, India experienced rapid GDP growth, becoming one of the fastest growing major economies in the world. However, the analysis indicates that this impressive growth had limited impact on reducing income disparities at the national level. The national Gini coefficient, a standard measure of income inequality, declined only marginally over the decade, suggesting that the benefits of growth have not been shared broadly across the income distribution. The paper finds that income concentration remains extremely high among the top 10% and top 1% of the population. The income share accruing to the top 1% exceeded 20% throughout this period. This indicates highly disproportionate gains from economic growth flowing to the very wealthy in India, while the incomes of lower- and middle-class households have lagged behind GDP growth rates. The paper is based on national household survey data from the National Sample Survey Office as well as tax data from the Income Tax Department. Trends in the rural-urban income divide are also examined. To explain the observed patterns, the paper discusses structural factors like the growth of the services sector and skill-biased technological change, along with inadequacies in tax policy, social security programs, and educational access. Given these findings, the paper argues for reorienting policy to foster more inclusive growth in India. It advocates increasing public spending on health, education, and social protection programs to build human capital and productivity of lower income groups.*

INTRODUCTION

This research paper aims to understand the relationship between India's impressive economic growth from 2010 to 2020 and trends in income inequality during the same period. It delves into the critical question of whether rapid GDP growth in India exacerbated income disparities across the population or whether the fruits of this growth were distributed more broadly, helping to reduce inequality.

The paper finds that despite India's strong economic growth, the decline in income inequality was marginal as evidenced by the modest reduction in the national Gini coefficient from 0.339 in 2010 to 0.322 in 2020. This suggests the benefits of growth have disproportionately accrued to the wealthy, as the income share held by the top 1% increased from 21% to 22% during this period.

The study highlights enduring regional disparities as poorer states continue to lag behind their richer counterparts in per capita incomes despite higher state-level growth rates. For instance, Bihar's per capita Net State Domestic Product remains only about a third of Haryana's even though Bihar grew at 10.3% annually from 2015-20 versus 9.2% growth in Haryana. The paper advocates for targeted policy interventions to address these inequalities and foster inclusive growth. It explores the impact of existing government programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which have provided income support to the rural poor. However, the analysis indicates more needs to be done across areas like health, education, job creation and social security to ensure robust, equitable growth.

Despite limitations posed by data availability and methodology, the paper underscores the critical importance of evidence-based policies that promote sustainable and balanced regional development in India. It calls for strengthened research in this evolving economic landscape to guide policymaking. Overall, the paper provides valuable insights into the relationship between growth, inequality and the effectiveness of government efforts to reduce income disparities. The paper deals with the following objectives:-

- To examine the influence of economic growth from 2010, to 2020 on the trends of income inequality in India.
- To explore the factors that have contributed to the changes in income inequality in India over the ten years.
- To analyse the disparities in growth and income inequality among regions within India and how they are connected.
- To investigate how government policies have impacted income inequality within the context of India's growth.
- To offer recommendations for policymakers who aim to foster an inclusive and equitable economic development approach in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have examined the relationship between economic growth and income inequality in India, with a focus on the period between 2010-2020 which witnessed rapid GDP expansion. Chancel and Piketty (2019) analyse historical trends in income inequality in India since 1922. Despite economic reforms and high growth rates in recent decades, they argue that inequality has increased substantially from the 1980s onwards, with the top 1% income share rising dramatically. Similarly, Dev and Sengupta (2018) finds increasing income inequality since the 1990s based on their analysis of household survey data.

However, they contend that economic growth has helped lower poverty levels even if inequality persists. Examining inter-state disparities, Ghatak and Mandal (2017) find significant variation in poverty rates across states, with poorer states lagging behind. Deaton and Dreze (2002) similarly highlight enduring regional inequalities in their influential analysis of poverty in the reform era. On government policies, Himanshu (2018) evaluates the impact of the rural employment guarantee scheme MGNREGA finding that it has provided income support to the rural poor and helped lower inequality. In contrast, Subramanian and Jayaraj (2016) argue that despite such initiatives, consumption inequality has continued to rise over time.

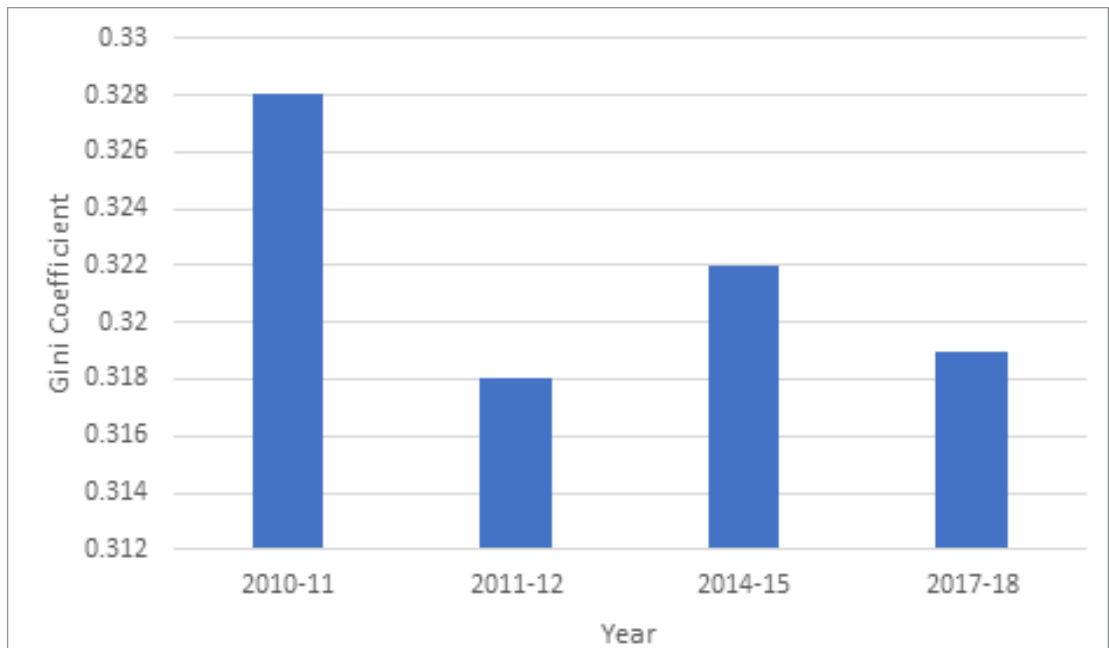
Several papers highlight data limitations in fully capturing the evolution of inequality. Suryahadi et al. (2012) point to deficiencies in survey data for analysis. Ravallion (2018) discusses measurement issues in assessing inequality. RBI data provides useful state-level statistics but lacks granular distributional information.

Overall, the literature examining India's high growth years indicates that inequality has persisted or widened despite rapid economic expansion, due to unequal distribution of gains. Regional disparities, rising top incomes, and gaps in data availability pose analytical challenges. Targeted policies are needed to ensure more inclusive growth.

ANALYSIS

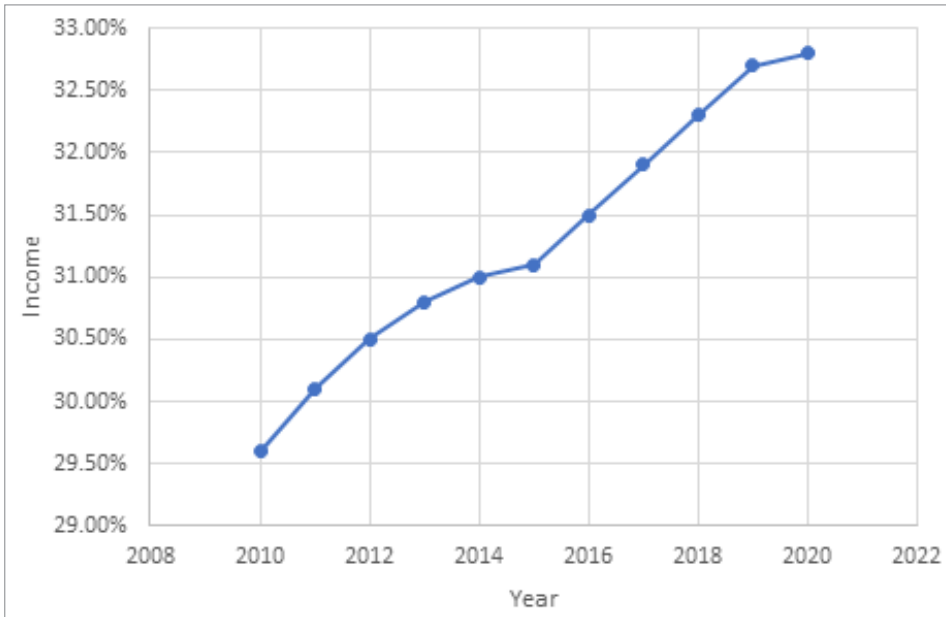
Figure 1 suggests that the national Gini coefficient, a standard measure of income inequality, only decreased slightly from 0.339 in 2010 to 0.322 in 2020, as per NSSO survey data. This marginal decline despite rapid economic growth indicates the benefits of GDP growth have not reached wider sections of society.

Figure 1: Gini Coefficient in India



Source: Author

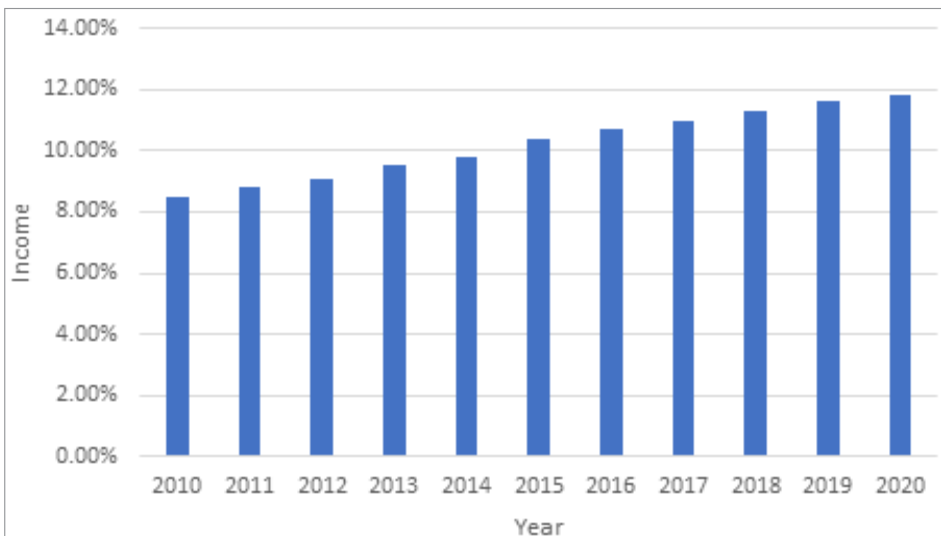
Figure 2: Income Share of Top 10%



Source: Author

The income share held by the top 1% in India increased from around 21% in 2010 to 22% in 2020, as per World Inequality Database. This shows rising prosperity accruing disproportionately to the top income earners (figure 2 and figure 3). Lack of job creation and low agricultural wage growth compared to non-farm sectors impacted poorer rural households

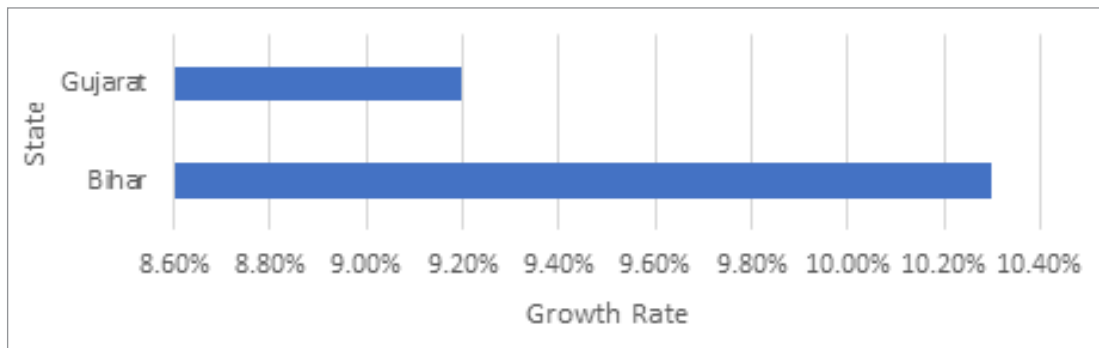
Figure 3: Income Share of Top 1%



Source: Author

Per capita Net State Domestic Product grew faster in poorer states, yet income gaps persist. In 2020, Bihar's per capita NSDP was about 1/3rd of Haryana's indicating enduring regional disparities. Targeted regional development policies needed.

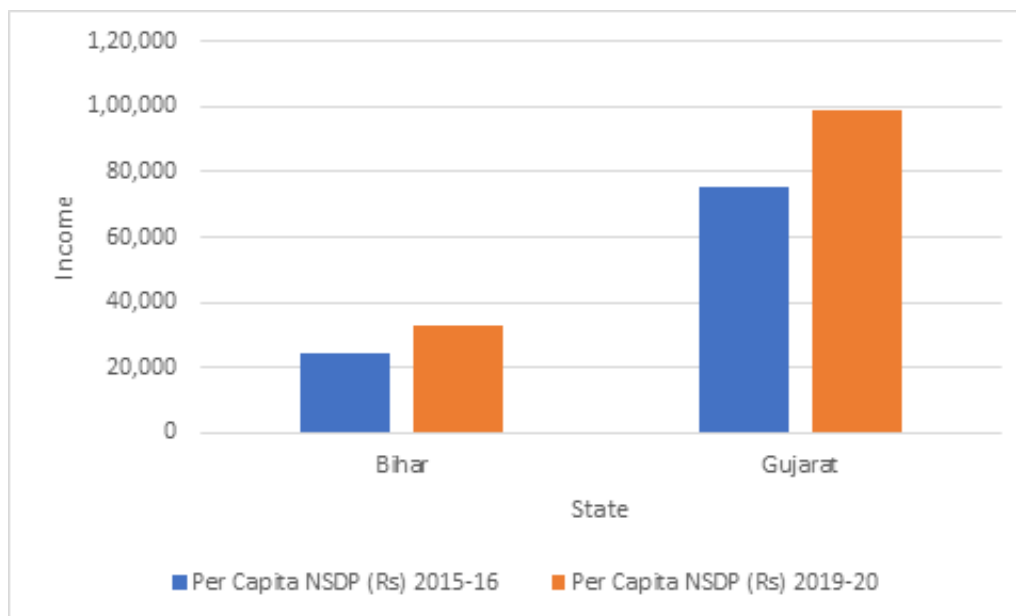
Figure 4: Annual Growth Rate (2015-2020)



Source: Author

The RBI data shows poorer states like Bihar have grown faster, with 10.3% average annual NSDP growth in 2015-20 versus 9.2% in Gujarat. However, despite higher growth, Bihar's per capita NSDP remains much lower than Gujarat, indicating the need for targeted policies in lagging regions to reduce development gaps. Sustained high growth in backward states is required to meaningfully bridge regional income disparities.

Figure 5: Per capita Net State Domestic Product



Source: Author

Suggested measures include investments in human capital development, generating employment opportunities, strengthening social security and rural employment guarantee schemes. Tax reforms promoting redistribution along with state-specific growth initiatives can foster inclusive growth

Despite rapid economic growth in India from 2010-2020, with GDP growth rates reaching over 8% in some years, income inequality at the national level declined only marginally as seen in a small drop in the Gini coefficient from 0.339 to 0.314 during this period. This indicates the limited impact of growth on inequality, as the benefits have disproportionately accrued to the wealthy, especially the top 10% and 1% of income earners whose share of national income has risen. Key factors exacerbating inequality include inadequate job creation, with unemployment rates remaining high and labour force participation dropping, along with lack of emphasis on health, education and skills development to improve human capital. Slower agricultural growth compared to overall economic expansion has also impacted rural incomes and poverty reduction. Despite higher national growth rates, per capita income in poorer states like UP, Bihar and Odisha continues to significantly lag behind richer states like Maharashtra, Haryana and Kerala, pointing to enduring regional disparities. Comprehensive granular data on the distributional impact of specific government policies and programs remains lacking. While rural employment guarantee schemes like MGNREGA provide income support to the vulnerable, more policy interventions are needed to boost employment opportunities, human capital capabilities, MSME growth, infrastructure development and social security to ensure broad-based, inclusive growth.

Economic growth between 2010-2020 had a limited impact on reducing income inequality at the national level, as evidenced by only a minor reduction in the Gini coefficient from 0.339 in 2010 to 0.322 in 2020. Several factors exacerbated income inequality despite rapid economic growth, including the rising share of national income accruing to the top 1% of income earners, inadequate employment generation and slower agricultural wage growth compared to non-farm sectors, disproportionately impacting poorer rural households. Enduring regional income disparities persist, with per capita incomes in poorer states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha continuing to significantly lag behind richer states like Maharashtra, Haryana and Kerala. This indicates the need for targeted policies to foster inclusive growth in lagging regions.

There is a lack of comprehensive granular data on the distributional impact of specific government policies and programs, hampering evidence-based analysis of their effectiveness in reducing inequality. However, broader analysis indicates schemes like MGNREGA have provided income support to the rural poor, but more policy interventions are required. Recommended measures to promote inclusive growth include substantially increasing public investment in health, education and skills development to improve the productivity and human capital of lower income groups. Generating employment opportunities by supporting MSME growth, self-employment and infrastructure development should also be a priority. Implementing tax reforms aimed at redistribution of income, including higher taxation of the wealthy and inheritance taxes can help reduce excessive concentration at the top. Strengthening social security programs and rural employment guarantee schemes is vital to provide income support to the poor and vulnerable sections. The analysis underscores the need for robust data collection and methodologies to rigorously evaluate the distributional impact of policies, schemes and economic growth patterns, to inform evidence-based policymaking aimed at ensuring broad-based, equitable growth. The study highlights that while rapid economic growth occurred over 2010-2020, much more focused policy efforts are required by the government at both national and regional levels to distribute the gains more widely across society and reduce income gaps. Equitable growth enabling prosperity for all remains an elusive goal for India.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed the relationship between India's rapid economic growth from 2010-2020 and trends in income inequality, examining whether high GDP growth helped reduce disparities or disproportionately benefited the wealthy. The key finding is that despite over 7% annual GDP growth, decline in income inequality at the national level was marginal, as evidenced by the Gini coefficient falling only slightly from 0.339 in 2010 to 0.322 in 2020. The analysis shows high growth alone is inadequate to ensure equitable development. Crucially, the income share accruing to the top 1% increased from around 21% to 22% over this period, indicating rising prosperity concentrated among the super-rich. Concurrently, job creation has been insufficient, agricultural wage growth has lagged, and poorer states continue to report much lower per capita incomes than richer states - all factors exacerbating inequality. Rural employment schemes have provided income support but more policy interventions are imperative. To foster inclusive growth, this paper recommends substantially increasing investment in health, education and skills to improve human capital and productivity of lower income groups. Generating employment opportunities by supporting MSME growth and self-employment in services and manufacturing is also vital. Infrastructure development in poorer regions can spread economic prospects. Tax reforms promoting redistribution of incomes such as higher taxes on the wealthy can curb excessive concentration at the top. Expanding social security programs and employment guarantees can further help vulnerable sections. The analysis is constrained by data limitations regarding distributional impacts of specific policies. Comprehensive data collection and methodologies are needed to rigorously evaluate programs and guide evidence-based policymaking. Overall, the study highlights that India's pattern of growth has delivered limited gains for many, with prosperity concentrated among the affluent. Turning impressive GDP growth into equitable development requires reorienting policy priorities towards increasing capabilities, opportunities and incomes of disadvantaged groups. Within a democratic framework, public pressure can potentially spur such policy shifts. But political economy barriers stemming from the influence of dominant elites represent a key challenge. Sustaining high growth while distributing gains more widely calls for innovative solutions that disrupt existing power structures. The COVID-19 crisis which has disproportionately impacted the poor presents an opportunity to rebuild more inclusively.

India's experience also has broader relevance for developing countries pursuing rapid growth as a developmental strategy. The analysis suggests growth alone is no panacea for inequality. Targeted policy efforts to spread human capital, assets, social security and employment opportunities widely are essential complements. With rising nationalism and right-wing populism globally, delivering prosperity for marginalized groups through progressive redistributive policies faces political headwinds. But growth sans equity is neither politically sustainable nor morally defensible. As India enters a new decade, the policy priorities must be recalibrated towards equitable growth to create an economy and society that leaves no one behind. Concrete steps by the government guided by evidence, public action to demand change and disruptive solutions to shift entrenched power can help achieve this vision. With the right policies, India's impressive growth can decidedly transform into shared prosperity.

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ICT Based Education: A Tectonic Shift in India

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Abstract: *Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are currently playing a crucial role in revolutionizing educational delivery methods. The impact of ICT innovations, particularly in telecommunications and multimedia applications, has been profound across all educational levels. In the past few decades, tools such as radio, television, film strips, overhead projectors, and audio-visual cassettes were employed to enhance teaching effectiveness and facilitate learning. However, contemporary education has been significantly enriched by a diverse range of ICT-based technologies, including interactive radio, teleconferencing, and both web-based and satellite services. ICT enables access to a wealth of information through various resources, allowing learners to engage with content from multiple viewpoints, thereby enhancing the authenticity of learning environments. The rapid changes in our world are particularly evident in the education sector, especially concerning media services. The era of educational institutions maintaining isolated audio-visual departments is now a thing of the past. The adoption of multimedia in education has surged in recent years and is expected to continue expanding in the future. This paper examines the integration of ICT within the Indian educational system and provides insights into the current educational landscape. It aims to highlight the implementation of policies related to ICT integration and assess the effectiveness of the teaching-learning environment.*

Keywords: *ICT in education, Educational Technology, Web Based Classroom, E-learning, Distance Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) contribute to enhanced developmental outcomes across various sectors, not limited to education, through two primary mechanisms. Firstly, ICTs significantly lower the financial expenses related to the acquisition and dissemination of information and materials. These technologies dramatically broaden the market reach for both producers and consumers of diverse content, often at negligible costs. Consequently, ICT-driven markets become more competitive and less susceptible to monopolistic dominance. This

heightened competition results in reduced prices, while both service consumers and providers benefit from access to specialized services that might not be available otherwise.

Secondly, ICTs greatly diminish the time costs involved in locating and obtaining high-quality resources and services. Communication technologies, especially the internet, have streamlined search processes far beyond traditional methods of information exchange, such as printed directories, physical advertisements, or informal recommendations. Moreover, not all ICTs offer the same level of efficiency in facilitating information access. For instance, making a phone call to a business may be quicker than visiting in person to inquire, but search engines enable users to obtain information about multiple businesses significantly faster. Additionally, automated systems powered by artificial intelligence can provide information even more swiftly and effectively.

In conclusion, ICTs serve as a catalyst for the markets that adopt them, reducing barriers to mutually advantageous transactions and exchanges. The advantages of these diminished constraints within the education sector are elaborated upon in the subsequent points.

COMPUTER AIDED EDUCATION

Since the introduction of personal computers in Indian schools, various initiatives—both governmental and nonprofit—have sporadically emerged to promote the integration of digital technology in educational settings. These efforts represent the latest phase in a long history of educational technology promotion that dates back to 1972. A key initiative from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) aimed at enhancing the quality of secondary education is the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), which includes a component focused on information and communication technology (ICT). This component emphasizes the establishment of computer laboratories in schools and the direct introduction of computers into classrooms. In the realm of research and nonprofit efforts, notable Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL) projects in India include Pratham's CAL program in Mumbai and Vadodara. A randomized trial conducted in 2000 demonstrated significant improvements in mathematics and language skills among primary school students who received computers and training on their educational integration. Another significant initiative was Media Lab-Asia (MLA), a collaboration initiated in 2002 between MIT's Poverty Action Lab and the central government, which implemented a software platform in ten rural and ten urban locations across India. This CAL intervention yielded substantial improvements in learning outcomes and computer literacy starting from Grade VII. In light of these research findings, RMSA has increasingly advocated for the direct integration of ICT-based education within classrooms, opting for the placement of computers in teaching environments rather than in isolated labs where they may be overlooked.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Azim Premji Foundation, established in 2000 by its namesake founder, who is also the billionaire chairman of the Indian technology firm Wipro, is dedicated to enhancing the quality of universal education in rural government-run elementary schools across India. In its formative years, the Foundation collaborated closely with state governments to implement educational initiatives focused on assessment, curriculum reform, textbook creation, teacher training, and educational administration. These initiatives included a significant investment in multilingual digital learning resources, such as books, electronic databases, and software designed for students in grades I-VIII. Since 2010, the Foundation has redirected its efforts towards direct collaboration with educational institutions, aiming for a more systematic and sustainable partnership with the state.

Similarly, the HCL Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility division of Hindustan Computers Ltd., spearheads philanthropic projects aimed at providing technology-driven educational solutions for children and women in both urban and rural settings. As part of the broader HCL Samuday initiative, which fosters sustainable development in rural India, HCL's three educational programs—Gurukul, My School, and My Scholar—benefited 133,665 individuals, including adults, youth, and children during the 2016-2017 period. Among these, Gurukul offers digital literacy courses for women and children through a community center outreach model, My School focuses on enhancing the quality of school programs, and My Scholar provides scholarships specifically for the children of HCL support staff who fall below a certain income threshold.

In 1994, Shiv Nadar, the founder of HCL, established the Shiv Nadar Foundation (SNF) with the aim of advancing transformative education across various socioeconomic strata. Initially, the foundation focused on creating educational institutions centered on technology and other STEM disciplines. In 2009, it expanded its efforts by launching VidyaGyan, a leadership academy in Uttar Pradesh designed for underprivileged students from rural areas. By 2012, SNF broadened its initiatives with Shiksha, a program aimed at providing ICT-enhanced educational content to over 25,000 students across more than 300 schools in rural Uttar Pradesh, alongside ICT training for over 600 educators. Shiksha is strategically developed for scalability, featuring interactive content, integrated student assessments, and thorough material reviews. In 2015, Shiksha also initiated an adult literacy project in 20 villages, with the overarching goal of reaching 100,000 schools by 2023.

Similarly, Infosys, another prominent technology company in India, is linked to philanthropic efforts through Rohini Nilekani, the spouse of founder Nandan Nilekani, who serves as the chairman of EkStep. Mrs. Nilekani previously chaired the Akshara Foundation, an initiative focused on primary education in Karnataka and Odisha, which has benefited 900,000 children since its inception in 2000. The Akshara Library Program integrates ICT through educational software that connects students with library resources. Furthermore, Akshara plays a pivotal role in the Karnataka Learning Partnership, facilitating collaboration among communities, schools, and nonprofits to share data and explore effective strategies for enhancing educational quality.

EDUSAT

EDUSAT exemplifies a unique and pioneering approach to delivering high-quality educational resources to remote classrooms. Initiated by ISRO in 2004, this "educational satellite" operates in a geosynchronous orbit above India, functioning as a central point for schools and content providers to share video educational materials. Beyond serving as a repository of instructional content for educators in off-grid remote schools, EDUSAT also enables two-way interaction between teachers and students. This capability presents a genuine opportunity for distance learning for institutions equipped to receive these broadcasts and possessing a reliable electricity supply to utilize them effectively in the classroom.

IMPROVED TEACHING RESOURCES

Through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), educators are provided with an extensive array of teaching resources that accommodate diverse learning styles, incorporate various media formats, and are frequently aligned with established curricula. Unlike traditional non-digital resources, which can pose challenges for teachers aiming to engage students at different proficiency levels, ICT resources promote interactive and self-directed learning. This shift enables educators to transition from traditional instructors to active guides and facilitators of

learning. Furthermore, digital resources are typically either rigorously evaluated by content review committees or validated by their widespread adoption among educators, resulting in a higher efficacy in teaching compared to the materials available in non-digital classrooms.

DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT

Before the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources in education, educators had limited tools for systematically assessing student performance beyond traditional examinations. More comprehensive evaluations of individual student performance quickly became complex, making it nearly impossible to conduct thorough statistical analyses and comparisons across schools and educational methods. The incorporation of ICT into classroom and school analytics has significantly streamlined these processes for two primary reasons. Firstly, the analysis of pre-existing data has become considerably less time-intensive due to the availability of database and statistical software. Secondly, the integration of ICT in educational settings facilitates the generation of a greater volume of data regarding student performance, thereby offering more profound insights into students' successes, challenges, and critical areas for improvement for educators, schools, and entire educational regions.

ROBUST LEARNER SUPPORT

ICT platforms, whether utilized for remote education or in traditional classroom environments, significantly improve both the volume and quality of communication among students, educators, parents, and the broader educational community. Previously, opportunities for dialogue and clarification were largely confined to face-to-face meetings; however, technology now enables interactions through various channels. For instance, forums empower students to pose specific questions to a wider audience, fostering multipolar discussions on classroom subjects instead of the typical binary exchanges between teacher and student that were common in the absence of such tools. Additionally, these platforms allow communities surrounding students to gain a clearer understanding of the challenges and opportunities present in the educational landscape, thereby encouraging greater participation from multiple stakeholders.

CAPABILITIES OF EXISTING PLATFORMS

Comprehensive Platforms for Classroom Use

EkStep Foundation

The EkStep Foundation, established in 2015, has rapidly emerged as a prominent entity in the realm of information and communication technology (ICT) for education. The foundation operates at two distinct levels to promote ICT-enabled education. Firstly, it serves as the foundational support for various comprehensive platforms managed by state governments, which deliver crowd-sourced educational content to users. For students, EkStep's application, Genie, offers gamified learning experiences that incorporate guided practice and assessments within an interactive digital framework. For educators, the platform provides analytical tools for content development, tutoring, assessment, and reporting. Content creators are encouraged to employ innovative pedagogical strategies, including concept maps, language models, games, and narratives, to disseminate their teaching expertise to a broader audience. The decentralized structure of the system enables EkStep to offer content in multiple languages and tailor it to meet local curriculum needs.

Additionally, EkStep extends substantial technological support to states aiming to establish their own ICT educational systems. The platform serves as the technological foundation for

DIKSHA, and EkStep has assisted in the technical development of Andhra Pradesh's e-knowledge exchange platform, APEKX. Furthermore, EkStep has fostered the creation of Sunbird, an open-source repository designed for teaching and educational management solutions. Through the direct influence of its platform and its collaborative efforts in developing other educational systems, EkStep aims to reach 200 million children in India by 2020, while also enhancing the capabilities of schools, governmental and non-governmental organizations, extracurricular initiatives, and parents at home.

DIKSHA (DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING)

DIKSHA stands as one of the most prominent ICT platforms for education in India. Initiated in September 2015, it emerged from a partnership involving the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), and the EkStep Foundation. This platform serves as a state-level, open, and customizable digital education resource designed to provide a wide array of educational materials. Through extensive consultations with state governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and over 30 public and private entities, DIKSHA has developed features aimed at transforming teachers into more interactive and engaging educators.

The platform is adaptable and currently supports ten Indian languages, addressing the diverse educational requirements of India's multifaceted population. The primary goal of DIKSHA is to provide Open Educational Resources (OERs) for schoolteachers, teacher educators, and student teachers. It offers resources such as lesson plans, concept videos, and worksheets aligned with local curricula, alongside tailored professional development training and assessments to assist teachers in recognizing their strengths and areas for growth. Additionally, it allows educators to contribute their own training materials, classroom resources, and insights to a community that aspires to reach five million teachers across India.

To effectively engage such a vast community, DIKSHA is structured to overcome existing challenges related to the integration of ICT in education while emphasizing the benefits of incorporating technology into the classroom. The platform's resources are accessible both online and offline, compatible with smartphones, tablets, and other devices, and are aligned with local languages and curricula. Teachers can utilize the platform to conduct digital assessments of their students and are encouraged to share effective strategies for teaching complex concepts, enhance their professional development through gamification, and evaluate their teaching performance over time. DIKSHA's reach additionally makes it an excellent means of communication between teachers and institutions.1718

MEGHSHALA

Meghshala, which translates to "school on the cloud," is a private initiative based in Bangalore that collaborates with Teach for India, Tata Trusts, and the Government of Karnataka to reform the educational landscape of the state. The initiative is centered around an offline mobile application designed for Android devices, aimed at enhancing the interactivity and engagement of classrooms for both learners and educators. The application offers teachers high-quality resources and lesson plans that incorporate relevant content tailored to various skill levels. Additionally, it seeks to inspire students who are eager to learn, ultimately fostering active learning environments that emphasize critical thinking rather than rote memorization.

The Meghshala app features over 2,500 "teachkits," which are multimedia modules aligned

with the Karnataka state curriculum and developed by experienced educators. These lessons utilize proven methodologies that not only aim to effectively teach subjects but also equip novice teachers with practical training in implementing optimal pedagogical strategies in their daily instruction. Recognizing that many teachers and schools may lack the necessary familiarity or infrastructure to adopt ICT-based education, the program provides training in technology and supplies teachers with computers and solar-powered projectors to facilitate the intended use of the platform in their classrooms. Meghshala aspires to reach 100,000 teachers by 2020 through its cloud-based lessons and supplementary support systems, with a primary focus on government schools and low-income private institutions in both urban and rural settings.

SARANSH

Saransh is a web portal launched in November 2015 by the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) aimed at enhancing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in educational institutions. This platform features six interconnected tools, which include self-assessment instruments, a data-driven decision support system designed for parents, a repository for e-books and various educational resources, a framework facilitating communication between teachers and parents, capabilities for data uploading along with real-time generation of performance statistics spanning three years, and data visualizations that effectively present and elucidate these statistics. For schools affiliated with CBSE, Saransh serves as a valuable resource for teachers and parents to evaluate student performance, track academic progress, and identify any required interventions.

LEARNING DELIGHT

Learning Delight is a digital platform designed to enhance student engagement in the educational process. Established in 2016, it is currently implemented in government schools across rural Gujarat. The platform employs innovative methods such as animations, riddles, and puzzles to encourage students to actively participate in their learning experiences. Learning Delight is complemented by e-books that feature audio and video content aligned with the state curriculum and presented in the regional language, thereby making essential subjects more engaging and accessible for learners. LCD screens are installed in the classrooms that utilize this program, and Learning Delight offers logistical and technical support to ensure the proper maintenance and implementation of these installations. Additionally, teachers receive specialized training in Computer Aided Learning (CAL) to optimize the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their teaching practices.

The Learning Delight software is organized into distinct sections that include e-textbooks for grades 1-8, as well as activities, games, language studies, value education, health, and student assessments. Each section features interactive animations, simulations, and videos designed to promote experiential learning among students. Unlike other comprehensive platforms that are open source and allow for user-generated content, the materials provided by Learning Delight are developed by the organization's dedicated team. The organization also offers supplementary training for teachers on how to effectively utilize the software and conducts regular follow-ups to assess impact and gather user feedback.

CONNECTED LEARNING INITIATIVES (CLIX)

CLIX provides students with opportunities for experiential learning within high school environments. Experts in science, mathematics, and communicative English have designed

subject-specific modules for the CLix software, aimed at helping students relate their classroom learning to real-world experiences. Recognizing the challenges posed by low levels of higher-order cognitive development and educational inequality as major obstacles to India's future progress, the program aims to enhance knowledge and skill acquisition by actively engaging students in the learning process. Established in 2015 and currently piloted in Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, and Telangana, CLix emphasizes the importance of high-quality curricular resources, improved student learning outcomes, enhanced teacher knowledge and classroom practices, increased use of information and communication technology (ICT), hands-on activities in secondary education, and the sustainable development of the initiative.

DISTANCE EDUCATION PLATFORMS

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

SWAYAM serves as a domestic platform for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) tailored for learners in India. Launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in July 2017, and developed in partnership with Microsoft and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), SWAYAM aims to enhance the secondary and higher education sectors by providing affordable skill development courses and advanced training. The courses available on the platform can be utilized in classrooms starting from the 9th grade and are accessible to all users at any time. The cloud-based infrastructure is designed to accommodate up to one million concurrent users, with government aspirations to enroll at least 10 million students within the initial 2-3 years. Currently, the platform offers 323 courses, with certification provided in collaboration with several prominent Indian universities.

A-VIEW (AMRITA VIRTUAL INTERACTIVE E-LEARNING WORLD)

Amrita Virtual Interactive E-learning World (A-VIEW) stands as one of the pioneering educational platforms in India, established in 2004 by the research institution Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, with financial support from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). This distance education initiative aims to deliver an experience akin to traditional classroom settings, facilitated by faculty from esteemed academic institutions. A-VIEW leverages information and communication technology (ICT) to address the prevalent shortage of qualified educators in higher education, offering comprehensive tuition-free programs to enhance employment opportunities for college students from underprivileged backgrounds. In addition to its academic offerings, A-VIEW also extends business development training to emerging startups.

The platform's online capabilities currently encompass audio and video communication modules, collaborative whiteboards, document sharing, and group chat functionalities. Furthermore, it is actively developing additional AI-driven features, including facial recognition and handwriting recognition. By integrating recorded lectures and a voting-based question interface, A-VIEW effectively simulates a realistic classroom environment within the realm of distance education.

JUGNUU

Jugnuu is a proprietary mobile platform currently in its pilot phase, aimed at delivering English language learning resources to students in remote areas. The platform facilitates English speaking, reading, and listening activities through phone calls and text messages, thereby

creating a personalized learning experience beyond the traditional classroom setting. After a pre-assessment conducted during the summer break, students receive scheduled calls three times a week, tailored to their availability. These calls include stories, grammar exercises, critical thinking tasks, comprehension activities, and vocabulary questions, all adjusted to match the students' proficiency levels. Jugnuu's user-friendly design accommodates both smartphone and feature phone users. By offering a platform that addresses the specific needs of students while reducing technological barriers to ICT-enabled education, Jugnuu aims to bridge the educational gaps for those who might otherwise be overlooked.

MINDSPARK

Mindspark is a privately-owned, profit-driven platform designed to enhance students' proficiency in mathematics and English through its unique adaptive learning system. Established in 2009, Mindspark aims to bolster student understanding in these fundamental subjects by pinpointing misconceptions related to essential concepts. The platform leverages over two million data points collected from a decade of benchmarking assessments to categorize questions based on type, difficulty, and the specific needs of students. The exercises incorporate gamification through a time-sensitive reward mechanism, which promotes student engagement and computational fluency. Additionally, responses are analyzed step-by-step to better identify student errors and areas requiring further development. While the majority of students access the software online, it is also available for offline use to accommodate situations where internet connectivity is limited.

Although Mindspark is primarily intended for individual learners, it has also been embraced by educational institutions as a cost-effective and scalable solution for instruction and review, particularly in scenarios where teachers may be unavailable or insufficiently equipped.

SPECIALIZED PLATFORMS

Firki

Firki is an open-source online platform for teacher training, established by Teach for India in 2013. This platform emphasizes fundamental teaching competencies and pedagogical strategies that are closely aligned with the formal Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) curriculum. Instead of relying solely on an online format, Firki employs a hybrid model that integrates online resources—such as readings, videos, and assessments—with in-person facilitation and collaborative learning among peers. This approach seeks to merge the advantages of both online and traditional teacher training programs, offering a centralized repository of high-quality, standardized resources while preserving the benefits of personal engagement with seasoned educators. Additionally, Firki promotes adaptability in training by organizing its content into modules that cover classroom instruction, leadership, community engagement, and the broader educational context, enabling teachers to access materials that best meet their specific needs. The platform aims to train 50,000 teachers across India, thereby directly benefiting 196,500 children.

E-PATHSHALA

Launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in November 2015, ePathshala provides free and convenient access to digital textbooks and educational materials in Hindi, English, and Urdu. The platform equips teachers with instructional and curricular resources, catering to the needs of diverse student populations. Additionally, parents can access curricular

documents and student resources to enhance learning outcomes and engage in their children's educational journey.

These resources are accessible via both a dedicated website and a mobile application. The MHRD has plans to expand the platform to include 22 Indian languages, facilitating the digitization of textbooks and resources across 31 states and Union Territories.

SHAALA SIDDHI

Shaala Siddhi, referred to as the National Program on School Standards and Evaluation (NPSSE), serves as a comprehensive web-based platform for school evaluation, allowing educational institutions to systematically assess and enhance their performance. Launched in November 2015 by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), this initiative encompasses approximately 1.6 million schools throughout India. It evaluates schools based on a wide array of metrics, including resource availability, teacher training, learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness and professional growth, school leadership and management, community engagement, as well as health and safety measures. The results of these evaluations are accessible to all stakeholders, fostering a culture of collaborative feedback. Furthermore, school evaluations can be aggregated at various levels, providing valuable insights for policy formulation and actions ranging from local to national scales. Consequently, the platform not only identifies specific needs within schools but also highlights systematic deficiencies that could be addressed through policy interventions to enhance overall school performance.

CONCLUSION

The imperative of integrating technology into educational institutions has never been more pronounced within the Indian education system. The benefits of digitization are substantial, encompassing areas such as content sharing, delivery, and academic monitoring, which are too significant to overlook. As the future increasingly leans towards digitalization, schools cannot afford to jeopardize their students' prospects by excluding them from a transformative information revolution that will reshape their professional and personal lives.

Consequently, it is not surprising that many schools, under considerable pressure from parents, school boards, and governmental entities at various levels, have begun to label themselves as "digital schools." However, in practice, the term has been stretched to the point of losing its original meaning, often to mask the limited advancements made in integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into education, frequently due to circumstances beyond their control. Since a more rigorous standard would likely decrease the reported digitization rates of government schools, there is little motivation for officials to enforce stricter requirements. Nonetheless, establishing more stringent criteria for digitization is essential to ensure that public investments are directed towards the necessary infrastructure and skill development required to equip students for the challenges of the 21st century.

A novel framework for assessing the digital status of schools is essential for identifying the types and levels of investment required to facilitate a smooth transition to digitally enabled education. One potential approach could involve developing a rubric that evaluates schools based on their performance in several vital areas of information and communication technology (ICT) integration. Implementing such a rubric would necessitate a comprehensive data collection initiative focused

on the digital status of schools according to the criteria established by this new framework. Nevertheless, this investigation would represent a crucial initial step toward enhancing the digital infrastructure of educational institutions. By introducing a systematic approach to evaluating digital capabilities in schools, valuable insights could be generated to inform investment decisions, while also establishing an inspiring benchmark for schools and communities to strive for in their efforts to improve educational outcomes for students.

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The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS): An Examination of Perception Versus Reality

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Abstract: *The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) exists as both a tangible entity and a construct of myth. A definitive assessment of the organization remains elusive due to its ongoing transformation and development. The RSS perpetually reconstructs and redefines its public persona. While the organization adapts and evolves on a daily basis, opposition politicians often target an outdated and inaccurate representation of the RSS. These political adversaries are, in essence, critiquing a mere reflection of the organization, failing to grasp its true nature.*

Keywords: *Assimilation, Democracy, Developmental Phenomenon, Hindutva, Modernity, Mobilization.*

INTRODUCTION

The modern Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has preserved many elements from its earlier form while simultaneously integrating new characteristics into its identity and structure. This transformation is illustrated not only by the shift from khaki shorts to brown trousers but also by the evolving viewpoints and initiatives of the organization. A new RSS is indeed taking shape in contemporary society, yet our frameworks for understanding it remain outdated. This article seeks to examine how the Sangh and its extensive network of educational, cultural, and social organizations have established deep connections within the Indian consciousness.

THE RSS: AN EXAMINATION OF PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has incorporated contemporary reasoning and arguments derived from democratic principles and modernity, alongside traditional Hindu and

religious discourse. For instance, it is actively participating in dialogues concerning societal matters related to gender, environmental issues, and development. This integration of modern themes into its traditional narrative has fundamentally transformed the latter's character. The structure of this redefined Sangh is not limited to a single organization; rather, it is shaped by a multitude of affiliated groups that function within society in distinct ways, thereby impacting various social strata. While many may recognize organizations such as Vidya Bharti and its Saraswati Shishu Mandir schools associated with the RSS, it is less widely known that approximately 800 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are operating across the country under the RSS's guidance, engaging in diverse activities including disaster relief during emergencies and efforts aimed at alleviating poverty.

Ideological conflicts and discussions are intrinsic to the Sangh and its associated organizations. For instance, entities like the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (Indian Workers' Union) and the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (Indigenous Awakening Forum) present viewpoints that diverge from those of the BJP and the RSS on various issues, resulting in protests against the Central government's land acquisition and liberalization policies, respectively. By emphasizing the ideological frictions stemming from its affiliated groups concerning a range of social and class-related issues, the Sangh aims to formulate a well-rounded argument. Within the Indian social fabric, different communities exhibit varying degrees of awareness regarding their needs, which inevitably leads to contradictions among them. This situation is often described as 'developmental consciousness,' illustrating the diverse perceptions of quality of life and essential requirements across social strata. Such differences are also apparent in the political and cultural organizations that advocate for these communities. The Sangh has integrated these contradictions into its narrative by nurturing a relationship with its affiliated organizations that mirrors the interdependence between a body and its components.

In light of democratic ideals such as equality and justice, along with the impact of global and diasporic social movements, the RSS's position on several modern issues, including homosexuality and transgender rights, has transformed. It has largely shifted away from a 'traditional' viewpoint on these subjects and no longer categorizes same-sex relationships as criminal. Additionally, in accordance with contemporary societal norms, the Sangh has shown support for reservation policies designed to benefit socially marginalized groups. Moreover, while women's participation in Sangh activities was historically limited, there is now a deliberate initiative to increase their involvement.

The Rashtriya Sevika Samiti (the women's wing of the RSS) is continuously organizing leadership development programmes for its members with a focus on *matritva* (universal motherhood), *kratritva* (efficiency and social activism) and *netritva* (leadership).

THE RSS AND DALIT MOBILIZATION

In its ongoing strategy to expand its influence among various segments of the population, the RSS is actively seeking to engage social communities that remain outside its reach. The organization is particularly focused on Dalits, tribals, and Muslims. A significant development observed in recent years is the RSS's initiative to connect with Dalits through its *samajik samrasta* (social harmony) campaign, alongside a more inclusive approach towards Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. An early sign of this shift in perspective regarding the Dalit leader was evident in a 2014 publication by Sangh ideologue Krishna Gopal, co-authored with Shri Prakash, titled *Rashtra-Purush Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar*. In this work, Ambedkar is portrayed as a paramount symbol of *samajik*

samrasta, advocating that his path should be emulated to ensure social dignity for marginalized groups.⁴ It can be argued that the BJP's attempts to align itself with Ambedkar are a political manifestation of the Sangh's revised evaluation of his legacy.

Ambedkar was perceived as a vocal opponent of the Hindu caste system by the radical Ambedkarite movement in India. He once declared that although he was born a Hindu, he would not die as one.⁵ He believed that one's birth-based caste within Hinduism was inescapable. Consequently, he made the decision to convert to Buddhism in 1956, shortly before his passing. His actions inspired a significant number of Dalits to also embrace Buddhism. There is a noticeable trend of Dalits in the northern regions of India, particularly those who are educated and from the middle and upper classes, adopting Buddhism.

However, a field study done by Badri Narayan, a social historian and cultural anthropologist, in the villages of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar reveal that the transition from Hinduism to Buddhism in terms of religious practices and memories is not yet complete for many. Some individuals continue to hold on to their Hindu beliefs and lifestyle, despite identifying as Buddhist. They still partake in Hindu festivals and worship Hindu deities, while also revering Buddha and Ambedkar.⁶ In some cases, during the wedding ceremonies of neo-Buddhist families in Hindi-speaking regions, both Ganesha and Buddha are worshipped, and their icons are displayed together on wedding invitation cards.⁷ While the situation may be different in Maharashtra, this phenomenon is common in many Hindi-speaking regions. The Hindutva movement, under the leadership of the Sangh, is attempting to transform Ambedkar into a figure that can be easily related to by all, while simultaneously diminishing his criticisms of the caste system. Their objective is to separate the persona of Ambedkar that vehemently criticized the caste system from the version of him that they have constructed. This approach consists of two main strategies. Firstly, by garnering respect for Ambedkar from Hindus of all castes, they aim to marginalize his critique of the Hindu religion from the memories of Dalits and other marginalized communities. Secondly, they persistently work towards reshaping Ambedkar's image by selectively disregarding his critiques. His image is utilized as a symbol for the samrasta campaign, as part of the effort to integrate Dalits into the Hindu community.⁸ In order to infuse elements of divinity, rituals, and worship into Ambedkar's image, it is crucial for Hindutva forces to align themselves with the symbolic power it holds. Calendars and portraits of Ambedkar can be found in numerous RSS offices. Additionally, in their public events, the portrait of Ambedkar is prominently displayed.

The BJP government has also taken various measures to demonstrate their reverence for Ambedkar's legacy, symbols, and memorials, surpassing the efforts made by the Congress government during its tenure. For example, they designated five locations in Delhi, Mumbai, Nagpur, Mhow, and London associated with Ambedkar as pilgrimage sites. In 2015, the Maharashtra government acquired Ambedkar's residence to establish a memorial museum in his honor. The memorial was inaugurated by Modi on 14 November 2015, after he had previously laid the foundation stone for the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in Delhi on 20 April 2015.⁹

The Sangh is actively responding to the changes taking place within the Indian socio-economic landscape, which have been profoundly shaped by economic liberalization and the rise of a technology-oriented public sphere. As it engages with the dynamics of modernity, democracy, market forces, and emerging technologies, the organization is incorporating the benefits of modernity into its framework. By leveraging smartphones, social media, and digital platforms, the RSS is creatively utilizing traditional resources from Indian society to enhance its modern mobilization strategies.

This contemporary RSS is reinterpreting Indian history and culture, infusing traditional narratives with new significance that aligns with its current ideological objectives. It is evident that a substantial portion of the BJP's current popularity can be attributed to the socio-cultural mindset cultivated by the Sangh over the past fifty to sixty years through its foundational work. The Sangh has methodically built a vast network of committed and capable workers, operating at all levels, whether in electoral contexts, opinion formation, group mobilization, or socio-cultural initiatives, without seeking media attention. Through its training camps (varga), the Sangh claims to prepare over one hundred thousand cadres annually.¹⁰ The speeches delivered by the volunteers exhibit a compelling storytelling aspect, which is a hallmark of their shakhas and vargas. These narratives convey the struggles, motivations, and objectives of the Sangh, with a notable emphasis on valor. Poems by Ramdhari Singh Dinkar and other nationalist poets, who have incorporated this theme, are frequently recited.¹¹

THE RSS : STRATEGY OF ASSIMILATION

A notable approach within these discourses is the strategy of assimilation, wherein the Sangh endeavors to incorporate various and often conflicting ideologies. This initiative effectively diminishes the critiques of Hinduism articulated by Ambedkar and neo-Buddhists, fostering a dialogue between Hinduism and Buddhism. Concurrently, in recent years, Dalit groups have sought to align themselves with lesser-known figures in Hindu scriptures, presenting these characters as embodiments of the injustices they have faced.

As a matter of fact, the Sangh is actively working to elevate the significance of these minor figures within its narratives, thereby affording them and their identities a measure of respect. For example, the character of Eklavya from the Mahabharata is portrayed as a dharmaparayan Dalit, who exemplifies devotion to his guru by sacrificing his thumb. This representation tends to obscure the injustices perpetrated by Dronacharya, which are emphasized by Ambedkarite Dalits. By utilizing the Eklavya narrative in this manner, proponents assert that the Dalit community has historically produced Dharmaparayan Dalit Mahapurush, thereby reinforcing the notion that Dalits are fundamentally aligned with Hindu cultural values.¹²

This strategy has led to the implementation of various initiatives aimed at constructing a broader narrative that encompasses diverse meanings and relationships derived from characters, stories, and religious traditions that were historically in opposition to them. A notable example is the establishment of the Shabari temple, which offers an alternative portrayal of the dynamics between Ram, Hanuman, and the forest inhabitants. Additionally, the initiation of temple construction alongside educational and sanitation projects in tribal areas exemplifies this approach.¹³ In northern India, the Sangh is cognizant of the local and lesser-known traditions that resonate within marginalized communities, and it actively seeks to explore and integrate these into its overarching narrative.

However, this process of linguistic assimilation is fraught with challenges and complexities, often marked by conflicts. Micro-narratives frequently emerge as dissenting voices, sometimes undermining the dominant metanarrative itself. The pracharak endeavors to mitigate these dissonant elements to facilitate their incorporation. This endeavor results in a disruption of the traditional language, texture, and tone of the RSS. For instance, when addressing the Dalit identity, the RSS employs the terms 'Dalit' and 'vanchit.' These terms carry significant weight; a substantial portion of the educated Dalit population identifies with 'Dalit,' which signifies a politically empowered group. Conversely, the RSS's attempt to subsume this identity under the broader

label of 'vanchit' creates friction. The shift from Dalit to vanchit, write Badri Narayan engenders processual conflicts, which the RSS pracharaks strive to reconcile.¹⁴ Only a select few highly skilled and experienced pracharaks manage to navigate this complexity successfully.

The RSS discourse often incorporates elements from smaller and overlooked subaltern traditions; however, the primary challenge faced by its workers lies in addressing the internal conflicts present within the overarching metanarratives.¹⁵ To effectively tackle this issue, the insights and feedback from RSS cadres engaged with diverse social groups at the grassroots level are crucial. While there are instances where these conflicts are successfully navigated, there are also occasions where such efforts fall short. Nevertheless, the commitment to expanding their narrative remains unwavering.

PERCEPTION AND POLITICS OF PROJECTION

The Sangh is currently drawing its strength from a multitude of sources and has developed a language and discourse that resonates with a significant portion of both rural and urban impoverished populations. Concurrently, it faces criticism from opposition parties. However, the challenge for these opposition factions lies in their struggle against a portrayal of the RSS that does not reflect its current reality. The RSS is continuously evolving, and the image that the opposition is contesting is outdated and no longer relevant. Consequently, these parties are engaging with a mere representation of the RSS, failing to grasp its true nature for effective mobilization.

In response, some opposition leaders have opted to confront the RSS using its own strategies. For instance, Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal and leader of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), announced the establishment of two new organizations—Jai Hind Vahini and Bang Janani Samiti—aimed at countering the RSS's influence within the state. Banerjee has articulated that these two entities will strive to maintain a secular political atmosphere in Bengal.¹⁶ Similarly, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has been vocal in his opposition to both the RSS and the BJP, framing his struggle as ideological.¹⁷ Nonetheless, a pertinent question arises: which version of the RSS are these two leaders truly challenging?

Here we should not miss this point that the RSS that Gandhi and Banerjee are claiming to fight, existed three to four decades ago, while the current RSS is a significantly transformed organization. In order to combat this reformed RSS, these two leaders must comprehend the shifts in RSS ideology. Political parties such as the Congress and the TMC must establish a new essence and identity to confront the RSS. They must establish new entities that demonstrate their commitment to not only political power and governance, but also to instigating social transformation. The RSS has effectively employed the concept of tyag (renunciation) as a strategy. It mobilizes communities without seeking power and wealth for itself. If any volunteers are deemed suitable for political roles, they are directed to join the BJP.¹⁸

The RSS refrains from appointing its own family members to any roles within the organization. The principle of tyag resonates with the Indian public and is in harmony with the traditional cultural values that are deeply embedded in the collective consciousness. The RSS fosters a group of pracharaks who have forsaken their familial ties to fully commit to its ideological framework. In contrast, Mamata Banerjee has appointed her brother to the organizations she created to oppose the RSS, which has led to her losing public trust even before the contest began. The cultural foundation and strategic positioning of the RSS empower it to exert significant influence. Political entities such as the Congress and TMC must establish a counter-hegemony through innovative cultural politics.

It is widely recognized that an organization lacking a profound understanding of Indian traditions and societal dynamics cannot effectively participate in cultural politics. While it may be feasible to challenge the BJP, opposing the RSS, which is the cornerstone of Hindutva politics, poses a far more formidable challenge. The RSS has transformed from a volunteer organization reliant on physical force to one that exercises sociocultural hegemony through sophisticated communication technologies and social media platforms. Traditional methods of critique and opposition, such as secularism and party organization, fall short in countering the RSS's ideological framework. To effectively confront the RSS, it is crucial to unveil its true character and address its strengths in appropriation and inclusion.

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मैथिली नाट्य साहित्यक विकास मे बेगूसराय, जिलाक योगदान

नवल किशोर महतो

शोधार्थी—विश्वविद्यालय मैथिली विभाग, ल.ना.मि.वि. दरभंगा

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सार-संक्षेप: “काव्येषु नाटकं रम्यं अर्थात् नाटक काव्यक सबसँ पैघ रमणीय रचना अछि। प्राकृतिक रूपँ जखन कोनो जीव—जन्तु जीवनमे सुख आ दुःखकँ अनुभव करैत अछि त’ ओकर तन आ मन ओहि अभिव्यक्तिक अवश्य प्रकट करैत अछि। ओ अभिव्यक्ति देखनिहारकँ आकर्षक आ रसास्वादनक अनुभूति करबैत अछि। ओहि अभिव्यक्तिक साहित्यिक रूपकँ ‘नाट्य—काव्य’ कहल जाएत अछि। जकरा पढ़लासँ बिना देखल, सूनल सम्पूर्ण अभिव्यक्तिक आभास होएत अछि। ओहि काव्यक लोक मंचनक माध्यमसँ पुनर्वावृत्ति करैत अछि, जकरा नाटक कहल जाएत अछि।”

अदिकालसँ मानवीय प्रवृत्ति अछि जे मानव प्रसन्नतावश नाचैत आ गावैत अछि। नाचए आ गावएक स्वरूप स्थान आ भाषाक अनुसार भिन्न होएत अछि, मुदा मानवक तन आ मन अपन अभिव्यक्ति अवश्य प्रकट करैत अछि। ओ अभिव्यक्ति देखनिहारकँ आकर्षक आ रसास्वादनक अनुभूति करबैत अछि। नाट्य वएह अभिव्यक्तिक एकटा अंग थिक। नाट्य कँ साहित्यिक रूपमे जखन दखैत छी त’ स्पष्ट होइत अछि जे ई एकटा एहन साहित्य अछि जकर स्वाद, विना पढ़ल, मात्र देख आ सूनि कँ लेल जा सकैत अछि। पाणिनीक अनुसार ‘नाटक’ शब्दक उत्पत्ति ‘नट’ धातुसँ भेल अछि, जकर अर्थ होइछ नाचब। ‘नाटक’ दृश्य काव्यक अंग अछि। एकर मंचन लोकक समक्ष सोझा—सोझी होएत अछि। एहि मंचन मे अनुकरणक चारू माध्यम आंगिक, वाचिक, सात्विक आ आहार्य सभक प्रयोग होइत अछि। एहिसँ नाटक सभ विधामे सुन्दर होएत अछि। तँ कालिदास कहलनि अछि — “काव्येषु नाटकम् रम्यम्।” अर्थात् नाटक पढ़ल—अपढ़ल, हरबाहा—चरबाहा सभकँ बुझैएबामे सक्षम अछि।

बेगूसराय जिला मैथिली नाटक काव्य विकासक लेल बड़ उर्वर परिक्षेत्र रहल अछि। आरम्भिक कालमे नाटकक विषय—वस्तु राम—लीला, राजा हरिश्चन्द्र, कृष्ण—सुदामा, सावित्री—सत्यवान, सीता—स्वयंवर धार्मिक आ उपदेशात्मक रहैत छल। मुदा क्रमानुसार एकर स्वरूप परीवर्तित भ' ऐतिहासिक, क्रांतिकारी आ समसामयिक भ' गेल। जट—जटिन, सामा चकेबा, डोमकछ, नैना—जोगिन, लोरिक, सलहेस, हिरणी—विरणी, विषहरी, सती विहुला, पमरिया, चन्द्रशेखर आजाद, भगत सिंह आदि। आरंभमे एकर आयोजन मठ, मंदिर आ जमींदारक दरबज्जा पर होएत छल। जे बादमे सार्वजनिक स्थल आ स्थायी नाट्यशालामे आयोजित होमय लागल। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्तीक बाद नाटकक स्वरूप समसामयिक भ' गेल। नाटककार विषय—वस्तुमे समाजमे घटित शोषित, उत्पीड़ित, दमित आ अंधविश्वाससँ पीड़ित घटनाक उजागर क' वहएसँ निजात दिएबाक प्रयास कएलनि। जिलामे स्थानीय स्तर पर कतेको नाट्य कला परिषद्क स्थापना भेल, जे दुर्गापुजा, छठपुजा, सरस्वती पुजा आदि धार्मिक उत्सव पर नाटकक मंचन करैत छल। जिलाक नाट्य कला मंच 'आशीर्वाद', 'नवतरंग', 'युगांतर' राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर ख्याती पएलक अछि। एहि काजमे स्थानीय कलाकार लोकनि समय—समय पर अपन विशिष्टता सेहो देखएलनि अछि। जाहिमे स्व० दीनानाथ पाठक 'बन्धु', स्व० मातादीन भगोरिया, सुदामा गोश्वामी, चन्द्रकान्त झा 'नवेन्दु', डॉ० रामशरण शर्मा, विष्णुदेव यादव, डॉ० रविन्द्र राकेश, अनिल पतंग अशान्त भोला, प्रदीप बिहारी आदि कलाकार लोकनि राष्ट्रीय ओ अन्तरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर ख्याती अर्जित कएलनि।

नाटककार सह साहित्यकार स्व० दीनानाथ पाठक 'बन्धु' द्वारा रचित नाटक 'गाम देवता' जे अप्रकाशित अछि, जाहिमे बन्धु जी आदर्श वाक्य— 'उत्तम खेती, मध्यम बान, अधम चाकरी, भीख निदान'क चरित्रार्थ करबाक प्रयास कएलनि अछि। नाटकमे गामक युवक शेखर उच्च शिक्षाक लेल शहर जाएत अछि। शिक्षा प्राप्त कएलाक उपरांत गाममे रहि खेती करबाक प्रयोजन करैत अछि, मुदा गामक बुजुर्ग महगू ओकर प्रयोजनकँ अधलाह बुझैत अछि। शेखर महगू आ ग्रामीण सभकँ गामक महत्व बुझबैत अछि। जँ गामक लोक अनाज, फल, दूध—दही, साग—सब्जी आ आन् खाद्य योग्य वस्तु शहर नहि भेजए तँ शहरमे लोक कोना रहत? शहरक ताम—झाम ग्रामीण लोकनिक पर निर्भर अछि। नाटकक विषय—वस्तु गामक गरीबी, बेरोजगारी आ शहरक ओर पलायनक समस्या उजागर करैत अछि। बन्धु जीक दोसर नाटक 'गुरुकुल' (अप्रकाशित) गाँधी जीक बुनियादी शिक्षा पर आधारित अछि। नाटकक दृश्यमे सहायक शिक्षा निदेशक'क गाममे आगमन होएत अछि। स० शिक्षा निदेशक गामक महिला लोकनि कँ शिक्षाक महत्व बुझबैत छथि आ पढ़बाक लेल प्रेरित करैत छथि। गामक बुजुर्ग महिला लालकाकी'क सहयोगसँ गामक महिला लोकनि शिक्षाक दिस प्रेरित होएत अछि। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्तीक उपरांत नारी शिक्षाक जे स्थिति छल वएहसँ 'बन्धु' जी चिंतित रहथि। हुनका आशा छल जे एहि नाटकसँ नारी शिक्षाक लेल प्रेरित होएतीह। किएक तँ नारी शिक्षाक बिना राष्ट्रक विकास संभव नहि भ' सकैछ।

लोक नाट्य रंगमंचक अभिनेता सह नाटककार डॉ० अनिल पतंग अपन लोक नाट्य पोथी जट जटिन नाट्य संग्रहमे जट—जटिन, डोमकछ, आ सामा चकेबा लोक नाट्यक भुमिका कथा—वस्तु, पात्र चयन, घटनाक्रमक परस्पर क्रमानुसार सजएलनि, जे पाठकक लेल सुग्राह्य अछि। इएह कारण अछि जे हिनक अभिनीत लोक—नाट्य फिल्म जट जटिन अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर चर्चित आ पुरस्कृत भेल। एहि संग्रहक तीनु लोक—नाट्य स्त्री परक अछि, आ तीनु नाटक मिथिलाक संस्कृतिकँ उजागर करैत अछि। जट—जटिन मिथिलांचलक प्रचलित लोक नृत्य आ लोक गीतक समावेश अछि, जे इतिहासकारक बीच विभेद उत्पन्न करैत अछि जे ई लोक नृत्य छी वा लोक गीत? नाटककार अनिल पतंग अपन नाट्य पोथीमे नीक जकाँ फरिछएलनि अछि, जे ई मिथिलाक लोक—नाट्य छी। ई नाटकक सभटा पात्र आ दर्शक स्त्री होएत अछि, जाँहिसँ स्त्री लोकनि निर्भिकता पुर्वक मंचन आ मनोरंजन करैत अछि। एहि नाटकक मंचन मुख्य रूपसँ जेट, अषाढ़ आ साओन माहमे अनावृष्टिक स्थितिमे स्त्री लोकनि वृष्टिक लेल इंद्र भगवानकँ खुश करबाक प्रयत्न करैत अछि, जे इंद्र भगवान खुश भ' वृष्टि करताह। एहि लोक—नाट्यमे स्त्री लोकनि चाँदनी रातिमे दू समूहमे बटि एक—दोसराक डारमे हाथ फँसाक एकटा समूह जट'क आ दोसर समूह जटिन'क अभिनय क' लोक गीतक संग लोक नृत्य करैत अछि। एहि नाट्यक अन्त उखरिमे बेंग राखि अविवाहित कन्या लोकनि नांगट भ' बेंग कूटैत छलीह। वएह कूटल बेंगकँ गामक कोनो बेसी खौंझाई वाला बुजुर्गक आँगनमे फेंकैत अछि। एकर पाँछा ई धारणा अछि जे बेंग कूटबाक दौरान बेंग जतेक बाजत वा बुजुर्ग लोकनि जतेक खौंझाईत आ गारि देत, वर्षा ततेक बेसी होएत। एहि लोक नाट्यक कतेक मनोवैज्ञानिक महत्व अछि, तकरो अनिल पतंग जी नीक जकाँ उजागर कएलनि अछि।

एहि नाट्य संग्रहक लोक नाट्य डोमकछ स्त्री लोकनि तखन करैत छथि, जखन पुरुष लोकनि विवाहक दौरान दोसर गाम बरियाती जाएत छथि। किएक तँ पहिने मिथिलामे बरियातीकेँ मरजादी रखबाक प्रचलन छल। एहन स्थितिमे गामक सुरक्षा स्त्री लोकनि करैत छलीह। पुरुषक गैरमौजूदगीमे स्त्री लोकनि स्वयं डोम, डोमिनिया, राजा, चोर, सिपाही आ आन पात्र लोकनिककेँ चरित्रक अभिनय क' निर्भीकता पूर्वक मनोरंजन करैत छथि। एहिमे डोम-डोमिनियाक दैनिक क्रिया-कलाप, डोमकेँ पाए कमएबाक लेल मोरंग देश जाएब, एहि बीच राजा द्वारा डोमिनियाक फुसलाएब। डोमाक वापिस अएला पर डोमिनियाक वापस आनब। डोमाक दारू पीबा पर पुलीस द्वारा पकड़ि थाना ल' जाएब। डोमिनियाक पुलीस संग संवाद आदिक अभिनय, सुबद्ध, रोचकपूर्ण वातावरणमे होएत अछि। लोक-गीत सामाजिक क्रिया-कलापसँ अभिप्रेरित आ समसामयिक होएत अछि। नाटकक शैली सभक लेल सुग्राह्य अछि।

एहि नाट्य संग्रहक नाटक सामा-चकेबा मिथिलामे अति लोकप्रिय अछि। जहिना रक्षाबंधन भाई-बहिनक पवित्र त्यौहार अछि, तहिना सामा-चकेबा भाई-बहिनकेँ प्यार'क प्रतीक अछि। बहिन अपन भाईक जीवनकेँ सुखमय बनबए चाहैत अछि। ओकरा विश्वास अछि जे भाईक रहितहुँ ओ कखनो असुरक्षित नहि होएतीह। सामा-चकेबा छठि पर्वक उपरांत पारनि दिनसँ पूर्णिमा धरि प्रतिदिन मंचित होएत अछि। एहि नाट्यमे विवाहिता आ कुमारी कन्या सहभागिनी होएत अछि। एहि अवसर पर माटिक सामा, चकेबा, चुगिला, सतभैया, ढोलकिया, खड़रुचि, कुकूर बना क' चडेरामे सजाओल जाएत अछि। कार्तिक पूर्णिमाक राति भाई आ ओकर प्यार'क प्रतीक सामा-चकेबाकेँ नदीमे विसर्जित क' एहि लोक नाट्य उत्सवक उद्यापन होएत अछि। अनिल पतंग जी एहि ऐतिहासिक लोक-नाट्यकेँ बड़ रोचकपूर्ण वातावरणमे क्रमबद्ध कएलनि अछि। ई लोक-नाट्य मद्र नरेश लक्ष्मण सेन'क पुत्र चक्रवाक(चकेबा) आ मोरंग नरेश राजा रतिनाह'क बेटी श्यामाक प्रेम-प्रसंगक प्रतीक अछि सामा-चकेबा। एहि लोक-नाट्यक आरंभ कएलनि लक्ष्मण सेन'क पुत्री खरईच। हालांकि एहि प्रसंग पर एखनो शोधक आवश्यकता अछि। विभिन्न इतिहासकार केँ एहि प्रसंग पर विभिन्न मत छनि, मुदा नाटककार अनिल पतंग जी मद्र नरेश लक्ष्मण सेन आ मोरंग नरेश रतिनाहक ई घटना मानैत छथि। दुनू वंशक साक्ष्य सेहो उपलब्ध अछि।

नाटककार उपरोक्त लोक-नाट्यक विषय-वस्तु, पात्र चयन, घटनाक्रम रोचकपूर्ण वातावरणमे कएलनि अछि, जे पाठकक लेल सुग्राह्य अछि। सभटा नाटक बहुउद्देशीय अछि। प्रकृति पुजा, सामाजिक सुरक्षा, मनोरंजन, नव कन्याक शिक्षा, निर्भीकता आ ऐतिहासिक घटनाक सुरक्षा लोक-नाट्यक उद्देश्य अछि।

रंगकर्मी, नाटककार सह साहित्यकार डॉ० रवीन्द्र राकेश द्वारा रचित एकल अभिनय संग्रह अन्तर्जालमे एगारह गोट नाटक अभिकल्पित अछि। नाटकक विषय-वस्तु ऐतिहासिक आ समसामयिक अछि। समाजक ज्वलंत समस्याक उद्घाटित करैत अछि। बहुमुखी प्रतिभाक धनी नाटककार डॉ० रवीन्द्र राकेश कविता, कथा, एकांकी, नाटक, निबंध, आलोचना, व्यंग्य आदि विधाक माध्यम सँ सामाजिक, साहित्यिक आ मानविक दायित्वक निर्वहन क' रहल छथि। हिनका द्वारा रचित अनेकों नाटक राष्ट्रीय स्तरक समारोहमे मंचित आ पुरस्कृत भ' चुकल अछि। हिनक रचित एकल अभिनय नाटक 'सुनू राम' भागलपुर विश्वविद्यालयक स्नातकोत्तर मैथिली विभाग द्वारा प्रकाशित 'नव नाट्य पुष्प' मे संकलित भ' ओहिठामक पाठ्यक्रममे शामिल अछि।

अन्तर्जाल एकल अभिनय संग्रहक नाटक 'धधरा'मे बेरोजगार नवयुवकक दशा आ भ्रष्ट सरकारी व्यवस्था पर ओकर आक्रोशक उजागर कएलनि अछि। मायक आँचर जे सभसँ सुरक्षित पनाहगाह होएत अछि, ओहो आँचर बेरोजगारक लेल असुरक्षित भ' जाएत अछि। रिस्ता, नाता सभ मुँह फेर लैति अछि। युवक अपन मेहनतसँ सफलताक चौखट धरि पहुँचि, सफलतोपरांत जीवनक कल्पना करैत अछि। मुदा भ्रष्ट व्यवस्थाक कारणेँ नौकरी नहि पाबैत अछि। तखन ओकरा अन्दर जे 'धधरा' उठैत अछि, वएह 'धधरा'क नाटककार आकर्षक शैलीमे अभिकल्पित कएने छथि। ओहो स्थितिमे बेरोजगारक पत्नीकेँ जजसँ रातिमे भेंट करबाक वकील साहबक प्रयोजन, सामाजिक, प्रशासनिक आ न्यायिक व्यवस्थाक रहस्योद्घाटन करैत अछि।

अन्तर्जाल एकल नाट्य संग्रहक नाटक 'माहुर' आ 'मुक्त पवन केर एक सांस'मे नाटककार डॉ० रवीन्द्र राकेश समाजक ज्वलंत समस्या काटर (दहेज) प्रथा आ ओकर दुष्प्रभावकेँ उजागर कएलनि अछि। 'माहुर' आ 'मुक्त पवन केर एक सांस'मे बाप बेटीक सुखमय जीवनक लेल अपन, डीह-डॉवर आ सर्वस्व काटरक लोभी दमाद आ समधीक समक्ष राखि दैत अछि। मुदा हुनकर लोभक जिज्ञासा बढ़ले जाएत अछि। 'माहुर'मे जतय चम्पा हारिकेँ इहलीला समाप्त क' लैति अछि, ओतय 'मुक्त पवन केर एक सांस'मे निर्मला हिम्मति

नहि हारैत अछि। ओ ककरो बोझ नहि बनैत अछि, सामाधान दुद्वैत अछि आ नारीक लेल मार्गदर्शिका बनैत अछि। नाटककार दुनू नाटकमे सामाजिक समस्याक नीक जकाँ उद्घाटित कएलनि अछि। 'मुक्त पवन केर एक सांस'मे समस्याक समाधान सेहो सुझएलनि अछि।

अन्तर्जाल नाट्य संग्रहक नाटक 'सुनू राम'क माध्यमसँ नाटककार डॉ० रविन्द्र राकेश जनक नंदिनी सीताक पक्ष राखि मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम राम पर प्रश्नक बौछार कएने छथि। नाटककार एसगर सीताक गर्भावस्थामे राम द्वारा जंगलमे छोड़बासँ आहत छथि। वहए काल सीताक मोनमे उठएवला गुबारकँ एहि एकल नाट्यमे व्यक्त कएलनि अछि। मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम राम सीता'क बिना पक्ष सुनने एहन निर्णय कोना लेलनि? कि सम्राटक लेल एक पक्षीय निर्णय शोभा दैत अछि? कि राम-राज्यमे नारीक संग भेद-भाव छल? मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम राम अपन संतानसँ ऐतेक निष्ठुर किएक भेलाह? जँ सीता आम गृहिणी होएतीह? तँ रामसँ ऐतेक प्रश्न निश्चित रहनि। नाटककार स्पष्ट कएलनि अछि जे सत्ताक लेल लोक आदिसँ एखन धरि अपनाक कुर्बान करैत अछि। सीता रामसँ प्रश्न करि विध्न उत्पन्न कएए नहि चाहैत छली। ओ पतिव्रता धर्म निभएलनि, आ सिद्ध कएलनि जे नारी अबला नहि अछि, ओ पुरुषक बिना जीवन जी सकैत अछि। संतानक परवरिश क' नीक संस्कार द' सकैत अछि। नाटककार सीताक समाजक समक्ष आदर्शक रूपमे प्रस्तुत कएलनि अछि।

नाटककार डॉ० रविन्द्र राकेश 'एक लोटा पानी' नाटकक माध्यमसँ घरमे बुजुर्गक सुरक्षा'क ओर समाजक ध्यान आकृष्ट कएलनि अछि। जे घरक वृद्ध लोकनिकँ घरक मान-मर्यादाक कतेक चिन्ता रहैत छलनि? मृत पत्नीक प्रति कतेक प्यार छलनि? हुनका चारु पुत्र रमेश, सुरेश, दिनेश आ महेशसँ कतेक अपेक्षा छलनि? बेटी आ दमादक प्रति कतेक प्यार छलनि? पाँचटा बेटा-बेटी, पोता-पोतीक रहितहुँ वृद्धक आत्मा शुरुसँ अन्त धरि एक लोटा पानीक लेल व्याकुल रहैत अछि। वएह एक लोटा पानीक प्रयोजनमे पिछैरि हुनक आत्मा आकुल रहि जाएत अछि। नाटकक विषय-वस्तु, शिल्प-शैली एत' मार्मिक अछि जे पाठकक ध्यान अंत धरि केन्द्रित रहैत अछि।

'अपराध-स्वीकार' नाटकक माध्यमसँ नाटककार डॉ० रविन्द्र राकेश न्यायिक व्यवस्था पर प्रहार कएलनि अछि। पैसा आ पैरवी वाला लोककँ बचैबाक लेल वकील फूसि साक्ष्य गढ़ैत अछि आ निरअपराधीक, अपराधी बनवैत अछि। हजारो-हजार जगता आ मंगली बाबू साहेब एहन अपराधीक शिकार बनैत अछि, आ बाबू साहेब एहन अपराधी खुल्ला घुमैत अछि। मुदा बलेसराक जगता भाईमे भगत सिंह'क छवि दिखाई दैत अछि। ओकरा विश्वास अछि जे जगता भाई जिन्दा रहत, तँ कयो बाबू साहेब जनम नहि लेत। जगता भाई बाबू साहेबक केशमे फाँसी चढ़ि जएताह, तँ कतेको बाबू साहेब तैयार भ' जाएत। एहि लेल बलेसरा स्वेछासँ अपराध स्वीकार करैत अछि।

'बहुरूपिया' नाटकमे नाटककार पात्र दीनमा'क(दीनेश्वर) माध्यमसँ नेता गणक चरित्रकँ उजागर कएलनि अछि। डॉ० राकेश अपन नाटकक माध्यमसँ ई बहुरूपिया नेतासँ समाजकँ सचेष्ट करैत कहैत छथि जे बहुरूपिया नेताक पहचान करि, ओकरा सत्तासँ दूर राखू। योग्य नेताक चयन करू. जाहिसँ समाजक समुचित विकास होएत।

'न भूतो न भविष्यति' नाटकक माध्यसँ नाटककार कैकेयी'क अन्तरद्वंदकँ स्पष्ट कएलनि, जे कैकेयी राजा दशरथक प्राणप्रिया छलीह, राजा दशरथक संग युद्धक साक्षी छलीह। प्रजाक सुख-दुःखक साक्षी छलीह। ओ कैकेयी राम राज्यारोहणमे कोना विध्न बनतीह? राज्यारोहणमे बाधा बनबासँ पहिने हुनका मोनमे कतेक प्रश्न उठि रहल छल? ओ भगवतीसँ गोहारि करैत छलीह जे एहि काजक लेल हुनका शक्ति दिऔ। ओ जनैत छथि जे ई काजक बाद लोकक मोनमे एकहिटा विचार उत्पन्न होएत जे एहन खलपात्रा ने भेल आ ने भविष्यमे भ' सकत। केओ अपन बच्चाक नाम कैकेयी नहि राखत? अतएव नाटककार कैकेयी'क राम-रावण युद्ध कँ महान खलनायिका मानैत छथि। एहन खलनायिका न भूतो न भविष्यति।

उपर्युक्त नाटकक विश्लेषणसँ स्पष्ट होइत अछि जे बेगूसराय जिलाक मैथिली साहित्यकार लोकनिक नाटक साहित्यक विकासमे महत्वपूर्ण योगदान देलनि अछि। स्व० दीनानाथ पाठक जी अपन साहित्यिक सहभागितासँ जन-जनमे शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य आ राष्ट्रक प्रति समर्पण भावकँ जगएलनि अछि। प्रसिद्ध रंगकर्मी अनिल पतंग जी अपन साहित्यिक सहभागितासँ लोक नाट्यक वैज्ञानिक महत्वकँ बुझौलनि अछि। अपन अभिनयक माध्यमसँ समाजमे शिक्षा आ स्वास्थ्यक प्रति जागृति पसारि रहल छथि। साहित्यकार सह नाटककार डॉ० रविन्द्र राकेश नाट्य साहित्यक माध्यमसँ समाजमे व्याप्त शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, बेरोजगारी, सुरक्षा आ आन सामाजिक कुरीतिक उजागर आ सामाधानक मार्ग प्रशस्त क' रहल छथि।

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