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YOUTH AND NATION-BUILDING : HARNESSING DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN INDIA

Prof. Shailendra Kumar Chaturvedi*

Abstract

India is undergoing a demographic transition that places youth at the center of its developmental trajectory. With more than 65% of its population below the age of 35, India holds one of the largest working-age populations in the world. This demographic profile presents both opportunities and challenges. If effectively harnessed, it can lead to accelerated economic growth, social transformation, and stronger democratic institutions. However, the absence of proper investments in skill development, employment generation, and governance structures could transform this advantage into a demographic burden. This paper explores the role of youth in nation-building, examines government initiatives, compares India's experience with global cases, and proposes strategies for harnessing the demographic dividend.

Keywords : Youth, nation-building, demographic dividend, governance, India, Public Administration.

Introduction

India, home to more than 1.4 billion people, is standing at a decisive moment in history. Its claim to becoming a global superpower is not built solely on economic growth rates or technological advancement, but equally on its demographic structure. Nearly half of India's population is under the age of 25 (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2023), placing the country within a demographic dividend window that is expected to last until 2055 (United Nations, 2019). This demographic advantage, if utilized effectively, can redefine India's future, positioning it as a global leader in innovation, governance, and sustainable development. However, demographic dividend is not automatic. Without strategic investments in education, health, skills, and employment opportunities, this window of opportunity could transform into a demographic burden, resulting in mass unemployment, social unrest, and economic stagnation. Therefore, the youth of India must not only be viewed as passive beneficiaries of development but as active participants in the process of nation-building.

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Nation-building, in the Indian context, extends beyond GDP growth or infrastructural expansion. It encompasses the creation of inclusive institutions, strengthening of democratic practices, ensuring social justice, and building a cohesive society that can compete globally while retaining its cultural ethos. Within this broad framework, the youth emerge as crucial stakeholders, as their energy, creativity, and adaptability are uniquely suited to drive transformative change (Kumar, 2020).

Understanding the Concept of Demographic Dividend

The term *demographic dividend* refers to the economic growth potential that arises when a country has a higher proportion of working-age population compared to dependents (children and the elderly). Bloom, Canning, and Fink (2010) describe it as an accelerated pace of economic progress that occurs when labor force expansion coincides with investments in human capital, productive employment, and sound policies.

Historical evidence provides powerful illustrations of this phenomenon. East Asian countries such as South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan experienced rapid transformation between 1965 and 1990 by harnessing their demographic dividend. By investing heavily in education, public health, and skill development, these nations converted their youthful populations into engines of productivity, leading to what is now called the *East Asian Miracle* (Lee & Mason, 2006).

For India, the opportunity is even larger given the sheer size of its youth population. But it is also more complex, as the country is characterized by diversity in development levels across states, uneven access to resources, and institutional capacity constraints. This makes the management of the demographic dividend not just an economic challenge but also a governance challenge.

Youth and Nation-Building : Historical and Philosophical Perspectives

Indian political and spiritual leaders have long emphasized the transformative role of youth in shaping the nation. Swami Vivekananda's call for youth to possess " muscles of iron and nerves of steel" was not merely rhetorical but aimed at inspiring resilience, discipline, and confidence among young Indians (Chaudhary, 2018). His vision continues to resonate with modern theories of participatory governance, which stress the importance of citizen engagement in building responsive and accountable institutions.

Mahatma Gandhi, while leading the freedom struggle, repeatedly stressed youth involvement in constructive work such as village development, sanitation, and education. His idea of *Nai Talim* (basic education) was aimed at shaping young Indians into self-reliant citizens who could directly contribute to society's moral and material progress.

In contemporary times, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, India's "Missile Man" and former President, famously referred to youth as "ignited minds." He believed that if guided properly, the energy of young Indians could transform the country into a developed nation. According to Kalam (2002), the nation's destiny is directly shaped by the aspirations, creativity, and determination of its youth.

Thus, across generations, the consensus has remained consistent: youth are not just the future, but the present driving force of nation-building.

Challenges Confronting Indian Youth

Despite favorable demographics, India's youth face significant challenges that risk undermining the demographic advantage.

1. **Unemployment and Underemployment :** Youth unemployment continues to be a pressing issue. While millions graduate each year, the job market is unable to absorb them. A large segment is employed in the informal sector, leading to underemployment and job insecurity (ILO, 2022).
2. **Skill Mismatch :** Educational outcomes often fail to meet employability standards. The World Bank (2021) highlights that while India has expanded access to education, its quality remains uneven, with poor skill alignment to industry demands. This mismatch creates frustration among educated youth, who are unable to secure suitable jobs.
3. **Regional Disparities :** The youth in urban centers may have access to better infrastructure, education, and employment opportunities, but those in rural and semi-urban areas often lag behind. This uneven growth can widen social and economic inequalities.
4. **Social Unrest and Brain Drain :** When aspirations are unmet, the risk of unrest, migration, and brain drain increases. Scholars like Joshi (2019) warn that disillusioned youth can either leave for better opportunities abroad or fuel populist movements, threatening democratic stability.
5. **Health and Well-being :** Investments in health– both physical and mental– remain inadequate. alnutrition, stress, and lack of mental health support continue to affect a significant segment of young Indians, further weakening their productivity.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon two complementary theoretical perspectives to analyze the role of youth in India's nation-building process.

First, Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961) posits that investments in education, training, and health enhance individual productivity, thereby driving economic growth. Within the Indian context, this framework underscores the importance of equipping the youth with knowledge, skills, and well-being so they can serve as an asset to national development.

Second, the Participatory Governance Model (Fung & Wright, 2003) emphasizes active citizen involvement in decision-making processes. It highlights the role of youth not just as economic actors but as political stakeholders who strengthen democracy through activism, accountability, and innovative governance.

By integrating these two frameworks, this study argues that youth empowerment is both an economic strategy and a political necessity for sustainable nation-building in India.

Youth as Drivers of Nation-Building Economic Development

India's young workforce plays a pivotal role in its GDP growth, especially in technology-driven and service-oriented sectors. According to NITI Aayog (2022), India is now the world's third-largest startup hub, and a significant share of founders are below 35 years of age. Initiatives like *Startup India* have fueled entrepreneurship, generating jobs, reducing dependency on traditional employment, and fostering inclusive growth. Youth-led ventures in fintech, healthcare, and e-commerce are reshaping India's economic landscape.

Social Transformation

Youth activism has emerged as a powerful force in shaping social and political debates. The 2011 anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare showcased the capacity of young citizens to mobilize mass participation through digital platforms (Chaudhary, 2018). Similarly, youth-led climate campaigns, gender justice movements, and rural education initiatives reflect their growing role as catalysts of social transformation. In several states, youth-driven NGOs and voluntary organizations have significantly improved outcomes in health, sanitation, and literacy.

Democratic Participation

Young Indians are increasingly active participants in the democratic process. In the 2019 general elections, nearly 15 million first-time voters aged 18–19 joined the electoral rolls (Election Commission of India [ECI], 2020). Moreover, social media platforms have amplified youth voices, allowing them to influence public opinion and demand accountability. However, this digital empowerment also brings challenges such as misinformation and political polarization, which require careful regulation and awareness.

Technology and Innovation

India produces over **1**.5 million engineering graduates annually (AICTE, 2021). This talent pool contributes to advancements in artificial intelligence, renewable energy, biotechnology, and space research. The successful launch and landing of Chandrayaan-3 in 2023 symbolized the intellectual potential of India's young scientists and engineers. Such achievements demonstrate that youth are not only consumers of technology but also innovators shaping global scientific progress.

Challenges in Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

While India's youth population presents a unique opportunity to accelerate national development, several critical challenges hinder the full realization of this potential. Unless addressed through timely and targeted interventions, these challenges could turn India's demographic dividend into a demographic burden.

Unemployment and Underemployment

Youth unemployment continues to be one of the most pressing concerns. In 2022, youth unemployment in India stood at 17.5%, significantly higher than the global average (ILO, 2022). Even among those employed, many are engaged in precarious or informal sector jobs, with limited job security, poor wages, and inadequate social protection. Such underemployment not only affects economic productivity but also creates frustration among young people, undermining social stability.

Skill Mismatch

One of the structural barriers lies in the disconnect between education and employability. According to the World Bank (2021), only about 46% of graduates in India are considered employable by industry standards. Universities often focus on theoretical knowledge while neglecting practical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. This skill mismatch results in a paradox: while millions of educated youth seek jobs, industries simultaneously struggle to find adequately skilled workers.

Brain Drain

The migration of India's brightest minds to developed countries poses another challenge. Engineers, doctors, scientists, and

IT professionals often pursue careers abroad due to higher salaries, better research opportunities, and advanced infrastructure. This **brain drain** deprives India of its innovation base and reduces the pool of highly skilled professionals available for nation-building. While remittances provide some economic benefits, the long-term loss of talent weakens India's ability to compete in the global knowledge economy.

Social Issues

The youth demographic also faces several social challenges. Rising instances of substance abuse, radicalisation, mental health concerns, and cyber addiction threaten to erode the productivity and wellbeing of young Indians (NCRB, 2021). The lack of adequate mental health support in schools, colleges, and workplaces exacer-bates these problems. Moreover, socio-political disillusionment among youth can lead to unrest, populist movements, or disengage-ment from the democratic process.

The Risk of a Demographic Burden

Taken together, these challenges illustrate the delicate balance of India's demographic transition. Without strategic investments in job creation, skill development, and social support systems, the very strength of India's youth could become a liability. Instead of driving growth, a disempowered youth population could deepen inequality, fuel social tensions, and strain governance systems. The choice before India is stark: convert its youth potential into a demo-graphic dividend, or allow it to deteriorate into a demographic disaster.

Government Initiatives

Recognizing the pivotal role of youth in shaping India's future, the Government of India has launched several major programs aimed at unlocking the potential of its young population. These initiatives cover areas such as skill development, entrepreneurship, governance, and digital empowerment.

One of the most ambitious efforts is the Skill India Mission, launched in 2015. Its target is to train over 400 million young people by 2025 in market-relevant skills. By focusing on vocational training, apprenticeship programs, and industry partnerships, this initiative seeks to bridge the skill gap between education and employment, ensuring that young Indians are prepared for both domestic and global job markets.

The Startup India program, launched in 2016, has transformed the entrepreneurial landscape by creating a favorable ecosystem for young innovators. Offering tax incentives, easier compliance norms, access to government funding, and the establishment of incubation centers, this initiative has encouraged a wave of youth-led enterprises. As a result, India has become one of the largest startup hubs in the world, with a significant proportion of founders under the age of 35.

The National Youth Policy (2014) provides a comprehensive framework for youth development, emphasizing education, employment, social inclusion, and civic participation. Its vision is to empower young people not only to secure livelihoods but also to actively contribute to governance and social change.

The Digital India initiative (2015) has been another landmark step, aimed at bridging the digital divide between urban and rural India. By improving internet connectivity, expanding digital literacy, and encouraging e-governance, this program has provided

young people with access to information, services, and opportunities that were previously out of reach.

Although not directly designed for youth, Mission Karmayogi (2020) deserves mention. This program focuses on capacity building for India's civil servants. In the long run, more efficient governance directly benefits youth by improving the delivery of public services, strengthening institutions, and aligning government systems with the aspirations of a young population.

While these programs mark significant progress, the challenge lies in their implementation and equitable reach. For example, access to digital resources is still uneven across rural and tribal regions, and skill development programs often fail to match the rapid changes of the global job market. Without consistent monitoring, accountability, and adaptability, the full impact of these initiatives may remain limited.

Comparative Lessons from Other Countries

India's situation is unique, but valuable lessons can be drawn from the experiences of other nations that successfully managed their demographic dividends.

South Korea provides one of the most compelling examples. During its demographic transition in the second half of the 20th century, the country invested heavily in universal education, technical training, and technological innovation. By aligning its youthful population with a clear strategy of industrialization, South Korea moved rapidly from being a war-torn economy to one of the most advanced in the world.

China, too, effectively leveraged its large working-age population by focusing on labor-intensive manufacturing and export-led growth. Strict population policies ensured a lower dependency ratio for several decades. However, China now faces a rapidly aging population, reminding India that the demographic window is temporary and must be used wisely.

Ireland offers yet another perspective. Known as the "Celtic Tiger," Ireland transformed itself into a knowledge-driven economy by attracting global IT firms, investing in higher education, and supporting research and innovation. Importantly, youth-oriented policies enabled Irish graduates to enter global industries with competitive skills, making Ireland a hub for technology and finance.

For India, the challenge is to adapt these lessons while maintaining its democratic ethos and social diversity. Unlike more homogeneous societies, India must ensure that youth empowerment reaches across regions, castes, genders, and economic groups. The task is not only to create opportunities for the urban middle-class youth but also to empower those in rural, tribal, and marginalized communities. Only then can India truly harness its demographic dividend in a way that is both inclusive and sustainable.

Recommendations

To fully harness its demographic dividend and ensure that youth remain central to nation-building, India must adopt a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy. The following recommendations are crucial for translating demographic potential into tangible developmental outcomes :

1. **Education Reform :** India's education system must move beyond rote learning and examination-centric approaches. Curricula should be redesigned to

emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, and innovation. Vocational education and skill-based courses should be integrated at both school and higher education levels, enabling students to acquire competencies directly relevant to the job market. Collaborative programs between universities and industries can help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

2. **Inclusive Development :** The benefits of demographic dividend cannot remain confined to urban centers or economically privileged groups. Rural, tribal, and marginalized youth must be brought into the mainstream of national development through targeted scholar-ships, localized skill training, and community-led projects. Special attention should be given to women and differently-abled youth to ensure that their potential is equally recognized and utilized.
3. **Youth in Governance :** Institutionalizing youth participation in governance is essential for a vibrant democracy. Establishing youth advisory councils at the national and state levels will provide young citizens with a structured platform to share ideas, influence policies, and hold decision-makers accountable. Such mechanisms will not only empower youth politically but also inculcate a sense of responsibility and civic duty, fostering a culture of participatory governance.
4. **Global Partnerships :** While India continues to face challenges of brain drain, this trend can be mitigated by offering return migration incentives to skilled youth working abroad. Policies could include tax benefits, research funding, or startup support for those who bring back expertise, technology, or capital. International collaborations in education, science, and innovation will also enrich the opportunities available to India's young workforce.
5. **Mental Health Support :** The well-being of youth is fundamental to their productivity. Rising stress levels, anxiety, and depression among students and young professionals require urgent attention. Counseling services, awareness campaigns, and peer-support groups should be integrated into schools, universities, and workplaces. By normalizing conversations on mental health and strengthening institutional support systems, India can ensure that its youth remain healthy, resilient, and capable of contributing positively to society.

If implemented in a coordinated and inclusive manner, these measures will ensure that India does not squander its demographic opportunity. By focusing on education, equity, governance, global engagement, and mental health, the country can transform its youth population into a driving force of sustainable nation-building.

Conclusion

India's demographic dividend represents a historic, once-in-a-generation opportunity. With nearly half of its population below the age of 25, the nation is poised at the threshold of transformative change. This youth bulge can become the backbone of India's economic progress, while also driving social reform, democratic renewal, and technological advancement.

However, the dividend is not a guarantee. If not managed with foresight and planning, it

could turn into a demographic burden, creating challenges of unemployment, social unrest, and economic stagnation. The key lies in strategic investments in education that builds skills and critical thinking, in employment generation that matches aspirations, in governance reforms that strengthen participatory democracy, and in social policies that safeguard youth well-being.

As Swami Vivekananda powerfully reminded us, " *The future of India rests in its youth."* This timeless message resonates even more in the 21st century. By empowering young citizens to be innovators, reformers, and leaders, India can harness its demographic dividend not only for national progress but also to emerge as a global leader in inclusive growth, sustainable development, and democratic values.

The choices made today will decide whether India's demographic advantage becomes a source of pride and progress—or a missed opportunity. The responsibility, therefore, is both urgent and profound: to ensure that every young Indian finds the space, skills, and strength to contribute meaningfully to the task of nation-building.

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GULF SECURITY REGIME : A WAY FORWARD TO PEACE AND STABILITY

Dr. Priya Ranjan Kumar*

Abstract

Conceptually, Security regime is articulated and institutionalised in a particular region or on issues to create conditions to formulate rules and procedures which can manage the anarchical international system and ultimately pave way for peaceful, friendly relationship and cooperative agreements among states, thereby acting as a mediating force between war and peace where war as an option becomes insignificant. Significantly, various regions have created security regime to establish peace and stability and to avoid violent confrontation as a means to resolve conflict. Empirically, the Gulf region is experiencing various forms of conflicts and violent confrontations which have resulted into non-existent of any formal or informal forms of security regime. The purpose this paper is to analyse the Gulf security scenario and explore the possibility of establishment of security regime while looking after prevailing conditions and constraints in Gulf region in particular and Middle East in general.

Keywords : Security regime, anarchical international system, gulf security, conflict and security, middle East.

Introduction

Theoretically, security regime is created mainly to establish how cooperation can be articulated and institutionalized in specific issues or regions. It provides an avenue to formulate rules and procedures which become instrumental in moderating the consequences of anarchy and pave way for peaceful, friendly relationship and cooperative agreements among states in the region. Significantly, the purpose of security regime is not to eliminate all the conflicts but to create conditions where states recognise the inevitability of disputes in relationship and seek to restrain the states from engaging in open conflict. In other words, security regime functions as mediating force between war and peace and pave way towards a comprehensive security (Kumar, 2019) and further towards security community (Deutsch, 1957) where war as an option for conflict resolution becomes insignificant. Evidently, the European Union can be seen as the best example of security regime. Practically, various regions of the world have attempted to create security regime, few have been successful and other experienced failure.

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Against this backdrop, the paper makes an attempt to explore the prospects of establishing a regional security regime based on the 'sum-sum' approach to security. Empirically, the Gulf Region, engrained with colonial legacy, greater militarization, the upsurges of intra-Arab and intra-Islamic rivalries, has been experiencing a peculiar security environment from decades. More comprehensively, paper suggests that colonial legacy, the existing nature of conflicts, mutual mistrust, intensive security dilemma and amount of military expenditure along with increasing dependency of military alliances with extra-regional powers are the constraining factors which undermine the conditions for the establishment of regional security regime in the region. The paper uses analytical method where it begins with abstract understanding of theory and attempts to testify its applicability on the region while describing the conditions and constraints that exist from multidimensional aspects.

Security Regime : A Theoretical Underpinning

Theoretically, security regime has been one of the significant concepts in international relations that has involved various prominent scholars time and again. Stephen Krasner, the prominent scholar on security regime states that –

> *Regimes can be defined as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decisionmaking procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice.*
>
> *(Krasner 1983)*

Robert Jervis defines a security regime as 'those principles, rules, and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behaviour in the belief that others will reciprocate' (Jervis, 1983).Moreover, there have been attempts to bring out political cooperation to manage transnational issues in regime studies (Keohane, 1977).

Further, for Joseph Nye regimes can be instrumental in affecting state's behaviour particularly, through the institutionalization of the norms and principles. This institutionalization helps through the agreed mechanisms while modifying the behaviour of states (Nye 1987 and Keohance 1988). Additionally, regime has been determinant in managing the effects of anarchical international system and 'joint gains' captured under diverse conditions (Rittberger, 1990). By creating an inclusive framework with well-defined norms, regimes lower the transaction costs of negotiating and implementing specific agreements (Keohane 1983). Moreover, by encouraging repeated transa-ctions, they enlarge the shadow of the future (Axelrod 1983).

These repeated transactions generate powerful incentives for states to continue their bargains to encapsulate a stream of future gains and some agreements self-enforcing (Telser 1980 and Leffler 1981). Similarly, for Ernst Haas regime becomes an arrangement where involving members wish to manage and limit conflicts of interests and recognise the significance of complex interdependence. Thereby, regimes help

visualize 'game of pure conflict too costly' (Haas 1982). Significantly, Donald J. Puchala and Raymond F. Hopkins perceive regimes as invariably attitudinal phenomenon (Puchala and Hopkins 1982).

Security regimes not only reduce uncertainty about the behaviour of adversaries, but also about their intentions and the boundaries of the conflict (Stein 2003). In other words, security regimes act as a mediating force between war and peace (Yaacov 1995). Participation in a security regime weaves boundary around the scope of a conflict, insofar as the regime fences off certain kinds of actions. Limited security regimes also link issues together, lengthening the shadow of the future and increasing the incentives to make some sacrifice of immediate for future gain (Oye 1985). Broadly, the calculative stands on regime substantiate the realist position (Nye 1987, Stein 1985 and Smith 1987) in international relations (Tow and Gray 1995).

Regimes encourage cooperation by making it rational and that is by increasing the expected benefits of cooperation and raising the expected costs of non-compliance. The two most important classic examples of the security regimes are Concert of Europe (1815-23) and Soviet-American security cooperation which transformed the international system in the specific time. Egypt and Israel, for example, have been members of a security regime at least since 1974, if not earlier (Stein 1987). Thus, these instances were deliberate efforts to manage international affairs to capture 'joint gains or prevent common losses' (Stein 1990). The rapprochement process between Greece and Turkey, two rivals in the wake of the 1999 earthquake paved the way for a 'limited security regime' ensuring parties to achieve crises stability and avoiding conflict (Onis and Yilmaz, 2008).

Additionally, limited security regimes are formed when leaders share nothing but an aversion to war or violence (Shubik 1971, Messick and Mc Clintock 1968). Currently, the rapprochement between two aspiring powers with incompatible goals, Saudi Arabia and Iran on 10 March 2023 in Beijing described as 'victory for peace' (Ahmad 2023) seems, inspired by the idea of limited security regimes to 'capture joint gains' based on shared common aversion to war (Stein 1990, Kegley and Raymond 1986). Moreover, the 'partial security regimes' is being developed to restrain state behaviour, reduce uncertainty, and create a focal point around which expectations can converge (George, Farley, and Dallin 1988). Evidently, there existed partial regimes or 'proto' security regimes between the Soviet Union and the US relations (Hamption 1990).

Nevertheless, on security issues it is difficult and dangerous to forego present advantage for future benefits because state can never be certain of other states' intentions (Mearsheimer 2001). Offensive realist like, Mearsheimer argue that states should always be looking for opportunities to gain more power and should do so whenever it seems feasible. States should maximize power, and their ultimate goal should be hegemony, because that is the best way to guarantee survival (Ibid).

Based on the above conceptual framework the paper attempts to examine various aspects of the security environment in Gulf Region and explore the prospects of the regional security regime amidst the multi-faceted challenges emanating from both

internal and external sources. In fact, attracted by its strategic location, immense oil reserves and above all, the great powers penetration through treaties, bases, arms transfer and overt military intervention, Gulf region assumes significance to explore the feasibility of security regime. The following section has analysed the prevailing security scenario of Gulf Region on regional and inter-state level. Further, Gulf interconnection with Syrian crisis has also been examined.

Contextualizing Gulf Security

It's pertinent to analyse existing security scenario of the Gulf to enquire into the conditions and constrains of creating security regime in same. In fact, nature and intension of conflicts and cooperation among the actors, existing security concerns and threat perceptions originated either from internal or external sources are the indicators of security scenario of any region. The region has experienced the formation of nation-state based on artificial boundaries encompassing various contested national identities. Additionally, the region also has hugely explored natural resources. Briefly, artificial creation of boundaries, contested national identities and reservoir of natural resources have turned into the capabilities of penetration and conditions for attraction of external powers.

Moreover, state formation and nationalism developed parallel, where authoritarian regimes, several border conflicts and sectarian strife engrained continuously. In fact, state, the rational actor is still in the process of consolidation (Hinnebusch 2002). Not to mention, about the persistent surfacing of the colonial legacies in the form of contested territorial claims and inter-state conflicts. For instances border disputes between Iraq and Kuwait, Iran and Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and Bahrain and Qatar remain along the line of colonialcrafted state formation. Ironically, there exist the practices of political establish to use the state security apparatuses for the regime security (while confusing with national security).

Thus, blurring, the distinctions between regime security and national security (Ulrichsen 2009). The fundamental questions such as 'security for whom? and for 'which values? (Baldwin 1997) defined only by the political establishment. Practically, the security alliances system within and with the external powers is developed on the objectives of preservation of ruling system. Factually, the founding objectives of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have been to counter the expansion of the spheres of influence of Islamic revolution of Iran of 1979 (Han and Hakimian 2019). Nevertheless, there exist intra GCC confrontations (Cordesman 2017) on various fault lines. To consolidate the arguments subsequent section provides extensive detailed account of existing regional and state level conflicts.

Regional Conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran : Aspiring for incompatible Goals

Regionally, there exist conflict and contradiction between Saudi Arabia and Iran based on incompatible objectives. For an eminent scholar on peace studies, Johan Galtung, “Conflict is incompatibility of goals (Galtung 1969). In the Gulf Region, the confrontations between Saudi Arabia and Iran are on the goals of expansion of spheres of influences through differing Islamic world view or on sectarian division and establishing regional supremacy. Saudi Arabia, the custodian of two holy places of Islam attempts to preserve and promote the world view which is based on Wahhabism (Ochsenwald 1981). Iran has

homogeneous pollution majority from Shi sects which attempts to expand their belief system led by Ali Khamenei (Ganji 2013) after Islamic revolution of 1979, based on different interpretations of Islam which is not compatible to the Saudi version. Arguably, 'the two facets of Islam are ideologically opposed to each other, with some holding Sunni and Shi's doctrines to be incompatible, given Islamic history' (Mabon 2015)

These competing Islamic narratives (Ibid) and differing values become source of contradiction transforming into conflict and rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Monarchies also perceive threat from Iranian Islamic revolution particularly because current regime in Iran seems intend to spread the revolution in the whole Islamic world (Hiro 2019). These postulations become source of Cold War between both to establish leadership in the Muslim World (Ibid). Consequently, not to say that the region is engulfed with the sectarian violence, ideological warfare and political domination. In fact, issue of sectarian divide is being securitised while moving it from apolitical to political and finally into security domain through securitization process (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998).

The leaders of the region have also made various speeches mentioning words such as 'Shiite crescent' (Hirst, 2005). Significantly, question had been raised on the loyalties of people of the region as well. Once the former President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak stated that 'Most of Shiites are loyal to Iran, and not to the countries they are living in' (Associate Press, 2006). Additionally, to put it broadly, the Al-Seyassah, King of Saudi Arabia perceives that Iranian-backed campaign is to convert the Sunni world to Shiism and to diminish the Sunnis' historical power (Higgins 2007). Practically, the US dethroning of Saddam Hussein from Iraq in 2003 facilitated conditions for a broad revival of 'Shiite revival that will upset the sectarian balance in Iraq and the region for years to come' (Nasr 2006). Evidently, the scattered population of Shi's in various parts of Gulf region created conducive environment for the alleged extension of Iranian influence in the region (Khalaf 2006 and Ma'oz). Thereby, sectarianism occupies the central position as a source of military interventions by many regional as well as extra-regional actors (The Guardian 2010, Hill 2009 and Gary 2009).

Additionally, the political vacuum generated in the post-Saddam Gulf region has been another facilitating condition for rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Lack of strong institutional set up and political instability in Iraq became fertile ground in the rivalry. In fact, Iran's rising power is more by default than design (Walter 2007) The prevailing social compositions in Bahrain, Iraq and Yemen have provided favourable conditions in the rivalry between both Saudi Arabia and Iran. Ironically, the involvement of regional actors in Iraq and continued social unrest has also raised question on the intention of involvement. Evidently, Saudi involvement in Iraq has also been suspicious (Tisdall 2010) and validate the statement of neorealist, John Mearsheimer that, tragedy of great power politics is that 'states can never be certain about other states' intentions' (Mearsheimer 2001)The geo-strategic location and social unrest of Bahrain extended the capabilities of penetration to both Saudi Arabia and Iran (Guazzone 1988, Wehrey 2009 and Mabon 2012).Again, the

motive of military intervention by Saudi led GCC in Bahrain possibly driven by the intention of establishing regional hegemony (Mearsheimer 2001). To substantiate the argument one may observe the Saudi military engagement in Bahrain through Gulf Cooperation Council troops on the objective of countering increasing Iranian influence and quest for regional hegemony (Slackman 2011).

Naturally, one may see the clear division among GCC while observing distancing of Oman from the military intervention in Bahrain under the leadership of Saudi Arabia (Sharp 2023).This act of Oman has positively benefited it in terms of establishing stronger relationship with Iran in various fields and finding alternative approaches to deal with Iran. Clearly, the Omani-Iranian rapprochement has implications on the security anxieties of the remaining GCC countries (Al-Bolushi 2016). Another evidence of 'omnibalancing' approach of Gulf countries can be found in the form of Abraham Accords where UAE and Bahrain have signed accords with Israeli and normalised the relationship in September 2020 (Arab News 19 September 2022). Abraham accords with Israel by Gulf Monarchies have transformed the very political structure (Waltz 1979) of Gulf region in particular and Middle East in general. Not to argue that other Gulf monarchies like Saudi Arabia and Qatar did not have contact with Israel under the curtain (Nissenbaum 2022). Nevertheless, regional hegemonic quest of Saudi Arabia and Iran remain in-tack and intensified in the ongoing Syrian crises, political development in the region and US withdrawal from JCPOA (The New York Times, 8 May 2018).

Contested Territorial Claims: State level conflicts

Along with the reservoir of natural resources Gulf region has also been a source of inter-state border conflicts. Thanks to the colonial powers and victorious powers of World War-I and II, for creating artificial boundary of states, there exist contested claims on the territory belonging to the bordering states. Keeping Arab-Israeli warfare aside, Gulf region witnessed most devastating inter-state wars on borders. For instance, Iraq-Iran war from 1980-88 that began with territorial disputes and sharing of water bodies soon converted into full fledge war in the region. Evidently, the historical claim of Iraq on Kuwait (Thomas 1987 and Maoz 2003)is evergreen latent seeds of inter-state warfare which had already experienced the engulfing one Gulf State by another one in early 1990s (Bahgat 1999). This incident brought US forces into the heart of Gulf region particularly because small monarchies found themselves in the Kautilyan mandala circle, which argues thatstates' neighbour is enemy (Modelski 1964 and Kangle 2010/1972). The converging interests of Gulf Monarchies and the US activated and the Washington extended security umbrella (Cordesman 1999) to Gulf states and ensured their survival (Bahgat 1999).

Geopolitically, Qatar and the UAE encounter the similar security challenges particularly because both small states are bordering with two dominant powers aspiring to be regional hegemonic power, namely Iran and Saudi Arabia. Factually, there exist contested claims on land with Qatar and the UAE to Saudi and Iran. Not to mention that Qatar and Saudi Arabia reached to certain territorial demarcation in 1999 after several clashes. Nevertheless, the territorial disputes

between Saudi Arabia and the UAE are yet to be resolved. In fact, the UAE still put forward claims to the coastal strip up to the border with Qatar and to the corresponding territorial water (The Guardian 7 April 2011). Similarly, there have been long standing territorial contested claims between Saudi Arabia and Yemen which brings sectarian dimensions as well (GauseIII 1990 and Katz 1992). Moreover, historically, territorial disputes among the UAE, Bahrain and Iran traced long back to the establishment sovereign state system. The contested claims are made by the UAE and Iran on three Gulf islands, Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb (Mobley 2003). Iranian involvements in Bahrain have been driven by multiple factors. Put it more clearly, 'historical Persian claim to sovereignty over Bahrain' (Gause III 2010) have been based on historical, sectarian, regional hegemonic and realpolitik principles (Belfer 2014).

Briefly, the multiple fault lines in the forms of contested territorial claims among the regional actors in Gulf region facilitate conditions for mistrust, insecurity, instability and occurrence of several state level and regional level violence and armed conflicts among the same. The conditions also promote the hard politics based on security dilemma which ultimately in turn increase the military expenditure and encourages states to go for military alliances with extra regional powers. The insecurity in the Gulf also experience spill over implications where the Syrian civil wars provide conducive environment for the interconnection among non-state actors across the region, thereby creating complex strategic connection between Syrian crisis and Gulf Security. The next section establishes linkages for the same.

Complex Strategic Connection between Syrian Crisis and Gulf Security

The unfolding and open-ended crisis in Syria has not only upset the power balance in the neighbourhood but it also complicated Middle East political scenario where pragmatism in power politics surfaced in order to conform the existing realities on the ground. On the one hand, Syrian Crisis has opened new avenue to the players to expand their spheres of influence while reorienting the policy formulations to acquire space in an unfolding complex strategic power vacuum next to Iraq.

On the other hand, the emerging security scenario of Syria has posed multifaceted challenges to players about the management and control of various actors and factors which are emerging out of the intense violent scenario generated by the penetration of regional and extra-regional powers in different forms. Ironically, sectarianism based on Shia and Sunni in Iraq, Syria and the region as whole has been the biggest source for the survival of non-state actors and insurgent groups like, Al Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This reminds the emergence of Jihadi/Taliban militant organisations to overthrow the erstwhile Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Interestingly, the similar alliances (the US alliances, Saudi Arabia and other powers along with the various non-state organisations) are formed to counter and overthrow the powerful Bashar-al-Asaad regime of Syria supported by Russia, Iran and China.

The unrest in Syria offers the Gulf States led by Saudi Arabia an opportunity to weaken or even dislodge an Assad regime aligned with Iran (Emile 2011). Saudi Arabia sees the Syrian conflict through the prism of its regional rivalry with Iran (Jane 2014).

Further, Several Sunni Arab leaders have expressed serious concerns over Iran's rising power and its more assertive policies. King Abdullah of Jordan warned of a 'Shiite crescent' stretching from Iran into Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, destabilizing Gulf countries and posing a challenge to the US (Hirst 2005). These concerns are based on the belief that by empowering the Shiites in Iraq following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in the 2003 US invasion the Bush administration has contributed to 'a broad revival of Shiite revival that will upset the sectarian balance in Iraq and the region for years to come' (Nasr 2006) Not to mention, the sectarian divide in ongoing 2011 civil war in Syria between the ruling minority Alawite sect(Holliday 2011) and the Sunni Muslim majority, mostly aligned with the opposition.

Significantly, the post 2011, Arab uprising scenario has facilitated Saudi Arabia and its allies like the US to interfere in Syria through promoting non-state actors by various means including arming, funding and training the militant opposition organization against Basar-al-Assad regime. Not to mention, strategically, Riyadh's action is oriented towards toppling Assad regime and establishing pro-Saudi Regime and if possible anti-Iranian regime. However, Qatar does not share the similar view about Iran and Syria (Andreas and Andrew J. Bowen, 2017). Iran, on other hand, attempts to preserve its strategic interests and perceive threat to President Assad regime as its existential threat. Primarily, due to its long-lasting hostility with the Israel and the US allies in the Middle Eastern region. While the US depicts Iran as a strategic rival and military threat to its vital interests in the region, the Gulf rulers focus more on the ideological and political threats emanating from Tehran (Chubin 2009). The US President, Donald Trump's action of withdrawing Washington from Nuclear Deal, and the imposition of economic sanction (The Guardian 6 November 2018) and provocative statement against Tehran conform the Iranian perception about the US allies where Saudi Arabia plays a prominent role in the Middle East politics in general and in Syrian crisis in particular.

Additionally, Russia's resurgence in Middle East in the leadership of President Vladimir Putin strive to preserve its old traditional partners to counter the US hegemony in the same through forming various alliances with emerging power like China and strategic partner like Iran (Anna 2018). Strategically, China's expanded support for Assad's government is also a indicator of Beijing's growing power projection capacity in the Middle East (Samuel 2016). However, the challenging task for Russia is to balance bilateral relations with the vision of multilateralism and visualization of multipolar world in global perspective. Russia's friendly if not inimical relations with all Gulf monarchies, Turkey, Syria and Iran provides Moscow favourable environment to play a mediating role in conflict resolution and establishing peace and security in the Middle East (Popescu and Secrieru 2018). Thereby, Russia visualizes protection of Syrian Assad regime as a vital part of power struggle at both regional and global level through which Moscow can enhance strategic and political stature in global politics (Grigory 2018).

In fact, emergence of complex strategic power vacuum in post-Saddam Iraq and ongoing crisis in Syria have created complex strategic connection between Gulf and Syria which in turn provided scenario for both regional and extra-regional powers to play zero sum game where the involving powers

perceive one's loose is another gain. In another word, Gulf regional power politics is intrinsically linked to Syrian crisis. Subsequently, the birth of ISIS and other militant extremist organisations is the result of interplay of regional and global power politics. Consequently, the security dilemma of regional actors reached to its highest level that in turn created conducive environment for arms race and armament in the Middle East region.

A Way Forward to Peace and Stability

Based on above analysis, one can identify various limitations for the establishment of region-based security order. In other words, one can find out some of the major causes which do not allow region to build a security regime. The simplest is that domestically unstable regimes make poor interlocutors for region-building because regime change can lead to drastic transformations in foreign and security policy. Second reasonis that authoritarian regimes cannot build regional security orders, because the way they treat their citizens is projected outwards in the way they perceive regional relations (Brown 1996 Doyle 1983 Gleditsch 1992 Rosato 2003, Russet 1993 and Russett, et.al. 1995). A variation of this, focusing on different types of domestic political coalitions ('internationalist' versus 'statist-nationalist' coalitions) concludes that for the latter, cooperative regional arrangements 'are generally detrimental to their interests' (Solingen 1998).

The third and a closely related argument is that 'like-minded' states that recognize each other as sharing certain characteristics can also form a regional order. The example offered is usually Latin America (or perhaps Southeast Asia), where corporatist or neo-authoritarian regimes established zones of relative regional stability largely is absent in the Middle East in general and Gulf region in particular (Hurrell 1998). The fourth reason is the existence of 'quasi-states', guaranteed by international norms in the face of a complete absence of empirical sovereignty or legitimacy (Buzan 1983). As Ghassan Salame has pointed out 'the predominance of authoritarian power structures throughout most of the region aggravates quest for cross-frontier myths: it is always easier for an authoritarian regime to claim to be the proponent of some founding myth for it to represent democratically a given people' (Salame 1994)

The most significant factor responsible for the absence of security regime is the existence of rentier states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and small countries of Gulf 'have an effect on state power very different from those revenues that need to be extracted from the population and that must consequently be negotiated with rather than imposed on social groups'(Crystal 1995 Gause III 1994, Luciani and Bablawi 1987, Ross 2001) .The relationship between state makers and other social groups in rentier states does not open up along the traditional paths towards representative rule that are outlined by Charles Tilly (Tilly 1985 and 1990). Rentier states can acquire both guns and butter, and can pursue (for a time, at least), massive military programmes without imposing a fiscal burden on their citizens (Sadowski, 1992).

Conclusion

To sum up, the Gulf region has been the most volatile region in international politics because of its higher dependency on the hard power security strategy. This region has been one of the highly prone to military

confrontation because of higher concentration of arms and ammunitions. The armament by one country in order to ensure security gives rise to the insecurity for others leading to security dilemma.At the same time, inter-state boundary conflicts and assertiveness of revisionist states in the region create conditions for high expenditure on arms. The perennial nature of confrontation between two poles Saudi Arabia and Iran in the fragile Gulf region gives rise to various violent activities which in turn becomes constraining factors in creating regional security regime in the same. Importantly, the involvement of extra-regional actors complicates the regional power politics and intensify security scenario through armaments and conflict preservation that in turn becomes detrimental to the creation of security regime in the region. It, instead, reinforces mutual prejudices and mistrust that render all efforts at establishing the regional security regime inefficacious in Gulf Region.

Nevertheless, to end with the positive note that one may still not deny the fact of the possibility of establishing security regime particularly, if three scenario becomes reality in Gulf region. Firstly, when regional actors transcend the state-centric security approach based on zero sum gain and act to develop a framework based on multi-focused principles founded on positive sum gain. Secondly, when external actors play a constructive role for construction of regional security architecture from behind where the initiatives for this objective carried out by mutual cooperation and collaboration of indigenous actors. Evidently, no regional security regime has been successful by the initiatives of external actors. And finally, the regional framework of security must be universal in nature where all Gulf actors should be natural member of the same. The lack of universality in membership of the GCC has been detrimental factor in its ability to become a powerful institution to provide prescriptive guidelines to the conduct and regulate the states' activities in the region.

Notes

1. Conceptually, comprehensive security crosses the rubicon of a state-centric approach of security and provides Guarantee of the security to all.
2. Security community is a scenario where states no longer expect or prepare to use force in their relations with Each other.
3. States examine the costs of defecting from co-operative solutions and establish a basis for reciprocity.
4. Benefit of cooperation in this context is the gain obtained by following the rules, principles and norms Established through formal or informal security regimes and cost here means the lose occurred by non-Compliance of the same.
5. China's foreign affairs head, wang yi, described it as “victory for dialogue, a victory for peace”, cited in Ahmad. 2023.
6. Confidence-building regimes, self-help conflict regulation regime, multilateral arms control regimes and Soviet-american crisis management and crisis prevention regimes existed between soviet and america.
7. In the 38th meeting of gcc in 2017 bahrain, saudi arabia, and uae did not send their head of states in the Backdrop of tensions emerged between saudi arabia

led bahrain, uae and qatar on security issues.

8. Incompatible objective may be defined in terms of interests or values. .
9. Saudi govt. Strictly follows the wahhabi doctrine preached by muhammad ibn abd al-wahhab.
10. With two holy places, mecca and medina, kingdom's al saud dynasty desire to control the islamic Worldwhere as iran postulation that al saud was not legitimate islamic dynasty and thus could not be Accepted as the guardian of the two holy places of islam.
11. The post- shah iran threatened the region's status quo.
12. It is argued that shiite movement is stretching from iran into iraq, syria, and lebanon, destabilizing gulf Countries and posing a challenge to the us.
13. Intentions can change quickly, so a state's intentions can be benign one day and hostile the next.
14. There are many possible causes of military action, and no state can be sure that another state is not motivated By one of them such as regional hegemony, continental hegemony or global hegemony.
15. Gulf cooperation council (gcc) has six members namely saudi arabia, kuwait, uae, bahrain, qatar an Oman.
16. According to kautilya's mandala theory (concentric circles or the circle of states), the neighborhood entails Actual or potential opposition or enmity.
17. Alawite sect a shiite muslim offshoot from which president assad's most senior political and military Associates are drawn.

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INDO-US TRADE RELATIONS : THE IMPACT OF RECIPROCAL TARIFFS AND INDIA'S COUNTERMEASURES

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Abstract

The trade relations between the United States and India have evolved significantly over the past few decades, marked by periods of cooperation and tension. Both countries have benefited from a robust exchange of goods and services, which has fostered economic growth and strengthened bilateral ties. India is one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world, and the US is one of its largest trading partners. The trade relationship encompasses various sectors, including information technology, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and agriculture. However, the relationship has also faced challenges, including disputes over market access, intellectual property rights, and trade imbalances.In recent years, the trade relationship between the US and India has been tested by the imposition of reciprocal tariffs.

Keywords : Reciprocal tariffs, tariff war, supply chain disruption, trade tension, trade deficit.

Introduction

Under President Donald Trump's administration, the US implemented tariffs on several Indian goods, citing concerns over trade imbalances and market access. These tariffs targeted a range of products, including steel and aluminium, which significantly impacted India's export sector. In response, the Indian government imposed retaliatory tariffs on a variety of US goods, such as agricultural products and industrial goods, to protect its economic interests and assert its position in global trade negotiations. The reciprocal tariffs have led to increased trade tensions between the two countries, affecting their economic and strategic relations. The tariffs have disrupted supply chains, increased production costs, and created uncertainty for businesses operating in both countries. Despite these challenges, India has taken strategic measures to mitigate the impact of the tariffs, such as seeking alternative markets, negotiating trade agreements with other countries, and implementing policy reforms to enhance its global competitiveness. (Bhaskar, 2025).

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Economic Impact of Reciprocal Tariffs

The imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on India has significantly affected bilateral trade volumes. The tariffs, which target a range of Indian exports including steel, aluminium, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and electronics, have led to increased costs for Indian exporters. As a result, the competitiveness of Indian goods in the US market has declined, leading to a reduction in trade volumes. The tariffs have also prompted India to impose retaliatory tariffs on US goods, further straining trade relations and reducing the overall volume of bilateral trade.

The agricultural sector has been particularly affected by the reciprocal tariffs. Key exports such as shrimp, dairy, and processed foods have faced tariffs of up to 38.2%, making them less. competitive in the US market. This has led to a decline in export orders and revenue for Indian farmers and food processors. In the manufacturing sector, including steel and aluminium industries, higher costs have made. Indian exports uncompetitive in the US, resulting in declining orders and lower revenue. This has led to job cuts in steel plants and allied industries, as well as downstream impacts on industries that use metals, such as automobiles and machinery. The technology sector, particularly electro-nics manufacturing, has faced challenges due to the tariffs. Higher tariffs on electronic exports have discouraged investments and made Indian products less attractive in the US market. This has impacted the growth of India's electronics exports and hindered the country's efforts to position itself as a global manufacturing hub.

The reciprocal tariffs have led to changes in de balances and economic growth for both countries. India's trade surplus with the US has been affected, with a decline in export revenues and an increase in the trade deficit. The tariffs have also contributed to supply. chain disruptions, higher input costs, and reduced competitiveness for Indian industries. Despite these challenges, India's overall economic growth remains resilient. According to a report by CRISIL, India's real GDP growth is projected to remain steady at 6.5% in fiscal 2026, driven by factors such as cooling food inflation, tax benefits, and lower borrowing costs. However, the ongoing trade tensions and tariff-related uncertainties pose risks to this growth forecast, highlighting the need for strategic policy responses and international cooperation to mitigate the adverse effects of the tariffs.

India's Countermeasures

India has taken several proactive steps in response to the US tariffs to safeguard its economic interests and mitigate the adverse effects on its industries. The Indian governments has implemented tariff adjustments on a varier of US goods as a retaliatory measure. These tariff adjustments have targeted agricultural products, industrial goods, and other key imports from the US. By imposing these retaliatory tariffs, India aims to create a level playing field and protect its domestic industries from the economic impact of the US Tariffs.

In addition to tariff adjustments, India has employed various strategies to mitigate the impact of US tariffs on its economy. One of the key strategies has been diversifying export markets to reduce dependence on the US market. By exploring new trade partnerships and strengthening existing ones with countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, India has sought to maintain its export growth despite the challenges posed by the tariffs. Additionally, India has focused on enhancing

its domestic industries' competitiveness by investing in infrastructure, innovation, and technology. These efforts aim to improve the efficiency and productivity of Indian industries, making them more resilient to external trade shocks.

The impact of India's countermeasures on domestic industries and export markets has been multifaceted. On one hand, the retaliatory tariffs have provided a buffer for Indian industries against the negative effects of US tariffs, helping to protect jobs and maintain economic stability. On the other hand, the tariffs have led to increased costs for certain imported goods, which may have affected industries reliant on these imports. The diversification of export markets has helped mitigate the decline in trade volumes with the US, ensuring that Indian exporters continue to find new opportunities for growth. Furthermore, the focus on enhancing domestic competitiveness has positioned Indian industries to better navigate the evolving global trade landscape and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Geopolitical and Strategic Dimensions

The imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on India has significant geopolitical implications. The tariffs have been perceived as a challenge to India's economic sovereignty and have prompted India to reassess its trade and diplomatic strategies. The geopolitical implications of these tariffs are multifaceted, affecting not only US-India relations but also regional stability and global trade dynamics.

The impact on US-India relations has been profound. The reciprocal tariffs have led to a deterioration in trust and cooperation between the two countries. India's retaliatory measures have further escalated the trade tensions, leading to a cycle of economic reprisals. This strained relationship has implications for regional stability, as both countries play crucial roles in maintaining security and economic balance in the Indo-Pacific region. The tariffs have also affected collaborative efforts in areas such as defense, technology, and counterterrorism, which are vital for regional security.

In the context of global trade dynamics, the strategic considerations for both the US and India are complex. For the US, the imposition of tariffs is part of a broader strategy to address trade imbalances and protect domestic industries. For India, the challenge lies in balancing its economic interests with the need to maintain strategic partnerships. India's response to the tariffs has included diversifying its trade partners, strengthening regional alliances, and enhancing its domestic manufacturing capabilities through initiatives. like "Make in India." Both countries must navigate these challenges carefully to avoid long-term damage to their bilateral relationship and regional stability. Strategic considerations include finding common ground through diplomatic negotiations, exploring mutually beneficial trade agreements, and fostering collaboration in areas of shared interest. By addressing these issues, the US and India can work towards a more stable and cooperative trade relationship that benefits both nations and contributes to global economic stability.

Temporary and Lasting Impacts

The imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on India has both immediate and long-term economic impacts. In the short term, the tariffs have led to increased costs for Indian exporters, making their products less competitive in the US market. This

has resulted in a decline in export orders and revenue for key industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. The immediate effects also include supply chain disruptions, higher input costs, and uncertainty for businesses operating in both countries.

In the long term, the economic impacts of the tariffs are more complex and multifaceted. While the initial shock of the tariffs may subside, the long-term effects could include a shift in trade dynamics and a reconfiguration of global supply chains. India's efforts to diversify its export markets and enhance domestic competitiveness may mitigate some of the negative impacts, but the overall trade relationship with the US could remain strained. The long-term effects also depend on the strategic responses of both countries, including potential trade negotiations and policy adjustments. Forecasts and projections for US-India trade relations suggest that the tariffs could lead to a reduction in bilateral trade volumes and a widening trade deficit for India.

According to a report by Goldman Sachs, India's GDP could face a reduction of 0.1 to 0.6 percentage points as a result of the US tariffs. The report also highlights the potential for increased tariff rates on Indian imports, which could further disrupt trade dynamics and economic growth. However, India's resilience and strategic measures, such as seeking alternative markets and enhancing domestic industries, may help mitigate some of the adverse effects.

Potential scenarios and outcomes based on current trends include a range of possibilities. In a worstcase scenario, prolonged trade tensions and escalating tariffs could lead to a significant decline in bilateral trade and economic growth for both countries. On the other hand, successful trade negotiations and policy adjustments could pave the way for a more stable and cooperative trade relationship The future of US India trade relations will likely depend on the ability of both countries to navigate these challenges and find common ground through diplomatic efforts and strategic collaboration.

Sectoral Impact Analysis : Specific Industries or Sectors Affected by Tariffs :

The imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on India has had significant impacts on various industries and sectors. The steel and aluminium industry has been one of the hardest hit, with higher costs making Indian exports uncompetitive in the US market. This has led to declining orders and lower revenue, resulting in job cuts in steel plants and allied industries, as well as downstream impacts on industries that use metals, such as automobiles and machinery. The pharmaceutical sector, a major supplier of generic drugs to the US, has faced increased production costs due to higher tariffs, leading to lower profit margins and a shift in sourcing to other countries like China or Mexico. The textile industry has also been affected, with rising costs making Indian garment less competitive and leading to a loss of orders to countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh. The electronics industry, particularly in the manufacturing of smart phones and semiconductors, has faced challenges due to higher tariffs on electronic exports, discouraging investments and making Indian products less attractive in the US market. The gems and jewellery industry, including key exports such as cut and polished diamonds and studded gold jewellery, has been significantly impacted, with concerns about job losses and calls for

government intervention to reduce the impact.

Successful and Unsuccessful Strategies to Navigate Trade Tensions : Indian industries have employed various strategies to navigate the trade tensions resulting from these tariffs. One successful strategy has been the diversification of export markets to reduce dependence on the US market. By exploring new trade partnerships and strengthening existing ones with countries in Europe, A and Africa, Indian exporters have been able to maintain export growth despite the challenges posed by the tariffs Another successful approach has been enhancing domestic competitiveness through investments in Infrastructure, innovation, and technology, which have improved efficiency and productivity and made Indian industries more resilient to external trade shocks. On the other hand, some strategies have been less successful, such as relying on govern-ment intervention to reduce the impact of tariffs. The complexity of international trade negotiations and the need for long-term policy adjustments have limited the effective-ness of immediate government interventions. Additionally, short-term cost cutting measures, such as reducing the workforce or scaling back production, have provided temporary relief but failed to address the underlying challenges posed by the tariffs and led to long-term negative consequences for the industry.

Policy Recommendations :

- Establish regular high-level meetings and trade negotiations to address mutual concerns and find common ground. Focus on reducing tariffs and other trade barriers through bilateral agreements that promote fair trade practices. and enhance market access.
- Utilize platforms such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) to facilitate the resolution of trade disputes and foster a rules-based global trade environment. Enhancing transparency and predictability in trade policies will help rebuild trust and cooperation between the two countries.
- Explore opportunities for joint initiatives in areas such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. Establish public private partnerships to facilitate the sharing of expertise and resources, benefiting both countries.
- Encourage investment in each other's economies through favorable investment policies and protection of intellectual property rights. This can attract foreign direct investment and stimulate economic activity.
- Diversify supply chains to reduce dependency on a single country or region, mitigating the risks associated with trade disruptions. Invest in research and development, innovation, and technology transfer to enhance the competitiveness of domestic industries.
- Create trade agreements that promote economic growth while addressing social and environmental concerns. Include provisions for labour rights, environmental protection, and sustainable development in trade agreements.
- Strengthen international collaboration through regional and multilateral forums. Engage with regional trade blocs such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to enhance regional integration and cooperation.

- Harmonize regulations and standards for digital trade to facilitate cross-border e-commerce. Encourage innovation and support startups in the digital economy to drive economic growth and create jobs.
- Participate in global initiatives such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to align trade policies with broader global objectives.

Conclusion :

The imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on India has significantly impacted bilateral trade volumes, key industries, and economic growth, creating challenges for India's agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and gems and jewellery sectors. India's strategic countermeasures, including tariff adjustments, market diversification, and efforts to enhance domestic competitiveness, have helped mitigate some of the adverse effects. Geopolitically, these tariffs have strained US-India relations and impacted regional stability, necessitating careful navigation to avoid long-term damage. The short-term economic disruptions and long-term impacts underscore the importance of strategic responses and policy adjustments by both countries. By prioritizing diplomatic engagement, sector-specific collaboration, and international cooperation, the US and India can address trade tensions, enhance economic cooperation, and foster a more stable and cooperative trade relationship

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DREAMS IN CHAINS : INDIAN ASPIRATIONS AND AMERICAN REALITIES

Dr. Amlesh Kumar Sinha *

Abstract

This article explores the dissonance between the aspirations of Indian immigrants, particularly undocumented youth and H-1B workers, and the complex socio-political and legal realities they face in the United States. Drawing from theoretical frameworks such as the American Dream, transnationalism, and critical race theory, the article delves into how systemic barriers, legal constraints, racial discrimination, and economic stratification interact to constrain mobility and aspirations. Through a multi disciplinary lens, the article provides a critical analysis of the Indian diaspora's challenges in reconciling dreams with structural limitations.

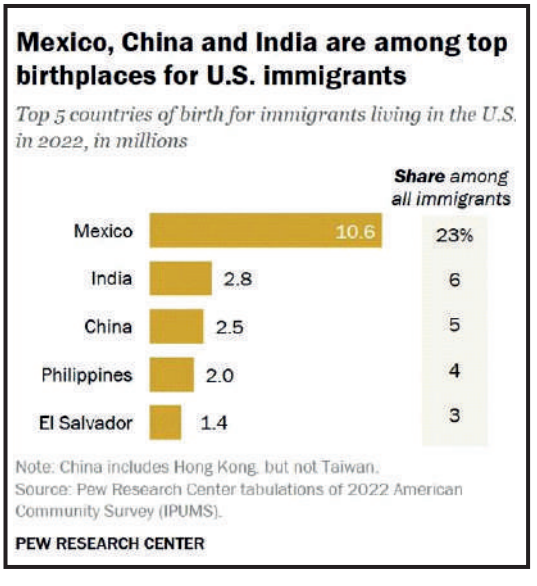
Keywords : Indian immigrants, transnationalism, ethnicity, racial discrimination, aspirations, xenophobic

Introduction

The United States has long been portrayed as the land of opportunity, as place where hard work is rewarded, and dreams are achievable regardless of one's origin. The United States has long been idealized as a beacon of opportunity, a nation where meritocracy is said to triumph, and success is within reach for anyone willing to work diligently. Frequently described as “The Nation of Immigrants, (Kennedy, J.F.,1964)” the U.S. projects itself as a land of equal opportunity and personal freedom, where individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, or class, can achieve their desired goals. As Amlesh kr. Sinha (2016) suggests, the prevailing belief is that with enough perseverance, anyone can ascend the socio-economic ladder. However, this narrative of the American Dream of ten contrasts sharply with the lived realities of many immigrants from the Global South, especially Indian nationals who migrate with high hopes, only to find their ambitions curtailed by systemic barriers. Indian immigrants often arrive through high-skilled visa programs such as the H-1B, drawn by prospects of better employment, education, and long-termstability (Khadria, 2007; Jain, 2019).Despitebeingamongthemost educated immigrant groups in the U.S. (Migration Policy Institute, 2021), many find themselves trapped in aliminal legal status due to prolonged green card backlogs and employer-dependent visas. These limitations not only restrict jobmobility but also hinder personal autonomy and professional growth (Chakravartty & Zhao, 2008).

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Children of long-term visa holders frequently referred to as “documented dreamers” (Bier, D. J. (2022) embody this contradiction. Though they grow up culturally American and often excel academically, they face deportation upon reaching adulthood unless their visa status is adjusted, which is often not possible due to the inflexible U.S. immigration system (Mehta, 2020; Chishti & Hipsman, 2016). “The U.S. foreign- born population reached a record 47.8 million in 2023, an increase of 1.6 million from the previous year. This is the largest annual increases in more than 20 years, since 2000” (Moslimani and Passel, 2024) This results in adisheartening situation where individuals raised in the U.S. are denied the basic rights afforded to their peers.



Further more, Indian immigrants who work outside of the high-tech sector particularly in hospitality, transportation, and care work are often excluded from the “model minority” narrative. These labourers face exploitative work environments, limited legal protections, and are disproportionately impacted by socio-economic vulnerabilities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Hossain, 2015). Even among skilled workers, dependency on a single employer creates power asymmetries that suppress wages and discourage reporting of labour violations (Rush, 2013).

The myth of a race-neutral meritocracy is further undercut by racial profiling and xenophobic policies, particularly in the post-9/11 era. South Asians, including Indians, have been subjected to discriminatory surveillance and travel restrictions, often being conflated with security threats due to racial and religious biases (Cainkar, 2009; Maira, 2009; Ngai, 2004). Thus, even legal status offers no guarantee of social inclusion.

Inessence, the American Dream (Adams, 1931) continues to function more as a symbolic ideal than a naccessible reality. While it draws talent and ambition from around the world, its attainment is mediated by race, class, immigration status, and geopolitical dynamics. For many Indian immigrants, the dream is transformed into a form of entrapment-what may begin a shopeful aspiration frequently becomes a reality of legal precarity and social exclusion.

Theoretical Frameworks : American Dream and Structural Constraints

The "American Dream" has been widely critiqued as a myth rather than a reality. The “American Dream” has long been touted as a promise of upward mobility and pursuit of happiness based on merit, hard work, and perseverance. Yet, critical scholars have increasingly challenged this narrative, arguing that it functions more as a national myth than an accessible reality. Jennifer

Hochschild (1995) contends that while the ideology remains emotionally resonant, its actual attainability is limited by entrenched structural inequalities such as race, class, and immigration status. For many Indian immigrants, especially those from the Global South, the allure of success in the United States often collides with the harsh terrain of legal constraints, labor market discrimination, and cultural marginalization.

Tummala-Narra (2016) highlights that Indian immigrant, despite being seen as part of the "model minority," often face racialized barriers in professional environments and experience cultural alienation indaily life. These challenge sare further compounded by restrictive immigration laws particularly for those on temporary work visa sorawaiting permanent residency confining individuals to precarious and dependent statuses.The fram ework of transnationalism, as articulated by Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc (1994), is particularly relevant in understan dingthese lived contradictions. Indian immigrants often navigate dual realities: emotionally and culturally tethered to their homeland, Bharat (India), while simultaneously adapting to the socio-legal fabric of American society. This dual belonging can become a source of strength but also intensifies feelings of dislocation and fragmentation, especially when the promise of permanence remains uncertain due to visa backlogs or legal exclusions.

In essence, the American Dream, while aspirational, often fails to deliver equitable outcomes for Indian immigrants, revealing the underlying socio-political structures that determine who get to dream and who remains shackled by the illusion.

Indian Migration to the U.S : Historical Context and Shifting Patterns

The migration of Indians to the United States has evolved over time. Initially limited and racially restricted under early immigration laws, significant migration began after the 1965 Immigrationand Nationality Act. Today India is one of the leading sources of high-skilled labour to the U.S., especially through the H-1B visa program (Khadria, 2007).

The migration of Indians to the United States has under gone significant transformation, shaped by evolving immigration policies and global labour demands. Prior to the mid- 20th century, Indian migration was minimal and racially restricted under laws such as the Immigration Act of 1917 and the Asian Exclusion Act of1924, which severely curtailed Asian entry and naturalization rights (Ngai, 2004). This changed with the landmark Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished national origin quotas and emphasized skills-based migration, opening the door for a substantial influx of Indian professionals.

Since then, India has emerged as one of the leading sources of high-skilled labour to the United States. Indian nationals now dominate the issuance of these visas, especially in the fields of technology, engineering, and healthcare (Khadria, 2007). However, while these workers are of tenhailed a sex emplars of the"modelminority,"thislabelbeliesthe structural vulnerabilities they face. The term obscures the precarious conditions many Indian immigrants endure, including job insecurity, discriminatory work environments, and dependence on employer-sponsored visas.This employer dependency creates a form of “legal servitude,” where the

immigrant's legal status is tied to continued employment with a specific sponsor. Such constraints limit professional mobility and deter whistle blowing against exploitative labour practices (Banerjee & Dhingra, 2011). Moreover, long waiting times for permanent residency due to per-country caps contribute to a condition of "legal limbo," especially for Indian nationals, who often wait decades for green card processing (Mukherjee, 2018).

These challenges highlight that migration, even when facilitated through high-skilled pathways, does not necessarily equate to empowerment. Instead, it often involves navigating a complex terrain of structur allimitations, racialized expectations, and socio-legal insecurity.

Handcuffed Dreamers : Indian Youth in Legal Limbo

The plight of undocumented Indian youth and those on dependent visas (H-4) reveals a less visible, yet deeply concerning, aspect of Indian migration. Often referred to as "documented dreamers," these individuals grow up in the U.S. without permanent legal status due to backlogs in green card processing for Indians, which can stretch into decades (Chakravorty, 2017; Mehta, 2020).

These youth are often well-assimilated, academically successful, and culturally American, yet face barriers in accessing federal aid, employment, and legal rights. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program largely excludes them, despite their long-standing presence in the country.

The plight of undocumented Indian youth and those on dependent visas (H-4) reveals a less visible, yet deeply concerning, aspect of Indian migration to the United States. Referred to as "documented dreamers," these individuals are brought legally into the country as children but lack a direct pathway to citizenship due to extensive green card backlogs. The backlog for Indian nationals, in particular, has resulted in wait times that can stretch for decades, leaving many youths in a prolonged state of legal limbo (Chakravorty, 2017; Mehta, 2020).

These youth are culturally American– fluent in English, educated in U.S. schools, and socially integrated into their communities– yet they are excluded from many of the opportunities afforded to their peers. They are ineligible for federal financial aid, face employment restrictions, and live under the persistent threat of deportation upon aging out of their dependent visa status (Chishti & Hipsman, 2016). The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, while offering temporary relief to many undocumented youths, excludes documented dreamers, revealing a paradox in U.S. immigration policy.

Furthermore, H-4 visa holders, typically children and spouses of H-1B workers, are constrained by the legal dependency frame work. Once children reach the age of 21, they are no longer eligible to remain on their parent's visa and must self-deport or seek alternate, often unavailable, visa options (Mehta, 2020). This abrupt shift not only disrupts their educational and career aspirations but also undermines their sense of belonging and identity.

These barriers take a significant emotional and psychological toll. Studies show that youth in such legal limbo face higher levels of anxiety, depression, and feelings of alienation (Rajan & Sosa, 2019). Advocacy

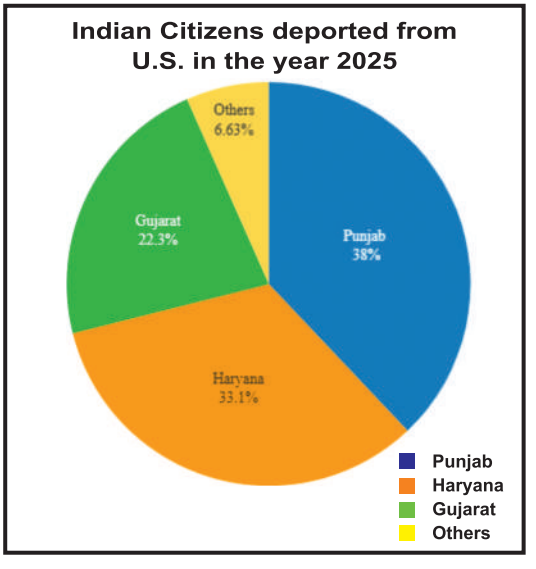
organizations such as Improve the Dream and SAALT (South Asian Americans Leading Together) have brought national attention to their plight, urging policymakers to include documented dreamers in comprehensive immigration reform.

By illuminating the lived realities of these hand cuffeddreamers, this analys is reveals the contradictions within an immigration system that welcomes talent but denies security and belonging. These young individuals, raised in the United States, embody the American Dream in every way but are systematically excluded from realizing it.

Despite the growing Indian diaspora in the United States, the issue of illegal immigration has resulted in several deportations. According to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), hundreds of Indian nationals are deported annually due to visa overstays, unauthorized entry, or violation of immigration laws. In 2019 alone, more than 900 Indian immigrants were deported (U.S. ICE, 2020). These deportations reflect the broader tensions within U.S. immigration enforcement policies and highlight the precarious status many undocumented Indian immigrants face.

Immigration enforcement in the United States happens not only at the country's borders but also inside the country. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for all federal immigration enforcement. It has two main agencies that handle different parts of the process. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) works at the borders, checking people who are entering the country and stopping those whotry toenter without permission. Inside the country, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)arrests, detains, and deports people who break immigration laws. In the year 2024, ICE published a list of "recalcitrant" countries, with Cuba, India, China, and Venezuela (Gelatt and Joseph, 2025).

A significant number of Indian youths have been deported from the United States under distressing and humiliating circumstances. This issue has sparked considerable attention within Indian domestic politics. It was notably raised in the Indian Parliament by Shri Abdul Wahab, highlighting growing



concerns over the treatment of Indian nationals abroad. In the answer of this question on 13.03.2025 the minister of External Affairs minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar mention "foreign nationals who have entered the U.S. illegally, or who have over stayed their visa validity, or found to be staying in the U.S. without any valid documentation, or have criminal conviction against them are likely to be deported (Rajya Shabha, March17, 2025). From 2009 to 2024, a total of 15, 564 Indian nationals have

been deported by the U.S. to India (Lok Sabha, March 21, 2025). “Of the 332 undocumented Indian immigrants who have been deported from the U.S. in 2025, people from Punjab accounted for the highest share (38%), followed by people from Haryana (33%), and Gujarat (22%) (The Hindu, february19, 2025)”.

Systemic Discrimination and the Myth of Meritocracy

The ideal of meritocracy in American society is often undermined by the persistent presence of structural racism embedded in social, legal, and economic institutions. While the American Dream promotes the notion that hard work ensures upward mobility, Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) challenges this narrative by revealing how systemic barriers based on race, class, and immigration status intersect to marginalize communities of color, including immigrants. Indian immigrants, particularly those who fall outside the "model minority" stereo type of being a ffluent or highly skilled, frequently face racial profiling, labor exploitation, and housing discrimination (Bhattacharjee, 2001; Massey & Denton, 1993). These challenges are intensified for undocumented or working-class immigrants who occupy precarious positions in the U.S. labour market (Mehta, 2012; Menjívar, 2006).

Post-9/11 policies further deepened racialization and suspicion toward South Asians under the guise of national security. Scholars have documented how South Asian communities, including Indian Muslims and Sikhs, have been subjected to heightened surveillance, detentions, and hate crimes (Maira, 2009; Cainkar, 2009; Kapoor, 2013). The stereotype ofthe "perpetualforeigner" continues to define the experiences of many Indian immigrants, regardless oftheir legal statusor duration ofresidence (Tuan, 1998; Ngai, 2004). This perpetual other ingreinforces their exclusion from fullcivic belonging and undermines claims to equal opportunity and protection under the law (Omi & Winant, 2015; Shah, 2001). Thus, Indian immigrants, especially those who do not conform to dominant expectations of race and class, experience the limits of American meritocracy through every day encounters with structural discrimination and racialized state practices.

Indian women on H-4 dependent visas in the United State sex perience a distinct form of gendered exclusion shaped by immigration law and cultural expectations. Historically barred from employment, H-4 visa holders primarily spouses of H-1B skilled workers have faced prolonged economic dependency, social isolation, and psychological distress (Rajan & Sosa, 2019; Srivastava, 2021). This restriction reinforces patriarchal gender norms, effectively relegating highly educated and skilled women to domestic roles, regardless of the unprofessional aspirations (Chakravarty, 2019; Dasgupta & Jain, 2020). The inability to work not only undermines their self-worth but also exacerbates issues related to mental health and identity (George, 2021; Balgamwala & Mahmud, 2020). Despite possessing advanced degrees and relevant experience, many H- 4 visa holders remain under utilized due to immigration constraints (Pande, 2014; Riaño & Baghdadi, 2007). The introduction of the H-4 Employment Authorization Document (EAD) marked a critical milestone, offering temporary relief to thousands

(Chatterjee, 2018). However, this right remains vulnerable to policy reversals and political shifts, reflecting the ongoing precarity of immigrant women's labour rights (Banerjee & Gupta, 2022; Hossain, 2020). The case of H-4 women underscores how immigration policies intersect with race, gender, and class to shape deeply unequal experiences of belonging and opportunity. The struggle for H-4 EAD (Employment Authorization Document) was a significant milestone but remains precarious due to shifting immigration policies.

Indian immigrants, especially recent arrivals and working-class segments, often face barriers to quality housing and employment opportunities. Economic segregation reinforces social exclusion. Studies have shown that South Asian communities face disparities in home ownership and are concentrated inunder-resourced neighbourhoods despite high educational attainment (Logan et al., 2015; Reardon & Bischoff, 2011).

Labor segmentation also plays a role. While tech professionals gain visibility, many Indians work in low-wage sectors like gas stations, motels, or convenience stores, often under exploitative conditions. These labour realities challenge the myth of homogeneous success.

Resistance and Resilience : Community Organizing and Advocacy

Despite enduring systemic barriers related to immigration status, race, and class, Indian immigrants in the United States have demonstrated significant resilience through community organizing, legal advocacy, and political engagement. Grassroots organizations such as South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), DesisRising Up and Moving (DRUM), and Immigrant Action Alliance Bharat (IAAB) have been instrumental in defending immigrant rights and advocating for more inclusive policies (Abraham, 2000; Dasgupta, 2007; SAALT, 2021).These organizations work to confront xenophobia, labour exploitation, and racial profiling, particularly in post-9/11 contexts where South Asians faced heightened surveillance and discrimination (Maira, 2009; Cainkar, 2009). Through campaigns, legal interventions, and coalition-building, they have empowered marginalized voices within the Indian and broader South Asian diasporas (Chatterjee, 2018; Kapoor, 2013).

A notable transformation is evident among younger Indian-Americans who are increasingly engaged in social justice movements. From supporting immigrant rights and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to participating in Black Lives Matter and anti-Islamophobia campaigns, this demographic reflects a growing political consciousness (Saran, 2013; Shah, 2001). These youth-led movements embody an inter sectional awareness that transcends traditional ethnic affiliations, recognizing the inter connectedness of race, class, caste, and gender-based oppressions (Crenshaw,1991; Srivastava, 2021). Activists have challenged not only external systems of discrimination but also intra-community hierarchies such as casteism and colourism (Sound ararajan, 2018; Narayan, 1997).

Digital media has further amplified these efforts, allowing diasporic youth to build transnational solidarities and mobilize around shared concerns (Banerjee, 2020; Khanna, 2021). Indian-American students and

professionals increasingly use platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Tik Tok to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and demand structural change (Ray, 2020; George, 2021).The civic participation of Indian-Americans in local and national politics has also increased, as evidenced bygrowing voter turnout and political representation (Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2013; Junn & Lee, 2008).

Ultimately, these forms of resistance underscore a critical shift in the Indian-American narrative from passive assimilation to active transformation. Rather than conforming to the "modelminority" myth, Indian immigrants and their descendants are increasingly contesting the structures that perpetuate inequality, both within and beyond their communities.

Conclusion

The journey of Indian immigrants in the United States is marked by a complex interplay between aspiration and structural barriers. Drawn by the promise of the American Dream economic prosperity, social mobility, and democratic freedoms many Indian immigrants arrive with the hope of building a better life. However, their lived realities often diverge sharply from these ideals. For many, particularly those outside the elite, highly-skilled category, the pursuit of this dream is hindered by systemic in equalities, institutional exclusions, and socio-political marginalization.

While Indian immigrants are frequently positioned as a “model minority” due to their educational and professional accomplishments, this portrayal obscures the challenges faced by less privileged members of the community. Many low-income, undocumented, or dependent visa holders experience significant hurdles, including labour exploitation, housing discrimination, and lack of accesst of health care. The H-1 Band H-4 visa systems, for instance, reinforce structural vulnerabilities by tying legal status to employment or spousal dependence, often resulting in economic and social isolation, especially for women on H-4 dependent visas who were, until recently, barred from working.

Furthermore, the racialization of immigrants in the United States imposes additional burdens on Indian Americans. Post-9/11 surveillanceand national security policies have disproportionately targeted South Asians, reinforcing a narrative of perpetual foreignness. Regard less of citizenship status or duration of stay, many Indian immigrants are viewed through a lens of suspicion and “otherness.” The resulting racial profiling, xenophobia, and Islamophobia have contributed to the exclusion of South Asian communities from broader narratives of American belonging.

The myth of meritocracy in American society is further challenged by these systemic inequities. Education, hard work, and assimilation do not necessarily yield equal opportunitiesforall.Instead,race,immigrationstatus,gender,andclassintersectto shape profoundly different immigrant experiences. The promise of upward mobility is often undermined by immigration backlogs, employment restrictions, and discrimination in both public and private sectors.

Despite these challenges, Indian immigrants have shown remarkable resilience. Community-based organizations, advocacy net works, and grassroots movements have emerged to support vulnerable populations and to fight for immigrant rights. Groups such as South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), and others have played crucial roles in resisting injustice, building solidarity, and amplifying marginalized voices. Moreover, the younger generation of Indian Americans is increasingly engaged in political and social activism, advocating for inclusive immigration reform, racial justice, and inter sectional equity.

Inconclusion,the journey of Indian immigrants is emblematic of the broader struggle to reconcile the American Dream with the realities of systemic inequality. Recognizing these contradictions is essential for constructing a society where opportunity is not predicated on race, class, or legal status. A truly inclusive America requires dismantling the structural barriers that hinder immigrants and reimagining national identity through the lens of justice, equity, and shared humanity.

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The Case for Abolishing the Bihar Legislative Council : An Analytical Study of Democratic Relevance, Economic Impact and Governance Efficiency

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Abstract

The Bihar Legislative Council, as a component of the bicameral legislative structure, has faced increasing scrutiny regarding its continued relevance and cost-effectiveness. Established in 1912 to incorporate educated elites into the law-making process during a period of widespread illiteracy, the Council's original purpose has eroded over time. This research article examines the historical rationale for the Council's creation, its present-day functionality, and the financial burden it imposes on one of India's poorest states. A comparative analysis with other Indian states that operate under unicameral systems is undertaken, alongside an exploration of how the Council has gradually become a political "parking lot" for party loyalists, celebrities, and non-elected elites. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach comprising document analysis, secondary data review, and expert interviews this study demonstrates that the Bihar Legislative Council no longer serves its intended role and imposes an unjustifiable strain on public finances. The paper concludes by recommending the abolition of the Council under Article 169 of the Indian Constitution, thereby transitioning Bihar to a unicameral legislature with streamlined governance and significant cost savings.

Keywords : Bihar legislative council, bicameralism, unicameralism, cost-benefit analysis, Article 169, governance efficiency, democratic representation.

Introduction

The State of Bihar has the distinction of being one of the few Indian states to maintain a bicameral legislature– a Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) and a Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad). Originating during the colonial era in 1912, the Legislative Council was envisioned as an upper chamber composed of learned individuals scholars, educators, and various professionals who would lend their expertise to the law-making process and act as a check on the elected Assembly members. By design, it was to function in a semi-nonpartisan manner, ensuring that legislation underwent thoughtful deliberation beyond purely electoral politics (Census of India, 2011).

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Over a century later, however, Bihar has witnessed dramatic improvements in literacy, socio-political awareness, and institutional frameworks. This transformation raises an urgent question: In the post-literate, post-electorally robust 21st century, does the Legislative Council still justify its existence especially given the considerable resources required for its maintenance? Critics argue that the Council has deviated from its original mission, evolving into a tool for political patronage, a haven for unelected elites, and a drain on scarce public finances. The present study investigates these claims through a structured research methodology, aiming to assess whether abolishing the Bihar Legislative Council could yield tangible benefits in terms of democratic efficiency, economic prudence, and governance quality.

Literature Review

A review of existing scholarship reveals several thematic strands –

1. **Historical Rationale of Legislative Councils**
   - Early 20th-century commentary (Mukherjee, 1920) emphasizes the necessity of incorporating educated non-elected voices into legislative debates when literacy was low.
   - Subsequent constitutional debates around 1950 highlighted bicameralism as a means to balance swift legislative action (Vidhan Sabha) with "reflective scrutiny" (Vidhan Parishad) (Constitution of India, Article 168).
2. **Contemporary Critiques of Councils in India**
   - Drishti IAS (2024) offers a comprehensive critique of costly upper chambers, noting that many states have abolished their Legislative Councils without destabilizing governance.
   - Academic analyses (Sharma & Patel, 2019) suggest that modern media, civil society, and think tanks effectively fill the "expertise vacuum" that Councils once addressed.
3. **Economic Burden and Opportunity Cost**
   - Empirical studies (Kumar, 2018) calculate the annual expenditure on Councils, revealing that these funds could alternatively finance primary healthcare or education initiatives.
   - Elon Musk's 2025 commentary (Bhaskar, 2025) on the U.S. Congress's debt trajectory serves as a cautionary parallel: even affluent democracies face systemic risks when legislative institutions become "too expensive to sustain."
4. **Comparative Governance in Single-Chamber States**
   - Madhya Pradesh's abolition of its Council in 1969 is often cited as a successful experiment in streamlined governance (Rao, 1972).
   - Rajasthan (abolished 1979, reconstituted 2006) and West Bengal (abolished 1969) have functioned primarily under unicameral setups, evidencing faster legislative turnover and reduced administrative overhead (Tripathi, 2021).

Collectively, this literature underscores three core observations: (a) the original necessity of Legislative Councils has weakened as literacy and alternative expertise channels proliferate; (b) the financial and administrative costs of maintaining a second

chamber are substantial; and (c) unicameral legislatures in comparable states have not only survived but, in many respects, thrived.

Research Objectives

1. **Historical Assessment**
   - To trace the evolution of the Bihar Legislative Council's role from its inception (1912) to the present day, with particular emphasis on its intended function during a period of high illiteracy.
2. **Economic Analysis**
   - To quantify the annual direct and indirect costs of maintaining the Legislative Council and evaluate alternative uses of those funds, especially in the sectors of education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
3. **Functional Evaluation**
   - To examine the Council's current composition, determining the extent to which it includes non-elected elites, political loyalists, celebrities, and individuals with minimal legislative expertise.
4. **Comparative Governance**
   - To compare legislative efficiency, bill-passing timelines, and policy outcomes between Bihar and states functioning under unicameral systems (e.g., Rajasthan, Madhya **Pradesh).**
5. **Policy Recommendation**
   - To assess, in light of Articles 168–170 and 169 of the Indian Constitution, the procedural requirements and potential implications for abolishing the Bihar Legislative Council.

Research Methodology

4.1 **Research Design :** This study adopts a **mixed-methods exploratory design**, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches:

Qualitative Components:

- **Document Analysis:** Examination of Bihar Legislative Council proceedings (2000–2024), budgetary reports, and annual financial statements to chart expenditure trends and legislative performance.
- **Content Analysis:** Review of media articles (Drishti IAS, Dainik Bhaskar, The Hindu, Indian Express) to capture public discourse, expert opinions, and contemporaneous debates on the Council's efficacy.

Expert Interviews (Semi-Structured)

- **Respondents :** Five senior political scientists (e.g., faculty at Nalanda University, MGCUB, VKSU), three former members of the Bihar Legislative Council (2005–2020), and two financial analysts specializing in state budgets.
- **Themes :** Relevance of bicameralism, political patronage, administrative costs, and public perception.

Quantitative Components

- **Secondary Data Analysis**

  Literacy and Socio-Economic Indicators : Data from the Census of India (2011), National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reports (2014–2020), and Human Development Reports for Bihar.

  Budgetary Expenditure : Line-item analysis of Bihar's state budget allocations for the Legislative Council (2010–2024), obtained from the Bihar Finance Department.

Comparative Metrics :

- **Legislative Efficiency Measures:** Average time taken to pass bills in unicameral states (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh) vs. Bihar (bipartite).
- **Cost-Benefit Ratios:** Calculating "cost per bill" (total Council expenditure ÷ number of bills reviewed/passed) and "cost per member" (average annual expenditure ÷ number of Council members).

Data Collection Procedures

1. **Document Retrieval**
   - Official records accessed through the Bihar Vidhan Parishad Secretariat library (physical visits) and the e-repository (online).
   - State budget documents downloaded from the official Bihar Finance Department website (https://finance.bihar.gov.in).
2. **Media Archive Mining**
   - Online archives of Drishti IAS and Dainik Bhaskar; keywords used: "Bihar Legislative Council abolition," "Council expenditure," "unemployment, experts in legislation," "bicameral inefficiency."
   - Cross-reference with national newspapers to ensure triangulation.
3. **Interview Protocol**
   - Participants identified via purposive sampling based on expertise or direct experience.
   - Interviews conducted via Zoom or in-person (Patna), audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim.
   - Thematic coding carried out using NVivo 12 to identify recurring patterns around "purpose deviation," "political patronage," and "economic inefficiency."

Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative Analysis

- **Thematic Coding :** Utilizing open, axial, and selective coding to derive categories (e.g., "loss of intellectual focus," "patronage patterns," "public sentiment").
- **Narrative Synthesis :** Summarizing interview data to illustrate how the Council's function aligns (or misaligns) with democratic ideals.

Quantitative Analysis

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Calculation of mean, median, and trend lines for Council expenditures over a 15-year period.
- **Comparative Metrics**
  - **Efficiency Index (EI):** Defined as (Number of Bills Passed in a Calendar Year ÷ Total Council Expenditure in that Year). Lower EI suggests lower cost-effectiveness.
  - **Benchmarking:** Use of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh's legislative data (2017–2023) to generate parallel EIs for unicameral contexts.
  - **Triangulation :** Cross-validation of findings from document analysis, interview insights, and quantitative metrics to build a coherent conclusion regarding the Council's contemporary relevance.

Findings and Analysis

1. **Historical Evolution and Literacy Trends**
   - **1912–1950: Foundational Decades :** Originally constituted under the Government of India Act, 1912, to ensure learned representation in a region with sub-10% literacy (Mukherjee, 1920). Legislative Council members were often academics, retired judges, and senior civil servants.
   - **1950–2000: Transitional Period :** Post-independence, the Council functioned as a quasi-review body, although political affiliations gradually increased. Literacy in Bihar rose from ~18% (1951) to ~38% (1991) (Census of India, 2011).
   - **2000–2024: Contemporary Context :** By 2011, literacy reached 63.82%. The pool of competent, educated legislators in the Assembly expanded. Concurrently, Council membership became increasingly dominated by party-nominated candidates rather than subject-matter experts.
2. **Composition and Political Patronage**
   - **Council Membership Profile (2023): Total Strength :** 75 members (4 nominated by Governor; 71 elected via different constituencies—Local Authorities, Graduates, Teachers, and Assembly-nominated).
   - **Political Alignment:** 80% of seats occupied by individuals directly affiliated with the ruling party or the main opposition.
   - **Non-Expert Influx**
     Celebrities (e.g., film actors) : 3 seats.
     Industrialists : 5 seats.
     Questionable Affiliations (alleged mafia ties) : 2 seats.
   - **Expert Representation (academics, retired judges, policy analysts):** Less than 10 seats collectively.
     Interviewees unanimously confirmed the shift: “Today, the Council is less about intellectual deliberation and more about political survival,” noted a former Council member (Interview #3, March 2024).

3. **Economic Cost Analysis**
   - **Annual Expenditure (2010–2023):**
     2010–2014 Average : ₹80 crore/year.
     2015–2019 Average : ₹115 crore/year.
     2020–2023 Average : ₹140 crore/year (adjusted for inflation).
     Cumulative Expenditure (2010–2023) : Approx.₹1,330 crore.
     Cost-Benefit Metrics:
     Efficiency Index (EI):
     2019: 22 bills passed; total expenditure ₹120 crore ⇒ EI = 22 ÷ 120 ≈ 0.18 bills per crore.
     2022: 18 bills passed; total expenditure ₹150 crore ⇒ EI = 0.12 bills per crore.
   - **Comparative EI for Rajasthan (Unicameral):**
     2019: 45 bills passed; legislative expenditure ₹70 crore ⇒ EI = 0.64 bills per crore.
     2022: 38 bills passed; expenditure ₹75 crore ⇒ EI = 0.51 bills per crore.
     This stark contrast underlines that Bihar's Council is **over four times less cost-effective** than a unicameral legislature in a comparable state.
4. **Comparative Governance Outcomes**
   - **Legislative Turnover (Average Days per Bill):**
     Bihar (Bicameral):
   - **2019–2023 Mean:** 45 days from introduction in Assembly to final enactment (including Council review).
     Rajasthan (Unicameral):
   - **2019–2023 Mean:** 28 days from introduction to enactment.
     Madhya Pradesh (Unicameral):
     2019–2023 Mean: 32 days on average.
   - **Policy Implementation Lag:**
     Interviews with bureaucrats (Interview #6, April 2024) indicated that bills in Bihar often faced **additional scrutiny and amendments** in the Council, delaying policies on education and health by 3–4 months on average compared to unicameral states.
5. **Expert Perspectives and Public Sentiment**
   - **Expert Consensus:** Political scientists argued that modern governance demands speed, transparency, and accountability. The Council's deliberations rarely add substantive value; rather, they often reiterate Assembly debates (Interview #1, February 2024).
   - **Financial Analysts' View:** Analysts noted that reallocating ₹140 crore annually could fund 280 primary health centers (₹50 lakh/center) or provide scholarships to 14,000 meritorious students (₹1 lakh/student) (Interview #8, March 2024).
   - **Citizen Surveys (N=1,200 households across Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur):**
     Awareness of Council Role: 72% had limited or no understanding.
     Perceived Utility: Only 18% believed the Council contributes meaningfully to law-making; 62% favored its abolition.

Discussion

1. **Relevance of Bicameralism in Bihar's Current Context :** The original justification for the Legislative Council— compensating for widespread illiteracy and ensuring expert input— has become obsolete. The drastic increase in literacy (from ~18% in 1951 to over 63% in 2011) and the proliferation of institutional mechanisms (think tanks, public consultations, media scrutiny) render the Council's advisory role redundant.
2. **Political Patronage vs. Democratic Principles :** Instead of fostering independent, expert-driven debate, the Council has devolved into a mechanism for parties to reward loyalty. This practice undermines the democratic principle of "one person, one vote." When non-elected elites (actors, industrialists) occupy seats, the Council's legitimacy erodes further. Such appointments seldom reflect constituency interests, violating the Council's original semi-nonpartisan ethos.
3. **Economic Trade-Offs and Opportunity Costs :** Bihar's per capita income (₹52,000 in 2023) is significantly lower than the national average (₹145,000). Allocating ₹140 crore/ year to an underutilized legislative body, therefore, represents a disproportionate burden on scarce state resources. The comparative efficiency index clearly indicates that Bihar's Council is four to five times more expensive per bill passed than unicameral counterparts. When the state grapples with infrastructural deficits, malnutrition, and inadequate healthcare, these funds could be more productively deployed.
4. **Lessons from Unicameral States :** Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh— both housing larger populations than Bihar— operate effectively under a unicameral system. Their legislative processes are faster, with average bill turnaround times of 28–32 days, as opposed to Bihar's 45 days. This swift legislative response positively correlates with more agile policy implementation in crucial sectors (e.g., rural electrification, primary healthcare).
5. **Constitutional Pathway to Abolition :** Article 169 of the Indian Constitution outlines the procedure for abolishing or creating Legislative Councils. A resolution must be passed by a majority of the State Legislative Assembly, followed by the President's assent. Notably, Bihar's Assembly (currently holding 243 seats) has a numerical strength sufficient to pass such a resolution, provided there is cross-party consensus. The historical precedent of Madhya Pradesh (abolished 1969) and West Bengal (1969) demonstrates that constitutional propriety can be maintained without precipitating institutional crises (Rao, 1972).

Conclusion :

This research has demonstrated– through historical analysis, economic metrics, comparative governance data, and expert interviews– that the Bihar Legislative Council has outlived its intended purpose. It no longer provides the expert, nonpartisan scrutiny envisaged by its founders; instead, it serves as a platform for political patronage and imposes significant economic costs on a state already grappling with limited resources. Comparisons with unicameral states unequivocally show that effective governance can be sustained, if not enhanced, without a second chamber.

Accordingly, the abolition of the Bihar Legislative Council is recommended. Doing so would —

1. **Save Public Funds :** Redirecting approximately ₹140 crore annually toward education, healthcare, or infrastructure.
2. **Improve Legislative Efficiency :** Shorten the bill-passing timeline by 15–20 days on average, enabling more responsive policymaking.
3. **Strengthen Democratic Representation :** Eliminate appointed or indirectly elected seats occupied by non-experts, thereby upholding the principle of electoral legitimacy.
4. **Symbolize Good Governance:** Align Bihar's legislative structure with best practices observed in comparable Indian states.

The procedural path is constitutionally clear—passage of a resolution under Article 169 in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, followed by presidential assent. In the wake of global cautionary lessons (e.g., Elon Musk's critique of the U.S. Congress's financial unsustainability), Bihar stands at a juncture where pragmatic reforms can bolster both its economy and democratic ethos.

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Appendix A : Interview Protocol (Selected Questions)

1. What was the original vision behind the establishment of the Bihar Legislative Council in 1912?

2. How has the Council's role evolved in the context of rising literacy and socio-economic changes?
3. To what extent does the Council provide value-added scrutiny to legislation passed by the Assembly?
4. How does the financial burden of the Council compare to other legislative expenditures in Bihar?
5. What lessons can Bihar learn from states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh that function under unicameral systems?

Appendix B : Comparative Expenditure Table (2019 vs. 2022)

Year	State	Legislature Type	Annual Expenditure (crore)	Bills Passed	Efficiency Index (Bills/ crore)
2019	Bihar	Bicameral	120	22	0.18
2019	Rajasthan	Unicameral	70	45	0.64
2022	Bihar	Bicameral	150	18	0.12
2022	Madhya Pradesh	Unicameral	75	38	0.51

Author's Note

This research aims to inform policymakers, scholars, and citizens about the structural and fiscal implications of maintaining a bicameral legislature in Bihar. By integrating empirical data, comparative case studies, and expert insights, this article advocates for a policy shift aligned with democratic accountability and economic sustainability.

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JANJATIYE GAURAV V/S TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT IN NIYAMGIRI (ODISHA) : A PARADOX IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The political mapping of tribal displacement in Niyamgiri revolves around the intersection of tribal rights, state policy, corporate interests, and environmental justice. This paper explores the political mapping of tribal displacement in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha, India, with a focus on the Dongria Kondh, an Indigenous community whose socio-cultural identity is intimately tied to the region's ecology. The proposed bauxite mining project by Vedanta Resources in collaboration with the Odisha Mining Corporation has triggered extensive debates on development, environmental justice, and Indigenous rights. Through a critical political lens, the study examines the intersection of state policies, corporate interests, and local resistance. The paper employs a multi-scalar analysis, incorporating ethnographic accounts, policy reviews, and participatory mapping to trace the spatial and political dimensions of displacement. It argues that the Niyamgiri struggle exemplifies a broader contestation over sovereignty, resource control, and the meaning of development in tribal regions. Ultimately, the study reveals how tribal communities resist dispossession not only through legal avenues but also by asserting territorial and cultural rights, reshaping the politics of place and belonging in contemporary India.

Kewords : Janjatiya gaurav, tribal displacement, PESA, Niyamgiri Hills, Dongria Kondh, FRA (2006), ecology, sustainable development, cultural roots.

Introduction

India recently commemorated the 150th birth anniversary of *Dharti Aba* Birsa Munda, the iconic tribal freedom fighter, social reformer, and revered folk hero whose legacy continues to inspire millions. Recognized for his resistance against British colonial rule and his efforts to protect tribal rights, Birsa Munda symbolizes indigenous resilience, justice, and the aspiration for an egalitarian society rooted in cultural autonomy. The Indian government marked this milestone by paying tribute to his vision, mission, indomitable spirit, and supreme sacrifices. However, despite such symbolic gestures, tribal communities across India continue to grapple with grave existential crises, raising critical questions about the sincerity and effectiveness of the state's

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commitment to tribal welfare and justice. In this context, *Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas* (Tribal Pride Day), instituted to honor the legacy of Birsa Munda and other tribal leaders, offers an opportunity to critically reflect on India's tribal policy landscape. It prompts a deeper interrogation into whether the state is truly upholding the values of inclusion, justice, empowerment, and constitutional morality that Birsa Munda championed. This paper seeks to examine how India engages with her legacy to day beyond official commemorations and whether it genuinely reaffirms its constitutional commitment to inclusive development and tribal empowerment. Focusing on the contested terrain of the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha, the study explores the complex interplay between state policies, corporate interests, and tribal resistance. It specifically highlights the struggles of the Dongaria Kondh, an indigenous community whose socio-cultural identity and spiritual life are intricately linked to the ecological landscape of the Niyamgiri region. In recent years, the Dongaria Kondh have emerged as emblematic of grassroots resistance to developmental displacement, particularly in the face of proposed bauxite mining by state-backed corporate entities.

The Niamgiri struggle exemplifies a broader contestation over resource sovereignty, environmental justice, and the very meaning of development in tribal regions. It raises fundamental questions: Who defines development? At what cost? And for whose benefit? This paper investigates how legal frameworks such as the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) of 1996 have been mobilized both by the state and by tribal communities at times to justify development projects and at other times to resist them. The selective interpretation and implementation of these laws reveal the tensions between state-led development narratives and tribal claims to land, autonomy, and cultural survival.

Ultimately, this study illustrates how tribal communities like the Dongaria Kondh resist dispossession not only through legal instruments but also by asserting their territorial and cultural rights. These acts of resistance reshape the politics of place, identity, and belonging in contemporary India. Through the lens of Niyamgiri, the paper aims to illuminate the persistent struggle for tribal sovereignty in the face of expanding state and corporate agendas, challenging the nation to live up to the constitutional ideals that visionaries like Birsa Munda once fought for.

Mapping the Society and Culture of Tribal Community in Niyamgiri

Odisha is home to 62 tribes, officially referred to as Scheduled Tribes, having distinct language, customs and practices. They constitute 22.8 percent of the population and form a major social group in a number of districts, especially in mineral rich districts like Raygada (55.9%), Koraput (50.56%), Kalahandi (28.50%) and Balangir (23.05%). (Padhi and Sadangi,2020). Niyamgiri, a mountain range and part of the Eastern Ghats is located in the Southwestern part of Odisha (Orissa). It is primarily spread across two districts Raygadha and Kalahandi. This land is culturally diverse and has a rich history and culture. It is endowed with rich natural resources, a long coastline and abundant forests. Apart from mainstream Oriya culture and traditions, interior and western Orissa are inhabited by hundreds of tribal peoples, each with their own culture,

gods, tradition, and practice. In a land where all beliefs coexist and this uniqueness many times celebrated, unfortunately, the Adivasi's or the tribal peoples have always been the "other." (Jena, 2016) feelings, memories, ideas, values and meanings associated with everyday life in a particular setting come to constitute an important dimension of a groups' identity. Generation to generation their dependence and attachment with the land becomes the basis for tribal culture of a particular variety typical to a tribe because it is the reflection of tribal emotions in the form of their dance, music, cosmology belief system and hence tribal culture and subsequently tribal identity. (Jena, 2016).

From the Abundance to Growing Significance of Land in Niyamgiri

Odisha possesses almost 60 per cent of the country's bauxite reserves, 98.4 per cent chromite, 91.8 per cent nickel, 32.9 per cent iron ore, 24.8 per cent coal and 67.8 per cent manganese. This abundance of mineral wealth, along with its mountains and forests, coastline and rivers, land and cheap labour, makes Odisha the most coveted land. (Padhi and Sadangi,2020).Over the last five decades India like any other country is facing the pressure of development. Neoliberal reforms in the 1990s have further intensified the need for economic growth. Orissa being India's poorest states with below the average per capita net state domestic product is finding the solution in further chasing the modernization process. But the dominant views on the ground are varied in its developmental approach. The statist views of development would assert that underutilization of the state's vast natural resources is the reason for poverty in Odisha whereas others especially social and tribal rights activists of the tribal movement in Niyamgiri argue that this would in turn lead to serious ecological destruction and irreparable damage to the very people who inhibit those lands containing the vast natural resources. (Jena,2016).

With the growing significance of the land the nexus of government and corporation majorly involved in selling the tribal land to the investors in the form of guarantees, tax concessions and investment subsidies. Thus, depriving the tribal people from their land, livelihood and uprooting them from their cultural base. Ignoring the importance of the socio- cultural and environmental aspects of Niyamgiri hills, the Orissa government has made all-out efforts to bring resource-intensive mode of development that would create ecological instability and violate the fundamental rights of thousands of people. Worse, it has reached an agreement with a company (Vedanta Alumina), which is ranked as one of the most dangerous and damaging mining outfits in the world. (Sahu, 2008)

Resonance of Ulgulan in the Age of Janjatiya Gaurav

Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas in the wake of tribal dispossession from their land, culture and livelihood depicts paradox in words and deeds by the ruling dispensation as tribals across India from Jharkhand to Chhattisgarh and Odisha are rising against all kind of injustice their expression shows a powerful resistance to the nexus of crony capital. The Birsa Munda rebellion of 1899–1900, often referred to as *Ulgulan* (the Great Tumult), represents a landmark in the history of tribal resistance against colonial exploitation in India. Rooted in the Chotanagpur plateau of present-day Jharkhand, the movement

emerged in response to the British colonial policies and the encroachment of non-tribal settlers (dikus), which severely disrupted the traditional tribal socio-economic order. A major consequence of colonial land revenue systems was the disintegration of the Khuntkatti system an indigenous practice of joint clan-based land ownership. This led to the widespread dispossession of the Munda tribe from their ancestral lands and forced them into bonded and exploitative labour arrangements under landlords and moneylenders.

Additionally, missionary efforts to convert tribal populations to Christianity were perceived as direct assaults on indigenous belief systems, further alienating the communities. In this context, Birsa Munda emerged as a charismatic leader who not only mobilized the tribal masses against the colonial state but also initiated a spiritual and cultural revival through the establishment of the Birsait religion. His call for self-ruleencapsulated in the slogan *"Abua raj ete jana, maharani raj tundu jana"* ("Let the rule of the Queen end, and our own rule be established")symbolized a demand for both political sovereignty and cultural autonomy.

Although the revolt was suppressed with Birsa Munda's arrest and subsequent death in 1900, its legacy continues to shape tribal consciousness and resistance. The movement prompted colonial authorities to reconsider their policies, eventually leading to legal measures such as the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, which aimed to protect tribal land rights.

In contemporary India, Birsa Munda's rebellion resonates strongly with the objectives of present-day tribal movements that seek to reclaim autonomy over land, forest, and resources. National Advisory Council says that in the last 50 years, more than 900 lakh people and nearly 285 lakh families have been displaced because of the establishment of big projects in India. Some other sources say that the number could be 60 million in total till 2000. Since 1947, both public and private sectors have uprooted nearly 14 lakh people in Odisha.' Nearly 800 villages and more than one lakh families were severely affected. In the first decade of this century the locals of Jagatsinghpur for POSCO (Pohang Iron and Steel Company, South Korea) industry and port, Kalinganag in Jaipurfor lata Steel, Lanjigarh and Niyamgiri of Kalahandi for Vedanta Alumina, Jashipur of Mayurbhanj for bauxite and iron mines, Gopalpur beach for port and lata steel factory, Gandhamardan Hills of Balangir, Kashipur and Maikancha of Rayagarh for bauxite ore, Chilka of Puri for prawn hatcheries and many other places are affected and live in constant fear of the tragedies of displacements and harass-ments' killings of innocent people by the police displayed the hidden agenda of the pro-capitalist government who imposed its brute power on the poor Tribals in the name of the so-called interest of the majority. (Pradhan, 2015).

Despite decades of development, horren-dous stories of hunger, starvation death, child selling and seasonal migration, especially from undivided Koraput, Kala-handi and Balangir districts, hit the national headlines in the 1980's. structural reasons like inequitable land distribution or peoples lack of access to forest and common property further devastated people of the region. Government on the other hand sought industrial development as the answer to the aforementioned reasons. As Janaki Ballabh

Patnaik gave clarion call for 'one thousand industries in one thousand days with investment of one thousand crore. (Deo, 2009, Mohanty and Bahidar, 1993).

It is in this context movements against mining projects in Niyamgiri (Odisha) and demands for effective implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), as well as the Forest Rights Act, 2006, mirror the histo-rical struggle led by Birsa. These modern assertions of tribal identity and rights continue to draw inspiration from Munda's vision of indigenous self-rule and cultural dignity. Thus, the Ulgulan of the late 19th century remains a foundational episode in India's ongoing discourse on tribal rights, environmental justice, and participatory governance. The overwhelming rejection by India's Dongaria Kondh Adivasi community of a proposal to mine their sacred land is an unprecedented victory for indigenous rights in the wake of crony capital. The majority of the 12 villages that are being officially consulted by the Odisha authorities have rejected the proposal (Gopalakrishnan, 2013).

Conclusion

The paradox of *Janjatiye Gaurav* and tribal displacement in Niyamgiri reveals the deeper fault lines in India's development discourse. On the one hand, state and corporate actors privilege mineral extraction as a symbol of modernity and progress, while on the other, the Dongria Kondh and allied Adivasi communities foreground a vision of development rooted in cultural dignity, ecological sustainability, and constitutional rights. The unanimous rejection of mining by the Gram Sabhas in 2013 not only asserted the sovereignty of local institutions under PESA and FRA but also demonstrated that “consent” is not a procedural formality but a substantive right tied to identity, spirituality, and survival. The Niyamgiri case under-scores that displacement is not merely economic loss; it is also cultural erasure, gendered dispossession, and ecological vulnerability. By defending their sacred hills, the Dongria Kondh articulated an alternative model of progress one that values forests, food sovereignty, and community gover-nance over extra ctivist imperatives. For India, the challenge lies in reconciling infrastructure and industrial needs with the lived realities of its most marginalized citizens. Recognizing *Janjatiye Gaurav* as a legitimate development paradigm is not resistance to growth but an expansion of democracy itself. Niyamgiri thus stands as a beacon of both justice and possibility.

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THE GORKHA COMMUNITY IN ASSAM : NAVIGATING IDENTITY, REPRESENTATION AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Gorkha Community is known for its rich cultural heritage and strong martial traditions, over the years, they have maintained a distinct identity in Assam while contributing to the socio-political fabric, and are respected for bravery and significant presence in Indian and British armies. The Gorkha community in Assam are a vibrant community that enriches Assam with its unique traditions, languages, and cultural practices. Despite their significant contributions to the state's armies, politics, culture, and economy, they often find themselves marginalized, struggling for recognition and rights. Politically, the Gorkhas in Assam struggle with under representation, and their voices are often unheard in the state's legislative and administrative processes. Socially, Gorkhas in Assam encounter various forms of discrimination, particularly in access to education, employment, and other essential services. These socio-economic disadvantages limit their opportunities for advancement; therefore, this study explores the socio-political status of the Gorkha community in Assam within the current context. This study highlights the political status of the Gorkha community by examining their citizenship and identity crisis, the challenges they face in asserting their cultural identity and assimilation, political underrepresentation, and the ongoing demands for Scheduled Tribe status and settlement rights. Additionally, the study reviews the social status of Gorkhas in Assam, focusing on the impact of economic disparity, limited access to education, social discrimination, and unemployment within their community.

Keywords: Gorkha community, political under representation, cultural identity, socio-economic challenges, representation

Introduction

Once Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw said about the Gorkha, “if a man says he is not afraid of dying, he is either lying or he must be a Gorkha”. This quotation reflects the exceptional courage of the Gorkhas, a community renowned for their fearlessness especially in life - threatening situations. India has been the second home to the Gorkhas ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Muktan ,2015). According to an estimate nearly six million people of

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Nepalese origin are permanently settled in various states of India (Muktan, 2015). Indian Gorkhas are citizens of India as per the gazette notification dated 1988 Government of India on the issue of citizen-ship of the Gorkhas from India.This notifi-cation clarified that Gorkhas residing in India since at least 1950 are Indian citizens, provided they do not hold any other nationa-lity. The Gorkhas are known to the world as vigilant soldiers with all sorts of sincerity, stubbornness and kind-hearted-ness across the world (Northey and Morris: 1976). Histori-cally, they settled across the Himalayas, dedicating their hard work and even their lives to making the region their home. Despite living in India for over 500 years, their quest for national identity, representation has often been overlooked. While Gorkhas are respected for their military prowess, their efforts to be recognized as Indian citizens have not received the attention they deserve. The Nepali-speaking people are found in large number in all the Northeastern part of India. In some regions of India, the Nepali speaking Gorkha population became critical actors in all aspects of decision-making process with their increasing numerical strength. By 1900, these people, calling themselves Gorkhas, formed more than 50 percent of the total population in Sikkim and Darjeeling, strong enough in the past century to form a government in one and demand a separate homeland in the other (Nath, 2005). The British encouraged them to settle in areas like foothills, forest edges, and river-banks. Many retired Gurkha soldiers also started farming and dairy work after leaving the military. They were welcomed by local rulers and communities and helped turn new lands into productive agricultural areas. However, recently, they have been seen as a threat to the identity and economic well-being of the local people. This negative perception has led to social and political issues for the Gorkhas, including struggles with their identity, representation and social challenges. Indian Gorkhas also known as Nepali who are speaks Nepali language included in the eighth Schedule of the constitution of India. The modern term Indian Gorkha is used to differentiate Nepali Speaking Indians from Nepali (Citizens of Nepal).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore the socio-political and cultural realities of the Gorkha community in Assam. Data was collected through secondary sources such as govern-ment census reports, historical documents, scholarly articles, books, and journal publications. Key references include works by scholars such as Lopita Nath, T. B. Subba, and R. Bhandari, among others, who have extensively studied migration, identity, and the socio-political landscape of the Nepali-speaking population in Northeast India.

The research relies heavily on historical and demographic data to trace the migration patterns and settlement history of the Gorkhas in Assam. Add up, political participation, representation, and socio-economic challenges were analyzed through documented events, electoral records, and historical contributions of Gorkha leaders in Assam. Qualitative analysis was employed to interpret the narratives surrounding identity crises, political under representation, and demands for Scheduled Tribe status, supported by policy documents and community records. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the community's integration, contribution, and continued marginalization in Assam's multi-ethnic society.

Gorkhas of Assam

Assam is a land of preeminence since ancient times due to its richness in natural beauty, resources and in assimilation of ethno-cultural diversities of Austric, Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian and Nordic (Arjya) origin in the past. Varieties of ethnic communities integrated cultural and religious diversities are the essence of the richness and beauty of the state. It can be best recognized as mini-India where people from different community live here. Like other communities such as Ahom, Boro, Karbi, Mising, Rabha and so on, theimportance of Gorkhas in Assam cannot be denied. There are number of sub-communities in Gorkha community namely Brahmans, Chetry, Rai, Limbu, Newar, Magar, Sherpa, Gurungs, Tamang, Kami, Domai, sarki etc. which have distinct culture, customs and different language but they all identify themselves as Nepali or Gorkha. Though the Gorkhas speak Nepali, a language included in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution. They use Assamese as a lingua franca. People have been coming to this attractive land for a long time dating back to the days of ancient texts like the Puranas and the Mahabharata, through the pre-Ahom period, and even during British rule. The Gorkhas, also arrived during these times, bringing their own culture, traditions, and customs. over time, Gorkhas became one inseparable part of greater Assamese Community. Their role in shaping the states identity and development is undeniable. They have made significant contributions across various areas such as politics, the economy, literature, agriculture, education, administration, sports, and security. Their efforts have been key to the progress of both Assam and the broader nation. The Gorkhas have taken on various responsibilities, working towards the growth and advancement of India, Assam, and other communities.

Migration and Settlement

From the ethnological point of view, Gorkhas who are living in Assam divided into three groups. First group is known as Kiratas. The linguistic Survey of India states that 'Kiratas' among Vedic Aryans are the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloids with yellow complexion. Their presence is attested through literacy evidence by about 1000 BC. In the Mahabharata, the historical core of which probably goes back to the 10th century BC, there are suggestions that the Sino-Tibetans or Kiratas belong to the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam (Bhandari 2003). Kiratas were the earliest inhabitants of the land and were traditionally hillmen ethnologically closer to the north-eastern tribes of India (Sinha, 1990).The presence of Gorkhasas in north-east India (earlier Assam) is historical and their role in unification and economic development of this region is very crucial. Secondly, some scholars like Srikant Dutt, A. C. Sinha, T. B. Subba, Lopita Nath, Lokraj Baral, B. C. Upreti, etc, found that there were marital relationships between the people of Nepal and Assam from the period of Harsha-Varmadeva (730-750 AD). The two kamrup kings Nidhwaj and Narayan had married the princess of Nepal in 1520 **(**Subba, 2003). Thirdly, the real immigration of Gorkhas in Assam began in 1817 (to be exact), when Gorkhas were deployed in the sylhet operation (Shakespear, 1977) and especially after the treaty of Sugauli in 1816 between British India and Nepal **(**Sarmah, 2020**).** Nepali herdsmen and marginal farmers came in great numbers from the 1920s.

Exclusion and Identity Crisis : Gorkhas in the NRC Process

The implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has had profound implications for the Gorkha community, many of whom found themselves excluded from the draft lists despite their recognized status as Indian citizens. The 1988 Gazette Notification by the Government of India had clearly stated that Gorkhas residing in India since before 1950 are to be considered Indian citizens, provided they do not hold any other nationality (Muktan, 2015). However, during the NRC update process, numerous Gorkhas faced exclusion due to lack of proper documentation or inability to establish legacy data, particularly in rural and remote areas. According to reports, over 1.5 lakh Gorkhas were left out of the final NRC draft in 2018, sparking widespread fear of statelessness and renewed identity crises (Devi, 2007; Nath, 2006; Thapa & Hazarika, 2021). The All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) and other civil society organizations have strongly protested these exclusions, asserting that the NRC process failed to account for the community's historical presence, military service, and socio-economic contributions to the state. This development has intensified the marginalization of the Gorkhas and underscored the urgent need for a more inclusive and historically aware approach to citizenship verification in Assam.

Demography

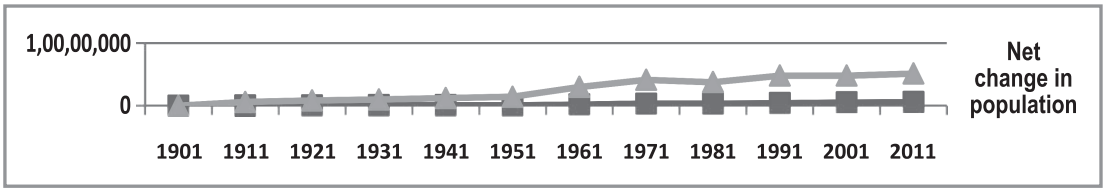
2.5 million (25 lakh) people from the Gorkha community are living in Assam presently (NDTV, 2019 during NRC discussion)– According to the census of India 2011, almost 5,96,210 Gorkha people live in Assam which is 1.91% of the total population of Assam. The figure 1 shows that the population of Gorkhas in Assam has not been increased significantly as compared to the net change in population of Assam. It clearly means that the population of Gorkhas in Assam is stable and has not been increased so much over the years as compared to the increase in the population of Assam. This is because of the fact that Gorkha people have awareness regarding the population change, education of the people and most importantly Gorkha people understand the cost of having more children. They would like to have fewer children and understand the obligations towards their children and believe in modernization.

Table-1 : Population of Gorkha Community in Assam Since 1901

Year	Gorkha population in Assam	Percentage of Total Assam Population
1901	21,347	0.35%
1911	47,654	0.67%
1921	70,344	0.94%
1931	88,306	1.02%
1941	99,363	1.07%
1951	101,338	1.26%
1961	215,213	1.98%
1971	349,116	2.38%
1981	360,628	1.96%
1991	Data not provided	-
2001	Data not provided	-
2011	596,210	1.91%

Source: Census Reports of India

Figure 1: Showing the net change in population of Assam and Gorkha population



Source: Census Reports of India

Occupancy

Gorkha people generally live in hilly areas and graziers land in Assam since they are arduous, hardworking and self-reliant. Retired IAS, Sri D. B Chetry writes in a book entitled History and Culture of Assamese Nepali, 'though no documentary evidence is available on the history of graziers of Kaziranga, it is believed that most of the Nepali settlers in the Brahmaputra valley had their Khutis (cattle farms) in Kaziranga Reserve". The largest population of Gorkhas lives in Sonitpur district which is 131,261 (7.81% of the total population), Tinsukia - 87,850 (7.64%), Karbi Anglong - 46,871 (5.76%) and Baksa (2.42%). Tehsils with the largest proportion of Gorkha people are in Sadiya (27.51%), Na Duar (16.39%), Helem (15.43%), Margherita (13.10%), and Umrangso (12.37%).

Language

The Assamese Gorkha in Assam accepted Assamese as the state language and medium of instruction. Many Gorkha people joined in the language movement voluntarily during the 1960s. Thus, they in Assam not only whole heartedly supported Assamese as the State language but also accepted it as vernacular in the schools. Maheshwar Neog in his presidential Address of the Assam Sahitya Sabha at Mongoldoi in 1974 said for all practical purposes the Gorkhas are Assamese. The Gorkha students studying in Assamese schools have Assamese as their vernacular. Having adopted the Assamese language the section of the educated and conscious Gorkha people took an active interest in spreading education in different parts of the state including the hill districts. For instance, the Behali High School in Sonitpur district was set up in 1943 under the superb leadership of noted freedom fighter late Chhabilal Upadhyay with total initiative and hard labour of the Gorkha elite of the locality (Sarmah, 2020).

Religion

Most of the Gorkha people like Bramins, Chetry, Kami and so on follow the Hindu or Sanatan Religion. But some Gorkhas such as lama, tamang and so on adopted Bhudhist as their religion. Some Gorkha like Rai, Limbu and Subba recognized themselves as kirat or follows kirat religion.

Traditional Dress

Gorkha community is rich in their culture. They used to wear traditional costumes even on day to day basis. Gorkha men generally wear Bhoto, Daura-Suruwal and Dhaka Topi (cap) while women wear Sari and Cholo.

Festivals

Gorkha people have been influenced by and have always been core of Nepali or Gorkhali Culture. Dashain Festival is known as the most important festival among the Gorkha people in Assam. It is celebrated in the months of October and November starts from Bijaya Dasami just after the durga puja. During this festival, they worship Durga and

take Tika as a holy Prasad. During the Dashain festival, all the relatives get together and take the blessing from senior citizens. It is also known as a festival of joyful moments with lots of happiness. Tihar or Depawali Festival is the second main festival among Gorkha Community. It is held in the month of November. It is the festival of lights, colorful decorations, fancy sweets, and juicy fruits. Tihar is the festival of 5 days, whereas the first and second day is the day of bird crow (kak Tihar) and dog puja (kukur Tihar), third and fourth day is Goddess Laxmi (Laxmi Puja) and Govardhan puja. And the fifth day is known as Bhai-tika, where people exchange the tika between brothers and sisters. So, it is also known as Bhai Tika or Bhai Dhuj. On the day of Bhai Tika sisters and brothers get together and accept tika from each other. Third important festival is teej which is the festival of womanhood. It is held in the month of August/September. Dancing, singing folk songs and every woman is wearing a red color which dominates the day of the TEEJ festival. The day recalls the heavenly occasion when Parvati, daughter of the Himalaya, won the hand of Lord Shiva after long meditation and fasting. On the first day of Teej, her mother sends her gift, food, and sarees to their daughter's house, and groups of women gather together to feast. Similarly, every woman worships Shiva (god) to make happy and productive long life for her husband. Similarly some other important festivals are maghe Sankranti, Fagu Purnima, Ashar ko Pandra, Thuli Ekadashi and son.

Livelihood

Though Gorkhas are mainly dependent on agriculture along with cattle farming for their livelihood since centuries. Gorkha people are peace loving who believes on self-dependent. They do hard works for their livelihood. Most Gorkha people love to serve country becoming a military person which is the main dreams of every Gorkha youths.

Political Status of Gorkhas of Assam

The Gorkha community in Assam has been actively participating in various social and political movements, including the fight for freedom movement. They have faced imprisonment and even sacrificed their lives for these causes. Their political engagement dates back to before independence, with figures like Dal Bir Singh Lohar and Chabilal Upadhyaya making significant contributions. Lohar was elected as an MLA in 1946 and was a key figure in the Tea Tribe Labour Union. Upadhyaya also played a notable role, being nominated to local bodies in 1948 and 1950. Over the decades, several Gorkha representatives were elected to various legislative positions. For instance, Bishnulal Upadhyaya served multiple terms in the Assam Legislative Assembly from 1952 to 1967. In the 1970s and 80s, several other Gorkha including Ram Prasad Sarmah, Padum Bahadur Chowhan, and Kul Bahadur Chetry, continued this trend. The 1990s saw Mani Kumar Subba achieving significant success as a Member of Parliament, serving three consecutive terms. More recently, Sanjay Raj Subba and Tanka Bahadur Rai have represented the community, with Rai notably being the first Nepali speaker in the Assam Legislative Assembly. This ongoing political involvement highlights the Gorkha community's active participation and influence in Assam's governance.The Gorkha League was a key organization for Gorkha people, playing a major role in various social initiatives. Their periodicals, 'Gorkha Sewak' and 'Pravat,' were crucial in uniting people and promoting different causes, including the freedom movement. In 1946, the British Cabinet Mission proposed a plan to separate Assam from India and place it in East Bengal,

which was met with strong opposition from the Gorkhas. On January 1, 1947, the Gorkha League held a major conference where millions of Gorkhas voiced their resistance to this plan. During the 1960s, the All Assam Nepali Student Union was actively involved in advocating for the Assamese language to be recognized as an official language and used in institutions. The Union's efforts highlighted key issues in Assam, such as identity crises and migration problems. They even submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India in 1980 addressing these issues.The Assam movement aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the region, with many patriots making significant sacrifices. Notable figures who contributed to this cause included Dhan Bahadur Chetry, Khirod Bahadur Tamang, Kul Bahadur Chetry, Padma Bahadur, Boijayanti Devi, and Bhim Bahadur Tamang.Despite their significant political contributions in Assam, the Gorkha community continues to face numerous political challenges related to citizenship, identity, and political representation. Despite their long history and active participation in the region's public administration, Gorkhaa often encounter issues related to their citizenship status and cultural identity, major concern is the ongoing citizenship crisis. Many Gorkha struggle with documentation and legal recognition, which affects their ability to access government services and participate fully in civic life. This issue is compounded by the broader context of regional identity politics, where the Gorkha status and rights are often contested. Culturally, the Gorkha face difficulties in preserving and asserting their unique identity amidst the dominant regional cultures. Assimilation pressures and the lack of official recognition of their distinct cultural heritage challenge their efforts to maintain their traditions and languages. Politically, underrepresentation remains a pressing issue. Despite their active involvement in local and state politics over the years, Gorkha often find themselves under represented in key decision-making bodies. This under representation hampers their ability to influence policies and advocate for their community's needs effectively. Additionally, there is a persistent demand within the community for Scheduled Tribe status, which would potentially offer better protection and recognition of their rights. The lack of formal acknowledgment of this status limits their access to certain benefits and resources that could enhance their socio-economic conditions. Settlement rights are another area of concern. Gorkha especially those in tea gardens and other traditional settlement areas, face challenges related to land rights and secure housing. Efforts to formalize their settlements and address land issues have met with varying degrees of success. Overall, the Gorkha community in Assam navigates a complex landscape of citizenship and identity challenges, political under representation, and ongoing demands for recognition and right status of Gorkhas in Assam.

Social Status of Gorkhas of Assam

The Gorkhas in Assam are a vital and inseparable component of the broader Assamese community. Their role in shaping the Assamese nation is undeniable, as they have made significant contributions across various domains including socio-political, economic, literary, agricultural, educational, administrative, sports, and security sectors. Their efforts have greatly advanced both the state and the nation. The Gorkhas have taken on substantial responsibilities for the comprehensive progress of India and Assam, as well as for the welfare of other communities. The Gorkha community in Assam, particularly in regions like Sonitpur, faces significant

challenges that have deeply impacted their social status. Economic disparity is a persistent issue, as many Gorkhas in Assam are engaged in low-income occupations such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and manual labor. These jobs, often unorganized and underpaid, provide little financial security, perpetuating a cycle of poverty within the community. The lack of substantial economic opportunities further exacerbates the economic disparity, as the younger generation struggles to find stable and well-paying jobs. This economic instability hinders the community's ability to invest in education, one of the key factors that could potentially elevate their social status. Limited access to education is another critical issue plaguing the Gorkha community in Assam. Due to their economic conditions, many Gorkha families are unable to afford quality education for their children. Schools in rural areas, where a significant portion of the Gorkha population resides, often lack basic infrastructure and qualified teachers. This educational gap limits the community's access to higher education and, consequently, better employment opportunities. Without the necessary educational qualifications, the Gorkha youth find themselves trapped in low-paying jobs, unable to break free from the cycle of poverty that has gripped their community for generations. Social discrimination adds another layer of complexity to the struggles faced by the Gorkha community. As an ethnic minority in Assam, the Gorkhas often face prejudice and exclusion from mainstream society. This social discrimination manifests in various forms, including limited representation in government positions, social services, and even in everyday social interactions. The community's perceived outsider status, despite their long-standing presence in Assam, marginalizes them further, making it difficult for them to assert their rights or demand equal treatment. This social exclusion not only affects their selfesteem but also limits their access to resources and opportunities that are more readily available to other communities. Unemployment is a significant issue within the Gorkha community, particularly among the youth. The lack of job opportunities, coupled with limited access to education, leaves many young Gorkhas unemployed or underemployed. This situation is particularly dire in rural areas, where the majority of the Gorkha population resides. The few who manage to secure employment often find themselves in precarious positions, with little job security and low wages. The high rate of unemployment contributes to the community's overall economic instability, further widening the gap between them and more prosperous communities in Assam. The combined impact of economic disparity, limited access to education, social discrimination, and unemployment has created a challenging environment for the Gorkha community in Assam. These factors have collectively hindered their social mobility, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and marginalization. Without targeted interventions and support from both the government and non-governmental organizations, it is unlikely that the Gorkha community will be able to overcome these obstacles and improve their social status in the near future. The need for comprehensive policies that address these interconnected issues is crucial to ensuring that the Gorkhas in Assam can achieve the social and economic progress necessary for their overall well-being.

Conclusion

Despite the various issues and problems of Gorkha community, the Gorkhas of Assam have been an indispensable part of the Assamese society. They not only played a

key role in protecting the frontiers of the country and Assam, but also contributed to every sphere of the Assamese society be it agriculture, farming, literature, language, culture, religion and so on.

As such, Gorkha community is an integral part of Assam. Gorkha people always believe in the theme of greater Assam (Bor Asom) established by Saulung Sukafa and Mahapurush Shrimanta Sankardev for the peace and unification of the Assam and its diversities of people. And the most importantly Gorkha people are peace-loving and always believe in the motto of "Live and let live".' Their historical presence, sacrifices, and civic engagement highlight their commitment to the growth of both the region and the nation. Yet, these contributions often go unrecognized within official frameworks. For meaningful inclusion and equitable development, there is a critical need for the government and society to acknowledge their unique status and address the longstanding challenges they face through inclusive policies and representation.

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FINANCIAL ABUSE OF WOMEN : THE HIDDEN COST OF PATRIARCHY

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Abstract

This article explores the nuances of domestic violence in its varied and subtle forms, placing a barrier on women's aspirations, identity, life choices and existence. Financial abuse is more relevant in contemporary times when women labor force participation is rising in India currently standing at 25.7% in urban areas and 38.2% in rural areas with an overall score of 34.2% in 2025. Despite the reducing gender gap with overall labor force participation rate of men currently standing at 77.7%, there is little to celebrate. Economic empowerment of women will still be a far cry if women work but don't get a chance to own their earning and use it to their discretion. This article tries to call out the hindrances faced by working women that undermine their access to fair and equal economic opportunity.

Keywords : Domestic abuse, financial abuse, violence, patriarchy, oppression, career“ each year, more women are touched by domestic violence than breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and lung cancer combined.” purple purse, all state foundation

Introduction

Domestic violence remains a widespread issue that transcends borders, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses. While physical and emotional abuses are widely recognized, amore subtle form financial abuse is often overlooked. Financial abuse, a subset of economic abuse, subtly strips women of their autonomy by limiting their control over financial resources, eventually compromising their independence and well-being. The increasing prevalence of financial abuse globally, especially in patriarchal societies like India, demands a focused and urgent response. Financial abuse does not operate in isolation; it intersects with emotional, psychological, and sometimes physical abuse, creating a web that is difficult for many women to escape.

Different Facets of Domestic Violence and Its Meaning in India

Domestic violence encompasses a broad spectrum of abusive behaviors that extend beyond physical harm. It includes emotional abuse, such as constant belittling or isolation; psychological abuse, which manipulates a victim's perception of reality and induces fear; sexual abuse, where consent is violated within intimate relationships; and economic or financial abuse, where control over financial resources is used to exert power. These forms of violence often

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intersect, creating a complex web of control that leaves victims emotionally depleted and socially isolated.

In the Indian context, domestic violence is deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms and traditional power structures that often normalize or justify male dominance. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) legally recognizes physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, and economic abuse, but implementation remains a challenge due to societal stigma, lack of awareness, and inadequate support systems. Cultural factors such as dowry expectations, preference for male heirs, and the glorification of female sacrifice further exacerbate the problem. In many households, violence is considered a private matter, and women are discouraged from seeking help to "preserve family honor." This results in significant under reporting and a normalization of abuse, especially among marginalized communities. Addressing domestic violence in India thus requires not just legal redress, but also a deep cultural shift that dismantles the social acceptance of gender-based violence and promotes equitable relationships.

Families : The Paradox of Protection and Oppression

Families are traditionally seen as protective units that nurture and support individuals. They are critical components of global care systems, providing the emotional, social, and often economic support necessary for individuals to thrive. However, within patriarchal contexts, families can become sites of systemic gender-based oppression. In many cultures, especially in South Asia, women are socialized to be financially dependent on male family members. The very institution that should protect women often becomes the source of their disempowerment. The Global Database on the Prevalence of Violence Against Women (2018) shows that 27% of women globally face intimate partner violence. In India, the NFHS-5 (2021) found the figure to be 29.3%, a staggering statistic that underscores the pervasive nature of the problem.

Understanding Financial and Economic Abuse

Economic abuse occurs when an abuser controls a woman's access to economic resources, making it difficult or impossible for her to support herself and forcing her to depend on the abuser financially. This may include sabotaging employment opportunities, withholding money, or controlling how money is spent. The broader spectrum of economic abuse not only includes financial control but also limits a woman's social and professional mobility.

Financial abuse is a narrower but deeply damaging form of economic abuse. It involves tactics like stealing or misusing a woman's money, controlling access to bank accounts, coercing women into debt, or forbidding them from working. These actions systematically dismantle a woman's independence and self-esteem. Financial abuse may also include practices such as demanding receipts for all expenditures, denying access to necessities, or using financial dependence as a tool for manipulation.

Manifestations of Financial Abuse

Financial abuse can manifest in various ways, each designed to limit a woman's autonomy –

- **Control and Restriction :** Abusers may prohibit women from working or dictate the terms of their employment, thereby limiting their ability to earn and control

income. Even when women are allowed to work, their salaries may be taken away, or they may be forced to quit under emotional or physical pressure.

- **Theft and Misuse :** Some abusers go as far as stealing from their partners or coercing them into taking loans or debts. Credit cards may be used without consent, or bank accounts may be emptied. Such actions not only cause financial instability but also destroy the victim's credit rating and economic prospects.
- **Coercion :** Women may be forced to sign financial documents, sell property, or make financial decisions under duress. This puts them in legally precarious situations and increases their vulnerability to further abuse and exploitation.
- **Emotional Manipulation :** A less visible but equally harmful method is the constant belittling of a woman's financial decisions. By undermining her confidence, abusers ensure that she remains economically passive and dependent.

Long-term Impacts of Financial Abuse

- **Career Disruption :** Abusers often sabotage women's careers by interfering with their job responsibilities, making it difficult to hold steady employment or pursue promotions. Many women leave their jobs under duress or due to harassment at home related to their employment, which limits long-term career growth.
- **Debt and Financial Ruin :** Financial abuse often leadto unmanageable debts incurred without the woman's consent or knowledge. These financial burdens can have a lasting impact, affect credit scores and make it difficult to rent homes, secure loans, or even access utilities.
- **Psychological Consequences :** Chronic financial instability leads to stress, depression, and anxiety. The fear of poverty, homelessness, or not being able to provide for children adds to the emotional burden women already bear from abuse.
- **Entrapment :** A major reason woman does not leave abusive relationships is financial dependency. Even among those who do, many find it hard to rebuild their lives. 51.6% of women who left abusive homes reported difficulty in resuming their careers or establishing economic independence.

Legal and Policy Challenges

Many legal systems around the world, including in India, have limited recognition of financial abuse as a standalone crime. While the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) in India includes economic abuse, its enforcement remains inadequate. Additionally, the legal process itself can be retraumatizing, with abusers using litigation as a form of continued control by dragging women through lengthy and expensive court cases.

Solutions and Interventions

- **Raising Awareness :** Public discourse about financial abuse is limited. Awareness campaigns can educate both women and the wider community about the signs and dangers of financial abuse. Platforms like media, schools, and workplaces should be utilized to disseminate this information. Such efforts can help destigmatize discussions around abuse and create supportive environments for survivors to seek help.

Legal Recourse and Institutional Support: Women should be encouraged and supported to pursue legal action against abusers. However, the legal system must be made more accessible, efficient, and sensitive to the needs of financial abuse victims. Legal aid services must be adequately funded and publicized, and judges and lawyers should receive training in gender-sensitive adjudication.

- **Government and Civil Society Collaboration:** Governments must partner with NGOs and civil society organizations to design and implement policies that address financial abuse. This includes funding shelters, helplines, and rehabilitation centers while also running financial support programs for victims to transition to independence. These collaborations should involve continuous monitoring and evaluation to measure effectiveness.
- **Financial Literacy and Inclusion :** One of the most effective tools against financial abuse is empowering women through financial education. Workshops, mobile apps, and community initiatives can help women understand banking, budgeting, credit management, and financial planning. When women are equipped with the knowledge to manage finances independently, they are less susceptible to manipulation and control.
- **Role of Fintech and Banks :** Financial institutions should design gender-sensitive products that protect women's assets and privacy. Digital banking tools must be simplified for ease of use, and strong authentication protocols should be put in place to prevent unauthorized access. Using frameworks like DEBIT (Design, Educate, Build, Include, and Trust), banks can create solutions tailored to women's unique needs.
- **Cooperatives and Community Support :** Women's cooperatives provide not only economic support but also emotional and psychological solidarity. Such collectives can facilitate group savings, micro-credit, and skills training programs while fostering an environment where survivors can share experiences and rebuild their lives with dignity.
- **Information Dissemination and Counseling:** According to the 'Know Economic Abuse 2020 Report,' information dissemination must be backed by action. Women must have access to counseling and clear pathways to report abuse. Institutions like police stations, hospitals, and legal aid clinics should be trained to identify financial abuse and provide appropriate referrals.

Global best Practices to Combat Financial Abuse of Women

Across the world, several countries have recognized the devastating impact of financial abuse and implemented comprehensive strategies to mitigate it.

In Australia, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act explicitly includes economic abuse as a form of domestic violence, allowing survivors to seek restraining orders and financial redress.

Canada's financial institutions work in tandem with nonprofit organizations like the Canadian Women's Foundation to develop survivor-centered banking services that safeguard victims' financial autonomy.

In the United Kingdom, the charity Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) has played a pivotal role in raising public awareness and lobbying for the inclusion of economic abuse in the

Domestic Abuse Act 2021. SEA also collaborates with banks and credit agencies to help survivors rebuild their credit and secure financial independence.

Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden and Norway, emphasize financial literacy as a core component of national gender equality policies, ensuring that girls and women are educated on personal finance from an early age. These countries also offer accessible shelters, legal support, and job placement services to help women escape abusive environments.

The United States has also made strides through initiatives like the Allstate Foundation's Purple Purse campaign, which combines financial empowerment programs with advocacy, helping thousands of survivors regain control over their finances.

These best practices demonstrate that a holistic approach grounded in law, financial systems, education, and public-private partnerships is essential for tackling the multifaceted nature of financial abuse.

Conclusion

Financial abuse is a critical yet under addressed component of domestic violence that undermines women's autonomy, dignity, and future. Its invisible nature makes it even more insidious, leaving deep economic, emotional, and psychological scars. Combating financial abuse requires a multipronged approachraising awareness, enforcing laws, fostering financial independence, and offering institutional support. Only when societies recognize the profound damage caused by financial abuse and actively work to dismantle patriarchal structures can we move towards genuine gender equality and empowerment.

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Lived Experiences of Transgender Youth's During COVID-19 Pandemic : Government Support System and Kerala Health Care Sector Readiness for a Future Phase

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Abstract :

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of human life. Certain groups, like people with trans gender identities, have been more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. This research focuses on the experiences of trans gender youths during the time of COVID-19 pandemic. It is mixed-methods approach-based research. The firsthand collected information was through in-depth interviews and analysis of recent research. What did trans gender Youths go through during the COVID-19 pandemic? The experiences across seven major themes: negative family environment, lack of access to housing and shelter, barriers to health care access, economic hardships, lack of access to digital technology, relationship strain, andmental health challenges.The paper implies that ignorance of intersectionality while deciding measures for preventing the spread of corona virus disease adversely affected the transgender youth who were already prone to difficult life situations. Moreover, the paper focuses on the current state of readiness of the Kerala health care sector and the government support mechanism for the transgender person ongoing cases of COVID-19 in Kerala.

Keywords : Covid-19, lived experience, transgender, mental health, health care sector

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted lives across the globe, but its impact has been disproportionately severe on marginalized communities, including transgender individuals. For transgender youth, who often navigate complex intersections of gender identity, age-based vulnerability, and social marginalization, the pandemic amplified existing inequalities and created new barriers to health, safety, and emotional well-being (Salerno et al., 2020). Transgender people frequently face discrimination in healthcare, education,

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employment, and family settings, leading to higher levels of psychological distress and social exclusion compared to cisgender populations (James et al., 2016). During the pandemic, access to gender-affirming healthcare, mental health support, and safe housing became even more limited, intensifying their risk of anxiety, depression, and isolation (Herman et al., 2021).

Youth within the trans gender community are particularly vulnerable due to their dependence on families many of whom may be unsupportive or abusive and limited autonomy to access supportive resources. Studies have shown that lock down measures increased exposure to hostile environments for LGBTQ+ youth, contributing to a rise in mental health issues and interpersonal conflicts (Fish et al., 2020). Moreover, the lack of inclusive policies and systemic neglect in emergency response frameworks further marginalized their voices and needs (UNESCO, 2021).

Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of transgender youth during the COVID-19 pandemic through a qualitative lens. Using in-depth and telephonic interviews, the study captures narratives around mental health, social relationships, access to services, and identity affirmation. The insights drawn from this research seek to inform more inclusive, intersectional responses in times of crisis.

Methodological Reflections

This qualitative study explores how youth who identify as transgender experience the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The responses from the participants were analysed for common themes through the application of qualitative research approaches. The data were considered several times to clarify possible differences in interpretation.

The sampling for this study involved selecting possible student participants who would be able to provide the most helpful information. A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select individuals who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into the research topic. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to target a specific group that is likely interested in the research project (Creswell, 1998). Participants of the study are transgender youth aged 18 to 25 residing in Kerala. Efforts are made to include participants from various caste backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and both urban and rural settings to ensure a holistic understanding of the community's experiences.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, conducted face-to-face and telephonic, based on participants' prefere-nces and in adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols. An open-ended interview guide facilitated discussions around key themes such as mental health challenges, access to healthcare, family dynamics, social support systems, and coping mechanisms during the pandemic. This method allows participants to share their stories in their own words, providing depth and context to their experiences. Each participant has been contacted via phone and 2 to 3 sessions of telephonic interviews and video calls were conducted with each of them.

The collected narratives were analysed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. Thematic analysis methods allow researchers to explore and understand the rich and complex narratives present in their data. In this study, themes

were developed inductively from the data, providing a nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences.

Challenges of Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected the physical health of individuals, but also has created psychological, economic and social impact on society. A study by Tüzün etal. (2022) found that decreased social connectedness and support during the pandemic were significantly associated with increased depression and anxiety levels in transgender youth. The lack of gender-affirming care and supportive relationships during lockdowns further intensified these mental health challenges.

In the United States, The Trevor Project (2020) reported that 42% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide during the past year, with transgender and non-binary individuals being particularly affected. The pandemic's impact on mental health was compounded by increased discrimination and reduced access to mental health services.

Lack of Social Support

The pandemic disrupted the livelihoods of many transgender individuals, particularly those in India. Chakrapani et al. (2022) highlighted that transgender women, especially those in the hijra community, faced significant economic hardships due to the closure of venues for blessings and sex work, leading to increased psychological distress. Additionally, many transgender individuals lacked access to government welfare programs because of missing legal gender identity documents.

A qualitative study by Raghuram et al. (2023) revealed that transgender persons experienced disrupted social support systems, exacerbated stigma, and reduced access to healthcare during the pandemic. These factors collectively impacted their mental health and well-being.Access to gender-affirming healthcare was significantly hindered during the pandemic. The restrictions on movement limited transgender youth's ability to receive necessary medical care. A study by Raghuram et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of maintaining gender-affirming services during public health emergencies to mitigate mental health risks for transgender individuals. This study highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by transgender youth during the COVID-19 pandemic, including mental health issues, economic hardships, and barriers to healthcare access.

Madhavan and Shinu (2021) conducted a study to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the transgender community in Kerala. The study highlighted several challenges faced by transgender individuals during the pandemic, including : health vulnerabilities, disruption of gender-affirming care, economic hardships, housing and living conditions. Despite these challenges, Kerala's proactive measures included providing temporary housing and food facilities to transgender individuals registered with the government during the lockdown.This research aims to analysis of the experiences of transgender youth in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their mental health, social relationships, access to support systems, and the impact of governmental policies on their well-being.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality framework (Kimberle Crenshaw, 1989) introduced intersectionality to address various forms of inequality, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, intersect to

create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of social identities and the simultaneous nature of multiple forms of oppression or privilege. Moreover, it provides a framework to examine how transgender youth in Kerala experience the convergence of multiple identities such as gender identity, caste, class, and rural-urban divides and how these overlapping factors shape their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By applying an intersectional lens, this research aims to uncover the multifaceted challenges faced by transgender youth, which may be obscured in studies focusing on single-axis analyses of gender or sexuality alone. This approach ensures that the voices and experiences of marginalized groups within the transgender community are not overlooked, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their lived realities during the pandemic.

Family Environment– A Double-Edged Sword

The trans persons who feel unsafe or afraid of their household, experienced financial strain, or had stuck at home due to the Covid-19 lockdown. The transgender youth have still in a situation to leave their home land and migrate to neighbouring states. The participants faced challenges within their familial settings. Instances of misgendering, lack of understanding, and outright rejection were reported. A participant narrative given below—

> *I have to spend the whole day at home due to the COVID restrictions. I faced a lot of issues at my home as my family members do not accept my gender expressions.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P1, Ankur*

Such experiences underscore the complexities of familial relationships for transgender youth, where the home can simultaneously be a haven and a source of distress. The pandemic intensified these dynamics, as lockdowns and movement restrictions forced many to remain in unsupportive environments without access to external support systems.

> *The post COVID-pandemic the same transgender person expressed different than during the lockdown period. Henarrates that we can easily moves anywhere according to our interests and not need to really on the family. He felt sad when his family do not much like is presence at home.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P1, A*

> *I was taking care of my father when he was ill. Now he doesn't like me. I felt that my parents are unable to adjust with transgender category like me. Their hatred has intensified during the lock down time.I find their behavior towards me deeply hurtful, and it feels as though they are deliberately avoiding me. They exclude me from auspicious occasions and family celebrations at home. Currently, I am staying with my grandmother. I want to stay with her till the completion of my studies. I plan to relocate to Bangalore after this.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P2 (Reema)*

The findings align with existing literature indicating that family support plays a crucial role in the mental health and overall well-being of transgender individuals. Feeling unsafe or afraid in the house hold posed a higher risk for both depression and thoughts of self-harm or suicide(Zwickl. et.al, 2021). There are some evidences that many transgender persons face discrimination and

violence within the home and that is associated with poorer mental health (Riggs et.al., 2015). These findings highlight the need for interventions that promote family acceptance and understanding to improve the well-being of transgender youth.

The Struggle for Housing or Shelter

Due to the sudden and seemingly indefinite lockdown, a difficult housing environment became a crisis of home-lessness for transgender youth. The transgender community who are abandoned by their families, or leave family due to unpleasant situations at homes, are vulnerable to risk and force into begging and sex work. Most of the transgender persons in the state are still living on streets. While some live in rented homes and lodges, the Covid-19 pandemic turned it difficult for them to pay house rents. One another case recounted which given bellow –

> *I have nowhere to go. My family do not accept my transgender identity. I cannot stay at home. I don't have money to pay for house rent. I have been stayed with a friend and I don't know when I'm being kicked out of the home.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P3, (Tanya)*

Even as governments asked landlords not to collect rent for some time, this was never executed. Trans persons soon found themselves homeless when they could not pay rent. The harassment and verbal threats by landlords force them to leave rented houses. Besides the issue of shelter homes,they face difficulty to find means for food.

In the international sphere, the committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) and the UN Special Rapporteur recognised adequate housing as a component of the 'right to an adequate standard of living'(Talwar,2021). In the Indian context, there is no legal provision for providing safe housing for the transgender community and they frequently experience forceful evictions and housing discrimination. No adequate shelter homes were available or provided for by the government for trans persons who became homeless and needed temporary housing.

The Kerala government has proposed a project named 'Sukrutham housing project', aiming to provide land to homeless transgender individuals (Simon, 2021). Such initiatives will be a relief for many of the transgender individuals. The schemes would be beneficial to transgender persons who have ID cards. However, the participants who lack ID card would again find difficulty to access such government benefits. The closing down of shelter home in cities due to shortage of funds has also amplified the struggles of homeless transgender persons. From an intersectional perspective, trans persons were already marginalized under the lockdown and found themselves abandoned and struggling to face uncertain futures.

Barriers to Health Care Access :

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted healthcare access for transgender youth in Kerala, intensifying existing challenges and exposing systemic inadequacies. Participants reported difficulties in obtaining essential services, including hormone replacement therapy, mental health support, and routine medical care. One of the participants shared—

> *I am unable to take hormones. I am unable to do my regular body check-ups. As there is no transportation facility available, I am unable to visit the hospital in Ernakulam which I used to visit for my monthly hormone treatment. We need to take hormones regularly otherwise the body will regain its older form. We suffered more due to the physical changes happen in our body.If I do not get thetreatment done, I may begin*

menstruating again. Sometimes, I experience stomach pain, and my body may undergo hormonal fluctuations. My feminine characteristics may come out.

– Researcher Interviewed, P4 (Rajesh)

The Covid-19 induced lock down and the pandemic have left transgender persons more vulnerable to poverty and reduced access to health care. Many transgender persons had to stop hormone medications because they were not affordable or accessible.The transgender persons who already have uneasiness in approaching medical professionals due to the refusal of medical care. The transgender persons who have specific health care needs; however, they face multiple obstacles to accessing health care ranging from social stigma to discrimination and lack of services (Mathur. B., 2021). The participants fear that the stopping of hormone treatments can cause immense effects on their physical appearance and mental health.

Access to gender-affirming healthcare, particularly hormone therapy, is crucial for transgender individuals aiming to align their physical characteristics with their gender identity. The hormone therapy is used to alter the hormone levels to match your gender identity. These disruptions not only halted their physical transition but also led to psychological distress. Typically, people who seek hormone therapy experience discomfort or distress because their gender identity differs from their sexassigned at birth or sex related physical characteristics (gender dysphoria). To avoid risks,the goal is to maintain hormone levels in the normal range for the target gender. The hormone therapy can make gender dysphoria less severe, reduce psychological and emotional distress, improve psychological and social functioning, improve sexual satisfaction, improve quality of life.

Limited Availability of Hormonal Medications

Participants reported significant challenges in obtaining essential medications for hormone therapy due to clinic closures and supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. These obstacles not only hinder the physical aspects of gender transition but also contribute to psychological distress and a sense of marginalization within the healthcare environment. Example from participant narrative:

Hormones Medicines are not available in every medical shops. This is the common concern of transgender persons. My friends in Alleppey are also facing such difficulty.I am unable to take medicines on time due to the Covid situation and unavailability of medicines in local shops and treatment facility in nearby health clinics.

– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R

Attitude of Health Care Providers :

Experiences of discrimination and lack of sensitivity from healthcare staff deterred participants from seeking necessary care. This highlights the importance of training in gender-affirming practices.

One of my major concerns is that the hospital staff is reluctant to do this treatment for us. The hospital staff ask so many questions to irritate us. If we go to any other health clinics for treatment, they will ask too many questions and irritate us.

– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R

In the absence of professional medical guidance, some individuals resorted to self-medicating, which heightened health risks and underscored the critical need for accessible healthcare services.

One of the participants shared :

I have doctor's prescription with me which I collected during earlier hospital visits. I wanted to use the doctor's prescription to get hormones from nearby shops. Usually, I take the dosage of 100 rupees. Now I took the dosage of 1000 rupees for compromising this interrupted treatment. I have no idea how my body will react to the heavy dosage of injection. I may get nausea or hormone variations or other difficulties due to this. I know people like me are not able to withstand this heavy dosage. If I take heavy dose for a month, I won't have to take it for 3 months. There is no date in the doctor's prescription sheet and I don't know whether it is to be taken lifelong or for a particular period.

– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R

Self-medication, particularly among transgender individuals facing barriers to healthcare access, poses significant health risks. This trend underscores the urgent need for public education on the dangers of self-medication

Economic Hardships

The nationwide lockdowns and movement restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted these income-generating activities, leaving many without any means of sustenance. This sudden loss of income led to immediate financial insecurity and heightened vulnerability within the community. Many transgender persons, already marginalized and reliant on informal sectors for income, found it increasingly difficult to afford essential medical treatments during this period. The participants of the study expressed their difficulty to meet treatment expenses :

We need money to take hormone treatment which is extremely difficult in this situation. I am facing financial difficulties. I don't have money. Those who are doing laser treatment are unable to continue due to the pandemic situation and lockdown. We are financially affected due to this present Covid situation. I have mental difficulties due to my financial issues. *Now I am depending on my parents. They have debts and approach others for money. No one in my family is earning now.*

– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R

I face mental stress and was admitted in psychiatric hospital for 1 month. It was difficult to find money to settle the hospital bill. I have to take medicines regularly. The expense of monthly medicines cost Rs.2000/-

– Researcher Interviewed, P1, A

Participants described the day-to-day challenges they encountered due to lack of income. One respondent shared:

"I don't have a single penny to take. I have hairs on my face since I am not taking laser treatment. I don't have money to buy even a plucker or blade to remove facial hairs. I don't have money to meet my travel expenses to town."

– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R

This account underscores the economic insecurities that extend beyond healthcare access and reflect the struggle for basic dignity and self-care. The participant further spoke about academic challenges linked to financial hardship :

"I am in much difficulty now. I couldn't apply for second semester scholarships even. I wanted to apply for that but couldn't do that because of the Corona lockdown"

– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R

These narratives reflect how the intersection of financial hardship and systemic neglect during the pandemic resulted in layered vulnerabilities for transgender youth—compromising their education, health, and emotional well-being.

Loss of livelihood and Joblessness

According to a 2018 report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the transgender community is deprived of many of the rights available to cisgender people. Approximately 92% of transgender individuals in India are excluded from participating in any form of economic activity, with even qualified individuals often denied employment opportunities (India Today Report, 2020). This systemic exclusion has historically compelled many to engage in informal sectors such as begging and sex work. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, as lockdown measures disrupted these informal livelihoods, leaving many transgender individuals without any source of income. As reported by The New Indian Express (2020), many transgender persons lost their means of income due to lockdown measures, leading to significant financial hardships. Selected verbatims from the participants with regard to loss of livelihood are described below :

I have financial difficulties. I need a job even it is small during this difficult situation. But no one will provide job now. If anyone willing to hire us, they are unable to give salary even.

– Researcher Interviewed, P1

I was working as salesperson in a textile shop. I stopped going to work due to the pandemic. The shop has been closed temporarily and I didn't get my salary from the owner. I am unable to go for any job due to Covid-19. I approached the shop owner many times and received 3000k from them. I spent the money for house hold expenses and nothing is left with me. They are unable to open the shop due to the current situation. The shop owner told me not to come to the shop.

– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R

In addition to job losses and lack of support, participants reported not being compensated for services they provided, especially in spaces meant to promote awareness and inclusion. One participant shared their experience of not receiving timely payment for conducting awareness sessions:

"I was taking awareness classes for students at NSS camps. Some were arranged by the Social Justice Department, and some were approached directly. I don't have the money to meet my travel expenses. Some schools don't give money, and we get it after a month, after begging for money. I asked them for money as I need to submit exam fees."

– Researcher Interviewed, P2

This narrative reflects the exploitative and dismissive treatment transgender youth often face in society. Despite possessing educational qualifications, many transgender individuals in India are compelled to accept low-paying or informal employment due to pervasive discrimination based on their gender identity. Participants in this study recounted experiences of job rejections explicitly linked to their transgender status. Trans people who are from the makeup field, drama, and dance, lost their jobs. The shopkeepers who employed trans people as salespeople dropped them immediately.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of their

Rights) Act, 2019, seeks to address such issues by prohibiting discrimination in employment. Specifically, Section 9 of the Act states: “No establishment shall discriminate against any transgender person in any matter relating to employment including, but not limited to, recruitment, promotion and other related issues.” However, despite this legal protection, many transgender individuals find that presenting themselves in their assigned gender at birth increases their chances of securing employment, even though jobs were hard to come by (Sahai et al.,2020)

The Digital Divide among Transgender Peoples

Lack of connectivity affect young people's ability to connect online. Those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are especially affected, often falling further behind their peers and are left with little opportunity to ever catch up. In many parts of the country, stable internet access remains a privilege rather than a given, deepening the digital divide and social marginalization.As shared by one participant,

> *We don't have range or internet connectivity in our place. I want to change my mobile network soon. Ours is a rural area. I want to attend online classes. I have noinformation about online classes from my college. My phone is also not in proper working condition.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R*

She further shared her difficulty in finding employment through online platforms due to her lack of access to technology.

> *We have WhatsApp groups of social workers. Everyone asks me why I am silent. I cannot send any message as my phone is not in proper working condition. I am unable to find an income during this challenging period due to lack of access to such technology. I have joined an online dance group. We need to give Rs.500 as registration fees. But I am unable to do that due to the lack of mobile and internet facility.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R*

In response to the physical restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the community shifted to online engagement through helplines, virtual discussions, and social media platforms. Yet, for many marginalized members of the transgender community who lack digital access, these changes have exacerbated existing inequalities, leaving them vulnerable to further discrimination and exclusion (Brindaalekshmi, 2021). As described by a participant:

> *I am unable to learn anything through online mode. I don't have internet connection in my phone. I don't have money for recharging my phone. I do a small recharge plan for making some phone calls.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R*

For many transgender individuals, the absence of digital access during the pandemic intensified feelings of isolation. Without reliable internet, they were cut off from friends, romantic partners, and community support, making it difficult to reach out or even engage in simple conversations during emotionally challenging times. A participant recounted the following experience :

> *I don't have much interactions with others in my village. They don't like to involve me in any of the activity and hence I keep distance from them. We are staying in rented house now. We shifted to that home due to the neglect of our relatives.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R*

The community network has provided a crucial support system for marginalized individuals, especially during times of crisis, whether it be domestic violence, conversion therapy, depression, anxiety, loneliness, or the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the words of a transman participant,

> *I had contacts with three of my transgender friends. We contacted regularly through phone during lock down time. I got time to communicate with them. I have 2 elder brothers (not biological) now and we are best friends too. They called me even today and asked to come home. My friend's mother is so caring and I am happy to talk to her.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R*

Accessing relief measures and support services has also shifted to digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is a significant gap in data when it comes to understanding internet and smart device access among transgender individuals in India, leaving a critical area of digital exclusion unaddressed.

Relationship Strain and Dependency

Many transgender participants in this study reported a high degree of dependency on their partners, both emotionally and financially. However, the pandemic exacerbated existing relationship issues. Several participants shared that their partners, whom they relied on for emotional support, either distanced themselves or engaged in deceptive behavior during the COVID-19 period. This led to feelings of neglect and betrayal. As one participant expressed,

> *"I don't have connection with other transgender friends now. Nobody is my friend now I got some disrespect from friends and I am not cooperating with anyone now. I am enjoying single life. The only person call to my phone is my partner, his mother and his sister. During the lockdown, my partner was emotionally unavailable. It broke me completely"*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R*

Moreover, the lack of communication with friends and community members during the pandemic further isolated these individuals. This dependency, combined with the breakdown in trust, contributed to heightened emotional distress. One of the participants' shared an experience of cheating from his partner –

> *I had a relationship with a person from transgender community. She cheated me and found another person. She blamed me for not having job and financially poor.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R*

A participant shared the emotional toll of being neglected or blamed by their partners during the pandemic.

> *My boyfriend is telling that these I am acting like psycho for getting his attention. He was interested to chat and talk before. He totally avoids me now after hearing the psychic problems. He is blaming me for his negative attitude towards me. When I shared this with him, I expected that he would accept me and say I am normal. But he asked me to consult doctor. He told me to go out of his life rather making his angry. He told everyone that I am acting. My partner is in WhatsApp, read all my messages, but not responding to my calls and messages. I wished him on his birthday and waited for his call. I am not able to sleep these days. I remain awake waiting his calls. He blocked my calls and not replying to any of the message. I know he won't call me back. I haven't been sleeping these days. I haven't taken a bath in days.*
>
> *– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R*

This form of neglect and blame from partners compounded the difficulties faced during an already challenging period. Many transgender individuals, due to lack of familial support and societal stigma, relied heavily on their partners for emotional and financial support. However, this dependency often became a source of vulnerability for them.

Mental Health Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic

The lack of communication, neglect and misunderstandings from partners and friends has also led to serious mental breakdowns. The participants are not aware about any mental health professionals or other support mechanisms to mitigate the mental stresses. A wide range of psychiatric symptoms, including anxiety, worriers, depression, insomnia, psychological distress have been noted among the participants. The postponing of consultation with mental health professionals made the life at risk and prone to severe mental health issues. One of the participants' narratives reveals mental stress due to her relationship issues.

The difficulty in arranging money for surgery expenses, and the doctors' denial of conducting surgeries during the pandemic situation has increased anxiety and stress among transgender individuals. The sex reassignment surgery was a dream for many transgender persons and they fear they could arrange money for undergoing surgery. Many transgender individuals experienced worsening gender dysphoria during the pandemic, and due to lack of access to hospitals, hormone therapy, laser treatments, surgeries, or other gender-affirming services, many faced severe mental health challenges and an increased risk of suicidality. One of the participants describes such an experience :

My surgery was fixed in April, but Covid situation has affected all my plans. We need to arrange the cash according to that. I arranged some money for my surgery but I was forced to take the money and spent for other needs due to this pandemic situation. This gives huge tension to me. Now it is difficult to arrange money again for my surgery. I do not have anyone to help me financially even in my family. I cannot even imagine if the hospital expense exceeds more than it was previously determined. I face more mental stress due to this.

– Researcher Interviewed, P4, R

One of the critical concerns expressed by participants was the limited awareness and accessibility of mental health services within the transgender community. Many individuals lacked information about where to seek professional psychological support or how to navigate the mental health care system

Everyone is telling that I have psychiatric problem. I am sure I will be ok if I get a call or atleast a message from my boyfriend. If everyone tells like this, I should consult a doctor. I could consult psychiatrist only after Corona pandemic. It is difficult for me to go and meet doctors.

– Researcher Interviewed, P2, R

Due to lockdown and stay-at-home measures, many LGBTI youth were forced to remain in unsupportive or hostile home environments with family members or others who did not accept their identity (Sahai et al., 2020).This situation can heighten their exposure to violence and contribute to increased levels of anxiety and depression. The recent deaths of transgender individuals in the state further highlight the physical abuse and mental health struggles they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kerala Health Sector Readiness for a Future COVID Phase

During the 2020-21 COVID waves, Kerala provided temporary lodging, food, hygiene kits, immunizations, telemedicine, and even recruited transgender local groups as (Madhavan M, Shinu KS, 2021).Transgender people are informed and given encouragement throughout medical appointments thanks to the establishment of queer-friendly hospitals and link-worker positions. Although there are still only about 10 queer supportive therapists in the state, IMHANS-MHI has just launched training programs to provide government hospitals with this capability (t

Kerala Government Support System During COVID-19 Waves

Enhance queer supportive therapy by expanding training sessions throughout public hospitals to enhance assistance networks. Incorporate mental health care for trans youths' individuals into state emergency procedures throughout pandemics. Promote the link-worker paradigm by empowering transgender volunteers in all regions to provide regular and urgent medical services. Provide prompt monetary assistance by streamlining payments for SRS, post-surgical care, and COVID-related medical costs. Gather transgender-specific indicators (testing, diseases, psychological wellness) for better management. Involve Kudumbashree transgender neighbourhood groups in consciousness, immunisation, and engagement during potential emergencies.

The lack of LGBTQ affirming counsellors at government agencies continues to impede mental health care (The Hindu.com). Discrimination still occurs within public hospitals; some transgender people steer clear of these facilities because of the prejudice, absence of confidentiality, and inadequate treatment following surgery (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). Problems with visibility and data: Targeted interventions and pandemic planning are hampered by the absence of separated public health statistics for transgender groups. Uncertainty in the economy : Transgender youth require ongoing assistance and money aid because a significant part of them depend on unreliable or unregulated sources of income that have been severely impacted by restrictions.

The government has lowered the trajectory and kept the COVID-19 incident death rate at 0.4 percent by implementing the five steps of trace, isolation, examination, quarantine, and treatment. This is in spite of an elevated population density, a sizable ageing population, an elevated incidence of not transmissible and cardiovascular illnesses, and a significant influx of individuals from other countries.

Conclusion and Recommendations :

The transgender individuals face unique challenges unlike those of others in society. Understanding their individual struggles and societal interactions are vital for their psychosocial well-being and related inter ventions. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the marginalisation and experiences of transgender youth in Kerala, amplifying their voices and perspectives.

While Kerala has made strides in transgender inclusion, such as implementing policies for gender recognition and providing healthcare access, the pandemic has revealed critical gaps in support systems. Limited access to healthcare, economic instability, and social stigma have hindered the well-being of transgender youth during this period. The intersection of gender identity with caste, class, and geographic location has intensified experiences of discrimination, economic hardship, and social isolation.

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ASSESSING GOVERNANCE MODELS FOR CLIMATE-RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

India's vision of attaining developed nation status by 2047, articulated through the Viksit Bharat@2047 initiative, demands a reimagining of governance structures with a focus on inclusivity, sustainability, and climate resilience. This research undertakes a critical analysis of existing governance systems in India, evaluating their strengths and limitations from the perspective of climate-resilient development. Utilising a mixed-methods framework that incorporates policy review, in-depth case studies, and stakeholder engagement, the study explores the effectiveness, flexibility, and responsiveness of institutional frameworks in addressing climate-related challenges. The analysis emphasises the roles of decentralisation, participatory governance, and technological innovation including geospatial mapping and e-governance tools in shaping more adaptive and inclusive responses. The findings highlight the need for governance models that are not only community-centric and technologically equipped but also capable of driving long-term environmental and socio-economic resilience. The study concludes with strategic policy recommendations aligned with India's sustainability agenda and the overarching goals of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Keywords : Viksit Bharat@2047, climate-resilient development, climate governance, sustainable development, sovernance frameworks, institutional resilience, policy analysis, participatory governance, geospatial technologies, adaptive governance

Introduction

Viksit Bharat@2047 represents India's long-term strategic vision to transform into a fully developed nation by its 100th year of independence. A critical component of this vision is ensuring sustainable and inclusive development, particularly in the face of increasing climate challenges. Climate-resilient development refers to policies and practices that enable communities and economies to anticipate, absorb, and recover from climate shocks, while ensuring long-term environmental sustainability. For a country like India, which faces frequent extreme weather events, water stress, and rising urban vulnerabilities, climate-resilient governance is not optional but essential.It aims to ensure that growth is not only sustainable but also capable of withstanding and rebounding from climate shocks such as floods, droughts, cyclones, heatwaves, and sea-level rise.

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It involves:

- Anticipating climate risks through forecasting, early warning, and proactive planning.
- Absorbing shocks via infrastructure resilience, social safety nets, and diversified livelihoods.
- Recovering and transforming systems post-disaster to be better prepared for future events.

Despite India's comprehensive climate action plans, significant gaps persist in implementation, coordination, and accountability. Fragmented institutional structures and lack of decentralisation hinder the effectiveness of climate resilience measures. There is a pressing need to evaluate existing governance frameworks and identify models that can effectively deliver climate-resilient outcomes.This paper assesses current governance structures and explores how adaptive, inclusive, and technologically enabled systems can advance India's developmental and climate agendas.

Objectives

- To assess India's national and sub-national governance frameworks for climate resilience.
- To identify gaps and best practices in climate governance through case-based analysis.
- To propose adaptive governance strategies aligned with the goals of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Research Questions

- How do existing governance models support or limit climate resilience?
- What role do decentralisation and digital tools play in enhancing governance effectiveness?
- What adaptive strategies can align governance with the goals of Viksit Bharat@2047?

Literature Review

The concept of polycentric governance, as articulated by Ostrom (2010), provides a critical theoretical lens for examining climate governance. This framework emphasises the importance of multiple, overlapping centers of authority that enable flexibility, innovation, and accountability in responding to complex environmental challenges.

Comparative international experiences from the European Union's multi-level environmental policy systems to Brazil's decentralised forest management and South Africa's communitydriven water conservation illustrate the benefits of participatory and layered governance models. These experiences are particularly relevant to India, given its federal structure and socio-ecological diversity.

In the Indian context, Dubash and Ghosh (2020) highlight the complexities arising from fragmented responsibilities across different tiers of government. They point to institutional overlaps, inconsistent mandates, and coordination failures as barriers to effective implementation of climate policies. Further, scholars such as Baviskar (2005) and Agarwal & Narain (1999) underscore the critical role of community participation and traditional ecological knowledge systems in shaping sustainable, localised climate responses.

Emerging literature also emphasises the transformative potential of digital governance tools such as GIS based planning, AI-driven forecasting systems, and real-time environmental monitoring platforms in enhancing state capacity and responsiveness to climate risks.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, desk-based methodology relying entirely on secondary data. The study involves thematic content analysis of climate-related policies, scholarly articles, institutional reports, and government publications. Key sources include the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) progress reports, and reports from think tanks and international organisations. Comparative case studies of Indian states with notable climate initiatives further inform this analysis.

Why Is This Critical for India?

India ranks among the most climate-vulnerable countries globally. Reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) underline the urgency of enhancing resilience in the following domains:

1. **Extreme Weather Events** : Coastal and northeastern states are increasingly exposed to cyclones and floods, while central and northern India are experiencing record-breaking heatwaves. Erratic monsoons have destabilised agricultural cycles and threatened rural livelihoods.
2. **Water Stress :** According to NITI Aayog (2018), 70% of India's surface water is polluted and 21 cities may run out of groundwater by 2030. This crisis heightens inter-sectoral tensions and exacerbates rural distress.
3. **Urban Vulnerability :** Rapid urbanisation without adequate planning has rendered many Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities vulnerable to flooding, heat stress, and air pollution. Insufficient green infrastructure and weak enforcement of zoning laws have further amplified these risks.

Key Pillars of Climate-Resilient Governance for Viksit Bharat@2047

To address these systemic challenges, India must prioritise the following governance pillars –

1. **Integrated Policy and Planning :** National climate missions, state action plans, and urban schemes such as AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission must be better aligned. Institutionalising climate risk assessments within infrastructure projects and land use regulations will ensure longterm adaptive capacity.
2. **Decentralised, Community-Centric Adaptation :** Empowering Gram Panchayats, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), and civil society through financial autonomy and capacity-building will foster localised solutions. Recognising the role of traditional ecological knowledge, especially among indigenous and forest-dependent communities, can enhance both legitimacy and effectiveness of climate interventions.
3. **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Water Management :** A shift toward resilient cropping patterns, agro ecological practices, and micro-irrigation systems is crucial. Initiatives for watershed management, rainwater harvesting, and revival of traditional water bodies must be scaled with community involvement and technological support.

4. **Resilient Infrastructure and Ecosystem Restoration :** Green infrastructure solutions such as urban forests, permeable pavements, and blue-green corridors should be integrated into urban planning. Simultaneously, restoration of wetlands, mangroves, and riverine ecosystems will create natural buffers against climate hazards.
5. **Data, Technology, and Early Warning Systems :** Expanding real-time climate data networks, AI-based forecasting systems, and mobile-based early warning mechanisms can vastly improve anticipatory governance. GIS and satellite imaging tools can aid in resource mapping, vulnerability indexing, and disaster preparedness.

Government Initiatives Already Aligned with This Vision

Several Indian initiatives already reflect components of this climate-resilient governance framework

- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Encompassing eight core missions, including those on solar energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable agriculture, the NAPCC provides a macro-level roadmap for national climate action.
- **State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) :** These state-level strategies, though uneven in implementation, represent an important step toward localisation of climate planning. Recent revisions have begun integrating resilience, health, and just transition elements.
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** Spearheaded by India, the ISA fosters international collaboration on solar technologies, making clean energy a cornerstone of climate action.
- **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):** Another India-led global initiative, the CDRI promotes climate-resilient infrastructure systems by encouraging cross-country learning and standards.
- **AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission :** These urban development programs include explicit components for climate resilience such as improving storm-water drainage, promoting non-motorised transport, and enhancing energy efficiency in public infrastructure.
- **Fasal Bima Yojana and PM-KUSUM:** These schemes support climate-smart agriculture by offering insurance against weather anomalies and subsidising solar-powered irrigation, respectively.
- **Digital India and GIS Platforms:** Government efforts under Digital India have led to improved data-sharing mechanisms and digital service delivery, which are critical for local governance and early warning systems.

Case Studies on Climate-Resilient Governance in India

India's varied geographical, ecological, and socio-political landscape has produced a range of climate governance practices. The following case studies from Odisha, Gujarat, and Kerala offer insightful examples of how different states are addressing climate challenges through innovative, context-specific, and adaptive strategies.

- **Odisha : Disaster Resilience and Coastal Adaptation :** Odisha, situated on India's eastern coastline, is one of the most cyclone-prone regions in South Asia. Yet, it has emerged as a global model in disaster risk reduction through a combination of institutional reforms, technological integration, and commu-nity engagement.

Key Interventions

- Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), established in 1999 after the Super Cyclone, was the first dedicated disaster management authority in India. It operates as a nodal body coordinating preparedness, response, and recovery.
- The state has developed multi-hazard early warning systems, supported by satellite-based alerts and real-time weather data. These systems are disse-minated through SMS, sirens, local volunteers, and community radio.
- Cyclone shelters, built across vulnerable coastal zones, double as schools or community halls during normal times, but serve as safe refuges during storms.
- Odisha's post-disaster recovery frame-work integrates climate-resilient housing, restoration of coastal ecosystems like mangroves, and livelihood rehabilitation through MGNREGS and skill training programs.

Outcomes

- During Cyclone Phailin (2013) and Cyclone Fani (2019), Odisha evacuated over a million people within hours, resulting in minimal casualties. The UN and World Bank have praised Odisha's "zero casualty" approach.
- The integration of disaster preparedness into local governance including training of Panchayats and school children has institutionalised climate resilience at the grassroots.

2. **Gujarat : Renewable Energy Leader-ship and Climate Finance :** Gujarat has emerged as a pioneer in renewable energy development, particularly in the solar sector, making significant contribu-tions to India's climate mitigation agenda. Its strategies also exemplify climate finance innovation and public-private partnerships.

Key Interventions :

- Gujarat launched the Gujarat Solar Policy (2009) and was the first Indian state to commission a solar park the Charanka Solar Park which now has over 600 MW of capacity.
- The Gujarat Energy Development Agency (GEDA) actively promotes solar rooftops, solar irrigation pumps, and wind energy through subsidies and awareness campaigns.
- The State Climate Change Department, formed in 2009, oversees the implemen-tation of the State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) and links state projects with national and international climate finance mechanisms.
- Gujarat also developed a State Green Budgeting Framework to track and enhance climate-relevant expenditures across departments.

Outcomes

- Gujarat has attracted significant private investment in solar energy infrastru-cture, contributing to India's national target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.

- It successfully operationalised decentralised solar solutions for rural and tribal communities, enhancing energy access and reducing carbon dependency.
- The convergence of climate policy with fiscal planning has enabled more efficient allocation of resources toward longterm mitigation and adaptation objectives.

3. **Kerala : Participatory Governance and Ecosystem-Based Adaptation :** Kerala, a state with high literacy and strong civil society networks, has adopted a communitycentric and ecosystem-based approach to climate resilience. Its unique governance model focuses on decentralised planning, genderinclusive development, and ecological restoration.

Key Interventions

- The People's Plan Campaign, initiated in the 1990s, devolved planning and budgetary powers to Local Self Governments (LSGs). Climate change has been integrated into this model through specific local climate adaptation plans.
- The Kudumbashree Mission, a women-led self-help group network, has been instrumental in promoting climate-resilient livelihoods such as organic farming, kitchen gardens, and composting.
- After the devastating 2018 Kerala floods, the state developed a Rebuild Kerala Initiative (RKI) focusing on green infrastructure, catchment area treatment, river rejuvenation, and floodplain zoning.
- Munnar Ecological Landscape Project and Vembanad Wetlands Restoration are examples of ecosystem-based approaches being implemented through public-civil society collaboration.

Outcomes

- Kerala's flood recovery efforts received support from multilateral agencies like the World Bank due to its emphasis on nature-based solutions and community participation.
- LSGs have shown a high degree of ownership in implementing localized water resource management, including pond rejuvenation, rainwater harvesting, and check dams.
- Kudumbashree's efforts have contributed not only to women's empowerment but also to enhancing household and community-level climate resilience.

Comparative Insights and Lessons

These case studies collectively reveal that context-specific governance innovations grounded in local realities but aligned with national and global climate goals are vital for resilience —

- Odisha demonstrates how stateled institutional frameworks, when integrated with local capacities and technology, can significantly reduce vulnerability to extreme events.
- Gujarat exemplifies how climate finance and public-private partnerships can drive energy transitions and technological adoption.
- Kerala showcases how decentralisation, gender empowerment, and ecosystem conservation can converge to build climate-adaptive communities.

Each of these models also underscores the importance of political will, long-term vision, and inclusive participation all essential elements of a governance framework for Viksit Bharat@2047.

India's International Commitments and Climate Governance Landscape

India, as a rapidly developing nation, occupies a crucial position in global climate negotiations and sustainable development efforts. Its international commitments reflect a strategic alignment with global climate goals while accommodating domestic development imperatives. Under the Paris Agreement, India submitted its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with ambitious targets such as achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, reducing the emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030, and ensuring that 50% of its cumu-lative electric power installed capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

In addition to these commitments, India has joined the Global Methane Pledge, aiming to reduce methane emissions a significant contributor to short-term global warming. Furthermore, India's decision to gradually transition from coal through planned retirement of aging thermal plants, alongside investments in renewables, demonstrates a clear intent toward a low-carbon economy, albeit with pragmatic time lines suited to national needs.

India also plays a leadership role in two major international coalitions :

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA), a treaty-based intergovernmental organi-sation initiated by India, aims to scale up solar energy deployment across deve-loping nations, particularly those in the tropics.
- The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), another Indian initiative, promotes the resilience of infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks, thereby aligning with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

These international engagements position India not just as a participant but as a proactive leader in shaping the global climate governance discourse, emphasising innovation, inclusivity, and equity.

Challenges in Climate Governance Imple-mentation Despite progressive policy frameworks and international leadership, India faces multiple challenges in translating climate commitments into effective gover-nance and action at the ground level. These include

1. **Fragmented Institutional Mandates :** One of the most pressing issues in India's climate governance is the lack of coherent and coordinated institutional mandates. Climate-related respon-sibilities are spread across various ministries and departments such as environment, energy, water resources, rural development, and urban affairs often leading to jurisdictional overlaps, siloed implementation, and ineffici-encies. This fragmentation impedes holistic responses to the inherently cross-sectoral nature of climate challe-nges.
2. **Inadequate Capacity at Local Levels :** Local governments both urban and rural are at the forefront of implementing climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives. However, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), municipalities, and urban local bodies (ULBs) often lack the technical, financial, and administrative capacity to formulate and execute climate-sensitive projects. The absence

of skilled personnel, planning tools, and dedicated climate cells exacerbates the implementation gap.

3. **Delayed Fund Disbursement and Coordination Gaps :** While schemes such as the State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) and the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) exist, their execution is often marred by slow fund disbursement, limited convergence between departments, and bureaucratic delays. Many state-level climate plans remain underfunded or outdated, lacking regular monitoring and revision mechanisms.
4. **Limited Integration of Traditional Knowledge and Community Insights :** India is rich in traditional ecological knowledge systems, often practiced by indigenous communities, farmers, and fisher folk. However, formal climate governance frameworks rarely integrate these insights systematically. Top-down planning models, designed without adequate local consultation, often overlook these valuable grassroots perspectives, reducing community ownership and long-term sustainability.

Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Climate Governance

To bridge the gap between global commitments and domestic implementation, the following policy reforms are essential –

1. **Promote Adaptive and Polycentric Governance Structures :** Adopting the principles of polycentric governance, as advocated by Elinor Ostrom, can enhance flexibility and innovation by enabling multiple centres of authority to operate collaboratively. An adaptive governance framework allows continuous learning, policy experimentation, and quick adjustments to emerging risks especially critical in a rapidly changing climate context.

   States should be encouraged to establish state climate councils or inter departmental task forces that coordinate actions across sectors and levels of government. These bodies can institutionalise climate risk assessments, ensure coherence in planning, and drive alignment with national goals.
2. **Mandate Climate Budgeting at State and Municipal Levels :** To mainstream climate action, governments must incorporate climate-sensitive budgeting in annual planning cycles. Green budgeting frameworks, already piloted in some states, should be scaled nationwide to track expenditures on climate adaptation and mitigation. This will not only improve fiscal accountability but also enable better tracking of progress toward NDCs and SDGs.

   Municipal corporations and Gram Panchayats must be incentivised to allocate dedicated funds for climate resilience projects ranging from flood management infrastructure and drought-proofing to clean energy transitions and afforestation.
3. **Foster Public-Private-Community Partnerships :** Achieving large-scale transformation requires the synergistic efforts of government, private sector, and communities. Governments should act as enablers by creating regulatory frame-works and financial incentives for

- Private investment in clean technologies and nature-based solutions.

- Community-based adaptation programs, such as watershed management, rainwater harvesting, and sustainable agriculture.

  By leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds and climate finance instruments like green bonds, climate action can become both decentralised and financially viable.

4. **Strengthen Institutional Capacities through Training and Digital Tools :** Investing in capacity-building programs for local governments is essential to build climate literacy, technical skills, and implementation readiness. Training modules should focus on climate risk assessments, early warning systems, green urban planning, and sustainable livelihood practices.

   Additionally, the deployment of digital governance tools such as GIS-based planning platforms, real-time environmental monitoring, and mobile apps for community reporting can enhance transparency, responsiveness, and evidence-based decision-making.

5. **Establish Independent Climate Audit Authorities :** There is a growing need for independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the performance of climate programs. A Climate Audit Authority, either at the national or state level, could ensure that targets under NDCs, SAPCCs, and local plans are met in a timely, transparent manner. This body can conduct performance audits, compliance checks, and risk assessments, holding institutions accountable and ensuring policy continuity.

Conclusion

The vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 is deeply intertwined with the need for climate-resilient development. India's climate future will not be determined solely by its technological innovations or international diplomacy but by the robustness of its governance systems. To navigate the dual challenges of development and climate change, governance must evolve from static, hierarchical models to dynamic, inclusive, and adaptive frameworks.

A resilient India must anticipate climate risks through data-driven foresight, absorb shocks through well-funded infrastructure and social safety nets, and transform governance practices through decentralized innovation and citizen engagement. This study offers a governance blueprint that connects climate policy with ground realities, ensuring that resilience is built not just on paper, but in the lives and livelihoods of people across India.

Ultimately, decentralization, digital enablement, and community participation will be the pillars of India's climate transition. If these principles are integrated into governance at all levels, India can lead not only in meeting its climate obligations but also in redefining development as a pathway to ecological balance and social equity.

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DIASPORA DIPLOMACY : STRATEGIC INFLUENCE OF THE CHINESE AND INDIAN DIASPORAS IN GLOBAL POLITICS

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Abstract

With diaspora diplomacy evolving into one of the pivotal strategies in modern international relations, rising powers attempt to use this sort of diplomacy. The transnational Chinese and Indian communities, among the largest globally, establish cultural and economic linkage between China and India and their host countries and operate as agents of strategic influence in these societies. This paper delves in to the nature, methods, and impact of Chinaand India's diaspora diplomacy. The article will look at the history, theories, and examples from North America, Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia to compare how China and India engage with their overseas communities, examine how effective these efforts are, and discuss issues like identity politics, reactions from host countries, and divided loyalties. The analysis shows that although both countries see their Diasporas as valuable for increasing their global influence, the ways they use them, the institutions behind these efforts, and the outcomes of their strategies are very different. The paper will end with policy suggestions to enhance diaspora diplomacy in an increasingly multipolar world.

Keywords: Diaspora diplomacy, Chinese diaspora, Indian diaspora, strategic influence, soft power, identity politics, foreign policy

Introduction

Once exclusively confined to Romani studies, the concept has lately turned very important within globalisation, the growth of transnational networks, and the diminishing wall of separation that once stood between domestic closures and foreign policy. Diasporas, for states whose populations have emigrated in large numbers, have come to be recognised as legitimate stakeholders and, in some cases, co-designers of implementing national interest overseas, apart from merely being on the receiving end of foreign policy (Gamlen, 2019). This transformation has been achieved primarily by China and India, the world's two most populous countries, which have created highly developed mechanisms to mobilise their Diasporas as strategic assets. This new development in policy phenomena, which is often referred to as

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diaspora diplomacy, reflects the increasing interest in how diasporas, as groups, interact with host-country politics to create economic flows and shape international opinion (Ho, 2011).

The Chinese and Indian Diasporas' communities are international by nature, ethnically disunited, and increasingly assimilated into the political, economic, and cultural life of their host countries. Thus, they become a medium through which the homeland can project soft power, lobby, transfer knowledge, or manage crises. On the other hand, diaspora diplomacy raises several issues related to state-society arrangements, dual allegiance, and potential backlash within the host society (Mohan & Zachariah, 2020).

The article seeks to unravel the strategic rationale, mechanisms, and impacts of Chinese and Indian diaspora diplomacy. By contrasting their methods and outcomes, it aims to advance our understanding of the role transnational communities play in contemporary global politics.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

1. **Theoretical Foundations :** In the last twenty years, the diaspora foreign policy literature has rapidly expanded, reflecting transnational actors becoming increasingly important in global governance. Some theorists, such as Sheffer (2003) and Vertovec (2009), consider diasporas as non-state actors with political and economic clout. Gamlen (2019) gives his thoughts on "diaspora institutions," whereby he sees states as having formalised their relations with emigrants, thereby effectively turning these relations into elements of foreign policy. Nye's (2004) conceptualisation could suitably be applied here, whereby diasporas are agents of soft power; in this sense, they promote their homelands' cultural, economic, and political values and provide the mechanisms for developing cross-border networks of trust and influence. Still, Brinkerhoff (2012) notes caution by stating that the relationships between Diasporas and their homelands are often complicated and contested, mediated by identity, inter generational changes, and politics within the host country.
2. **Diaspora Diplomacy Defined :** Diaspora diplomacy is when countries of origin work with emigrant communities on purpose and in a planned way to further their foreign policy goals (Ragazzi, 2014). It could mean –

- **Lobbying and advocacy :** Getting groups of people from the diaspora to lobby the governments of the countries where they live.
- **Cultural and educational outreach :** Using groups of people from a country who live abroad to tell stories about their history and culture.
- Economic diplomacy is when you use business networks in the diaspora to help with trade, investments, and sending money.
- **Crisis and humanitarian aid :** getting people from the diasporato helpwith disaster relief, protect consulates, and settle disputes.

3. **Comparative Perspective : Chinese vs. Indian Diaspora Engagement :** The literature shows that China and India have very different ways of managing diaspora. Historically, China has had a more centralised, state-driven model, as

seen in the work of the United Front Work Department (UFWD) and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (Pieke, 2012). India, on the other hand, takes a more decentralised and pluralistic approach, using a variety of cultural, political, and economic institutions like the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas," andadvocacy groups led by the diaspora (Kapur, 2010).

This article uses these frame works to compare how Chinaand India use diaspora diplomacy, looking at their strategic logic, how they get involved, and how it affects politics worldwide.

Evolution and Distribution of the Chinese and Indian Diasporas

1. **The Chinese Diaspora : Scale, History, and Dispersion :** More than 60 million Chinese people live outside China, mainly in Southeast Asia, North America, Europe, Africa, and Oceania (Li, 2016). There are many reasons why Chinese people have moved to other countries. For example, they moved for work in the 19th and 20th centuries and, more recently, for school, business, and professional reasons (Poston & Wong, 2016). Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore all have well-established Chinese communities today. The US, Canada, and Australia have all seen much growth in their Chinese communities in the past few decades.
2. **The Indian Diaspora : Diversity and Global Footprint :** The UN says the Indian diaspora is the biggest in the world, with over 32 million people living outside India. There are Indian immigrants in almost every part of the world. However, there are huge groups in North America, the Gulf states, the UK, South Africa, and Southeast Asia (Lal, 2006). Many people are in the Indian diaspora, including descendants of indentured workers, professionals, students, and business owners. Many still have strong economic, cultural, and political ties to India (Kapur, 2010).
3. **Mapping Diaspora Influence :** The Chinese and Indian Diasporas have both move dupin the world and gained much power. We can see this in their importance in business, academia, politics, and the media in their host countries. For example, in the US, immigrants from China and India are some of the most educated and wealthy groups, becoming more common in technology, finance, and politics (Migration Policy Institute, 2022).

Chinese Diaspora Diplomacy : State-Led Engagement and Strategic Outreach

1. **Institutional Frameworks : United Front Work and Beyond :** A lot of state involvement and coordination mark China's diaspora diplomacy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) runs the United Front Work Department (UFWD). Its job is to get Chinese people living abroad to support the country's strategic goals (Brady, 2017). The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) became part of the UFWD in 2018. It works closely with Chinese-language groups, embassies, and consulates worldwide. The 13th Five-Year Plan for China (2016–2020) says that the country should use Chinese people living abroad to help with "serving the country's reform and

opening up" and spreading the "Chinese Dream" (Pieke, 2012).

2. **Modalities of Engagement**

a) **Political and Cultural Mobilisation :** Chinese embassies and consulates help with many Chinese-language schools, cultural festivals, and media outlets. The CCP has also pushed groups like the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) to be on foreign university campuses to build loyalty and fight bad ideas (Le Corre, 2021).

b) **Economic Diplomacy and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) :** Chinese business net works worldwide have been critical to the success of the BRI. They have helped with investments and infrastructure projects, especially in Southeast Asia and Africa. The "bamboo network" of ethnic Chinese businesses gives important market information, money, and local contacts (Yeung, 2013).

c) **Crisis Response and Consular Protection :** The Chinese government has shown that it can quickly get diaspora communities to act during times of crisis, like when they had to get Chinese citizens out of Libya in 2011 and during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fang & Nolan, 2020).

3. **Strategic Outcomes and Controversies :** Chinese diaspora diplomacy has been good at spreading influence and encouraging economic ties, but it has also raised worries about interference, divided loyalties, and the chance of spying (Joske, 2020). Countries that host the CCP, like Australia, Canada, and the United States, have started investigations into operations linked to the CCP, which has caused diplomatic tensions.

Indian Diaspora Diplomacy : Pluralism, Soft Power, and Political Advocacy

1. **Institutional Evolution : From Indifference to Engagement :** India's relationship with its diaspora has changed alot over the years. The Indian government did not know what to do with its emigrant communities for most of the 20th century. They thought they were a leftover from colonial times (Kapur, 2010). Things began to change in the 1990s. The High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs were both created. In 2016,thetwo groups were combined into the MEA.

   India's foreign policy has become more focused on involving its diaspora since the start of programs like "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas" (in 2003), the "Overseas Citizen of India" (OCI) card, and the expansion of consular services (MEA, 2022).

3. **Modalities of Engagement**

a) **Political and Economic Advocacy :** Indian diaspora groups have worked hard to get host countries, especially the US, UK, and Canada, to make good policies for them. The India Caucus in the US Congress, which started in 1993, is an excellent example of how advocacy by people from India living in other countries has changed important policy areas, such as US-India civil nuclear cooperation (Rana, 2022).

b) **Remittances and Economic Linkages:** Indians living abroad send a lot of money back home, a significant foreign

exchange source. In2022,they sent home the most money in the world : $ 111 billion (World Bank,2023).The Indian diaspora has also helped the country's IT boom, venture capital, and knowledge transfer, primarily through professionals' "return migration" (Saxenian, 2006).

c) **Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power :** Indian films, food, yoga, and festivals are now important ways to use soft power. The Modi government has tried hard to connect with Indians living abroad through significant events like the 2014 rally in Madison Square Garden in New York. They have made India's role as a "Vishwa Guru" (world teacher) more important and gotten people from other countries to support national causes (Tharoor, 2018).

3. **Challenges and Critiques :** India's diaspora diplomacy has problems because it is divided, there are issues with identity politics, and some times the goals of the diaspora and the central government do not matchup. Also, worries in the host country about political mobilisation, likethe protests over Kashmir and the CAA-NRC, have sometimes complicated things (Tripathi, 2021).

Comparative Analysis : Methods, Outcomes, and Strategic Implications

1. **Modes of Engagement : Centralisation vs. Pluralism :** The Chinese model has a lot of government control, strategic planning, and a focus on working together to reach a common goal. The Indian model is becoming more institutionalised, but it is still more varied and relies on projects run by people outside of India. India has a long history of democracy, and many different people live there (Kapur, 2010).

2. **Effectiveness in Achieving Foreign Policy Goals :** Both models have worked well in some significant ways –

   The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) makes it easier for people to get to the economy, helps Chinese stories like Taiwan and the South China Sea, and helps with technology transfer. India is trying to improve relations with the US, send money home, and show a friendly, multi cultural face.

   However, people can say bad things about each model. China is becoming more suspicious and lessable to do things that will affect ot her countries. Some times, Indian diaspora activists get involved in sectarian or home-country conflicts, which can make the host country angry.

3. **Diaspora, Technology, and Innovation Networks :** Both Diasporas are important parts of the world's technology and innovation ecosystems. Most people working in Silicon Valley are Chinese or Indian tech workers. They help new businesses grow and make it easier for people to put money into businesses in other countries (Saxenian, 2006). Many countries, such as China's "Madein China 2025" and India's "Startup India" programs, are trying to use this talent to help them reach their national goals.

4. **Crisis Diplomacy : COVID-19 and Beyond :** The COVID-19 pandemic showed how helpful diaspora networks can be for making plans. During the COVID crisis in India in 2021, Indian diaspora groups in North America and the UK got together to get medical

supplies and oxygen. Chinese groups also worked together to get donations of personal protective equipment (Fang & Nolan, 2020). These mobilisations help people who need them and strengthen soft power and public diplomacy.

Policy Challenges and Ethical Considerations

1. **Dual Loyalty and Host-Country Backlash :** As diaspora groups get more involved in politics in their home countries, people are more worried about "dual loyalty." People worry that immigrants will care more about their home country than their new one. This has made people more aware of foreign influence. This is especially true in Western democracies, where laws like the Foreign Agents Registration Act in the US and foreign influence laws in Australia have been used to go after lobbying and influence operations by diaspora groups (Joske, 2020).
2. **State Surveillance and Civil Liberties :** Some people say that China and, to a lesser extent, India have been spying on or putting pressure on their Diasporas to stop speaking out or get help. There are many stories about Chinese consulates watching Chinese people who live abroad, putting pressure on students, or trying to influence Chinese-language media (Le Corre, 2021). People have also said that Indian consular officials get involved in activism in the diaspora, but they do not usually work together as well or reach as many people.
3. **Diaspora and Transnational Conflict :** Sometimes, getting involved in the diaspora can make things worse at home. For example, the Indian Sikh diaspora in Canada and the UK has made it harder for India to fight rebels. The pressure of the Chinese government on the Uyghur and Tibetan communities living abroad has also caused problems with Western governments (Ragazzi, 2014).
4. **Opportunities for Inclusive Diplomacy :** There are risks, but diaspora diplomacy can also help people from different cultures get along better, improve the economy, and solve problems worldwide. Diasporas often help countries get along and give us new ways to think about problems around the world. (Gamlen, 2019).

The Future of Diaspora Diplomacy in a Multipolar World

The Chinese and Indian Diasporas will likely gain more strategic power in the next few decades as migration, global networks, and technological changes speed up. Both countries are likely to make their diaspora work more official. They will try to find a balance between what the government needs and the freedom and diversity of their communities abroad.

The world of diaspora diplomacy is also changing. Governments in host countries are more aware of how outside forces can affect them. Thanks to technology, people can work together across borders more easily. Pandemics and climate change are also giving diaspora groups new ways to help.

China's biggest problem will be eliminating the idea that it is controlling or manipulative and promoting a more friendly, one-on-one approach. India has a strong and diverse diaspora, but the country needs to be careful not to let politics and division get in the way of its goals.

In the end, diaspora diplomacy shows how complicated and multi-layered global politics are in the 21st century when power is shared by states and the transnational communities that connect them.

Conclusion

In the world of international relations, diaspora diplomacy is becoming increasingly important. This is especially true for countries like China and India, which have many influential people living in other countries. Both countries think it would besmart to get their Diasporas involved. However, they do it in very different ways because their political systems, histories, and diaspora makeups are all different.

Chinese diaspora diplomacy is characterised by centralisation, strategic coordination, and a willingness to use state power to protect national interests. Indian diaspora diplomacy, onthe other hand, is more diverse and depends on the soft power, economic strength, and advocacy of independent diaspora groups.

Both models have helped achieve foreign policy goals. However, they have also been criticised and faced backlash, especially regarding dual loyalty, political interference, and relations with the host country.

In the future, diaspora diplomacy will need to find a good balance between the needs of the host countries and the rights and freedoms of diaspora communities. To get the most out of their Diasporas, China and India should encourage more open, friendly, and helpful ways for people to interact. It will help the world work together and be more stable.

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NEOLIBERALIZING TENDENCIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND LAW IN IR : THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

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Abstract

Liberalism of the current times is still haunted by imperialist tendencies, especially in the operational replacement of the traditional empire with the advancement of human rights. Human rights imperialism is an inextricable part of international affairs in the post-cold war period. Selective applications of legal procedures lead to anarbitrary system of governance with no regard to any of the human rights standards. The inconsistencies between the principle of sovereignty and the principle of human rights in the situation of settler colonialism in Palestineis one that is discussed here. This period is read as that of neoliberal globalism, one which is not only about the effective loss of meaning of the sovereign, but also of the process of institutionalization of the violations of human rights. The article discusses the Oslo Accords in Palestine as having brought in the phenomena of permanency of the 'state of exception.

Keywords : Human Rights, liberalism, imperialism, sovereign, Palestine

Introduction

The discourses of human rights in academia have become something for the disciplinarybattles to forage from, for example, the realism versus constructiv ismdebatein International Relations, and the absolutist, restrictive insistence on the use of quantitative methods in the disciplinary research (Moyn 2014) is of the opinion that when political scientists are involved with human rights discourses, the tendency is to primarily care about the futures of the discipline under the pretext of engaging with globa human rights phenomena. The experiences of citizenship politics indicate that one asserts their reading and version of rights that is dictated by the specific context of their stand point, while another asserts theirs, but if there is disagreement between the two, thenthereexistsno other way but to bargain. In politics as we know it, rights are another term for policies who seen dorsement finally depends oneitheracon sent for the policies or them being forcefully imposed. Asisopinedby Arendt (2006), rights were examined as akind of a step child by the discipline of political thought in the 19th century. This articletries to explore the Oslo Accords in Palestine as having brought in the phenomena of permanency of the 'state of exception.

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Historical Analysis of Human Rights and Crisis of Liberalism –

The school of Liberalism has always been statist as well as imperialist with its exclusion of anything remotely in resemblance to the international human rights paradigms. Its central historical endeavour with respect to Christian Europeans' (Western Europe) suffering sespecially under Ottoman empire was a standard form of nationalism, and this was eventually followed by the Americans– the will to stand in support of 19th century nationalist movement sir respective of its consequences of compromising the integrities of borders with their interferences. Therefore, the benchmark of historical liberal progressiveness was that of the white nations tatesruling the world under the pretext of bringing about reform, given the liberated nations governing themselves, and so, 'liberal internationalism' in the 19th century was nationalist in character with humanitarian intervention being focused on the liberation of the white people from the likes of Ottoman empires (Bass 2008).

Adoption of human rights by Liberals beyond Empire– the above discussion leads to theera of liberalism being inclusive of rights extremely prominently, where a rights revolution in thought and practice has taken place, with international human rights becoming a policy matter to be pursued. It is pertinent to note that this rights revolution of the liberal international order is rigorously different from that of domestic politics (Epps 1998). It is also observed by Bell (2014: 705).

The history of liberalism is a history of constantre invention… the most sweeping of these occurred in the middle of the twentieth century, when liberalism was increasingly figured as the dominant ideology of the West – its originsret rojected back in to the early modern era, it came to denote virtually all non-totalitarian forms of politics as well as a partisan political perspective within societies.

The two critical steps of liberalism in order to reach its significance in the international human rights paradigm were its antitotalitarian bend towards rights and its internationalisation in the post-imperial world order. The cold war saw the promise by liberal states of increased intervention by the state and greater redistribution of welfare measures, in response to their king sentiment stemming from the Marxists being in power. The liberals of the cold war period like Judith Shklar and I. Berlin presented a grim picture of human welfare where the maximum a government could achieve was to project a platform for freedom of individuals (Jan-Werner Mueller 2008). They were hesitant to present criticisms of the empire, except when directed towards the Soviets and more often defending the empire until the last possible measure (having been involved in its expansion in the 19th century). Liberalism of the current times is still haunted by imperialist tendencies, especially in the operational replacement of the traditional empire with the advancement of human rights, even though the moving a way from the eras of liberalism and the empire are eventually riveting (More field 2014).

Human Rights and International Law in the Context of Palestine - Israel –

Thomas Pogge (2000) discusses how it would be entirely irresponsible to deprive ourselves of any moral basis for the assessment and reform of our global order. The only such basis that could be both

plausible and capable of wide inter national acceptance today is the conception of human rights (HR). O' Neill (2003) also discusses HR as being the principled elements of an ethical Foreign Policy (FP) while Stanley Hoffmann (1966) writes about HR as challenges to state sovereignty. Foucault's (2002) conception of HR as rights of private individuals to effectively intervene in the sphere of international policy and strategy, takes away the monopoly of the state through the will of the individual. In the spheres of international intervention, the major international realm where principle of HR is directly facing the principle of state sovereignty is understood by taking into account two major norms of Westphalian state systems–sovereignty and nonintervention, which are at stake when humanitarian intervention is invoked in a given context. Selective applications of legal procedures erode universality of norms, sanctity of law and the strength of institutions of law (Haragopal and Jagannatham 2009). It leads to a despotic system of governance with no regardto any of the HR standards, national or international.

The Palestinian people's political right of self-determination has been treated with utmost disregard from the very beginning of the Palestinian crisis. This process of creation of Israel and systematic dismantling of Palestinian lives and their 'inherent dignity'[1] through the selective usage of international law and regime, has created a 'class of people' (Chimni 2010) who are subjugated. This class structure gives birth to the establishment of subaltern states and people (Chimni 2004) which needs to be studied through the lens of class in international law. The inconsistencies between the principle of sovereignty and the principle of human rights in the [1]Ibid 11situation of settler colonialism[2] in Palestine is one to take note of. The sovereign is often considered as the holder of absolute power. This notion of absoluteness is asserted in theBodin Formula expression (Bodin 2009) '*potestaslegibussoluta*' which translates to 'power is not bound by law'. This understanding of sovereignty manifests in the charter of the United Nations[3].Article 1 of the UN charter echoes the principle of sovereignty stressing on the development of friendly relations between states based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination. Hence the concept of sovereignty embedded in the UN charter is complementary to 'equal rights and self-determination' of peoples, suggesting the coexistence of both. There has been flagrant violation of human rights in the Palestinian region by the state of Israel.[4] The principle of state sovereignty and the in alien able human rights seem to be in conflict with each other.

Problematizing the Oslo Accords and Neoliberal Globalism

The global normative alternative in the form of civil society in itself is not free from moral dilemmas and power politics. Neoliberal globalism (Ramakrishnan 2002) seemingly expanded the discourse on HR into new arenas, but also restricted the sovereign capacity to make laws independently and guard the rights ensuing from them. This period of neoliberal globalism is not only about the effective loss of meaning of the sovereign, but also of the process of institutionalization of violations of HR (Chatterjee 2002). Baxi (2002) contributes with important aspects of transformations of the concept and practice of HR inera of neoliberalism– aparadigm of HR which renders unprob-lematic the voices of

suffering and encou-rages insensitivity towards the sufferings of the people, and questions of justice in HR discourses. Trade Related Market Friendly Human Rights (TRMFHR) comesin, where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) paradigm is being steadily supp-lanted by trade related market friendly HR, reversing the notion that universal HR is for attainment of dignity, well-being of humans, enhancing security, and the well-being of socially, economically and civilizationally vulnerable peopleand communities.

The larger phenomena across the West Bank, which since the 1967 Arab – Israel War, has been under illegal occupation by Israel, and where, since the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestine Authority (PA) majorly led by the Fatah, has been 'ruling'. The political situation in the West Bank, which is also Palestine, is one with a political regime being in complete agreement with the West and the US Israel model of negotiations since the early 1990s. And yet, the West Bank continues to be under Israeli military occupation with 565 movement obstacles with 49 constantly staffed check points, 300 road blocks, ever expandingil legal settlements, a 712-kilometre-long separation wall, mass imprisonment without charge, and an ID-permitsystem controlling all aspects of Palestinian life employment, education, marriage, access to resources each of these illegal under international law.[5] A report published by the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner notes that there are 700,000 approx number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank and 24, 300 approximate number of housing units with in existing illegal Israeli settlements.[6]

The Oslo Accords, a set of agreements that called for the formation of an 'interim self-governing authority' an intermediate between the Israeli occupation forces and the Palestinians, have ensured a continued occupation, instead of the formation of an independent sovereign political state. The members of this interim body (the PA) were arranged to be paid their salaries by the internationals, mostly the European Union, in addition to the introduction of civil society organisations in the Palestinian political–economic land scape, being funded by the international organisations and donor states (Haddad 2018). This brought in the phenomena of NGOs focusing on a rights-based approach in an apolitical fashion, leading to a professionalization of grassroots movements that were struggling for independence and liberation.

The foreign currency-based economy has resulted in the throwing off balance of the property rents in cities like Ramallah and Jerusalem, where most of the international NGOs have their offices, and hence the overall living costs have substantially increased for a historically and traditionally agriculture-based economy (Samara 1992). In geographical terms, the development of land has been taking place in the areas where the Palestinians are permitted, according to the Oslo Accords specifications, to build on. These are the Areas designated as 'A' and 'B' – which approximately makes up for forty percent of the total West Bank area. Therefore, there has been a construction boom in a very limited area of land, with the prices of properties here steadily increasing over the years. While Area 'C' forming up to sixty percent of the West Bank, and under full Israeli control as per Oslo Accords, and Jerusalem have been seeing unrestricted construction of illegal Israeli settlements (Haddad 2018).

The normative shift in HR in the contemporary era takes two dimensions increasing hegemonic rights of global capital and instrumental use of HR for protecting the interests of powerful states. Agamben (2005) writes about the state of exception, and it is relevant here. There is a voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency which has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states including democratic ones. The Western donor states, the PA and the Israeli occupation have drastically shifted the Palestinian question from its inherent characteristics and principles. The interim arrangements no longer continue to yield the results as imagined by the donor states in the beginning of the Oslo 'peace process'– who have substantially reduced aid to the PA as well as to aid disbursing bodies like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) - an apolitical agency encapsulated within an extremely political setting, providing basic services like education, sanitation, healthcare tofive million refugees[7]. The model of negotiations based on the vastly resented Oslo Accords, with the complete cooperation of the ruling Palestinian political regime in the West Bank for 30 years, has utterly failed. The concept of 'de-development' by Sara Roy is again relevant here in further deciphering the state of affairs –

> The years since the Oslo agreement have seen a marked deterioration in Palestinian economic life and an accelerated de-development process. The key features of this process have been heightened by the effects of closure, the defining economic feature of the post Oslo period. Among its results are enclavisation, seen in the physical separation of the West Bank and Gaza; the weakening of economic relations between the Palestinian and Israeli economies; and growing divisions within the Palestinian labour market, with the related, emerging pattern of economic autarky. In the circumstances described, the prospects for sustained economic development are non-existent and will remain so long as closure continues (Roy 1999: 64).

With the de-development processes accelerating alongside the Oslo effects, it was the sustaining of the PA structure and the continuation of negotiations that were the priorities of the donor communities and this became a concern.

Conclusion

HR imperialism is an inextricable part of international affairs in the post-cold war period. The right to self-determination is integral to basic human rights[8], which has been denied to the Palestinian people. It has rightly been identified in the works of Noura Erakat that law becomes the tool to further an interest (Erakat 2019). This is done under the garb of emancipatory rhetoric that evolved from privatized notions of rights in favour of markets. The conditionality attached to foreign aid to the PA structures in the West Bank ensures a perpetual servility of the PA to Israel and western donor states. Indeed, the state of exception today has reached its maximum worldwide deployment. The normative aspect of law can therefore be obliterated and contradicted with impunity by governmental violence, that while ignoring international law externally and producing a permanent state of exception internally, nevertheless stillclaims to be

applying the law. The neoliberal projects of peace building and state-building are preoccupied with technicalities, terms like 'development', 'welfare', 'empowerment', 'autonomous.' The commonsensical approach to these ideas and practices is that of these being appealing generally, and especially so, for a struggling population. The overarching scientific, objective methods of the IFIs and international donors (at least on paper) have de-politici-zation effects across all sections of the socio-political space that they are practiced on.

Notes

1. ibid 11
2. unga, 2022https://docs.un.org/en/a/77/356
3. article 2, para 1, uncharter, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text
4. unga/shc/4385, 78th session,2023, https://press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4385.doc.htm
5. International Court of Justice, (2024). Legal Consequence sarising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf
6. UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2024). STATE OF PALESTINE : Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/Palestine-March2024.pdf
7. Resolution 302 (IV), (1949) Assistance to Palestinian Refugees. https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/302(IV)
8. UNGA/SHC/4085, 5 November 2013, https://press.un.org/en/2013/gashc4085.doc.htm

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SECURING NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT THROUGH SANCTIONS : A MYTH OR REALITY

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Abstract

According to a report by the United Nations, sanctions against Iran has limited its ability to acquire items for its nuclear and ballistic missile programme but has failed in neutralizing the political will of Iran to stop its nuclear programme. In other words, sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy have defied the cost-benefit calculus i.e., higher the cost imposed on the targeted country, the more willing the sanctioned state will be to offer concessions. In fact, research shows that escalation in sanctions has led to an increase in the nuclear ambitions of Iran. According to one research in 2006 when the sanctions against Iran were made harsh by US and European Union Iran had 1000 centrifuges which increased nineteen-fold in 2013. The question is why sanctions have not yielded the desired result? This paper argues that the answer lies in the nuclear non-proliferation debate and discourse. Nuclear disarmament can only be achieved through comprehensive and complete disarmament. Till state's territory is not guaranteed security, they will have no option but to procure weapons, nuclear being the ultimate security. Therefore, this paper suggests that the policy makers in the West instead of devising new mode of sanctions need to divest their energy on finding new ways and means of eliminating nuclear arsenals from the earth. Till then, sanctions are nothing but a disguise for hegemonic US policy aimed at denying the state's their sovereign right to protect their boundaries.

Keywords : Nuclear proliferation, security, disarmament, arms control, hegemony.

Introduction :

The increasing tension of looming war between US-Iran and the fire beneath the ashes once brought the entire world on the brink of disaster. US-Iran relations have always been raucous, except for a few flashes. Starting with the 1979 Iranian revolution caused by US led coup against Mohammed Mosaddeq when he tried to nationalize Iranian oil companies to the President Bush Government levelling of Iran as the 'Axis of Evil' in 2002, one finds that the relations have grown from worse to worst. However, in the past few years due to chain of events

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that followed, particularly the US accusation in 2000 that Iran is clandestinely pursuing nuclear programme, what is evident is a hassled relationship turning the world arena into a hot bed of war. The 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and US with Iran agreeing for international in spection in return for lifting of economic sanctions was abandoned by United States in 2018 and the killing of General Qasem Soleimani of Iran in US drone strike in 2020 further deteriorated all hope of cooperation between the two countries. International arena is thronged with deliberations on US-Iran relationship with experts probing its various dimensions like the historical pers-pective, US- sanctions policy, its implications, actions, and reactions. The issue gains significance in the light of change in Government in United States. When Joe Biden was at the helm of affairs, it is unclear whether he would aim at Iran's compliance with 2015 deal as suggested in his campaign that he would support targeted sanctions against Iran for his nuclear pursuit or he will be more persuasive in his dealing with Iran. Now with President Bush again into power the US-Iran relation is back to square one. This paper is an attempt to investigate the pros and cons of US sanctions against Iran within the framework of nuclear deterrence debate. There is an absence of literature scrutinizing whether the whole notion of sanctions by United States to make Iran stop its nuclear pursuit and contribute to nuclear nonproliferation would bear the test of nuclear deterrence debate? Nobody has tried to analyze the present US sanctions on Iran from the prism of nuclear nonproliferation goals of the P-5 countries. These are the grey areas of research, which this paper seeks to explore.

Nuclear Being a Weapon of Deterrence and not Retaliation

International politics is state centric and states are power centric since the immediate as well as ultimate objective of each nation is to secure its boundaries from foreign aggression. State's security depends on their possession of the latest instruments of warfare. The use of atom bomb in Second World War made Japan surrender unconditionally and seeing the devastating capacity of the bomb, mankind thought, in course of time, that they have given birth to the 'winning military tools' for future warfare known by the name of 'nuclear bomb' in its new Avtar. However, the catastrophe leased by the use of atom bomb in the Second World War have made states wary of its use in future. The result is that although nuclear weapons remain the most potent military tools on earth it has not yet been used by any country of the world. This brings to light the most interesting facet of nuclear weapons, that is, it is a weapon of deterrence rather than a weapon of demonstration. Countries on which it is used either will not exist to retaliate or will be devastated to an extent that it will lack the means to fight back. The conclusion in a nut shell is that the weapon can at the most be used to create panic in the minds of both Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) as well as Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) i.e., deterring them of the consequences of its use but whether that deterrence would translate into peace/ avoidance of conflict is not guaranteed. One can thus safely conclude that the whole notion of nuclear non-proliferation hinges on the notion of creating 'psychological fear or deterrence in the minds of the state' and not on gaining victory on any state through its use.

Nuclear deterrence and the cost-benefit calculus

Before the invention of nuclear weapons state sought to secure their boundaries by gaining military edge or parity among the comity of nations. The outbreak of First World War not only negated the assumption that the balance of power leads to peace/avoidance of conflict but it also gave birth to two new variants of deterrence theory; structural deterrence theory and decision theoretic deterrence theory (Mearsheimer, Waltz). Deterrence being a specific type of relationship in which an actor- a state, group or an individual seeks to influence the behaviour of another in desired directions resting primarily upon threats of sanctions or deprivations, an attempt to indicate to an opponent that the costs of an action by him far outweighs benefits accruing from it (Rajamohan 1986). While structural deterrence theory considers the cost-benefit-calculus done by state actors within the ambit of systemic structures prevailing, the decision theoretic deterrence seeks to find an answer to the same question focussing on the choices available to the state actors. But in both the cases the cost-benefit calculation is based on the perception of the state actor (which need not always be accurate) which in turn is affected by the psychological behaviour of the leaders, the domestic factors as well as the nature of the international system in which the states operate. Another important aspect of nuclear weapons is that it contains the inherent danger of prompting a weaker state to use its nuclear weapon first lest it lose the chances of using it forever if its calculation goes wrong. This raises another question as to how many nuclear arsenals a state requires to survive a nuclear attack and still be able to inflict nuclear attack which means that nuclear superiority is dangerous for peace as it increases the intensity of devastation and yet is a prerequisite for deterrence to work in favour of those who possess nuclear arsenals.

Another question which gains significance in the nuclear deterrence discourse is the status of non-nuclear states vis a vis nuclear states as the question of the benefits of first strike and second-strike capability does not apply to them since the cost-benefit calculation will always reflect zero-sum-game for them. It is this advantage which the Nuclear Weapon States have over the Non-Nuclear Weapon States which forces Nuclear Weapon States to deny the Non-Nuclear Weapon States access to nuclear technology and is responsible for the pursuit by Non-Nuclear Weapon States to possess-nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapon not only gives leverage to states in their negotiations with the NWS but also creates a false impression that they will not face nuclear attack from others. It is a kind of asymmetric psychological warfare going on in the minds of NWS and NNWS whereby the supposed victory always rests on the mere actual possession of the nuclear weapon, that is nuclear deterrence, and not on the use of it, since nuclear weapon have so far been never used.

Analysing Iran's Pursuit of Nuclear Weapon through the Prism of Nuclear Deterrence

Middle East is a loosely defined trans-continental geographic region, consisting of 18 nations. Most of the countries were part of the erstwhile Ottoman Empire, which disintegrated to give way for their creation. An ancient civilization, Iran is located at the

crucial juncture of South Asia and Middle East. It also links the Central Asian Republics and the Caucasus region to the Arabian Sea (Bansal, 2012). Having a history of being the fulcrum of international trade it is not surprising that its leaders are aspiring to regain their lost status which they once enjoyed in the Middle East.

Thus, Iran becomes the center of attention for United States as well as for other European countries because of its considerable say in oceanic trade and its ability to influence commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's coastal border offers it easily exercisable hard power status in the relatively narrow Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz located south of Iran is the most important waterway for global energy supply. Since, oil accounts for majority of gulf economies, any disruption in oil supply will significantly lead to rise in world oil price.

The importance Strait of Hormuz is being underlined by the statement, 'if you control the entry and exit of Hormuz, you control the world trade through ocean' since the Strait of Hormuz connects Persian Gulf to Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean which accounts for 40 percent to 46 percent of the world's oil exports. A study by the International Energy Agency (IEA), forecasted that by 2030 two-thirds of the world's oil supply would flow through the Persian Gulf. Considering the above statistics, any interruption of flow of oil and gas through the Strait of Hormuz would have a catastrophic impact on the global economy, particularly on its prices, which is the reason why Iran has played Strait of Hormuz as a bargaining tool in its negotiation with the west as far as nuclear sanctions are concerned. This is also the reason why Iran claims to control the Arabian Sea and its traffic in a manner where it is able to say that closing its access to foreign powers is easier than drinking a glass of water (Lahabi, 2019). A nuclear Iran as well as Middle East would be more difficult to negotiate for United States as far as its trade interests are concerned (not to forget the fact that the United States is the largest consumer of oil in the world) and hence the attempt by it to deny Iran the access to nuclear world. In fact, Iran started to pursue nuclear weapons in part because it wants to be the leader of the Arab world and in part because Israel had it and it feared that Iraq would get them too. In Iran, Md. Reza Shah Pahlavi started the nuclear programme 45 years ago as part of a broader effort to establish himself as a nationalist modernizer who would restore the position of regional pre-eminence that Tehran had enjoyed in earlier centuries. This regional aspiration of Iran increased US interest in Iran's nuclearization ambitions.

One only needs to revisit the extended nuclear umbrella deterrence policy of United States to understand the validity of this argument. 'United States has given commitment to use nuclear weapons first, if necessary, to defend an ally if it is attacked by an enemy who uses conventional forces, biological or chemical weapons and a more tailored US commitment to use US nuclear weapons in retaliation against only a nuclear attack on an ally' (Sagan 2009). One needs to be reminded here that only China and India have given the pledge of 'no first use'. United States has not given any such commitments. In fact, in the Bush world view,'since rogue states are undeterrable, a military contingency plan must prepare for a variety of scenarios in which the use of nuclear

weapons and the merger of nuclear and conventional forces will be required'. A revealing glimpse of such contingency plans surfaced in a draft of the Pentagon's "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations" that was posted on the Joint Chief of Staff website from late 2004 until October 2005, withdrawn thereafter (Goldblat 2002)'. The conclusion is that world peace is dependent on the political will of the statesas well as their military superiority, with or without nuclear.

Kroenig (2013) argues that 'nuclear weapons have not been central to America's national security for the past two decades because it's primary foes- Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda did not have them'. Iran's possession of nuclear weapon would disturb the status quo in Middle East that favoured United States till date and thus US interest to deny Iran the option of developing nuclear weapon. Till date United States has used sanctions with majority of them focussed on preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear and missile materials and technology. Others aim to make Iran pay a price for pursuing its nuclear related activities as these sanctions are focused on reducing economic investment and trade of Iran with other countries of the world with the United States specifically targeting the energy sector. More recently sanctions have been targeted towards officials in the regime, especially the top echelons of the Revolutionary Guards. The sanctions are international in scope; imposed by the United Nations' Security Council and unilateral on part of United States, the European Union, and others (Pape 1998).

Here it is important to be reminded of the analysis by Sagan (2009) that even if a Nuclear Free World is achieved, the NWS would still have the technique to develop it any day and they then would act as 'latent nuclear powers' thereby sustaining the status-quo. Nuclear deterrence would still exist in a nuclear weapon free world but it would be of much recessed and latent form than it exists today' and it would deny the nonstate actors any chance of getting it. Given the weakness of the deterrence provided by the possession of nuclear arsenals, would not it be rational to eradicate it from Mother Earth.

NPT which was signed on 1st July 1968 and remained in force till 1970 was unique in the sense that "it prohibits possession of the most destructive weapons yet invented by an overwhelming majority of states while tolerating possession of the same weapons for an undefined period by a handful of states" (Goldblat 2002:101). In addition to retaining their nuclear arsenals, 'the Nuclear Weapon Powers can even help one another in developing nuclear warheads and testing them. They can also purchase material necessary to pursue their nuclear weapon programmes from each other. They can through mutual understanding deploy nuclear weapons on the territories of other states. The provisions of the treaty give them the right to decide by themselves how far they would accept international controls over their peaceful nuclear activities' (SIPRI2020: 39). A careful analysis of the terms of the treaty clearly reveals that it is not only discriminatory in its treatment of NWS and NNWS but also defies the basic assumptions of deterrence theory. If mere possession of nuclear weapon deters states from going to war, then why the clause of cooperation between NWS as well as friendly NNWS inserted? Even if one tries to examine the above clauses through the

prism of structural deterrence theory one fails to understand how the cost-benefit-calculation for different political systems operating with different socio-economic-political and cultural set-ups be the same? How a nuclear India becomes a threat to China and US but nuclear Pakistan does not? The 188 signatories are those who never had any intention of making nuclear weapons since they never were a threat to the prevailing status quo. Infact, NPT was a kind of bargain for them mainly to please bigger powers on which they were dependent for aid and trade. Harrison has very well summed up that the "most important test cases for the NPT from the start have been three big countries with historically rooted ambitions for major power status: India, Iran and Japan" (Harrison 2006:1-3) and the assumption of this paper further substantiates the statement of Harrison.

Conclusion :

Under the circumstances one may say with the neo-realists that securing the boundary is the prime interest of states and nuclear being the ultimate weapon `motivate the NNWS to acquire them. Since there exists a thin line of demarcation between rationality and irrationality the threat to nuclear devastation is real forgetting the debate whether it is possessed by a democratic country or a rogue stateor non-state actors, the world cannot imagine the catastrophe it will lease to humanity. So long there remains imbalance in the distribution of powers among states, there will remain a desire to balance and what better way to balance than to acquire nuclear! States will never allow other states the chance to gain parity with it and hence the whole drama of nuclear proliferation and nuclear disaster. Even a single nuclear state poses the same danger to World peace as any other number of Nuclear Weapon state. It is high time the mankind engages in a rational debate over the efficacy of nuclear weapons in securing the boundaries of nations and realises the potential threat to mankind accruing from it.

Another very important but less debated issue in the nuclear deterrence debate is the growth of non-state actors as instruments of warfare (Fourth Generation Warfare and Fifth Generation Warfare) where it has been predicted that warfare will now be waged by non-state actors in which case the security of nuclear and its clandestine transfer into the hands of non-state actors is something which one cannot dare to ignore. Here it is pertinent to bring to exploration the threat posed by the desire of the non-state actors to procure nuclear weapons in their fight against the state actors and the danger lies not merely for the technically backward countries but equally to the most advanced and powerful states like US, China Russia, and others. United States experienced 156 cyber attacks till 2020 which is the highest in number faced by any other country followed by United Kingdom, India, Germany, South Korea, Australia, Ukraine, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia (Ang 2021). One needs to be reminded of the cyber-attack on Iran's nuclear facility at Natanz which brings to the fore the threat posed by non-state actors.

Under the circumstances the wisest policy options available for any country is not to stop any country from acquiring nuclear weapons but to collaborate with different countries of the world to eradicate the existence of these deadliest weapons from this universe. There lie many other ways of deterring a state, why to rely on a weapon which cannot be used but merely used to

threaten. The cost for Mother Earth of possessing this weapon far outweighs any positive security guarantee accruing from it and hence this paper pleads for a Nuclear Free World- a world not divided between Nuclear Haves and Nuclear Have nots but a truly safe and secure egalitarian world.

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POLITICS AND CULTURE : A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This comprehensive study explores the intricate relationship between politics and culture, examining how cultural identities, values, and practices shape political landscapes and vice versa. By integrating multidisciplinary perspectives from political science, anthropology, sociology, and history the research investigates the dynamic interplay between cultural norms and political institutions across different historical periods and geographical contexts. The paper analyses case studies ranging from national movements and revolutions to global cultural shifts, highlighting the ways in which cultural narratives influence political ideologies, policy-making, and governance. It also examines the reciprocal impact of political regimes on cultural expression, including censorship, state-sponsored art, and cultural diplomacy. Through a nuanced understanding of these interactions, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on identity politics, social cohesion, and the role of culture in shaping political stability and change. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of cultural awareness in political processes and offers insights into fostering inclusive, culturally sensitive governance in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords : Politics, culture, relationship, identity

Introduction

The relationship between politics and culture is one of the most enduring and complex themes in the study of human societies. At its core, this relationship reflects the fundamental ways in which shared beliefs, values, practices, and symbols influence political behavior, institutions, and policies, while, conversely, political structures and actions impact the cultural fabric of societies. Understanding this bidirectional dynamic is essential for comprehending the development of social movements, the stability or fragility of states, and the evolution of collective identities over time. Historically, culture has functioned both as a foundation and a reflection of political life. From the ancient city-states of Greece to modern nation-states, cultural elements such as language, religion, art, and tradition have served as sources of unity, legitimacy, and resistance. Conversely, political upheavals revolutions, regime changes, and policy reforms have continually reshaped cultural landscapes, leading to new narratives, social norms, and modes of expression. This ongoing dialogue underscores the importance of viewing politics and culture not as isolated spheres but as deeply interconnected domains that mutually influence and redefine each other.

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In recent decades, the intersection of politics and culture has gained renewed significance amid globalization, technological advancements, and the rise of identity politics. The proliferation of digital media has transformed cultural dissemination and political mobilization, enabling marginalized groups to voice their narratives and challenge dominant paradigms. Simultaneously, the increasing recognition of cultural diversity and the politics of identity have reshaped debates around nationalism, multiculturalism, and social justice. These develop-ments highlight how cultural considerations are central to contemporary political discourse and policymaking.

This research paper aims to provide a thorough investigation into the multifaceted relationship between politics and culture. It will explore foundational theories and conceptual frameworks that have shaped scholarly understanding of this relationship, critically analyze case studies across different regions and historical periods, and assess the contemporary implications of cultural politics in an interconnected world. By doing so, the study seeks to illuminate the ways in which cultural identities influence political allegiances and conflicts, how political institutions shape cultural expression, and the potential pathways for fostering inclusive and resilient societies through anuanced understanding of cultural politics.

The significance of this research lies in its capacity to inform policymakers, scholars, and practitioners about the importance of cultural considerations in political processes. Recognizing the cultural underpinnings of political behavior can lead to more effective governance, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. As the world faces unprecedented challenges ranging from ethnic conflicts to global pandemics the insights derived from examining the nexus of politics and culture are more vital than ever. This paper endeavors to contribute meaningfully to this ongoing discourse, emphasizing that sustainable political solutions must be rooted in a deep appreciation of cultural diversity and complexity.

Literature Review

The relationship between politics and culture has long been a central focus in social sciences, reflecting the intricate ways in which cultural identities, values, and practices influence political processes and vice versa. Understanding this dynamic interplay is essential for analysing phenomena such as political ideology formation, social movements, nationalism, and policy development. This literature review synthesizes foundational theories, recent advancements, and critical debates within the field, drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives including political science, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies.

Early theorists like Clifford Geertz (1973) emphasized the importance of symbols, rituals, and shared meanings in shaping collective identities. Geertz argued that culture provides the interpretive framework through which individuals understand their social worlds, influencing political behavior and attitudes. Building upon this, Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of *imagined communities* posited that nations are cultural constructs sustained through shared narratives, symbols, and media, which in turn underpin nationalistic politics. Additionally, Huntington (1996) proposed

that cultural identities are fundamental to political affiliations, especially in the post-Cold War era, emphasizing the role of civilizations in shaping global conflicts. Similarly, Samuel P. Huntington's *clash of civilizations* thesis (1996) suggests that cultural differences are primary sources of conflict, contrasting with modernization theories that emphasize economic factors whereas the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) introduced the concept of *cultural capital*, illustrating how cultural preferences and knowledge influence social stratification and political power. Bourdieu argued that dominant cultural forms serve to reproduce social inequalities and legitimize political authority and Almond and Verba (1963) pioneered the analysis of *political culture*, categorizing societies into participant, subject, and parochial cultures. Their typology has been foundational in understanding variations in political participation and democratic development across nations.

The framing theory, advanced by Snow and Benford (1988), highlights how social movements use cultural symbols and narratives to mobilize support and achieve political objectives. Movements such as civil rights, feminism, and environmental activism often rely on culturally resonant messages to foster collective identity and action whereas Anderson (1983) and Smith (1991) explored nationalism as a cultural phenomenon, emphasizing the role of shared history, language, and myths in constructing national identities. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) remains seminal in understanding how cultural narratives underpin national consciousness. After that James C. Scott (1990) introduced the concept of *everyday resistance*, illustrating how subordinate groups utilize cultural practices to oppose oppressive regimes. Cultural resistance becomes a form of subtle defiance that influences political change over time. Additionally, Appadurai (1996) and Tomlinson (1999) examined how globalization fosters both cultural homogenization and hybridization. While some argue that global media and economic integration erode local cultures, others highlight the resilience and adaptation of indigenous cultural practices in the global context. In another study Schiller (1976) critiqued cultural imperialism, asserting that dominant Western cultural forms often overshadow local traditions, influencing political ideologies and social structures globally. Conversely, local movements often resist such influences through cultural revivalism and political activism.

Recent scholarship has focused on how populist movements leverage cultural anxieties and identity politics (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Populists often frame politics as a battle between 'the pure people' and 'corrupt elites,' using cultural symbols to mobilize support. Similarly, the rise of digital media has transformed cultural dissemination and political engagement. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) analyze how digital platforms facilitate new forms of political participation rooted in cultural affinity, but also contribute to polarization and echo chambers. Kymlicka (1995) and Parekh (2000) debate the challenges and opportunities of multicultural policies, emphasizing the importance of cultural recognition in fostering inclusive democracies. Cultural diversity influences policy debates on citizenship, rights, and social cohesion. While foundational theories have provided

valuable insights, scholars increasingly recognize the complexity and fluidity of the politics-culture nexus. Critics argue that traditional models sometimes overemphasize cultural determinism or understate economic and institutional factors (Friedman, 2017). Future research is encouraged to explore the inter sectionality of identity, technology, and geopolitics in shaping contemporary political cultures. Thus the literature on politics and culture underscores a multifaceted relation-ship characterized by mutual influence and continual transformation. From the construction of national identities to the impact of globalization and digital media, culture remains a vital lens through which political phenomena can be understood. As societies evolve, so too must our theoretical frame-works, incorporating interdisciplinary approaches and nuanced analyses to capture the dynamic interplay between politics and culture.

Theoretical Framework

On the basis of above literature review it can be argued that the understanding the intricate relationship between politics and culture necessitates a multi disciplinary approach, drawing from political science, anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. Central to this inquiry are theories that elucidate how cultural values, norms, and identities influence political behavior, institutions, and ideologies, and vice versa.

1. **Cultural Theory of Politics:** Cultural theorists posit that political systems and behaviours are deeply embedded within the cultural contexts in which they operate (Geertz, 1973). Clifford Geertz's interpretive approach emphasizes that symbols, rituals, and shared meanings shape political actions and institutions. Culture acts as a lens through which political phenomena are understood, influencing political participation, legitimacy, and conflict.
2. **Huntington's Political Culture And Civilization:** Samuel P. Huntington (1996) introduces the concept of "clash of civilizations," suggesting that cultural identities rooted in religion, language, and history serve as primary sources of political conflict in the post-Cold War world. Huntington argues that civilizations possess distinct political cultures that influence governance, conflict, and cooperation.
3. **Cultural Hegemony and Gramsci's Theory:** Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (1971) emphasizes how dominant classes maintain power not only through political and economic control but also via cultural institutions that propagate ideologies aligning with their interests. This framework explains how cultural narratives shape political consciousness and social consent.
4. **Identity Politics and Social Constructivism** : Identity politics theory underscores that cultural identitiesbased on ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexuality are central to political mobilization and conflict (Castells, 2010). Social constructivism further posits that identities and cultural meanings are socially constructed and mutable, influencing political strategies and policies (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).
5. **Modernisation and Cultural Change**: Liberal modernization theory suggests that economic development fosters cultural shifts towards individualism and secularism, impacting political

institutions and democratic consolidation (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Conversely, cultural preservation and resistance to change can hinder democratization, highlighting the dynamic interplay between politics and culture.

Analysis and Final Discussion

Thus, the relationship between politics and culture is complex, multifaceted, and context-dependent. Empirical evidence demonstrates that cultural factors significantly influence political attitudes and behaviours across diverse contexts. In many societies, cultural values underpin political institutions. For example, Confucian values emphasizing hierarchy and harmony influence governance models in East Asia (Bell, 2008). Similarly, Western liberal democracies are rooted in Enlightenment ideals emphasizing individual rights and secularism (Habermas, 1987).Ethnic and religious identities often serve as mobilizing forces in conflicts and political movements. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict exemplifies how cultural and religious identities shape political claims and resistance (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). In India, caste and religious identities influence electoral politics and policy decisions (Chandra, 2004).Gramsci's theory explains how dominant cultural narratives sustain political hegemony. For instance, Western media and educational systems often shape perceptions of global politics, reinforcing imperialist ideologies (Hall, 1996). Resistance movements challenge hegemonic narratives, utilizing cultural symbols to forge alternative political identities. Globalization has facilitated cultural exchanges but also triggered reactions emphasizing cultural preservation or nationalism (Appadurai, 1996). The rise of populist movements in Europe and North America reflects anxieties over cultural change and sovereignty, impacting political discourse and policy. Cultural grievances often underpin political violence and insurgencies. The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, rooted in religious and cultural tensions, illustrates how cultural marginalization can lead to violent conflict (Onuoha, 2012).

Conclusion

The nexus of politics and culture is a vital area of scholarly inquiry, revealing that political phenomena cannot be fully understood without considering cultural contexts. Culture shapes political identities, mobilizes social movements, and influences governance and conflict. Conversely, political structures and policies impact cultural expressions and transformations. In contemporary geopolitics, the tension between globalization and cultural sovereignty underscores the ongoing contest over cultural identities and political power. Recognizing the cultural dimensions of political processes enhances our understanding of both domestic and international relations and informs more nuanced policymaking. Future research should continue exploring how digital media and transnational cultural flows reshape political landscapes, potentially fostering inter cultural dialogue or fuelling polarization. As societies evolve, the interplay between politics and culture will remain central to understanding social cohesion, conflict, and change.

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Strategic Convergene of India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific : An Analysis of India's "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" and Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" Strategy

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Abstract

The rise of the Indo-Pacific in the geopolitics of international relations is significant from many perspectives. Growing maritime trade, securing maritime boundaries and establishment of rules- based order are prime concerns of countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Principle universal values such as democracy, rule of law, respect for international laws, free, open and inclusive area of cooperation, inclusion of like-minded countries with the centrality of ASEAN are the core features of the strategic alliance of India and Japan and are the underlying principles on which India and Japan have strategically adopted their policies and strategies for the Indo-Pacific. The study seeks to analyse India's “Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative” (IPOI) and Japan's “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) strategy and tries to find out the strategic convergence and areas of cooperation between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific. The rise of China (economic and military assertiveness) and the growing U.S.-China rivalry poses some threat to the Indo-Pacific but opportunities in the Indo-Pacific override the challenges. It is this strategic convergence of India and Japan that has made both a 'natural and indispensable partner' for cooperation and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords : Indo-Pacific, ASEAN, freedom of navigation, rule of law, Indo-Pacific Oceans initiative, free and open Indo-Pacific, rules-based order.

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region for India comprises area between Indian Ocean and Central andWestern Pacific Ocean extending upto the Eastern African Coast and South China Sea. The Indo-Pacific region consists of 38 countries directly attached to it with 60% of world's GDP and 80% of global maritime trade. The region experiences huge trade and economy, has perhaps some of the most important sea lines of communication (SLOC), and richness in natural and maritime resources. This highlights the geopolitical and geo-economic significance of the Indo-Pacific region not just for India and Japan but for the rest of the world.

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This research aims at under standing India and Japan's approach towards the Indo-Pacific through India's 'Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative'(IPOI) and Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) strategy. This study further seeks to enrich research on the various policies and strategies adopted by India prior to formulating its Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and her commitment to peace, secure and stable Indo-Pacific. India and Japan have diplomatically engaged with many South Asian and East Asian countries in the Indo-Pacific. This paper focuses more on the India-Japan bilateral relation with ASEAN centrality (or as a link between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean). This research also aims at finding the similarities and points of convergence of both the countries on various issues for the establishment of a 'rules-based' order and peace, prosperity and security in the Indo-Pacific region by adopting a comparative analysis of India and Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy.

Various initiatives and strategies have been adopted by India to strengthen her relationship with south east Asia in general and Indo-Pacific in particular. The Indian approach to the Indo-Pacific has evolved over a period of time and is a series of strategies and policies adopted by India from time to time to address the needs and aspirations of India along with southeast Asia and the greater Indo-Pacific. India's partner-ship with ASEAN started at 1992 Singapore Summit that was upgraded to full Dialogue Partnerin 1996, Summit Partnerin 2002 and Strategic Partner of ASEAN in 2012. India's approach to the Indo-Pacificis centred around the centrality of ASEAN. ASEAN, for India, remains its gateway to the East (Jaishankar, 2020). Another major step taken by India in this regard was elevating the previous 'Look East' policy to' Act East' policy in 2014. Previously, India also adopted the Neighbourhood First Policy to help and prioritise the immediate neighbours of India on issues of maritime securities, regional connectivity and stability, and economic co-operations as well.

The (Security and Growth for all in the Region) SAGAR initiative initiated in 2015 forms the very base of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. The vision of India on the Indo-Pacific was laid down at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore in 2018 by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi where he stated India's vision of 'free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific' as a common pursuit of progress and prosperity. His remark at Shangri-Lasets a new approach to India's Indo-Pacific policy. It was in the backdrop of these policies and strategies the following year during the 14th East Asia Summit, Bangkok, Thailand, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi first proposed the idea of 'Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative' (IPOI).

India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative :

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative is an open, non-treaty based, unrestricted free international initiative and a collaborative approach for like-minded countries to work in co-operation for finding solutions to the common challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. This initiative is a further extension of the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative that was initiated by the Government of India in 2015 and is the next step beyond India's Act East Policy. The 'Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative' (IPOI) was first proposed by the Indian Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi during the 14th East Asian Summit that was held on November 4, 2019.

IPOI aims to strengthen maritime security and to promote stronger cooperation between India and the regional allies in the Indo-Pacific region. Major areas of concern for IPOI include safeguard ing the oceans, focus ingon free trade and mari time transportation, conservation of maritime resources and sustainable use of resources, capacity building, disaster management and disaster risk reduction, and technological cooperation.

The objectives behind the IPOI are- to enhance maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region, to forge alliances grounded on the principles of free and open trade and sustainable use of maritime resources, the promotion of welfare through democratic framework by establishing a rules-based order for free trade and collective efforts of the countries to generate wealth, and to create a framework for coordination with the like-minded nations in the Indo-Pacific.

It includes seven thematic areas which form the seven pillars of the IPOI. These are- maritime security (led by the United Kingdom and India), maritime ecology (led by Australia and Thailand), maritime resources (France and Indonesia), capacity building and resource sharing (Germany), disaster risk reduction and management (India and Bangladesh), Trade, connectivity and maritime transport (Japan and the United States), and Science and technology andAcademic collaboration (Italy and Singapore).

India's Indo-Pacific approach puts ASEAN at its core. This is evident from Prime Minister Modi's speech at Shangri-La where he stated “inclusiveness, openness and ASEAN centralityand unity, lie at the heart of the new Indo-Pacific” (Modi, 2018). For India the Indo-Pacific region should be multipolar since, a strong multipolar world deals with the contemporary challenges. Moreover, India always tries to secure a balance in the Indo-Pacific through multipolarity to avoid the dominance of any single country and at the same time aims to be hostile to no other country in the Indo-Pacific region, “nor as a grouping that seeks to dominate. And by no means do we consider it as directed against any country” (Modi, 2018). The primary principle underlying the IPOI is a persistent partnership with those countries that share similar values and align with India's goals for the area.

Japan's Freeand Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy :

The idea of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” is considered to be the brainchild of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It was his vision to promote economic prosperity of Japan as well as peace, stability and security in the region. In his speech “Confluence of the Two Seas” in the Indian parliament in 2007, He narrated his views on the dynamic coupling of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and termed it as “seas of freedom and of prosperity”. He highlighted the importance of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and expressed his concern regarding maritime security and freedom of navigation and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. Abein his speech at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Nairobi, Kenya propounded his strategic vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP). This vision is broadly regarded as the Japanese approach to the Indo-Pacific and Abe's role and legacy in transforming Japan in the Indo-Pacific (Rajagopalan, 2022).

The three pillars that form the basis of Japan's FOIP Strategy are— (i) promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc. (ii) pursuit of economic prosperity (improving physical connectivity; people-to-people connectivity; and institutional connectivity) and (iii) commitment for peace and stability (through capacity building assistance, maritime and human resources development). (Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, Japan.)

Japan's FOIP strategy stresses that by combining two continents (Asia and Africa) and the two oceans (the Pacific and the Indian Ocean) it can bring stability and prosperity to the international community in the Indo-Pacific region. Japan sees Asia as a rapidly growing or developing continent and Africa as full of potential to develop. Japan aims to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region to make it free and open as "international public goods". It includes ensuring rules-based order, rule of law, freedom of trade and navigation, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

One of the important aspects of Japan's FOIP strategy is that it believes ASEAN (Association of SouthEast Asian Nations) as the hinge of two oceans, the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. Thus, ASEAN, for Japan, is important in enhancing connectivity through free and open Indo-Pacific between Asia and Africa and in promoting stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region as a whole.

Convergence of India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific :

The relationship between India and Japan has a long history which is rooted in both the countries spiritual, cultural, civilisational and religiousties. Both countries share great zeal and potential to evolve this relationship to cover a wide range of areas of co-operations including political, economic cooperation, commerce, scientific and technological, infrastructure development, maritime and defence security, climate, energy, educational, skill development and social and cultural ties (Joshi, 2023). Japan is India's most trustworthy partner for both "Act East Policy" and "Indo-Pacific Oceans initiative" and India is Japan's 'indispensable partner' for "free and open Indo-Pacific" (Kishida, 2022). India and Japan are 'natural partners' in the Indo-Pacific and work in collaboration in pursuit of common goals. Both India and Japan benefited because of this relationship.

The Japanese technology has helped in the development of manufacturing and economic development of India. The Official Develop-ment Assistance (ODA) provided by Japan has helped in the growth and developmen to fmetrorails, high speed rail, transport corridor and other infrastructure growth in India. The economic benefit of the relationship with Japan is accelerated growth of India and in "its ability to impact entire sectors of the economy and help create new enterprises and capabilities" (Jaishankar, 2020). Japan also enjoys the benefit of economic cooperation with India as India's massive population can provide a consumer market and offer opportunities to uplift Japan's ailing economy (Rawat, 2021).

The points of convergence of India and Japan in the political sphere showcases the interest and approach of both the countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Both the nations share their commitment to the universal values such as rule of law, democracy, human rights, freedom of navigation and respect for international laws at the basic

underlying principle of the Indo-Pacific (Yoshimatshu, 2023). For India, Japan is a partner that is committed to peaceful, free, open and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and vice-versa. "Japan-India relationship is blessed with the largest potential for development of any bilateral relationship anywhere in the world …… a strong India is in the best interest of Japan and a strong Japan is in the best interest of India". (Abe, 2007)

Though India and Japan have very different societies and distinct cultures, they do share some common interests and values. This mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries is yielding significant social and cultural benefits to both the countries. Japan sees India through the historical lens which are reflected through Buddhism (peace and enlightenment), Yoga and its intellectual traditions where as Japan represents a perfect example of blending modernity with tradition. The people of Indian origin abroad (i.e., the Indian diaspora in Japan) is further promoting cultural integrity or the people-to-people exchange.

Areas of Convergence of India and Japan :

- India's approach to the Indo-Pacific (through various policies and initiatives such as Act East Policy, SAGAR initiative, project Mausam, SAGARMALA, etc.) coincides with the Japan's vision of ASEAN centric (economic and cultural) growth and free and open Indo Pacific and a rules-based order in the Indo Pacific.
- **Promotion of Universal values :** Both India and Japan promote universal values such as rule of law, democracy, and human rights, for free, open and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.
- The ASEAN centrality is common to both the countries in their approach to the Indo- Pacific.
- The vision of both the countries India and Japan in the Indo Pacific is inclusive of all the countries. Neither does it favours the dominance of any country or grouping nor it be directed against any country.
- **Regional and Global Cooperation :** The Indo-Pacific vision of both India and Japan includes the inclusion of like-minded countries from regional Southeast Asia, East Asia and Africa to global players such as the US, Australia, France, Italy, the UK, Germany, etc.
- **Common challenges :** The Indo-Pacific region is experiencing challenges common to both the countries such as terrorism, drug trafficking, maritime security, protection and sustainable use of maritime resources, etc.
- **Defence and Security co-operation :** Both the countries are univocal regarding the security of the Indo-Pacific region. India and Japan conduct (bilateral and multilateral) joint military exercises and co-operate on defence technology transfer to enhance maritime security and stability in the region (Khurana, 2007).
- India's goal to develop its manufacturing sector coincides with Japan's goal to expand its market and move its production bases from China to some friendly nation like India.
- **Chinese aggression :** One aspect of the continuous growth of cooperation between India and Japan is the economic rise of China. With the growth of the Chinese economy, its disrespect for international laws (UNCLOS; 1982) and

also its continuous dominance in the South China Sea poses a serious threat to freedom of navigation and sustainable use of maritime resources. To counter-balance the Chinese influence and promote economic development various countries including India and Japan are aligning in making strategic partnership (Chadha, 2023).

- **Climate Change and Sustainable Development :** Both India and Japan raise concern for the protection of nature and natural resources. Kyoto Protocol (to cut Global emission of greenhouse gases by 50%), ODA for forest conservation, harmonious coexistence with nature and balance between economic growth and climate change from the bedrock of nature of cooperation between the two countries.

Challenges

The greatest challenge that comes when we talk about the Indo-Pacific is that it has no standard definition and it means different for different nations i.e., India has its own definition and understanding of the Indo-Pacific different from the Japan and the US understanding of the Indo-Pacific. For both India and Japan, the ASEAN centrality is common to the Indo-Pacific approach but India focuses more on the Indian Ocean region than the Pacific Ocean region.

The recent development and growth of the Indo-Pacific is not the suo-moto cognisance of India and Japan rather this is attributed to change in American stance (the renaming of its US Pacific command to the Indo Pacific command in 2018) and the economic rise of China, which means the Chinese assertive-ness and the growing US-China rivalry will have impact on the developments in the Indo-Pacific region. The Asian countries are still developing countries and lack technology for faster growth of their economy whereas the African countries though have the potential to grow are developing or under-developed. They lack basic infrastructure. In the name of capital investment and monetary assistance they may fall prone to debt trap.

Lack of democracy, rise of military dictator-ship, terrorism and other religious funda-mentalism often surface in many countries in South and South East Asia and African continent.

The Indo-Pacific region is full of diverse culture, religion, language and ethnicity. Tobring about unity among the nations is in it self a mammoth task.

Conclusion

India and Japan have evolved their own policies and strategies and their approaches have a strategic convergence in policy formulation in the Indo-Pacific. This has enhanced the nature of partnership between the two countries and now both India and Japan are diversifying and expanding their scope for greater cooperation and contri-bution in the Indo-Pacific. The foundations of Indo-Pacific strategy of both the countries are laid on the similar principles i.e., the principles of universal values such as rule of law, democracy, human rights and urge for the establishment of a 'free and open Indo-Pacific and a 'rules-based' order for freedom of trade and navigation in the Indo-Pacific. Both countries agree on the centrality of ASEAN in the management of regional affairs as it promotes Asian culture and values. Also, India and Japan converge on the inclusion of like- minded countries in their approach to the Indo-Pacific stretching its ambit to include nations from South and Southeast Asia to Africa, the U.S.,Australia

and major European powers such as France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The common challenges such as aggressive China and the U.S.-China rivalry, resource constraints, terrorism and dictatorship lag far behind when India and Japan work in partnership, and the opportunities and cooperation override the challenges. By cooperating with each other, India and Japan can play an important role in the Indo-Pacific becoming an essential pillar of the Indo-Pacific architecture. This cooperation and collaboration based on the Indian 'Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative' and Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'will help in shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific and also contribute to peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH A GENDER LENS : WOMEN'S INTERVENTIONS IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES

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Abstract

The making of the Indian Constitution is often narrated through the lens of prominent male leaders. However, the role of women in framing the Constitution and shaping the ideological foundation of modern India deserves greater attention. This paper explores the contributions of women in the Constituent Assembly, their perspectives on citizenship, rights, and social justice, and their impact on the evolving idea of Bharat. Through a critical reading of Constituent Assembly Debates and secondary scholarship, the paper highlights the often-overlooked voices of women such as Hansa Mehta, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Durgabai Deshmukh, and others, who actively participated in envisioning a secular, democratic, and inclusive India.The paper especially focuses on the contribution of Dakshayani Velayudhan who strongly voiced in the favour of marginalized community and raised the issues like social and gender justice in constituent assembly. In the already under represented voices of marginalized communities within the Assembly, women from these communities faced further marginalization. In these circumstances, she emerged as the voice of the voiceless, steadfastly advocating for greater justice and the democratization of society.

Keywords : Social justice, gender justice, constituent assembly, representation, marginalized communities, nation building.

Introduction

The formation of the Constitution of India marked the beginning of a new nation committed to justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. While the narratives of Nehru, Ambedkar, and Patel dominate the historical discourse, the contribution of women in shaping the constitutional framework remains marginal in mainstream political historiography. Women were not mere spectators in this nation-making process; they were active participants who brought distinct perspectives rooted in their lived experiences of colonialism, patriarchy, and political struggle. This paper investigates the role of women in the Constituent Assembly and their contribution to shaping the "Idea of India"a term encompassing secularism, pluralism, democracy, gender justice and social justice.

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A Brief Historical Background of Women's Political Mobilization

Women's participation in India's freedom struggle provided the socio-political foundation for their involvement in constitutional debates. From the Non-Cooperation Movement to the Quit India Movement, women like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and Aruna Asaf Ali had established themselves as political leaders and activists. The All-India Women's Conference (AIWC), founded in 1927, campaigned for women's rights in education, suffrage, and legal reform, influencing the national discourse on gender equality.

The British colonial administration had largely excluded women from political decision-making. However, by the time of the Government of India Act (1935), women had gained limited electoral rights. This incremental political recognition set the stage for women's participation in the Constituent Assembly formed in 1946.

Role of Women in the Making Constituent Assembly and Quest for Social and Gender Justice

Women in the constituent assembly were highly under represented. Out Of the 299 members in the Constituent Assembly, only 15 were women. Despite their small number, these women made significant interventions on issues ranging from fundamental rights to minority protection and social justice. Key women members included Hansa Mehta, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray, Begum Aizaz Rasul, and Purnima Banerji.

Their presence was not symbolic. They were lawyers, educationists, social reformers, and political leaders, bringing in critical voices for an egalitarian constitution. These women were particularly vocal in debates on civil rights, minority protections, gender justice, and family law reforms (Kumar, 1993).

Women members made an important intervention in the making of constitution. They raised various issued in the assembly in which some pertinent issues need to be mention here.

> “The Civil Code… must be on a par with, or in advance of, the most progressive of the personal laws… Otherwise… a retrograde step …”.

The above excerpts from the constituent assembly speech by Hansa Mehata shows her attempt to make India inclusive enough for the larger democratization of society. Alongside leaders like Ambedkar, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and Manoo Masani, she fought to include a Uniform Civil Code as a justiciable right though it remained a Directive Principle.

Mehta further argued that the Constitution must affirm the equality of women not just as a legal formality but as a substantive right. She proposed that the phrase "all men are equal" be replaced with "all persons are equal," which was ultimately accepted. This linguistic correction was crucial in ensuring that gender equality was constitutionally embedded (Basu, 2008).Moreover, as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Mehta was instrumental in shaping the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and brought those global ideas of gender equity into the Indian constitutional framework.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur raised major issues related to health.As the only female member of the Nehru Cabinet and later India's first Health Minister, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was a strong advocate of public health and

education. In the Constituent Assembly, she championed women's access to health care, hygiene, and maternity benefits. Kaur believed that true independence was meaningless without social emancipation for women. She emphasized the need for equal access to opportunities and was critical of the caste and gender biases ingrained in Indian society (Manor, 1994). Her advocacy laid the groundwork for Article 42 of the Constitution, which directs the state to make provisions for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Durgabai Deshmukh, a prominent social reformer, was instrumental in pushing for the establishment of a uniform civil code and legal reforms to ensure women's rights within marriage and property. Her speeches reflected anuanced understanding of how law and tradition intersect to perpetuate gender inequality. She supported a secular legal framework for personal laws, arguing that religion should not be used as an excuse to deny women equal rights. Although the Uniform Civil Code was eventually placed in the Directive Principles, her advocacy set the stage for ongoing legal reforms in family law (Agnes, 1999).

Begum Aizaz Rasul, the only Muslim woman in the Constituent Assembly, made valuable contributions to the debate on minority rights and secularism. She advocated for the protection of cultural rights of minorities while emphasizing national integration. Her opposition to separate electorates for minorities was particularly noteworthy. She argued that such provisions would isolate minorities and damage the secular fabric of the nation (Guha, 2007). Her stance reflected the aspiration to create a united and inclusive Indian identity beyond communal divisions.

Dakshayani Velayudhan's Contributions in the Constituent Assembly

Dakshayani Velayudhan was born on 15th July 1912 in Mulavukad, a small island in what is now the Ernakulam district of Kerala. Her father was a schoolteacher and she belonged to the Pulaya community; a group subjected to severe oppression under the caste system. She began school at the age of six and, with the support of a scholarship from the Cochin State Government, became the first Dalit woman in India to graduate. She earned her B.Sc. in Chemistry and later obtained a teacher's training certificate in 1938. Daksha-yani began her career as a teacher. In 1913, the Kayal Sammelanam (the Backwater Conference), played a pivotal role in shaping Dakshayani's commitment to fighting caste oppression. Hundreds of Pulayas, including her family members, gathered on small boats in Kerala's back waters because they were barred from assembling on land. This event had a profound impact on Dakshayani, who later requested that her biography be titled The Sea Has No Caste. Her experience of discrimination as a Dalit teacher further pushed her to reconsider her career in education. Seeking justice for her community, she urged the Cochin government to allow her to serve in the legislature. When her request was granted, she resigned from teaching and was nominated to the Cochin Legislative Council in 1945. Subsequently, the Cochin government nominated her to the Constituent Assembly, where she played a key role in shaping India's Constitution. As the only Dalit woman in the Assembly, her presence was a powerful statement against the entrenched caste system. She argued for the inclusion of Harijans in the Hindu

representation in Muslim-majority provinces and urged that Harijans be given the same representation rights as other Hindus, emphasizing their integral place within the broader Hindu community. She expressed strong support for clause 11 of the Fundamental Rights report, which addressed the exploitation of marginalized communities. She linked the economic exploitation of the Harijans to their social disabilities. She saw an Independent United India as being more beneficial to the abolishment of caste rather than a measured divvying of electoral politics. She opposed separate electorates or reservations for Harijans, arguing that these mechanisms would not lead to genuine representation. She cautioned that such systems could result in candidates being purchased by others and not truly representing the Harijan community. She criticized the Draft Constitution for being too similar to the Government of India Act of 1935 and argued that India needed more decentralization. She spoke passionately about the issue of untouchability and remarked that we cannot expect a constitution without a clause relating to untouchability. She urged that untouchability be eradicated not just through laws but through continuous social reform and education. She passed away in 1978, but her tireless efforts for Dalit rights continue to inspire activists today. Her advocacy extended to broader social reforms, including education for Dalit women and protections for their labour rights. Through her work, she helped lay the foundation for a more just and equal society. In 1977, she founded the Mahila Jagriti Parishad in Delhi, championing women's rights. Her lasting impact is acknowledged by the Kerala Government through the Dakshayani Velayudhan Award, instituted in 2019 to honour women empowering others. (Khobung and Sagar, 2024).

As the sole Dalit woman member of the Indian Constituent Assembly, Dakshayani Velayu-dhan played a significant role in shaping the constitutional discourse on caste, equality, and social justice. Her interventions were grounded in a commitment to the integration of Dalits within the broader social and political fabric of independent India. She strongly advocated for the abolition of untouchability and called for its eradication not just through legal provisions but also through social reform and public education. Velayudhan supported Clause 11 of the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee Report, which sought to address the socio-economic exploitation of marginalized communities. She emphasized the interconnectedness of social disabilities and economic hardship faced by Dalits and argued that their emancipation required structural changes in both spheres. Crucially, she opposed the idea of separate electorates or reservations for Dalits, warning that such mechanisms might lead to tokenistic representation or manipulation by dominant interests. Instead, she championed equal political representation within the general electorate, viewing integration as essential for national unity and the long-term dismantling of caste barriers. Velayudhan also critiqued the Draft Constitution for its similarities to the colonial Government of India Act, 1935, advocating for greater decentralization and more democratic participation. Her persistent focus on abolishing untouchability, ensuring dignity for Dalits, and promoting inclusive nationbuilding remains a crucial yet under acknowledged part of India's constitutional history. The idea of India, as imagined by the

Constitution, was deeply influenced by women's visions of a just and inclusive society. Their contributions went beyond gender issues and intersected with broader concerns of democracy, federalism, human dignity, and social justice. These women viewed citizenship not just as a legal status but as a lived experience of equality and participation. They sought to dismantle hierarchical structures caste, gender, religion that fragmented Indian society. Their interventions reinforced the ideals of universal suffrage, fundamental rights, and affirmative action. Women in the Constituent Assembly recognized that constitutional democracy must be backed by social and economic equality. Their advocacy for education, healthcare, and welfare policies formed the bedrock of India's welfare state aspirations (Jayal, 2013).

Challenges and Silences

Despite their contributions, women's voices were often marginalized in the Assembly. Their proposals for greater legal protections against domestic violence, inheritance rights, and political reservations were either sidelined or diluted. Moreover, the broader patriarchal structure of Indian society continued to influence the implementation of constitutional ideals. Many of the Directive Principles advocated by women, especially regarding gender justice and uniform civil code, remain partially implemented.

This underlines the gap between constitutional promises and social realities. Feminist scholars argue that the Constitution, while progressive in spirit, has often failed to transform the everyday lives of Indian women due to inadequate implementation and cultural resistance (Menon, 2004).

Legacy and Contemporary Relevance

The legacy of these pioneering women continues to influence India's constitutional and political landscape. In contemporary feminist movements from the demand for gender-neutral laws to the fight for political reservation the foundational work of these women serves as a source of inspiration.

Recent judicial verdicts upholding gender equality, such as the decriminalization of Section 377 (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018) and the entry of women into Sabarimala temple (Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala, 2018), echo the constitutional values championed by the women of the Constituent Assembly. Their vision of India inclusive, secular, and egalitarian remains a guiding light in contemporary struggles for rights and justice.

Conclusion

Women played a critical yet often underacknowledged role in the making of the Indian Constitution and the idea of India. Their presence in the Constituent Assembly brought transformative insights into justice, equality, and inclusion. Through their speeches, amendments, and committee work, they laid the foundation for a gender-just polity. As India grapples with questions of identity, citizenship, and rights in the 21st century, revisiting the contributions of these women offers valuable lessons. Their commitment to a pluralistic and equitable India must be fore grounded in both historical narratives and contemporary policy discourse.

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