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Rethinking Affirmative Action in India: A Marxian Analysis of Merit, Class, and Elite Capture

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Abstract

India's reservation system was designed as a constitutional mechanism to address historical injustices and expand access to opportunities for marginalized communities. However, changing socio-economic conditions have increasingly complicated its contemporary relevance. This paper presents a theoretical analysis, guided by a Marxian perspective, to examine how economic class now plays a growing role in shaping access to education and employment in India. While caste continues to remain a significant marker of social identity, material resources such as income, education, and social networks have become crucial in determining life chances. Drawing on parliamentary debates, judicial interpretations, and existing scholarship, the study argues that the continued reliance on caste as the primary basis of affirmative action risks overlooking emerging forms of inequality. It highlights the issue of intra-group disparities, where relatively privileged sections within reserved categories continue to access state benefits, while economically disadvantaged individuals across all social groups often remain excluded. These patterns raise concerns about fairness, institutional trust, and the long-term effectiveness of redistributive policies. The paper contends that a recalibration of affirmative action is necessary to better align it with present material conditions. It proposes a more balanced framework that incorporates economic criteria alongside social disadvantage, ensuring that benefits reach those most in need. By shifting the analytical focus from identity alone to the interaction between caste and class, the study contributes to ongoing debates on equity, merit, and social justice in contemporary India.

Keywords

Karl Marx, Meritocracy, Economic determinism, Caste, Elite capture, Affirmative action.

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Rethinking Affirmative Action in India: A Marxian Analysis of Merit, Class, and Elite Capture

1. Introduction

Meritocracy is often celebrated as a system that rewards individuals based on talent, effort, and achievement, regardless of background. In theory, it promises efficiency, fairness, and equal opportunity, ensuring that the most capable individuals rise to positions of responsibility. However, in deeply stratified societies like India, the ideal of meritocracy is complicated by historical and structural inequalities, particularly those related to caste and economic class. Affirmative action in the form of caste-based reservations was introduced as a constitutional measure to correct entrenched social injustices by ensuring access to education, employment, and political representation for historically marginalized communities. Yet, over time, critical questions have emerged: Who truly benefits from these policies today? Have caste-based reservations reached their intended beneficiaries, or have they been appropriated by a small segment of already privileged individuals within these groups? This paper interrogates these questions through the lens of Karl Marx's theory of economic determinism, which posits that material conditions—not identity alone—primarily shape social relations and institutional structures. In modern India, economic capital has become the decisive force in determining life outcomes. Increasingly, it is not caste but financial resources, access to private education, and embedded social networks that enable upward mobility. Despite this shift, caste continues to dominate the logic of reservation, often to the detriment of economically disadvantaged individuals—both within and outside the reserved categories—who lack the necessary forms of capital outlined by Pierre Bourdieu, including cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Moreover, elite capture within reserved categories has become a recurring pattern, whereby the benefits of affirmative action are disproportionately claimed by a limited, often urban and economically secure subset of the population. These beneficiaries frequently retain their reserved status across generations, despite having accumulated significant privilege. Meanwhile, general category individuals from impoverished or rural backgrounds are denied comparable support, perpetuating a new form of exclusion. This structural imbalance challenges both the ethical and practical foundations of the reservation system. In this context, the paper argues that a Marxian re-evaluation of affirmative action is necessary—one that aligns with contemporary material realities and aims to ensure justice for the truly disadvantaged, regardless of caste identity.

2. Objective of the Study

This study aims to critically examine India's reservation framework through a Marxian lens, with particular attention to the growing role of economic class in shaping access to opportunities. It analyses patterns of elite capture and resulting inequalities, and advocates for reforms that reorient affirmative action toward economically disadvantaged groups in line with distributive justice.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in Marxian political economy to examine the relationship between caste-based reservations, economic class, and meritocracy in India. The analysis is primarily based on secondary sources, including parliamentary debates, judicial decisions, academic literature, and policy reports, which provide the broader empirical and conceptual foundation for the study. In addition, the paper is informed by qualitative insights derived from discussions with students, educators, and participants across multiple academic and public settings in different states. These interactions, while not structured as formal focus group discussions, offered valuable perspectives on lived experiences, perceptions of fairness, and contemporary debates surrounding reservation. Observations from these discussions were thematically noted and used to support the analytical arguments of the paper. The study emphasizes the role of economic factors in shaping access to opportunities, highlighting how material resources mediate outcomes in education and employment. As a theoretical and analytical inquiry, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization but to contribute to ongoing debates on equity, merit, and affirmative action in India's evolving socio-economic context.

4. Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored in Karl Marx's theory of economic determinism, which posits that the material base of society—particularly the modes and relations of production—fundamentally shapes its superstructure, including politics, education, and ideology. In this view, class struggle, not identity alone, drives historical change. Marx argued that the ruling class, by controlling the means of production, also dominates institutions and social norms, often cloaking inequality in narratives of fairness, merit, and individual responsibility. Applied to contemporary India, this framework reveals that economic capital has increasingly supplanted caste as the primary determinant of life outcomes, particularly in education and employment. Complementing this is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, which identifies not only economic but also social, cultural, and symbolic capital as forms of power that are inherited and reproduced across generations. While caste continues to mediate access to certain resources, the decisive factor in determining who can convert these capitals into mobility is often economic in nature. For instance, a reserved-category student from an affluent family with access to elite schooling, coaching, and professional networks is significantly better positioned than a general-category

student from a rural, low-income background with none of these assets. Thus, Bourdieu's theory helps expose how inter-generational privilege operates within reservation categories, often hidden behind a static caste label. The paper also draws from Michael Young's critique of meritocracy, where merit becomes a legitimizing ideology that obscures systemic inequality. In India, merit is frequently defined by exam scores or institutional credentials, without accounting for the vastly unequal starting points of candidates. The result is a false dichotomy between merit and reservation, when in fact both are deeply shaped by structural advantages. By combining Marx's economic determinism with Bourdieu's multi-capital model and critiques of meritocracy, this framework exposes how caste-based reservations, in their current form, risk reinforcing inequality when economic privilege goes unchecked. It offers a lens through which to reimagine affirmative action not as static compensation for historical identity, but as a dynamic tool of economic justice rooted in material reality and class struggle.

5. Historical Context of Reservation Policies

India's reservation policy emerged as a response to centuries of caste-based exclusion, designed to integrate historically oppressed groups—particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and later Other Backward Classes (OBCs)—into the structures of state, education, and employment. These measures were rooted in a framework of compensatory justice, assuming that caste identity was a stable indicator of disadvantage. Over time, the policy was codified through constitutional provisions such as Articles 15(4) and 16(4), and later expanded by judicial interventions, including the landmark *Indra Sawhney vs Union of India* (1992), which established the 50% ceiling on caste-based reservations and introduced the concept of the “creamy layer” within OBCs. While these policies were framed as tools of social inclusion, they were also shaped by the political economy of post-colonial India. In Marxian terms, early reservations were an attempt to integrate marginalized castes into the state apparatus without fundamentally altering the relations of production. They redistributed access to state-controlled jobs and educational opportunities, but left broader economic structures—such as land ownership, industrial capital, and market access—largely untouched. Over time, reservations became a politically managed mechanism to absorb demands for redistribution without disrupting class hierarchies rooted in material accumulation. The 103rd Constitutional Amendment in 2019, which introduced a 10% quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among the general category, marked a paradigmatic shift: it recognized economic deprivation as a legitimate basis for affirmative action. However, this remained a parallel track rather than a structural integration with existing caste-based systems. Furthermore, the evolving political discourse around the proposed caste census underscores deep-seated anxieties within India's affirmative action framework. Critics argue that without a parallel socio-economic survey, a caste census alone is unlikely to yield actionable justice. The enumeration risks becoming symbolic unless grounded in

current material deprivation. Additionally, fluid regional caste structures and the absence of a uniform varna classification system make any such attempt highly contentious. In practice, caste and class increasingly intersect in complex ways. A significant portion of SC/ST and OBC beneficiaries now belong to middle- or upper-income strata, while many general-category individuals remain trapped in poverty. This disconnect between policy design and lived economic conditions reflects what Marx described as the ideological function of the state—to maintain the appearance of equity while real material disparities persist. Thus, while reservation was historically justified, its current architecture demands critical re-evaluation. It must respond not only to inherited stigma but to contemporary modes of exclusion, particularly those rooted in economic structure, capital distribution, and class relations that Marx and his successors have long identified as central to justice.

6. Economic Determinism and Reservation Policies

Karl Marx's theory of economic determinism asserts that material conditions—ownership of capital, access to resources, and control over labour together form the foundation upon which the superstructure of society is built, including its laws, culture, and institutions. In this framework, it is not identity, ideology, or morality that shapes life outcomes, but the distribution of economic power. When applied to the Indian context, this insight reveals a growing contradiction: while reservation policies remain tied to caste, the most decisive barrier to opportunity today is economic class. Caste and class were historically intertwined in India, with lower castes occupying economically subordinate positions. However, the acceleration of capitalist development, privatization, and urbanization over the last three decades has reshaped the terrain of inequality. Economic marginalization now cuts across caste lines. Many individuals from the general category remain trapped in poverty, excluded from state support, while a sizable elite within reserved categories continues to benefit from state-sponsored affirmative action despite accumulating substantial wealth, assets, and cultural capital. This is a classic case of elite capture, where a policy originally designed to rectify structural exclusion is leveraged by a relatively advantaged minority to perpetuate inter-generational mobility and privilege. Moreover, in a system where access to quality education, coaching centres, technology, and language proficiency is increasingly commodified, it is economic capital—not social identity—that determines who can prepare for and excel in competitive exams. The reliance on caste as the primary axis of affirmative action thus overlooks the more immediate determinant of social exclusion: lack of material resources. In Marxian terms, the failure to restructure the base—economic conditions—renders the superstructural correction (reservation) insufficient and, at times, regressive. The reservation system, while well-intentioned, risks becoming a symbolic concession rather than a transformative force if it ignores these shifting material dynamics. A growing section of the population now experiences relative deprivation not because of inherited caste stigma, but due to systemic poverty and absence of economic

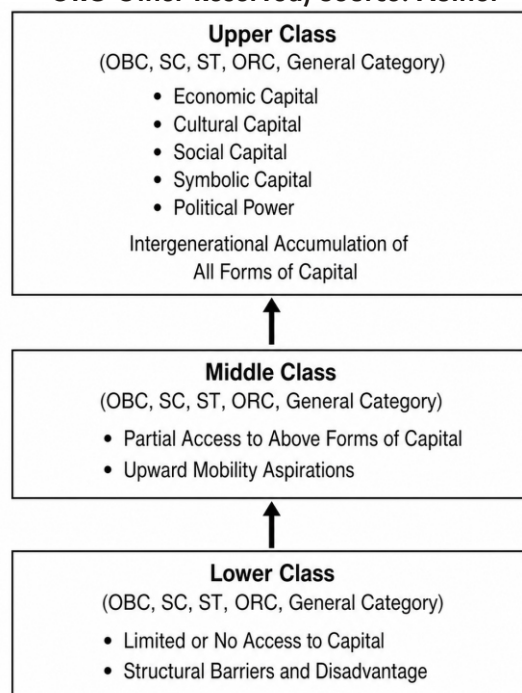
capital-factors Marx would identify as foundational to class struggle. Hence, unless policies evolve to reflect the economic realities of modern India, the state risks entrenching a new form of stratification under the guise of social justice.

7. Mechanisms of Elite Capture

The concept of elite capture describes a structural process wherein policies intended for marginalized populations are appropriated by a relatively privileged subset within those groups. In the context of India's reservation system, this manifests as the recurring access to state-sponsored opportunities—education, employment, promotions—by families and individuals who have already transcended the socio-economic vulnerabilities the policy was designed to address. A Marxian analysis frames this as a bourgeois consolidation within oppressed groups, whereby the initial beneficiaries accumulate material and symbolic capital and, over generations, reconstitute themselves as a dominant class within their own caste category. Recent debates have also highlighted how dominant groups within the OBC category, such as Yadavs and Reddys, may now wield economic and political capital rivalling that of forward castes. Yet, they continue to benefit from quotas, crowding out lower-tier OBCs. The Rohini Commission's recommendation of sub-categorization attempts to address this, but implementation remains fraught with legal, administrative, and political challenges. Such elite resistance illustrates Marx's thesis: the ruling strata within any category manipulate policy to perpetuate class advantage. This phenomenon is evident in public sector employment, where repeated access to reserved quotas has allowed certain families to secure high-ranking positions across generations. Rather than uplifting the broader community, these opportunities are often concentrated among those already possessing educational, economic, and social capital. These actors leverage their state-mediated privilege to secure coaching for competitive exams, place children in elite institutions, and form social networks with gatekeeping power. In Bourdieu's terms, they command a convergence of economic, social, and cultural capital, which reproduces their class advantage, even while retaining the formal status of being "backward". Meanwhile, truly disadvantaged individuals within both reserved and general categories—those without access to quality schooling, professional mentoring, or even nutritional security—are effectively excluded. The consequence is the emergence of a dual exclusion: poor general-category individuals are denied support altogether, while the poorest within reserved categories are displaced by their better-off counterparts. Marx would interpret this as the internal stratification of the proletariat, where segments of the oppressed class are co-opted into the existing power structure, thereby weakening the potential for class solidarity and systemic reform. Moreover, this cycle is perpetuated by the absence of exit norms in the reservation framework. Unlike time-bound welfare mechanisms, caste-based entitlements are often accessed indefinitely, even by those no longer economically vulnerable. This distorts both equity and merit, compromising institutional efficiency and public trust. In this context, elite capture is not merely a bureaucratic

loophole—it is a systemic feature of the state’s failure to recalibrate affirmative action in line with contemporary economic stratification.

Figure-1: Class Stratification Across Caste Categories and the Intergenerational Accumulation of Capital (SC-Schedule Caste, ST-Schedule Tribe, OBC-Other Backward Classes, ORC-Other Reserved) Source: Author



The above diagram illustrates the interplay between caste and class in the Indian socio-economic context. It categorizes individuals into Upper Class, Middle Class, and Lower Class, each of which includes members from historically marginalized (OBC, SC, ST) and non-marginalized (General Caste, ORC/Other Reserved Categories) communities. The classification emphasizes that caste identity alone does not determine social location; rather, access to various forms of capital plays a decisive role.

Across caste groups, individuals in the Upper Class possess a disproportionate accumulation of:

- Economic Capital (wealth, assets),
- Cultural Capital (education, lifestyle, language),
- Social Capital (networks and affiliations),
- Symbolic Capital (honour, prestige),
- Political Capital (influence, representation).

These forms of capital reinforce each other and are transmitted inter-generationally, leading to what Bourdieu describes as class reproduction. Consequently, elite capture is evident not only in the general category but also within

reserved categories, as successive generations consolidate their socio-economic advantages. This stratified accumulation challenges the assumption that caste-based reservations automatically benefit the most marginalized. Instead, it calls for a nuanced understanding of intra-category inequality, where upwardly mobile members of reserved groups increasingly resemble their general category counterparts in terms of capital accumulation and social power.

8. Illustrative Cases of Elite Capture across Social Contexts

Elite capture is not unique to India but reflects a broader structural pattern in which redistributive policies are appropriated by relatively advantaged actors. In a Marxian sense, this process represents the consolidation of class power within beneficiary groups, where emerging elites use institutional mechanisms to reproduce their socio-economic advantages.

Comparative evidence highlights this dynamic across contexts. In Mali, development interventions such as unconditional cash transfers have been shown to be mediated by local elites, who reframe and control access to resources while maintaining their social dominance. In Mexico, elite capture within security institutions has enabled political and criminal actors to redirect public resources toward private interests, undermining redistributive goals. Similarly, in India, local governance structures often involve informal intermediaries or “fixers” who regulate access to welfare schemes and employment opportunities, reinforcing patronage networks rather than equitable distribution.

These cases demonstrate that elite capture is a structural feature of redistribution systems, where existing hierarchies shape the flow of benefits. In the context of India’s reservation policy, this pattern is reflected in the repeated access to affirmative action by relatively privileged sections within beneficiary groups, thereby limiting its reach to the most disadvantaged.

9. Social Mobility, Class Inequality, and Access to State Opportunities

India’s reservation system was conceived to enhance social mobility for historically marginalized communities through access to education, employment, and state institutions. However, from a Marxian perspective, its transformative potential is constrained by the failure to distinguish caste identity from material deprivation. While it initially expanded representation, upwardly mobile families within reserved categories have increasingly used it to consolidate access to higher education and public employment across generations. In the absence of economic filters, this has created a cycle of privilege, where beneficiaries possessing economic and cultural capital continue to claim reserved status, crowding out the most disadvantaged.

Simultaneously, economically weaker individuals from general categories—often rural, first-generation learners lacking access to coaching, digital

infrastructure, and quality schooling—remain excluded from both state support and competitive opportunity. In Bourdieusian terms, they lack the economic, cultural, and social capital required to convert merit into mobility. This unequal access has intensified perceptions of unfairness, weakened institutional trust, and fostered fragmentation within the working class. Rather than dismantling inequality, the system risks reproducing it, with mobility increasingly shaped by accumulated capital rather than policy intent.

The “creamy layer” principle recognizes that caste alone is an insufficient proxy for disadvantage by excluding economically advanced sections within OBCs. However, its limited application—excluding SCs and STs—permits inter-generational privilege within key beneficiary groups. From a Marxian standpoint, this reflects class consolidation within caste-based affirmative action, where individuals with access to elite education, state employment, and material assets continue to benefit from redistributive policies while retaining symbolic capital derived from their legally protected status.

In contrast, the “poverty layer”—those facing acute economic deprivation across caste groups—remains inadequately supported. Despite widespread poverty, eligibility for affirmative action continues to be determined primarily by social identity rather than material need, producing a structural disconnect. Relatively affluent beneficiaries access state resources, while economically vulnerable individuals, particularly from general categories, remain excluded. This results in a dual inequality within the working population, reinforcing class divisions under the framework of caste-based policy.

Government employment remains a central pathway to economic security and upward mobility, yet the scale of competition—over 220 million applicants for fewer than one million posts between 2014 and 2022—reveals a structural imbalance between labour supply and secure employment. In Marxian terms, this reflects the expansion of a reserve army of labour, where large sections remain in conditions of precarity.

Within this context, caste-based reservations without corresponding economic filters intensify perceptions of inequity. Candidates from relatively affluent reserved-category backgrounds, supported by superior educational and institutional resources, secure positions through quotas, while economically disadvantaged general-category applicants compete under uniform merit criteria despite structural constraints. This disparity exposes the limits of both meritocratic and identity-based frameworks, as access is shaped by unequal resource distribution. Continued allocation of scarce public employment along caste lines risks undermining institutional trust and reproducing class advantage. A more equitable framework would align access with material need, ensuring that state employment functions as an instrument of genuine social mobility rather than selective advantage.

10. Policy Analysis and Recommendations

India's reservation policy was designed to address historical exclusion and expand equitable access to education, employment, and representation. However, as argued in this paper, the material base of inequality has shifted: economic capital increasingly shapes life chances more than caste identity alone. Without acknowledging this transition, affirmative action risks enabling class consolidation under the guise of equity. A Marxian approach requires that redistribution respond to actual material deprivation rather than inherited social categories.

While proposals such as the caste census aim to refine policy, they risk reinforcing identity-based divisions unless combined with robust socio-economic indicators. Meaningful reform must therefore be evidence-based, class-sensitive, and aligned with constitutional limits such as the 50% cap, while also addressing intra-group inequalities highlighted in policy debates.

To restore distributive justice and institutional credibility, the following reforms are proposed: introducing sub-quotas within reserved categories to target the most disadvantaged and prevent elite capture; establishing uniform income and asset thresholds across categories to identify genuine need; limiting eligibility to individuals educated in public or resource-constrained institutions; and excluding those who have already accessed elite educational advantages from repeated benefits. Further, restricting reservation to a single lifetime use can prevent inter-generational accumulation of advantage. Minimum eligibility benchmarks should be maintained to safeguard institutional standards, alongside academic support for disadvantaged candidates.

In addition, a centralized poverty registry and family-based allocation system can reduce duplication and ensure targeted distribution. Public communication is also essential to reframe reservation as a corrective mechanism rooted in justice rather than identity entitlement. Collectively, these measures shift affirmative action from symbolic representation toward material redistribution, consistent with Marxian principles of equity.

11. Conclusion

The reservation system in India was envisioned as an instrument of social justice to counter caste-based exclusion. However, its continued reliance on caste as the primary basis of redistribution increasingly fails to reflect contemporary socio-economic realities. This paper has argued, through a Marxian lens, that class position and access to economic capital now play a decisive role in shaping inequality.

In its present form, the system facilitates inter-generational elite capture within reserved categories, allowing relatively privileged groups to repeatedly access benefits while the most deprived remain excluded. At the same time, economically disadvantaged individuals from general categories are denied support due to identity-based criteria. This misalignment between deprivation and redistribution

weakens both equity and institutional legitimacy. The perceived dilution of merit in critical sectors further erodes public trust and reinforces social fragmentation.

A reorientation toward class-sensitive affirmative action is therefore essential. Incorporating economic thresholds, sub-quotas for the poorest, and limits on repeated access can better align policy with material realities. Such reforms would preserve the ethical foundation of affirmative action while enhancing its effectiveness. This analysis does not question the historical necessity of reservation but seeks to examine its evolving outcomes in light of changing socio-economic conditions. Ultimately, a shift from identity-based entitlement to need-based redistribution offers a more sustainable path toward equality. By grounding affirmative action in economic justice, the policy can move beyond symbolic correction and function as a meaningful instrument of social transformation, aligned with the evolving political economy of India.

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The Changing Face of Farmer Credit in Rajasthan: A Study of Loan Sources from 2002 to 2019

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Abstract

This study investigates the evolution of loan access patterns among farmers in Rajasthan, with a focus on the changes between 2002-03 and 2018-19. The research analyzes how income growth correlates with loan accessibility and outstanding loan amounts across various landholding categories. It also examines shifts in the distribution of institutional and non-institutional loan sources and trends in interest rates and loan shares over time. Using data from the 59th and 77th rounds of the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) Situation Assessment Survey (SAS), the study harmonizes loan classifications to enable a consistent comparison across time periods. The analysis reveals a significant shift towards increased reliance on institutional credit sources, particularly among medium and large farmers. While institutional loans have become more accessible due to declining interest rates and expanded government initiatives, marginal and small farmers continue to face barriers in accessing formal credit, often relying on non-institutional sources. The findings highlight a growing income disparity, as larger landholders benefit more from both income growth and formal credit access. The study underscores the importance of continued policy efforts to enhance institutional credit access for smaller farmers to ensure equitable financial growth. These insights provide valuable recommendations for policymakers and financial institutions working to promote agricultural development and credit accessibility in Rajasthan.

Keywords

Farmers, Institutional loans, Non-institutional loans, Credit accessibility, Loan shares, Landholding categories, Rural indebtedness.

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1. Introduction

Agriculture forms the backbone of India's economy, contributing significantly to both employment and national income, especially in rural regions like Rajasthan. Despite its critical role, Indian farmers, particularly those in Rajasthan, face persistent financial challenges that have made reliance on loans a common practice. Agricultural income in these areas is often volatile, fluctuating due to unpredictable monsoon patterns, crop failure, and global price instability, leading to a dependence on external financial support. Furthermore, high input costs for seeds, fertilizers, and equipment, as well as the expenses associated with social ceremonies such as marriages and funerals, exacerbate farmers' financial burdens. These factors create a continuous cycle of debt, forcing farmers to seek loans to sustain their livelihoods and agricultural activities (Chand, 2017).

Historically, both institutional and non-institutional sources of credit have played a significant role in meeting the financial needs of farmers. Institutional loans, provided by banks, cooperatives, and government schemes, have been integral to fostering agricultural growth in India. These formal sources of credit are designed to offer better terms, including lower interest rates and longer repayment periods, which help to improve farm productivity and rural livelihoods. Studies indicate that institutional credit has been a key driver in modernizing agriculture by providing the necessary capital to invest in better technology, irrigation facilities, and high-yield crop varieties (Bhalla & Singh, 2009). Additionally, institutional loans come with the advantage of transparency in terms of loan agreements and formal financial security, ensuring that farmers are protected from exploitative practices common in informal credit markets (NABARD, 2018).

However, despite the apparent benefits of institutional loans, non-institutional loans, predominantly from moneylenders, traders, and other informal sources, continue to be prevalent in rural Rajasthan. One of the primary reasons for this persistence is the ease of access associated with non-institutional loans. Moneylenders, who often share close personal or familial relationships with borrowers, provide loans without the complex paperwork or collateral requirements typical of institutional loans (Sharma, 2019). This informality and flexibility make non-institutional loans attractive to farmers, especially those with little or no formal financial literacy or access to institutional credit systems. Additionally, many farmers in Rajasthan still prefer the convenience of quick,

short-term loans from local moneylenders, despite the high interest rates and exploitative practices often associated with them (Rathore & Chauhan, 2016).

The reliance on non-institutional loans persists despite various government interventions aimed at increasing farmers' access to formal credit. Initiatives like the *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana* (PMFBY) and the *Kisan Credit Card* (KCC) scheme were introduced to reduce the dependency on moneylenders by offering affordable and accessible institutional credit. However, these programs have had limited success in fully addressing the credit needs of rural farmers, primarily due to inadequate awareness, bureaucratic delays, and the continuing influence of traditional informal lending practices (Nair & Binswanger, 2020). This dichotomy between institutional and non-institutional loan sources calls for a detailed examination of how farmers' preferences and access to credit have shifted over time.

This study aims to explore the shift in the sources of loans for farmers in Rajasthan between 2002-03 and 2018-19, with a comparative analysis of institutional and non-institutional credit sources. Although a considerable body of literature has examined the role of institutional and non-institutional loans in rural India, there is a lack of comprehensive studies focused on understanding the changes in loan patterns over time in specific regions like Rajasthan. Existing research has primarily addressed the individual characteristics of these loan sources but has often overlooked the dynamic shifts that have occurred over time due to changing economic, social, and policy landscapes (Dev, 2014). This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how access to and reliance on institutional versus non-institutional loans have evolved over the 16-year period.

2. Literature Review

Rural credit markets in India have been an essential component of agricultural development, particularly in states like Rajasthan, where a significant portion of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Over the years, there has been a marked shift in the dynamics of loan sources, with institutional loans from banks and cooperatives gaining prominence, yet non-institutional sources like money lenders and traders continue to play a critical role. This literature review will examine eight key studies that discuss the impact of institutional loans on farmers, trends in loan sources, and why non-institutional loans persist despite government interventions.

Bhalla and Singh (2009) highlight the critical role institutional loans play in enhancing agricultural productivity by providing farmers with capital to invest in technology, seeds, and irrigation systems. The study emphasizes that farmers with access to institutional loans experience a higher rate of adoption of high-yielding crop varieties and mechanization. Furthermore, institutional loans, particularly from nationalized banks, offer better interest rates and formal terms, which reduce the financial burden on farmers, fostering long-term agricultural growth.

Chand (2017) analyzes the overall impact of institutional loans on rural livelihoods, particularly in states like Rajasthan. According to this study, access to

institutional loans has helped farmers mitigate some of the risks associated with agriculture, such as fluctuating crop prices and climate variability. Institutional credit has also contributed to improving the standard of living for farmers by enabling them to invest in education and healthcare. However, the study points out that many small and marginal farmers struggle to access institutional credit due to bureaucratic hurdles and the need for collateral.

Despite the availability of institutional credit, Sharma (2019) finds that non-institutional loans continue to be prevalent among rural farmers, particularly in Rajasthan. The study notes that moneylenders, traders, and relatives offer more flexible and accessible loans, often without the need for documentation or collateral. This ease of access makes non-institutional loans attractive, even though they come with higher interest rates and informal terms, often leading to exploitative lending practices.

A study by Rathore and Chauhan (2016) examines the role of cooperative banks in providing credit to farmers. Cooperative banks, which are more localized and have stronger ties to the rural population, have been crucial in filling the gaps left by commercial banks. However, the study also highlights the inefficiencies in cooperative banking, such as delays in loan disbursement and mismanagement, which often push farmers towards non-institutional credit sources.

A comprehensive review by Nair and Binswanger (2020) highlights trends in interest rates for institutional loans. While institutional sources like nationalized banks and cooperative banks offer lower interest rates compared to non-institutional lenders, the study reveals that the process of acquiring these loans can be cumbersome. Interest rates for institutional loans have remained relatively stable, but the accessibility issues often negate the benefits for small and marginal farmers who prefer quick, informal loans despite their high costs.

Dev (2014) explores the barriers that prevent farmers, particularly smallholders, from accessing institutional loans. The study finds that institutional lenders often require extensive documentation and collateral, which many small-scale farmers do not possess. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness about government schemes that aim to provide low-interest institutional loans. As a result, many farmers in Rajasthan continue to rely on non-institutional sources despite the financial drawbacks.

According to a report by NABARD (2018), various government schemes such as the *Kisan Credit Card* (KCC) were introduced to increase access to institutional credit. However, the report shows that while these schemes have improved credit access in some areas, they have not completely eliminated the need for non-institutional loans. Farmers often prefer the convenience and informality of moneylenders, especially during emergency situations.

Singh and Bhattacharya (2015) conducted a study examining how institutional loans impact the debt cycles of farmers. The research suggests that while institutional loans can provide financial relief in the short term, many farmers

are unable to repay these loans due to poor agricultural yields or market fluctuations. As a result, farmers may end up in long-term debt cycles, often exacerbated by the difficulty of accessing follow-up loans from institutional sources. This pushes them back towards non-institutional lenders, creating a dual dependency on both formal and informal credit systems.

The literature highlights the complex interplay between institutional and non-institutional loans in rural credit markets. While institutional loans have been instrumental in fostering agricultural productivity and providing farmers with more favorable financial terms, their inaccessibility to small and marginal farmers remains a critical issue. Non-institutional loans, despite their exploitative nature, continue to be popular due to their ease of access and informal lending practices. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the financial needs of farmers in Rajasthan, as well as for improving the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at promoting institutional credit.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis will provide insights into how the shift in loan sources from 2002-03 to 2018-19 has impacted the agricultural sector in Rajasthan. By examining the trends in institutional and non-institutional credit, policymakers can better understand the barriers to accessing institutional loans and develop strategies to make rural credit markets more inclusive and beneficial for farmers.

3. Objectives of the Study

Objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the relationship between farmers' income growth and their access to loans, focusing on loan outstanding amounts and borrowing patterns across different land sizes.
2. To evaluate the changes in the distribution of institutional and non-institutional loan sources among Rajasthan farmers across various landholding categories between 2002-03 and 2018-19.
3. To investigate trends in interest rates and loan shares among institutional and non-institutional sources

4. Research Methodology

This study analyzes the shift in farmer loan sources in Rajasthan by utilizing data from the 59th and 77th rounds of the Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in 2002-03 and 2018-19, respectively. The 59th round surveyed 2,596 farmer households in Rajasthan, while the 77th round surveyed 2,688 agricultural households. These surveys provide comprehensive data on various aspects of farmers' livelihoods, including indebtedness, loan sources, and credit accessibility.

To compare loan sources over time, the study harmonizes the classifications of institutional and non-institutional loans across the two survey periods. Institutional

loans, which include sources such as government agencies, cooperative societies, and formal banks, are consolidated from both rounds. In 2018-19, the categories were expanded to include Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and microfinance institutions, but these were grouped under the broader institutional loan category to maintain consistency with the 2002-03 survey. Similarly, non-institutional loans-encompassing moneylenders, traders, relatives, and other informal sources-are harmonized across the two datasets.

The research focuses on analyzing changes in credit accessibility and indebtedness trends between 2002-03 and 2018-19. Special attention is given to the growing role of institutional loans, the persistence of non-institutional credit sources, and the impact of government interventions aimed at improving farmers' access to formal financial institutions. The nominal values of loans and income are adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to allow for a more accurate comparison of financial trends over time. This methodology enables a detailed examination of the evolving dynamics between institutional and non-institutional credit sources, providing valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

5. Presentation and Analysis of Data

5.1 Landholding Patterns and Credit Accessibility Among Farmers

As per Table-1, the average annual income of farmers in Rajasthan across all landholding categories significantly increased between 2002-03 and 2018-19. Marginal farmers (those with less than 1 acre of land) saw their average annual income rise from ₹46,634 in 2002-03 to ₹119,992 in 2018-19, marking a substantial growth. Similarly, small farmers (1-1.99 acres) experienced a notable increase in income from ₹54,581 to ₹103,159. Medium farmers (2-4.99 acres) saw their income grow from ₹48,681 to ₹123,251, while large farmers (5 acres and above) witnessed the most significant rise, with their income nearly tripling from ₹60,646 to ₹188,111. These trends suggest that income growth is positively correlated with landholding size, with larger landowners benefitting more substantially from agricultural income growth over the study period.

In terms of loan access, the percentage of loanee households varied across the two periods, with an overall increase in households borrowing loans from 52.7% in 2002-03 to 60.3% in 2018-19. This rise was most pronounced among medium and large farmers, with medium farmers' loanee households increasing from 52.6% to 66.8%, and large farmers from 54.4% to 70.9%. Interestingly, marginal farmers saw a decline in loanee households from 50.7% to 44.6%, indicating a shift in borrowing behaviour. The share of institutional loan recipients rose significantly, especially among medium (20.6% to 46.9%) and large farmers (27.0% to 56.2%), reflecting an increasing reliance on formal credit sources. On the other hand, non-institutional loan recipients saw a decline across all categories, with marginal farmers' dependence on such loans dropping from 40.8% to 33.6%.

Table-1: Rajasthan Farmers' Income and Credit accessibility Patterns by Landholding Size (2002-03 vs. 2018-19)

Year	Farmer Category	Farmer Households	Average Annual Income (₹)	% Loanee Households	% Institutional Loan Recipients	% Non-Institutional Loan Recipients	Average Loan Outstanding (₹)
2002-03	Marginal (< 1 Acre)	1,126,012	46,634	50.7	12.3	40.8	50,945
	Small (1-1.99 Acre)	1,059,859	54,581	52.4	13.0	41.5	64,550
	Medium (2-4.99 Acre)	1,437,892	48,681	52.6	20.6	37.3	79,157
	Large (5 Acre & more)	1,684,001	60,646	54.4	27.0	35.8	154,065
Overall		5,307,764	53,221	52.7	19.3	38.4	95,023
2018-19	Marginal (< 1 Acre)	1,649,998	119,992	44.6	16.5	33.6	131,348
	Small (1- 1.99 Acre)	1,817,089	103,159	58.9	32.6	40.2	106,336
	Medium (2-4.99 Acre)	2,235,152	123,251	66.8	46.9	35.3	171,396
	Large (5 Acre & more)	1,335,527	188,111	70.9	56.2	32.8	319,300
Overall		7,037,766	129,608	60.3	37.9	35.7	181,058

Note: The results presented in this table are calculated by the authors using unit-level data from the NSSO 59th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2002-03) and the NSSO 77th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2018-19). The data are estimated in Indian Rupees (₹), adjusted to constant 2016-17 prices.

The average loan outstanding saw substantial growth across all landholding categories. Marginal farmers experienced an increase from ₹50,945 in 2002-03 to ₹131,348 in 2018-19, marking a significant rise in their credit dependence. Small farmers saw their average loan amounts increase from ₹64,550 to ₹106,336, while medium farmers had an even sharper rise, with average loans increasing from ₹79,157 to ₹171,396. Large farmers, who had the highest loan outstanding, saw their loan amounts surge from ₹154,065 to ₹319,300 during the same period. These figures illustrate a significant rise in borrowing, driven by factors such as rising input costs, consumption needs, and the growing credit demands of larger farms.

The trends in borrowing behaviour reveal that larger landholders have not only seen a higher income growth rate but also a greater reliance on institutional credit sources. This shift indicates that larger farmers are better positioned to access formal financial institutions, possibly due to their greater asset base, collateral availability, and stronger ties with banking networks. Conversely, marginal and

small farmers, while still heavily reliant on loans, continue to depend on non-institutional sources to a considerable extent, highlighting the persistent barriers to accessing formal credit.

These insights are central to the research objective, as they underscore the complex relationship between income growth and loan access among farmers. The findings suggest that while formal credit access has improved, particularly for larger landholders, small and marginal farmers still face significant challenges in transitioning away from non-institutional sources. This has broader implications for agricultural policy, particularly in the need to enhance credit accessibility for smallholders to promote equitable income growth and reduce dependence on informal lending.

5.2 Institutional and Non-Institutional Loans Proportion in Rajasthan

As per Table-2, the distribution of institutional and non-institutional loan sources among Rajasthan farmers shows significant changes between 2002-03 and 2018-19 across different landholding categories.

Table-2: Changes in Institutional and Non-Institutional Loan Rates and Amounts Among Rajasthan Farmers by Land Size (2002-03 and 2018-19)

Year	Farmer Category	Avg Inst. Loan	Inst. Loan Rate	Avg Non-Inst. Loan	Non-Inst. Loan Rate	Proportion Inst. Loan
2002-03	Marginal (< 1 Acre)	12,065	15.3	38,881	24.8	23.7
	Small (1-1.99 Acre)	11,737	17.2	52,813	26.4	18.2
	Medium (2-4.99 Acre)	25,932	14.9	53,225	24.5	32.8
	Large (5 Acre & more)	63,157	16.1	90,908	22.7	41.0
Overall		32,471	15.9	62,552	24.0	34.2
2018-19	Marginal(< 1 Acre)	54,970	9.7	76,378	24.6	41.9
	Small (1-1.99 Acre)	50,355	8.0	55,981	21.6	47.4
	Medium (2-4.99 Acre)	116,602	7.7	54,794	21.7	68.0
	Large (5 Acre & more)	245,946	7.8	73,354	21.4	77.0
Overall		118,082	8.0	62,977	22.2	65.2

Note: The results presented in this table are estimated by the authors using unit-level data from the NSSO 59th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2002-03) and the NSSO 77th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2018-19). The data are estimated in Indian Rupees (₹), adjusted to constant 2016-17 prices.

In terms of average institutional loan amounts, there has been a substantial increase across all farmer categories. Marginal farmers (less than 1 acre) saw their average institutional loan rise from ₹12,065 in 2002-03 to ₹54,970 in 2018-19, while large farmers (5 acres and above) experienced the most dramatic growth, with their average institutional loan increasing from ₹63,157 to ₹245,946. This rise indicates that institutional loan amounts have scaled considerably over time, with larger landholders benefitting the most. Small and medium farmers also saw their institutional loan amounts increase significantly, from ₹11,737 to ₹50,355 and from ₹25,932 to ₹116,602, respectively. These increases highlight the growing importance of institutional credit, particularly for medium and large farmers, reflecting their improved access to formal financial institutions.

In contrast, the average non-institutional loan amounts also increased, but at a slower rate compared to institutional loans. Marginal farmers saw an increase from ₹38,881 in 2002-03 to ₹76,378 in 2018-19, while small farmers' non-institutional loans grew from ₹52,813 to ₹55,981. Medium farmers saw their non-institutional loans rise from ₹53,225 to ₹54,794, while large farmers experienced an increase from ₹90,908 to ₹73,354. While non-institutional loan amounts have grown, the rate of increase is much slower relative to institutional loans, suggesting a shift towards greater reliance on institutional credit.

Regarding institutional loan rates (i.e., the interest rates charged by formal institutions), there is a notable decline over time. For instance, the institutional loan rate for marginal farmers dropped from 15.3% in 2002-03 to 9.7% in 2018-19, while for large farmers, it decreased from 16.1% to 7.8%. This reduction in institutional loan rates reflects improved lending conditions, potentially due to government policies aimed at promoting formal credit through lower interest rates and greater accessibility. On the other hand, non-institutional loan rates have remained relatively stable over time, with slight variations. For marginal farmers, the rate hovered around 24.8% in 2002-03 and 24.6% in 2018-19, indicating that non-institutional lenders still charge high rates, especially compared to institutional lenders.

The proportion of institutional loans also shifted significantly. Marginal farmers' reliance on institutional loans increased from 23.7% in 2002-03 to 41.9% in 2018-19. Similarly, for small farmers, the proportion of institutional loans grew from 18.2% to 47.4%, and for medium farmers, it jumped from 32.8% to 68.0%. The most substantial increase was seen among large farmers, where the proportion of institutional loans rose from 41.0% to 77.0%. This trend indicates a growing preference for institutional loans among farmers of all land sizes, particularly for medium and large landholders. The shift away from non-institutional loans, particularly for larger farmers, reflects the increased penetration of formal banking institutions in rural areas, as well as greater access to government-backed credit schemes.

In summary, the data in Table-2 reveal a clear shift towards increased reliance on institutional loan sources among farmers in Rajasthan across all landholding categories, with larger farmers benefitting the most. The significant reduction in institutional loan rates and the slower increase in non-institutional loan amounts

suggest that formal credit sources are becoming more accessible and attractive to farmers. This shift supports the research objective by demonstrating how improved access to institutional credit has influenced borrowing patterns, income growth, and overall credit accessibility in Rajasthan, underscoring the critical role of formal financial institutions in promoting agricultural development. These findings also highlight the need for continued efforts to reduce barriers to institutional credit for small and marginal farmers to foster equitable growth.

5.3 Institutional Loan Pattern

In Table-3, the data reflect significant changes in the average interest rates, loan shares, and distribution across institutional loan sources between 2002-03 and 2018-19. The average interest rates for institutional loans decreased notably during this period, dropping from 15.8% in 2002-03 to 8.0% in 2018-19. A detailed comparison shows that interest rates for loans from the government fell from 16.7% to 12.3%, while those from co-operative banks dropped more sharply from 13.9% to 7.6%. The most significant reduction occurred in loans from banks, where the interest rate decreased from 16.2% to 7.7%, reflecting an increasing push by formal financial institutions to provide more affordable credit to farmers.

Table-3: Institutional Loan Patterns: Source-Wise Interest Rates and Loan Shares Among Rajasthan Farmers (2002-03 vs. 2018-19)

Year	Loan Source	Avg. Interest Paid (%)	Loan Share (%)	Loan Number Share (%)	Person Share (%)
2002-03	Government	16.7	1.3	1.6	1.9
	Co-operative Bank	13.9	5.9	10.8	12.9
	Bank	16.2	27.0	15.3	18.0
All Institutional Loan		15.8	34.2	27.7	32.8
2018-19	Government	12.3	3.8	6.8	6.9
	Co-operative Bank	7.6	3.0	6.2	6.8
	Bank	7.7	58.3	35.6	37.7
All Institutional Loan		8.0	65.1	48.6	51.4

Note: The results are estimated by the author using unit-level data from the NSSO 59th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2002-03) and the NSSO 77th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2018-19).

In terms of loan share, banks dominated the institutional loan market, with their share increasing from 27.0% in 2002-03 to 58.3% in 2018-19. This reflects a clear shift in farmers' reliance on bank loans, possibly due to better accessibility and lower interest rates. In contrast, the loan share for co-operative banks declined from 5.9% to 3.0%, while the government's share grew modestly from 1.3% to 3.8%. This increase in the government's share may be linked to enhanced financial inclusion schemes and subsidies aimed at rural areas. Overall, institutional loans

accounted for 65.1% of the total loan share in 2018-19, up from 34.2% in 2002-03, marking a significant shift towards formal credit sources.

When analyzing the loan number share (the proportion of loans disbursed) and person share (the proportion of individuals receiving loans), a similar trend is observed. In 2002-03, banks accounted for 15.3% of the loan number share, which increased to 35.6% by 2018-19. Meanwhile, co-operative banks saw a decrease in their loan number share from 10.8% to 6.2%. The overall share of institutional loans in terms of persons benefitting rose from 32.8% to 51.4%, further underscoring the growing dominance of formal credit sources.

These trends support the research objective by demonstrating a clear shift towards institutional loans, particularly from banks, over time. The significant reduction in interest rates and the increasing loan share of banks indicate a concerted effort by financial institutions and the government to make formal credit more accessible and affordable for farmers. This shift towards institutional lending suggests a reduced dependence on informal, often exploitative, credit sources, which is crucial for improving financial stability and agricultural productivity among Rajasthan farmers.

5.4 Non Institutional Loan

Sources of non-institutional loan are as follows:

1. Agricultural/Professional Moneylender: Refers to loans provided by professional moneylenders, particularly those tied to agriculture.
2. Traders: Includes loans from traders, input suppliers, and market commission agents.
3. Relatives & Friends: Represents informal lending from personal networks, such as family or friends.
4. Others: Comprises loans from miscellaneous sources, including chit funds, landlords, and professionals like doctors or lawyers.

Table-4:Non-Institutional Loan Patterns: Source-Wise Interest Rates and Loan Shares Among Rajasthan Farmers (2002-03 vs. 2018-19)

Year	Loan Source	Avg. Interest Paid (%)	Loan Share (%)	Loan Number Share (%)	Person Share (%)
2002-03	Relatives & Friends	16.8	6.9	9.6	11.4
	Trader	24.2	21.0	24.4	21.3
	Agricultural/Professional Moneylender	25.4	36.5	36.3	33.1
	Others	20.0	1.4	2.0	1.5
All Non-Institutional Loan		24.0	65.8	72.3	67.3

2018-19	Relatives & Friends	0.0	2.3	6.8	7.5
	Trader	21.3	1.3	3.5	3.2
	Agricultural/Professional Moneylender	24.2	26.4	33.5	31.5
	Others	22.0	4.9	7.5	6.4
All Non-Institutional Loan		22.2	34.9	51.3	48.6

Note: The results are estimated by the author using unit-level data from the NSSO 59th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2002-03) and the NSSO 77th Round (Situation Assessment Survey, 2018-19).

The above table illustrates a different picture for non-institutional loans, with notable changes in interest rates, loan shares, and the distribution of loans across various non-institutional sources. Average interest rates for non-institutional loans remained relatively high, decreasing slightly from 24.0% in 2002-03 to 22.2% in 2018-19. While the interest rate for agricultural/professional moneylenders dropped marginally from 25.4% to 24.2%, it remains significantly higher than institutional sources, indicating the continued cost burden for farmers relying on non-institutional credit. Traders reduced their average interest rates from 24.2% to 21.3%, and loans from relatives and friends experienced the most dramatic change, with interest rates falling to 0.0%, reflecting the informal and sometimes interest-free nature of such loans.

In terms of loan share, agricultural/professional moneylenders remain the dominant non-institutional credit providers, although their share decreased from 36.5% in 2002-03 to 26.4% in 2018-19. This decline suggests that despite their persistent role, farmers are increasingly moving away from high-interest moneylenders toward formal credit institutions. The loan share from traders also fell sharply, from 21.0% to 1.3%, indicating a significant reduction in farmers' reliance on trade-based credit. In contrast, the share of loans from relatives and friends dropped from 6.9% to 2.3%, and the others category grew modestly from 1.4% to 4.9%.

Analyzing the loan number share, non-institutional loans accounted for a dominant 72.3% of the total number of loans in 2002-03, but this fell to 51.3% by 2018-19, signaling a shift toward institutional credit. Similarly, the person share of non-institutional loans decreased from 67.3% to 48.6% during the same period, underscoring the declining reliance on informal credit sources across all categories.

These findings support the research objective by revealing a gradual shift away from non-institutional loans over time, as farmers increasingly turn to institutional sources like banks, which offer more favourable terms. Despite this shift, non-institutional loans, particularly from agricultural moneylenders, still play a significant role, especially for farmers who may lack collateral or easy access to formal credit. The persistence of high interest rates among non-institutional sources further highlights the challenges faced by farmers who remain dependent on these informal networks.

The trends observed in both Tables-3 and 4 reveal a clear movement toward greater reliance on institutional loan sources, particularly from banks, with significant reductions in interest rates and increased loan shares for formal credit institutions. In contrast, non-institutional loan sources have seen a decline in both loan share and interest rate reductions, though they remain critical for certain groups of farmers, particularly those unable to access formal institutions. These trends reflect the evolving role of institutional loans in providing more accessible and affordable credit to farmers in Rajasthan, aligning with the broader goal of enhancing financial inclusion and reducing dependency on informal, high-cost loans.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the dynamics of farmer loan sources in Rajasthan, focusing on the shift in institutional and non-institutional credit between 2002-03 and 2018-19. The findings reveal significant changes in borrowing patterns, credit access, and interest rates across various landholding categories:

- 1. Income Growth and Loan Access:** The relationship between income growth and loan access shows that larger farmers have benefitted more substantially in terms of both income growth and access to institutional credit. Between 2002-03 and 2018-19, farmers in all landholding categories saw an increase in income, but medium and large farmers, in particular, experienced higher income gains. This income growth was coupled with increased reliance on institutional loans, especially among medium and large farmers. The share of institutional loan recipients rose from 19.3% to 37.9% overall, with medium farmers increasing from 20.6% to 46.9% and large farmers from 27.0% to 56.2%. This shift highlights that income growth is positively correlated with access to formal credit sources, with larger landholders enjoying better access to formal financial institutions.
- 2. Distribution of Loan Sources:** The distribution of loans by source also changed significantly. In 2002-03, non-institutional sources such as moneylenders and traders dominated the credit landscape, especially among marginal and small farmers. By 2018-19, there was a clear shift toward institutional loans, particularly from banks. The proportion of institutional loans for marginal farmers rose from 23.7% to 41.9%, while for large farmers, it increased from 41.0% to 77.0%. Despite this positive trend, marginal and small farmers still show a higher dependence on non-institutional sources, underscoring persistent barriers to formal credit access for smaller landholders.
- 3. Interest Rates and Loan Shares:** Trends in interest rates show a marked reduction for institutional loans, with the average rate dropping from 15.8% in 2002-03 to 8.0% in 2018-19. In contrast, non-institutional loans remained costly, with only a slight reduction in average interest rates (24.0% to 22.2%).

The falling interest rates for institutional loans have made formal credit sources more attractive, particularly for larger farmers. At the same time, the declining loan share of non-institutional sources—from 65.8% in 2002-03 to 34.9% in 2018-19—suggests a gradual shift toward more formalized credit options. However, non-institutional loans, especially from agricultural moneylenders, remain significant for farmers who lack the collateral or financial literacy required to access institutional loans.

7. Policy Suggestions

Some of the most important policy suggestions for farmer credit are as under:

1. **Enhancing Credit Access for Small and Marginal Farmers:** Despite the growing dominance of institutional loans, small and marginal farmers still face barriers in accessing formal credit. To address this, policies should focus on easing the collateral requirements and simplifying loan application processes for these farmers. Expanding awareness programs about government-backed credit schemes, such as the *Kisan Credit Card* (KCC) and other rural finance initiatives, would further help smallholders transition away from exploitative informal credit.
2. **Reducing Regional Disparities in Credit Access:** The data show that larger farmers have benefitted disproportionately from the expansion of institutional credit. Policymakers should ensure that formal financial institutions focus on marginalized regions and smaller landholders, possibly through targeted lending schemes, subsidies, or rural banking reforms, to provide equitable access across all land sizes.
3. **Lowering Non-Institutional Loan Dependence:** Although institutional loans are becoming more prevalent, many farmers still rely on high-cost non-institutional sources. Strengthening rural credit cooperatives and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which offer more accessible forms of credit, could be instrumental in reducing dependence on non-institutional loans. Additionally, regulating moneylender activities to ensure fair practices could alleviate the financial burden on farmers still reliant on informal loans.
4. **Interest Rate Flexibility for Marginal Farmers:** While institutional interest rates have declined, marginal farmers continue to face relatively higher costs. Introducing flexible, lower interest rates for smaller loans aimed at marginal farmers could help reduce their financial strain and promote their inclusion in the formal credit system.

In conclusion, this study underscores the need for sustained policy efforts to improve institutional credit access for small and marginal farmers. By focusing on financial inclusion, fair lending practices, and targeted support, Rajasthan's rural economy can benefit from a more equitable distribution of credit, fostering agricultural productivity and income growth across all landholding categories.

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The Empty Nest and Aging: Consequences of Youth Migration on Left behind Elderly Parents

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Abstract

This study was based on the consequences of youth migration on left behind elderly parents. The objective of this study was to assessing the socio-economic background of the elderly and the effects of youth migration on left behind elderly parents. Based on the study's aims, a semi-structured interview schedule of both open-ended and closed-ended questions was used to collect primary data in order to obtain meaningful information. To find out how younger people's migration affects older parents, a personal interview was conducted. The respondents were Kirtipur residents who were 60 years of age or older. According to the interviewees, their migrant family members reprimand them when their youngsters act out, skip school, or disregard their elders' advice. Only a small percentage of respondents said they occasionally experience mental and physical torture. In a similar vein, they had trouble bringing groceries, sugar, tea or coffee, edible oil, vegetables, and other essentials, as well as difficulties cooking. According to the majority of respondents, their grandchildren would bring those necessities including groceries.

Keywords

Migration, Younger people, Left behind, Elderly parents, Research.

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The Empty Nest and Aging: Consequences of Youth Migration on Left behind Elderly Parents

1. Introduction: Consequences of Youth Migration on Left behind Elderly Parents

One of the third factors of population change that has not received as much attention as fertility and mortality is migration. Mortality and fertility are two factors that have a distinct effect on population size than migration. While fertility and mortality both function within the biological framework, migration is not a biological characteristic, however social, cultural, political, and economic variables do have some impact on it (Bhende & Kanitkar, 1978).

Migration has existed for as long as human civilization. Studying the nature and history of migration at the national, international, and regional levels is crucial. The historical evidence of migration in various communities is now visible.

Human migration has historically been characterized by a transition from a condition of no human settlement to one of progressive migration. The majority of migrations (except from those that populate isolated areas like the Arctic or the Pacific) occurred during times of conflict, conquest, or population expansion. It began during the upper Palaeolithic period and continued until the Neolithic stage. Sedentary population growth into formerly sparsely populated or permanently unpopulated areas is a component of colonialism. Since roughly 3000 BC, different distinct groups of people have migrated from one part of the world to another. They have had a significant impact on the human story in doing so. These individuals can be classified as groupings in a variety of ways, although few of them are involved in racial distinctions. The world's most common migration was among Semitic tribes, Indo-Europeans, Indo-Europeans in Asia, Indo-Europeans in Europe, and the Jewish Diaspora, which lasted from the second century BC to the fifth century AD.

The phenomenon of migration is complex. Since the importance of economic factors and the economic motive for migrants serve as pull factors, they may have a favorable impact on the financial well-being of migrants and their families. In addition to improving one's financial situation, migration may also bring about better social conditions, access to education, and better health care, all of which can lead to higher incomes. Even if migration happens to get away from the unstable circumstances that exist in the place of origin, it can also occasionally strain the bonds between parents and children. The family and elderly parents are supported financially by the migration, but it may also leave a care gap.

Desperation or distress situations have developed in the rural sector as a result of rising unemployment, crop failures, debt, poor credit facilities, lack of other

options, droughts, and poverty levels in rural areas in recent years. Because of this, the country's poor, laborers, and marginal and small farming groups are moving around, temporarily abandoning their homes to seek work and a living in other affluent rural and/or urban locations. (Smita, 2007).

People migrate inside a country for a variety of reasons, which we might categorize as push and pull causes. The things that encourage people to relocate inside a nation are known as push factors. On the other hand, pull factors are those that draw or draw individuals from other parts of a nation. Centrifugal or impulsive push factors and centripetal or attractive pull factors are sometimes used to describe the process of migration, which is the result of the interaction between centrifugal and centripetal inclinations. (Mitchell, 1989)

The high natural rate of population growth that puts pressure on the available resources, the depletion of natural resources, natural disasters like earthquakes and famines, and severe social, religious, or political conflicts that force people to migrate elsewhere for safety are some examples of the push factors that exist in the place of origin. The development of new industries that offer fresh chances for profitable work, access to better education in urban areas, favorable weather, etc. are the pull forces. (Zar, 2005).

These driving forces also compelled young people in my study to leave their families and aging parents behind in pursuit of work. It affects women, children, their health and education, and it has a major effect on elderly parents. Because of their age and handicap, the elderly are rarely migrated. The empty nest syndrome affects elderly adults who are nearing the end of their lives. the issues of elderly parents who are compelled to care for their grandchildren because they are unable to migrate. The study addresses issues related to daily life activities, physical and psychological well-being, and caring for grandkids.

Both intra-household relationships and individual household members are impacted by migration. Migration may have different intra-household effects when one family member migrates alone or even when family members migrate together seasonally. Understanding how the movement affects both the migrant households and the source communities, as well as how it affects women, children, and the elderly, both as migrants and as those left behind, is crucial.

The study mainly focus at problems with elderly parents who were abandoned by their kids and are unable to move. They talked about the challenges and troubles of daily life, as well as a number of topics related to their social lives, money, and day-to-day issues. Their health issues have been investigated, and the effects of the migration process on their mental and physical health have also been discussed. Seniors and their families are affected by migration. because it affects things both positively and negatively. It also affects the elderly, non-migrant grandchildren and those left behind. When their children move away, the elderly take on the role of primary caregiver for their grandkids. Elderly parents who are left behind by their

family may experience health issues as a result of migration. The migration has an impact on older people's physical and mental health and well-being. Children and elderly non-migrants who are left behind must deal with several difficulties in their everyday lives.

Becoming older is a common and normal occurrence. It starts the moment a person is born and lasts till they pass away. When someone reaches a certain age, they can be referred to as elderly. Around the world, different people have different ideas about old age. For the age groups of 55, 60, and 65, there are three distinct cutoff points. While it starts at age 65 in Western nations, those who are 60 years of age or older are regarded as old in Nepal. The age of around 55 is regarded as the start of the old age period, taking into account physiological changes.

2. Theoretical Framework

International migration, according to the UK government's Office for National Statistics, is "the movement of people from one country to another and is often defined by the period they live in each country" (White, 2021). "Shifting of people or an individual or group of individuals from one cultural area to another, which may be permanent or temporary" is the literal definition of migration (Rajan & Neetha, 2018).

Lee offers a concept that takes into account both the spatial and temporal aspects of migration. According to him, migration is a shift in a person's permanent or semi-permanent habitation that involves an origin, a destination, and any impediments that stand in the way (Lee, 1966). Migration has no universally accepted definition. The definition of a migrant changes depending on their socioeconomic and political goals as well as the rules and regulations governing migration (King, 2012).

Alfred Marshall, a well-known British economist, expressed the following opinions about migration: "The best blood from all over England is absorbed by the big towns, and London in particular; the most enterprising, the most talented, the people with the best bodies, and the strongest personalities go there to find scope for their abilities" (Marshall, 1920).

For some people, being elderly was a luxury, but not for everyone. People can now expect to live longer because of the significant advancements in the health sector. In Nepalese culture, aging and the elderly are highly valued. According to *Manusmriti*, life consists of four phases: "(i) *Brahmacharya* or celibacy (ii) *Grihastha* or householder, when a person is supposed to do all his responsibilities towards his family including to his parents and society (iii) *Vanaprastha*, time to leave all the worldly pleasures for spiritual growth, and finally (iv) *Sanyasa* is the life stage of renunciation" (Britannica, 2017). '*Vanaprastha*' is the period of old age in which people fulfill all of their responsibilities.

One aspect of aging is the development of complex health disorders, which do not fit into any particular illness category because they only appear later in life.

These are commonly known as geriatric syndromes. (WHO, 2018). In their research, Jaul Efraim and Barron Jeremy divided age-related declines into the following categories: physical function, psychological and cognitive, social/environmental, immuno-sciences, urologic changes, somatic disease and various chronic disorders, sensory changes, muscle strength and fat changes. (Jaul & Barron, 2017). The body undergoes a number of fundamental changes as increasing in the age of the people, and the chance of developing chronic illnesses increases. (WHO, 2015).

3. Methodological Approach

The starting point for scientific investigation that describes the general study plan is research philosophy. In order to get knowledge, this study uses scientific procedures and assumes that the phenomena are objective. This study's entire foundation is a survey that evaluates older people's socioeconomic backgrounds and the impact of younger people's migration on their elderly parents. A semi-structured interview schedule of both open-ended and closed-ended questions based on the study's objectives was used to gather the primary data. To find out how younger people's migration affects older parents whose family migrates, a personal interview was conducted. The respondents were Kirtipur Municipality residents who were 60 years of age or older. Kirtipur Municipality's ward number eight was chosen due to the high level of migration in comparison to the other nine wards. Using a purposive sampling technique, 50 respondents were chosen as a sample in order to achieve the goal. Excel was used to organize, modify, check, and tabulate the data, and descriptive statistical measures were used to analyze the results. Informant consent, a minimum similarity index, respect for local customs and culture, and personal safety were all upheld in order to uphold academic ethics. Nevertheless, this study is restricted to a specific number of producers in Panga's Kirtipur Municipality ward number 8.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher focuses on evaluating elderly peoples' socioeconomic backgrounds and the consequences of youth migration on their elderly parents who are left behind. This section covers the respondent's age, educational background, and gender, among other pertinent variables. For this reason, the researcher collected this data.

4.1 Age of the Elderly Parents

If a person has reached a certain age, they might be referred to as "aged". Around the world, different people have different ideas about old age. For the elderly, there are three distinct cutoff ages. age ranges: 55, 60, and 65. People who are 60 years of age or older are regarded as elderly in Nepal; in industrialized nations, this distinction is made at age 65. Age composition of the selected respondents has been depicted in Table-1 on the next page.

Table-1: Age of the Elderly Parents

Age of the Elderly Parents	Number	%
60 and 70 above	12	24.0
71-80	26	52.0
81- 90	8	16.0
91- 100	4	08.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table demonstrates that, of the 50 responders, the vast majority (52 percent) are between the ages of 71 and 80, 24% are between the ages of 60 and 70, and 16% are between the ages of 81 and 90. Just 8% of respondents, or those between the ages of 91 and 100, were in the oldest-old category with deprivation in health. A larger portion of elderly parents (52%) are in the 71-80 age range, which is a critical period for providing care, whether it be medical, physical, or social. Organizations or family members supporting elderly parents may need to focus their resources on this age group.

4.2 Gender of the Elderly Parents

An excess of men is indicated by a sex ratio above 100, while an excess of females is indicated by a sex ratio below 100. The sex ratio is a measure of the composition of male and female senior individuals. An equal number of males and females is indicated by a ratio of 100.

The 2021 National Population and Housing Census found that Nepal's old population had a sex ratio of 97.7, or almost 98 men for every 100 women.

Table-2: Gender of the Elderly Parents

Gender of the Elderly Parents	Number	%
Male	10	20.0
Female	40	80.0
Total	50	100 .0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The gender of the responders is displayed in the above table. Only 20% of the responses were men, with the majority (80%) being women. The sample showed clear signs of the feminization of aging. It was because they were superior to men. It was discovered that in Kirtipur municipality ward no. 8, Panga, there were more left behind old women than men because women tend to live longer than men, which could explain the higher percentage of elderly females,

4.3 Level of Education of the Elderly Parents

Elderly people's educational records and well-being are closely related because education makes it possible for them to be more adaptive to shifting

socioeconomic circumstances. A person who can read and write is considered literate.

The Population Census 2021 indicates that 76.2% of people are literate overall. The literacy rates for men and women are 83.6% and 69.4%, respectively.

Table-3: Level of Education of the Elderly Parents

Education of the Elderly Parents	Number	%
Illiterate	30	60.0
Literate	13	26.0
Primary	7	14.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Regarding the education of the elderly parents, above table shows that 60% are illiterate. This represents the largest group, with 30 elderly parents who have not received formal education or have very limited literacy skills. This could be due to historical socio-economic conditions, lack of access to education, or cultural factors that might have limited opportunities for education in their time. Similarly, 26% are literate. Means 26% individuals can read and write, but likely have not completed formal schooling. This suggests a basic level of education, but they may not have pursued further academic development. Furthermore, 14% have primary education: These 14% individuals have at least completed primary school, indicating a slightly higher level of education compared to the illiterate or merely literate groups.

4.4 Marital Status of Elderly Parents

Marriage is a significant event in people's social lives. 33.1% of Nepal's old population was never married, 61.8% was married, 4.5% was a widow or widower, 0.2% was divorced, and 0.4% was separated, according to the country's 2021 National Population and Housing Census.

Table-4: Marital Status of the Elderly Parents

Marital Status	Number	%
Married and having spouse	17	34.0
Divorced	1	02.0
Separated	4	08.0
Widow/widower	28	56.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table shows the respondents' marital status: 34% were married with a spouse, and 56% were widows or widowers. Because there was no such thing as divorce in the past, only 2% of respondents were divorced, and only 8% of respondents were separated, meaning that the spouses lived in different homes with

their children. It shows that 66% of the respondents do not have life partners, which undoubtedly has an impact on their lives today.

4.5 Religious Affiliations of the Elderly Parents

Social identity formation is significantly influenced by affiliation with religion. 81.19% of Nepal's population is Hindu, 8.21% Buddhist, 4.39% Muslim, 3.17% Kiratist, 1.76% Christian, 0.01% Sikh, and 0.01% Jain, according to the country's 2021 census. The majority of people are Hindus, followed by Buddhists, Kiratists, Christians, Sikhs, and Jains.

Table-5: Religious Background of the Elderly Parents

Religion	Number	%
Hindu	43	87.0
Buddhist	5	11.0
Christian	1	02.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

When the researcher observe the religion of the respondents, above table gives the details of type of religion the elderly parents followed. Hinduism is the predominant religion in this group, making up 87% of the population (43 out of 50 individuals). This is a clear majority, suggesting that Hinduism is the most widely practiced religion in this particular population. Buddhism represents 11% of the group, with 5 people identifying as Buddhist. While a minority, this is still a significant proportion, reflecting a smaller but notable presence of Buddhism. Christianity is the smallest group, with only 1 individual identifying as Christian, making up just 2% of the total population.

4.6 Abuse faced by Elderly People

Abuse or mistreatment of the elderly is not a new phenomenon. It alludes to deliberate abuse and disregard. According to Glendenning (1999), neglect is an act of omission, whereas elder abuse or mistreatment is an act of commission. Physical, psychological, social, and other forms of mistreatment are all possible. Mistreatment also includes deliberate neglect, denying the elderly their regular rights, and taking advantage of them. "A single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person" is the WHO (2015) definition of elder abuse. Furthermore, elderly people are being neglected and abused by their family members on an emotional, physical, and financial level. Respondents to this study were asked about the abuse they experience from their co-resident grandkids and migratory family. Table-6 depicts the responses of the selected elderly parents on types of elder abuse.

Table-6: Types of Elder Abuse

Types of elder abuse	Number	%
Scolding	18	36.0
Physical abuse	1	02.0
Mental torture	1	02.0
No answer	30	60.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Above table shows the types of elder abuse they face, scolding is the most frequently reported form of elder abuse, with 36% of the group (18 individuals) indicating that scolding is a form of abuse. This suggests that verbal abuse or mistreatment is quite common, possibly indicating that it is a prevalent issue in the context this data is coming from. Physical abuse and mental torture are reported at very low rates, with only 2% (1 person each) indicating these types of abuse. While these forms of abuse are serious, their occurrence in this data set is relatively rare compared to scolding. The low numbers for physical and mental abuse could suggest that these forms of elder abuse are less recognized or reported in the group, or they could simply be less common in this particular instance. A significant 60% (30 individuals) did not answer the question or did not acknowledge experiencing any abuse.

4.7 Problem faced in Daily Activities

As parents grow older, they become increasingly dependent on their caregivers or younger family members for assistance with daily activities and routine tasks. In most cases, their children serve as the primary caregivers, providing both physical support and emotional companionship. However, in the absence of children or other caregivers, many elderly parents face significant hardships and are compelled to seek assistance from neighbours or other members of the community. In many migrant households, although adult children leave their own children in the care of grandparents, they often provide limited support to the elderly themselves, placing an additional caregiving burden on ageing parents. The elderly also confront numerous challenges. Their actions, like as skipping school and walking around all day without telling the elderly, cause them a lot of issues. The elderly were really concerned about them, thus society and family members shouldn't hold them responsible for their negligence.

The activities of daily living include housework, money management, food preparation, shopping, and other activities, while the activities of daily living (ADL) include bathing, dressing, cooking, eating, and using the restroom. The elderly require assistance with both of these activities as they get older.

Table-7: The Person assisting of the Elderly Parents in Cooking

Cooking Assistant	Number	%
Myself	2	04.0
Grandchildren	29	58.0
Neighbours	13	26.0
Relatives	2	04.0
No answer	4	08.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table indicates about the person who assists respondents in cooking. 58% (29 respondents) indicated that their grandchildren assisted them in cooking. This is the largest group, showing that grandchildren are not only emotionally important but also play a practical role in helping the elderly with daily tasks like cooking. This could reflect strong family bonds and the intergenerational support system in place. 26% (13 respondents) mentioned neighbours as their source of assistance with cooking. This suggests that in some communities, neighbours play an important role in offering help with tasks, indicating a sense of community and mutual support. Only 4% (2 respondents) indicated that they managed cooking by themselves. This low figure suggests that most elderly individuals in this group may need help with cooking, either due to physical limitations, time constraints, or a preference for assistance. 4% (2 respondents) stated that relatives (other than grandchildren) assisted them with cooking. This number is similar to those who reported being self-sufficient, showing that extended family members may not be as involved in helping with this specific task. 8% (4 respondents) did not provide an answer. This could imply that they either don't need help, don't want to disclose this information, or may not have been comfortable responding

Table-8: The Person bringing Groceries and Basic Things

Support Person	Number	%
Myself	6	12.0
Grandchildren	28	56.0
Neighbour	9	18.0
Relative	7	14.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table shows the person who will bring groceries and basic things like sugar, tea/coffee, edible oil, vegetables and other necessary things for them. 56% (28 respondents) reported that their grandchildren assist in bringing groceries and basic items. This is the largest group, reinforcing the strong role that grandchildren play in supporting their elderly family members, both in terms of emotional support and practical help with daily tasks such as shopping. 18% (9

respondents) indicated that neighbours help them with bringing groceries and basic things. This suggests that a smaller but significant portion of elderly individuals rely on their neighbours for practical assistance, indicating a strong sense of community and neighbourly support. 14% (7 respondents) mentioned relatives (other than grandchildren) helping with groceries and basic items. This is a smaller group, which might indicate that extended family members are less involved in day-to-day support, perhaps due to geographic distance or other factors. 12% (6 respondents) stated that they bring groceries and basic things themselves. This suggests that small groups of elderly individuals are still self-sufficient in managing essential tasks like shopping, though it is a relatively low percentage.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how younger people's migration affects older parents who are left behind. Elderly parents who were left behind had numerous issues. Elderly parents in the area I studied experienced physical and psychological torture, as well as reprimands. This result was in line with Glendenning's (1997) research. According to Glendenning, neglect is an act of omission, but elder abuse or mistreatment is an act of commission. Physical, psychological, social, and other forms of mistreatment are all possible. Mistreatment also includes deliberate neglect, denying the elderly their regular rights, and taking advantage of them. The results of this study are also consistent with those of Jaul Efraim and Barron Jeremy, who categorized age-related declines into the following categories: physical function, psychological and cognitive, social/environmental, immuno-sciences, urologic changes, somatic disease and various chronic conditions, sensory changes, muscle strength and fat changes, and urologic changes (Jaul & Barron, 2017). As stated by them this study also came to similar conclusions. The elderly become unable of performing the instrumental activities of everyday life, such as housework, money management, food preparation, shopping, and dressing, eating, cooking, bathing, and using the restroom, as their ages increase. Increase in the age leads to the necessity for the aid in these tasks of elderly and the elderly people take assistance of grandchildren, neighbours and relatives. The study's conclusions are acknowledged theoretically. According to the suggested theoretical approaches, elderly parents who are left behind frequently experience physical, psychological, social, or other forms of abuse or mistreatment.

6. Conclusion

This study's main focus is on the effects of migration of younger people on left behind elderly parents in Kirtipur Municipality ward no 8. Left behind elderly parents confront many obstacles in their day-to-day lives, which also has effects for their health and well-being. First of all, elderly parents who are left behind have experienced various forms of elder abuse. The fact that the majority of respondents did not respond well to questions about elder abuse suggests that family members may have subtly abused them. According to several respondents, their relocated family members reprimand them when their grandchildren act out, miss school, or

ignore their grandparents' advice. Only a small percentage of respondents said they occasionally experience mental and physical torture. Secondly, they encountered difficulties when cooking. The majority of those surveyed said that their granddaughters are particularly helpful and considerate. Thirdly, they had trouble bringing groceries and necessities like sugar, tea or coffee, vegetables, edible oil, and other items they needed. Majority of the respondents reported that their grandchildren will bring groceries and basic items for them.

Acknowledgments

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Role of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Welfare Administration in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) in welfare administration with special reference to Himachal Pradesh. As the apex Sikh religious and administrative institution, the SGPC has expanded its role beyond the management of gurdwaras to encompass a wide range of religious, educational, cultural, and humanitarian welfare activities. Using an exploratory and descriptive research approach based on secondary sources, the paper analyzes the Committee's institutional responsibilities and its contribution to community welfare in the state. The study highlights the SGPC's initiatives in the administration and maintenance of gurdwaras, provision of accommodation and essential facilities for pilgrims, publication and dissemination of Sikh literature, organization of religious and cultural events, promotion of dharam parchar, educational support through scholarships, schools, camps, seminars, and youth programmes, as well as assistance in pilgrimage and disaster relief. The findings reveal that the SGPC has evolved into a multifaceted welfare organization that not only preserves Sikh religious heritage and cultural identity but also contributes to social development through humanitarian assistance extended to people irrespective of religion during times of crisis. While the Committee continues to prioritize the educational, social, and economic advancement of the Sikh community, its expanding welfare programmes demonstrate the growing significance of faith-based organizations in complementing public welfare administration and fostering community development and in Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords

SGPC, Welfare administration, Social development, Community development, Social cohesion.

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Role of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Welfare Administration in Himachal Pradesh

1. Introduction

The welfare administration is like the backbone of modern public administration, essentially working towards the well-being of individual persons and the community. Welfare programme's administration is a complex process that involves policy formation, resource allocation, programme implementation, and evaluation, all aimed at impacting the quality of life of people. Hence, the establishment of a system is ever-important for social policy to make sure the administration of social services occurs smoothly and timely. Welfare administration goes beyond mere social service provision and into the administration with the aim of improving income opportunities and living standards for individuals.

Social policymaking turns social policy into social welfare, and vice versa. Social welfare administration provides planning and organization to implement and execute social policies. They are also engaged in supervising different agencies that work towards welfare of society, both governmental and private. Through various social welfare programmes, assistance is provided to facilitate those in need—whether the individuals facing disadvantages or particular demography confronting certain difficulties. is transformed into social welfare services through the intricate working of social welfare administration.

Welfare administration is basically the careful effort to plan, coordinate, oversee, and manage social services and programmes. These programmes are meant to help people and communities do better. It highlights that the core of welfare administration lies in its ability to transform social policies into tangible services that effectively tackle the diverse social issues prevalent in society. The phrase “the process of organizing and directing a social agency” refers to social welfare administration, which involves the administration and organizational framework of both public and private social agencies that are essential components of the administrative side of social work. To put it simply, social welfare administration involves all of the activities required that enable a social agency to effectively support its customers and communities. For social welfare administration to succeed and thrive meaningful results, it is crucial to set attainable and comprehensible goals for the organization.

Social welfare administration in India is closely linked to the efforts of self-governing establishments such as NGOs or religious bodies like the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). These institutions help to optimize

social welfare by ensuring that the programmes reach down to the very needy and disadvantaged sections of society. Social welfare in India has thereby widened in scope since the amalgamation of government agencies and these self-governing organizations.

With the Indian welfare administration being charged with the detailed planning, implementation, and evaluation of social welfare programmes. This implies coordination among various ministries and departments dealing in health, education, employment, and rural development, to mention but a few. Yet, given the vastness and diversity of Indian populace, local self-governing institutions complement the response for some community needs and fill the gaps.

This influencing body is the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) as a self-governing body for various welfare projects undertaken for and by the Sikh community. Established in 1920, the committee manages the Sikh Gurdwaras and helps the Sikh community by way of income from social services that include education, medical aid, and emergency relief. The committee does all this through a whole chain of schools, colleges, and hospitals in order to keep these essential services within the reach of the community. Their devotion to “seva” (selfless service) is a powerful example showing how important social welfare can be through religious bodies. SGPC welfare activities are exercising social welfare also beyond the Sikh community. The SGPC has come as a relief force in times of national distress, such as natural calamities, helping the afflicted populations without distinction of creed. This kind of philanthropy inculcates healing to ensure that the role of faith based institutions can serve the goals formulated in order to attain the scope of social welfare.

2. Review of Literature

Kaushik & Sachdeva (1992) in their scholarly article titled “Social Welfare Administration as a discipline and a profession: Perspectives and Prospects” have clarified how the field of social welfare administration works to deal with the challenges faced by various groups, with a strong emphasis on eliminating these issues.

Rao (1992) in the book “Organisational and Financial Management of Religious Institutions” has thoroughly examined the management practices, revenue and expenses, and the perspective of the pilgrims, particularly in relation to Tirumala Tirupati Devasrhanams (TTD). Since religious institutions are the subject of both studies, there is a clear connection between them.

Singh (2009) in the doctoral dissertation, “Management of Religious Institutions by Minorities with a particular reference to the Law Relating to Management of Gurdwaras in India”, renders insights regarding the management of Gurdwaras, specifically looking at Gurdwara Sachkhand Hazur Sahib in Nanded and referencing The Nanded Sikh Gurdwara Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Act 1956. This study highlights the managerial roles carried out by the SGPC.

Kaur (2010) in the doctoral dissertation, “Management of Educational Institutions of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee” has elucidated the management structure of higher educational institutions operated by the SGPC. It has emphasized the hierarchical and financial framework of these institutions. This study is relevant to the current study as SGPC’s educational functions are carried out here in state of Himachal Pradesh as well.

Chandra (2017) in the book “Social welfare Administration in India” has introduced the concept of social welfare administration, and its application at both union and state levels. It has also discussed the role of voluntary organizations in society. While the book doesn’t specifically address the purpose of SGPC, it does enhance to our understanding of faith-based institutions such as churches, mosques, and temples.

Singh (2019) in the Doctoral dissertation, “Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee di Vidyak Dean Dharam Adhiyan Prasang vich” delves into the definition of religious studies as articulated by various scholars. He underlines how it is related to an assortment of the teaching method engaged by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee for religious teaching. Thus, this analysis has indicated academic institutions, including missionary colleges and their affiliated institutions, committed to the rigorous and culturally relevant exploration of religious knowledge, it fails to provide any information specifically as to the activities undertaken throughout the Himachal Pradesh state.

The above review of literature leads to an important research gap. It becomes quite apparent through this brief review that, despite the fact that there are many studies conducted to date, there aren’t many focused studies on the welfare functions being carried out by the SGPC in Himachal Pradesh. There is a dearth of scholarly attention to the functions of self-governing organizations like SGPC in welfare management. As a reputed entity, SGPC should keep constantly assessing his strengths and weaknesses while focusing on the management, operations, and human resources-that is, the basic ingredients of any successful organization. To fulfill this lacuna, the present research tries to examine the role of SGPC in the welfare administration of Himachal Pradesh.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are enumerated below:

1. To explore/the role of welfare administration.
2. To examine the functional aspects of welfare administration.
3. To investigate whether the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee engages in any welfare activities in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

4. Research Design

This research study employed a qualitative and descriptive research design, drawing on secondary data compiled from a variety of sources such as books,

journals, articles, and other relevant data materials. This careful approach to data collection ensures that the research is well rounded and supported by a diverse array of the sources which are used to establish the conclusions of the study.

5. Welfare Functions performed by Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) in Himachal Pradesh

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) is known to bring about welfare services for not only the Sikh community but for all the people. Initially, it was founded with the objective of/ the management and supervision of Gurdwaras; today, it has a much wider mission in several welfare activities that cater to the social, medical, and educational needs of the community a significant role in providing welfare services not just for the Sikh community, but for everyone.

5.1 Educational Services

Providing educational services is a very prominent role undertaken by SGPC. They run several universities, colleges, and schools offering programmes in both secular and religious education. These educational premises are tasked with the responsibility for preserving Sikh history and tradition and promoting literacy, all aimed toward offering quality humanistic education to Sikhs. By having a focus on education, SGPC tries to make sure that their students receive a balanced education that addresses moral and ethical instructions based on Sikh philosophy. A few of the initiatives they undertake are listed below:

- Promoting and providing for education through their own established educational institution.
- Advocating for Gurmukhi script of Punjabi be taught as a subject in the schools, allowing students who are interested in learning Punjabi to benefit.
- Offering scholarship and schemes to help eligible students in pursuing their educational goals without worrying about the expenses.
- Running coaching institutions that assist students in their education for achieving their dream careers in defense services, civil services, judicial services, engineering, medical education, and sports.
- Conducting Dharmik Parikhya to nurture a sense of religious understanding, remembering major events and how they shaped religion and strengthened the faith over the period.

5.2 Healthcare Services and Assistance

In order to provide for healthcare, the SGPC is instrumental in the provision which are vital for healthcare services and assistance. In poorly equipped areas, it operates hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries that assist those in need. These healthcare service units provide general and specialized healthcare and surgical services. SGPC's commitment to healthcare provision promotes absolute access to

basic medical services, thus improving the health and well-being of the community through:

- Distribution of medical services by organizing healthcare and setting up dispensaries.
- Offering medical assistance in form of free of cost medicines to the patients in need.
- Providing financial support for medical treatments to the ailing people.
- Running screening camps and health check-up drives.
- Delivering emergency medical services.

5.3 Disaster Relief

Whenever some natural calamities run amok and causes havoc, the SGPC's wheels start turning for disaster relief. Whether its flood, earthquake, and any other natural calamity, an elaborate procedure is followed in the organization for disbursing timely help, including sharing of food, shelter, and medical aid, along with other essentials that the harmed individuals/families require. The SGPC's following disaster-relief activities emphasize the fact that they truly stand with the community when it really needs them:

- Implementing disaster management and relief programmes, including evacuation and transportation to the safer places.
- Offering community feeding in the form of Langar to the people caught-up in the disasters.
- Providing medical assistance to the victims of disasters like landslide and flood.
- Allocating funds to help the affected community members in order to rebuild their businesses.
- Distributing warm bedding and other necessities to those imacted by disaster.

5.4 Social Services

The SGPC SGPC is focused on expanding the availability of complimentary social services aimed to augment community members' quality of life in the health and education sectors. Fostering social equity and extending aid to the under-resourced and vulnerable individuals, along with environmental preservation and protection, is the foundation of their efforts. Influenced by the principles of Sikhism, SGPC social initiatives imbue their programmes with values, such as compassion, service to others, and charity. Below are listed some of their major initiatives:

- They manage and coordination the Gurdwaras to ensure they operate smoothly together.

- New Gurdwaras are being established at recently discovered sites of significant religious importance.
- They work on the reconstruction and restoration of existing Gurdwaras.
- Accommodation facilities are being built to support visitors and community members.
- During tough times, widows and disadvantaged women who belong to the Sikh community receive financial aid to help them sustain their families.
- During difficult times, the community is catered with essentials like ration and supplies which are distributed to support the community during difficult periods.
- They advocate for various issues faced by the Sikhs in state, bringing them to the government's attention for their resolution.
- They address matters related to the properties and assets of the Gurdwaras.
- Issues of mismanagement in heritage Gurdwaras, which pertains within the purview of state government's Department of Art and Culture, are also taken up before the government for resolution.
- To promote a clean and green environment, special plantation and afforestation drives are carried out by the SGPC to cater increased the forest cover.
- The ban on single-use plastic packaging for Prashad is in place to encourage environmental cleanliness and use of sustainable materials for packaging.

5.5 Cultural and Religious Activities

The SGPC also focuses on safeguarding and encouraging Sikh culture and religion. They coordinate the religious community events and festivals that help the Sikhs strung and inherited community bonds. They also help access Sikh teachings by publishing religious texts and literature. The SGPC's help in fostering Sikh culture and community are remarkable. These responsibilities are inclusive of:

- The spreading and nurturing of religious values to understand and rightfully practice them are paramount for spiritual growth.
- Commemorating and highlighting the sacred days and their relevance to the Sikh history on large scales for public awareness.
- Scheduling pilgrimages to holy places with the intention of acknowledging and fulfilling their religious obligations and see historical hallmarks of the revered place.
- The retention of historical texts historical literature and relics for the coming generations.
- The distribution of Sikh literature and scriptures to Gurdwaras and to the community members for their spiritual development.

- The Nanakshahi Calendar is distributed to Sikhs for seasonal and festive events aligned with the lunar cycle.
- Initiatives like Dharam Parchar and Amrit Sanchar to promote religious teachings.
- Organizing workshops, movie screenings, and competitions to engage the community.
- Camps are organized with the purpose to encourage the values and tenets of Sikhism.
- Turban-tying camps and competitions not only highlight the symbolic importance and pertinence of Turban but also teach the Sikhs with the skill of adorning a Turban gracefully.

6. Conclusion

In Himachal Pradesh, the SGPC undertakes a vast range of responsibilities. The SGPC is entrusted with vital roles across various sectors. They manage Gurdwara administration, which includes overseeing the management, coordination, exploration, construction, refurbishment, and reconstruction of these significant places of worship. To encourage the pilgrims have a welcoming and comfortable experience, the SGPC also builds and manages housing facilities for Gurdwara staff and provide lodging within the Gurdwaras. Additionally, they supply essential commodities like as groceries, blankets, carpets, and utensils which deliver to the basics needs of Gurdwaras and visitors. The SGPC is also dedicated to preserving and promoting Sikh literature and scriptures, which are published and printed at their own press in Amritsar. Across Himachal Pradesh, the SGPC distributes the teaching materials and resources of the people of Sikh faith for no cost at all to those in need, promoting easy accessibility and affordability of the Sikh faith for everyone, regardless of their financial situation.

The SGPC offers more than pilgrimage services to and from Punjab. It organizes travel to other regions within the state and to furthermore in the country. Sikhs are also facilitated with visits to historical sites in the neighbouring nation of Pakistan. The SGPC collaborates with the central government of Indian and the state government of Himachal Pradesh regarding the visa and other travel needs. To honor the memories of the revered Gurus of Sikh faith, the SGPC organizes state recognized centennial events, and celebrations for major anniversaries. The SGPC also organizes and provide Sikh educational sponsorship and scholarships, while also taking into consideration the other issues faced by the Sikh community, particularly Sikh student. During the unprecedented disasters and other emergencies, the SGPC provides aid of all forms to anyone in need, without giving regard of their religion. This is inclusive of monetary, medical, and other assistance to women, students, and other community members in the disaster state. To advance the Sikh community, the SGPC strategically focuses on the educational

welfare of the community and sponsors Sikh educational advancement programmes like, camps, workshops, seminars, and Darbars. This is clear with the opening facility of the Dashmesh Public School in Una, which bears a noteworthy Sikh population near the Punjab bordering area. The school provides excellent education to its students in conjunction with the religious instruction. The other activities chalked out by SGPC in the state include hosting educational camps, organizing turban-tying competitions, and planning educational trips. The SGPC is considerably active in major rites such as amrit sanchar and in the propagation of teachings (dharam parchar). These activities, therefore, greatly help the SGPC in fulfilling its purposes to allow those attached to it to appreciate and fathom Sikhism on a deeper level. The SGPC through its activities indeed helps the culture and the ethos of Sikhism to survive and flourish in Himachal Pradesh. Various kinds of events and programmes demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding Sikh history. The continual effort of the SGPC helps to maintain traditional Sikh life and further cultivate the cultural scene across the border in Himachal Pradesh.

As an institution changes and develops, the atmosphere around it shifts through time. People's experiences with the organization change as they develop closer bonds with it. Such changes may manifest in greater opportunities for employment in the institute, greater workload for some staff members, greater operational transparency, and an increased focus on adhering to a strict dress code. All these indicate the organization's dynamic change and the changing demands placed on its staff. Such important changes in the organization have further has an impact on the general public. Today there is a greater emphasis within the organization on the advancement and welfare of Sikhs than has ever been prior when it was basically concerned with day-to-day functions. About the largest proportion of the resources are focus to the empowerment and uplift of Sikhs, and it does give a lot of time and effort to the service of the Sikh community.

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**Credit, Caste and Institutional Inclusion:
An Assessment of NABARD-Supported
Interventions for Scheduled Castes in
Rural India, 2021-22 to 2023-24**

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Abstract

Getting access to institutional credit is essential for investment, livelihood development and economic upliftment in rural India. However, access to credit remains socially biased. The ability to approach a bank, satisfy eligibility requirements and secure finance for sustainable livelihoods often depends on land ownership, collateral, occupational status, institutional linkages and caste relations. Using data from the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, supplemented by financial information from NABARD and Government of India publications, this paper examines the participation of Scheduled Castes in credit, development and infrastructure programmes during 2021–2023. A descriptive and comparative analysis distinguishes capital- and asset-intensive interventions from livelihood, skill and collective-action programmes. The findings reveal persistently low Scheduled Caste participation in most capital-intensive schemes, generally below three per cent, while participation in selected developmental programmes ranges from about sixteen to over twenty-five per cent. These patterns are interpreted through the concepts of asset-based exclusion, institutional embeddedness and administrative invisibility. Rather than equating programme participation with developmental impact, the paper argues that aggregate credit expansion alone cannot demonstrate equitable inclusion. It recommends standardized social-group reporting, application-to-disbursement tracking, inclusion-sensitive district credit planning, stronger institutional facilitation and a pathway linking capacity-building with productive credit, asset formation and sustainable enterprise.

Keywords

Scheduled Castes, NABARD, Rural credit, Financial inclusion, Social exclusion, Institutional embeddedness, Rural development.

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Credit, Caste and Institutional Inclusion: An Assessment of NABARD-Supported Interventions for Scheduled Castes in Rural India, 2021-22 to 2023-24

1. Introduction

The expansion of formal banking in rural India is one of the most significant institutional changes in the country's post-independence development experience. The physical outreach of finance has improved significantly with measures like branch expansion, priority sector lending, self-help group and bank linkage, and specialized development finance. However, merely being near a bank does not guarantee access to productive credit. For example, a household may have a bank account but still not be able to secure a good loan, meet the requirements of collateral, draw up a bankable proposal, or bear the financial risk associated with the business. The difference between financial presence and financial access matters greatly in the case of SCs, who are still struggling economically.

Caste in rural India does not simply denote cultural identity. Historically, it has organized labor, settlement and access to resources, among many factors. Even though the state of these issues has changed due to migration, activism, policy arrangements, and even globalization, caste is still linked with class (Deshpande, 2011; Mosse, 2018; Srinivas, 1962). In this sense, banks and other lenders operate in a field where their procedures seem to be similar, with the situation still potentially leading to inequality in their effects depending on the initial wealth and institutional borders of different groups of potential borrowers.

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has acquired a unique position in this context. NABARD is the apex development bank dedicated to agriculture and rural developments in India. It impacts rural credit through its refinance, institutional development, credit planning, infrastructure funds, promotional activities and capacity building initiatives. It is not, however, a direct retail lender in most of its operations. Consequently, an assessment of NABARD and social inclusion must distinguish its own developmental interventions from credit delivered through banks, state governments, cooperatives and other partner institutions.

This paper examines reported patterns of SC participation in selected NABARD-supported interventions from 2021-22 to 2023-24. Its concern is not simply whether funds expanded, but whether the design and delivery of different programme categories created comparable opportunities for historically disadvantaged households. The central argument is that credit inclusion depends on the conditions attached to entry. Schemes built around land, scale and pre-existing project capacity tend to favour already embedded actors, whereas group-based

livelihood and skill programmes can lower initial barriers. The latter, however, produce durable empowerment only when participants are able to move from training and mobilization to adequate productive finance, market access and asset creation.

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

2.1 Caste, Assets and Rural Economic Opportunity

Classical rural sociology showed that caste relations are reproduced through material institutions as much as through status and ritual (Desai, 1979; Srinivas, 1962). In today's agricultural economies, land serves both productive function as well as a clear indicator of credit worthiness. Those who do not own lands or who do not have proper titles on their lands will have problems not only in providing collateral, but also in showing capacity of repayment in classical bank terms. The notion of caste as a system of various levels of inequality discussed by Ambedkar comes into play here, as exclusion takes place not at one point, but acts regarding the dynamic accumulation of education, property, social contacts and self-confidence through generations (Ambedkar, 2014).

Caste and economics still remain interconnected as confirmed by more recent studies. Thorat and Newman (2010) show how so-called free markets still perpetuate discrimination and social practices in favor of certain castes. In a similar vein, Deshpande (2011) warns against the assumption that caste inequality is a thing of the past as it has less and less meaning as the economy grows. Another researcher, Mosse (2018), believes that caste is flexible enough to adopt new economic realities.

2.2 Formal Credit and Unequal Access

Rural banking significance in the process of development is well understood. According to Burgess and Pande (2005), the expansion of rural branches led by the government contributed to poverty reduction, thus demonstrating the potential of public banking for broader distribution. However, aggregate expansion of the institutions does not show who is applying, who got approval, how much was received and whether this amount was enough for the purpose of the investment. Kumar (2013) indicates that the differences in agricultural lending amounts based on caste is the result of processes taking place on both sides: the borrower and the institutions. There could be several factors behind low application level such as lack of knowledge; perceived rejection; poor documentation; or history of difficult relations with the institutions. Later on, loan approval, as well as the amount granted, could depend on the armchair of assets of the borrower, the assessment of risks and discretion of the institution.

The policy framework acknowledges this issue. According to the RBI guidelines, attention should be given to the credit flow to SCs and STs, lending to them should be promoted and associated with social-group reporting in the context of recent advances in the priority sector (Reserve Bank of India, 2016). The National Strategy for Financial Inclusion also emphasizes the necessity of using

meaningful electronic data for ensuring future interventions (Reserve Bank of India, 2019). The existence of gaps, however, moves the analytic task from a simple observation of the presence of policies to a question of implementation quality, measurement, and accountability.

2.3 NABARD, Collective Institutions and Developmental Finance

NABARD's developmental role extends beyond refinance. Its work with self-help groups, producer organizations, watershed institutions, livelihood programmes and rural enterprises can create organizational capacities that conventional loan appraisal often assumes rather than builds. Granovetter's (1985) concept of embeddedness helps explain why these collective arrangements matter. Economic action is situated in social relationships; membership in a credible group or producer institution can transmit information, reduce transaction costs and mediate interaction with formal agencies.

However, inclusion in a training programme and inclusion in productive capital are not the same achievement. Capacity-building may improve skills without overcoming the financing gap required for equipment, working capital, storage, processing or market expansion. A serious assessment must therefore examine whether developmental programmes function as bridges to mainstream finance or remain parallel, low-value spaces for poorer beneficiaries.

2.4 Research Gap

Three gaps motivate this study. First, financial inclusion is frequently measured through account ownership or aggregate credit growth, leaving the distribution of productive credit across social groups insufficiently examined. Second, limited attention has been paid to variation in SC participation between different categories of NABARD-supported interventions. Third, scheme-level administrative evidence is rarely connected to sociological explanations of asset-based exclusion, institutional embeddedness and caste-mediated access. This paper addresses these gaps through a comparative reading of official scheme information. It deliberately treats missing caste-disaggregated data as an institutional finding rather than a neutral absence.

3. Objectives and Research Questions

The study has five objectives: to map NABARD-supported interventions relevant to SC welfare; examine year- and scheme-wise patterns of participation; compare capital-intensive schemes with developmental programmes; identify structural and institutional barriers; and propose an equity-sensitive framework for rural credit planning.

1. What patterns are visible in SC participation across NABARD-supported credit, infrastructure and developmental programmes during 2021-22 to 2023-24?
2. Does SC participation differ between capital-intensive interventions and livelihood-, skill- and collective-action programmes?

3. How far can differences in participation be interpreted through land ownership, collateral, scale, documentation and institutional embeddedness?
4. Does the available administrative information provide an adequate basis for monitoring social inclusion?
5. What reforms can connect developmental participation with productive credit and durable asset formation?

4. Analytical Framework: From Formal Access to Substantive Inclusion

The research considers inclusion as more of a process rather than a singular state. Even if a program has a formal procedure for including citizens, it could still not work for certain households. Effective inclusion can be defined as an access to program for eligible citizens who can benefit from it. The stage of development is vital: the loan only empowers when it is used in productive use as source of income or employment.

Four concepts help explain interpretation. Asset-based exclusion conveys how land and collateral requirements eliminate a large pool of borrowers. Institutional embeddedness denotes households' connections with banks, cooperatives, self-help groups, producer organizations, and extension systems. Occupational stratification signals the continued concentration of disadvantaged households in informal, low-return, or traditionally stigmatized employment. Lastly, administrative visibility relates to whether institutions keep track of social groups' applications, approvals, rejections, amounts, and outcomes.

Table-1: Operational Framework for assessing Substantive Credit Inclusion

Analytical Dimension	Meaning	Observable Indicator
Institutional accessibility	Ability to obtain information and complete procedures	Outreach, assisted applications, documentation support
Eligibility	Capacity to meet entry conditions	Land, collateral, project scale, margin money, credit history
Financial access	Actual receipt of usable finance	Applications, sanctions, disbursement, adequacy of amount
Institutional embeddedness	Connection with mediating organizations	SHG, JLG, FPO, cooperative or extension membership
Developmental conversion	Translation of finance into durable benefit	Income, assets, jobs, enterprise survival, repayment
Administrative visibility	Capacity to monitor equity	Caste-disaggregated application-to-outcome data

Source: Author's analytical framework based on Granovetter (1985), Sen (2000) and Silver (1994).

5. Data Sources and Methodology

5.1 Data Sources

The study uses secondary and administrative evidence. Its principal source is scheme-wise information furnished by NABARD to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes concerning programmes relevant to SC beneficiaries for the period 2021-22 to 2023-24 (NABARD, 2024d; National Commission for Scheduled Castes, 2024). The analysis is supplemented by NABARD annual reports and statistical statements, the All-India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey, RBI reports and regulatory guidance, and documents of the Department of Financial Services (Department of Financial Services, 2025; NABARD, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c; Reserve Bank of India, 2023). The administrative record is used for scholarly analysis; views and interpretations are those of the author.

Since the data was not initially interpreted and processed into the household impact database, the study maintains clear difference between households and individual beneficiaries, between projects and amounts approved, transferred and refinanced. These elements cannot be consolidated without caution. In particular, refinance obtained through the intermediary institution is not regarded as equivalent to a standard retail loan issued to the SC family.

5.2 Method

The research employs a descriptive and comparative approach. The interventions are categorized as follows: (a) infrastructure-based funds, investment funds, and capital-heavy programs; and (b) programs in the area of development, livelihood, capacity-building, and collective action. Wherever the number of beneficiaries is available, the participation rate of the SC is determined by the formula of SC beneficiaries by the total number of beneficiaries multiplied by 100. And whenever financial data is available, the SC financial share is mentioned as a separate comparison. The research compares the participation mode in different forms of programs and gives explanations through the framework used in Table 1. The causal claims are not made as a result of the analysis, as it can only indicate uneven participation and the possible mechanisms of participation.

6. NABARD's Institutional Position in Rural Development

In India's rural credit system, NABARD plays a unique role by having financial, developmental and supervisory responsibilities. As a financier, NABARD offers refinance facilities and manages funds for and provides assistance to investment projects in sectors like agriculture and rural infrastructure, among others. NABARD's developmental functions include supporting the creation of institutions, promoting the idea of self-help groups, financial literacy programs, and encouraging various activities that can lead to enhanced income-earning opportunities. Planning activities can be found in the works of NABARD as seen with the Potential Linked Credit Plans and local banks. (NABARD, 2024a, 2024b).

The aforementioned roles should be recognized separately. In the case of an infrastructure fund, the immediate borrower or the entity implementing the project may be a state authority, bank, cooperative or project company; in this case, the degree of socioeconomic effects may not be clear from the data related to funding. Meanwhile, in the context of programs aimed at improving people's livelihood, the beneficiaries may be defined directly. It has to be mentioned that comparison of percentages across different programs may lead to incorrect conclusions unless the research unit is determined. Therefore, patterns discussed in this study may be seen more as indicators of administrative participation in the process than as strictly comparable measures of household credit incidence.

7. Findings: Uneven Inclusion across Programme Types

7.1 The Central Data Constraint

The most important finding is that there is no regular caste-specific data on key credit flows, including agricultural loans. This makes it impossible to analyze how the scheduled castes access crop loans, short and long-term agricultural loans, and other similar loans. There is more to this than just an absence of data. If it is not possible to gather application, sanction, disbursement, and rejection data by social group, it means that inequalities become difficult to identify in administrative terms. Overall increase in the volume of lending can be characterized as inclusion even when it is unclear from which groups this increase has taken place.

The reporting system created by RBI makes it clear that it is feasible to track lending by social group (Reserve Bank of India, 2016). The task is to develop a unified monitoring system for all the processes through which NABARD helps finance reach the borrowers. A reliable system would be able to identify individual borrowers while separating the credit from NABARD's refinancing.

7.2 Capital-intensive and Infrastructure Interventions

The administrative documents used in this study indicated that several capital-intensive measures, such as agricultural marketing and irrigation projects, food processing, and fisheries funds, had a very small visible participation of scheduled castes (SCs). The highest participation was seen in some RIDF- and FPO-related projects, although the meaning of being a beneficiary differs in these programs. It must be noted, however, that these findings do not mean that infrastructure does not benefit SC communities; rather, they signify that the participation of SCs or financial impact seemed limited.

The architecture of any programme provides an explanation of the pattern. Large projects require scale, technical know-how, land or organizational ability, and risk management over time. SC households are far less likely to take these routes if they are landless, marginally landholding, or engaged in insecure livelihood. Therefore, ostensibly caste-neutral project criteria could generate social inequalities in participation since the start of the projects themselves would be unequal.

7.3 Developmental and Promotional programmes

Different case studies illustrate the difference between the pattern of the two types of livelihood and enterprise development programmes and watershed movement initiatives, as well as off-farm producer associations. News confirms that the SC's involvement in the indicated country ranges from about sixteen to over twenty-five per cent. This style of action diminishes entry barriers through training, building groups, doing local mobilization, and institutional support. This form of intervention also creates human and social capital before expecting beneficiaries to self-manage their finances.

This relative success is significant but needs to be interpreted cautiously. Having a large share of beneficiaries in a training program with low financial input does not equal having the same share of investment funding. Inclusion should be measured by reach, volume, adequacy and stability of financial support. If these factors aren't taken into account, it is possible for marginalized segments of the population to be adequately represented in terms of capacity building as well as underrepresented in terms of funding instruments creating productive assets.

Table-2: Comparative Pattern emerging from the Administrative Evidence

Programme category	Reported SC participation pattern	Likely institutional explanation	Interpretive caution
Capital-intensive infrastructure and investment	Generally low; often below 3% in the reported records	Land, scale, technical preparation, margin and risk-bearing requirements	Project benefits and direct beneficiary credit are not always comparable
RIDF- and FPO-related interventions	Relatively better than several large investment funds	Public investment or collective institutional route	Final social incidence requires clearer beneficiary tracing
Livelihood, skill and promotional programmes	Approximately 16% to over 25% in selected programmes	Lower entry barriers, group participation and handholding	Participation does not by itself prove income or asset outcomes

Source: Author's analysis of NABARD information furnished to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. Percentages are reported ranges; scheme-level denominators should accompany any subsequent numerical table.

8. Discussion: Credit is Not Socially Neutral

8.1 Asset-based Exclusion

The divergence between programme categories supports a basic proposition of rural sociology: institutions encounter social groups at unequal starting points. Landlessness affects more than household income. It restricts collateral, reduces the scale at which an enterprise can be imagined and weakens the evidence a borrower

can present to a risk-averse lender. Occupational concentration in casual labour further produces irregular cash flows that do not fit standard repayment models. The resulting exclusion can occur without an explicitly discriminatory rule.

This does not eliminate the possibility of institutional bias. It clarifies that observed disparities may combine unequal endowments, application behaviour, procedural friction and discretionary decision-making. An adequate monitoring system must therefore capture the entire pathway from awareness and application to sanction, amount, utilization and repayment.

8.2 Institutional Embeddedness and Collective Action

The comparatively wider SC presence in group- and livelihood-oriented programmes illustrates the value of institutional mediation. SHGs, JLGs, FPOs, cooperatives and community organizations can help potential borrowers interpret schemes, assemble documents, build a transaction history and negotiate with formal institutions. They also reduce the isolation of first-generation entrepreneurs. In Granovetter's (1985) terms, they embed economic action in relationships that make information and trust available.

Yet collective participation should not become a ceiling. Poorer households should not be confined to micro-scale activities while larger individual and corporate actors access investment finance. The policy objective should be graduation: a credible route from mobilization and skill development to working capital, technology, processing, storage and market expansion.

8.3 Administrative Invisibility and Accountability

The inability to disaggregate major credit flows limits both diagnosis and correction. A financial institution cannot know whether a neutral-looking scheme is substantively inclusive if it does not record who applies, who withdraws, who is rejected, who is sanctioned a smaller amount and who receives the funds on time. Missing data thus become part of the mechanism through which inequality is normalized.

The correct answer is not merely a target identification. It's a social inclusion performance measurement system that tracks scheme, location, gender, caste, purpose of loan, degree of application success, amount sanctioned, and repayment status. Such data should be used for learning purposes and not just for compliance. It can tell whether low participation stems from outreach, eligibility issues, appraisal issues, disbursement problems, or post-disbursement problems.

8.4 Participation is not Outcome

A key distinction made in the paper is between participation and developmental change. The count of beneficiaries gives an indication of reach but gives no indication of changes in income, assets and mobility. A robust outcome framework would measure enterprise survival, employment created, loan repayment performance, productive assets created and informal borrowing. This

distinction also helps explain the new title of the paper. Evidence shows patterns of access and inclusion by institutions but does not substantiate any causal claims about development. Future work at the beneficiary level can build on the analysis of participation to assess impact.

9. Policy Framework for Equity-Sensitive Rural Credit

9.1 Standardize Social Inclusion Data

NABARD and its partner organizations should create a unified data dictionary that includes received applications, approved applications, rejections, approved amounts, amounts disbursed, outstanding amounts, and repayment information. The number of beneficiaries and financial shares should be published separately. The reasons for rejection should have a standardized coding system while at the same time privacy measures should be in place to protect the identity of individual borrowers.

9.2 Integrate Inclusion into District Credit Planning

Possible Linked Credit Plans and district credit plans should set measurable inclusion indicators based on the demographic, occupational and asset profiles of SC households. Planning should focus on local constraints such as landlessness in one district or weak producer organization coverage in another instead of imposing a uniform national remedy.

9.3 Create a Credit Progression Pathway

The participants who have finished their training for businesses and skills need to receive assistance so that they can create their projects, raise the needed capital for the starting costs, and get funding afterwards. This may imply not only the training but also a link to the incubators, loans, support from technological and insurance firms, etc.

9.4 Strengthen Facilitation and Grievance Review

Dedicated facilitating arrangements in SC concentrated districts will help with processes, documentation and project formulation. Clear denials and timely appraisal should be provided by banks as far as the reasons for rejection are concerned. Analysis of rejection trends can help in finding out genuine viability issues as compared to avoidable procedural hurdles or irregular assessments.

9.5 Measure Quality, not only Reach

An inclusion audit should assess the general amount received for each beneficiary, timing, sufficiency, recycled credit, survivability of business ventures and asset formation. It must also provide gender-wise, region-wise and livelihood-wise disaggregation of results. Finally, a programme that has a large number of beneficiaries, but low funding should not be assessed similarly to a project providing sustainability in economic progress.

Table-3: Proposed Social Inclusion Monitoring Matrix

Stage	Core indicator	Equity question
Outreach	Eligible persons contacted; assisted applications	Are excluded groups receiving usable information?
Application	Applications by social group and gender	Who applies, and where do potential applicants drop out?
Decision	Sanction and rejection rates; reasons	Are similar applications treated consistently?
Disbursement	Amount, timeliness and adequacy	Does sanctioned finance reach the borrower in usable form?
Utilization	Asset or working-capital use	Can the borrower deploy credit productively?
Outcome	Income, jobs, survival, repayment, informal debt	Does participation generate durable economic improvement?

Source: Author's proposed monitoring framework.

10. Limitations and Agenda for Further Research

The limitations of this study lie in the nature of its administrative data. The information on different castes is not equally available in all the major sources of refinance and credit. The records do not always have information on the number of applications approved, and loans disbursed and there is no uniformity among the different schemes with regard to the amount loaned. There is also no household-level evidence on the income, formation of assets, repayment of loans, and the survival of enterprises. Therefore, the estimated shares cited in this study need to be treated as measures of participation and not of impact.

Next, the research should integrate administrative monitoring with beneficiary surveys and comparative district case studies. Interviews with applicants, bankers, NABARD officials, SHGs, and producer societies would highlight points of procedural bottlenecks. A panel design that studies the same beneficiaries before and after the intervention would also allow real assessment of development conversion. State, gender, and sub-group approach would also bring out inequalities unnoticeable in the aggregated SC category.

11. Conclusion

Being in a position to bring together finance, planning, and rural institution building gives NABARD the ability to shape financial inclusion in India. However, the analysis in this paper shows that there are flaws in this internal structure. The SC participation seems to be wider in terms of specific employment, training, and participatory projects as opposed to the well-defined, visible participation in many asset- or capital-heavy projects. This trend reflects the unequal distribution of lands, security, access to the market, and information available in rural areas.

The lesson that can be learned from the policy is that development programs should not supplant conventional credit. Rather, development programmes should

function as steps towards conventional credit. Training programs, in the absence of subsequent financial support, could enhance skills, but not change the ownership of resources. Increasing the availability of general refinancing, without tracing its social implications, could serve to enhance rural credit while perpetuating existing inequalities. Inclusive development entails intentional linking of capabilities with credit, markets, and resources.

Hence, the transition from formal neutrality to material equality is obligatory. By implications, this necessitates the evaluation of credit seeking and loaning, the basis for refusal and total disbursements, and transformations and beneficiaries' presence as well. Also, it requires comprehension that accreditation boundaries may have an uneven outcome, as households come to institutions with distinctive social and economic statuses.

The main conclusion is simple: the amount of credit that flows to the rural economy is just one indicator of financial inclusion. It is equally important, however, to consider who has access to the financial system, who gets sufficient productive finance, through which institutions and with what long-term implications. By incorporating these questions into its data, strategies and programming NABARD can move from increasing rural finance to reforming the distribution of resources.?

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Harnessing the Potential of ‘Okra Bast Fiber’ for Technical Textile Applications

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Abstract

Okra (Abelmoschus esculentus) is an important agricultural crop whose stem and bast residues represent a promising source of lignocellulosic fiber. In recent years, considerable attention has been directed toward the utilization of okra bast fiber (OBF) as a sustainable reinforcement and textile fiber because of its cellulose-rich composition, satisfactory mechanical properties, relatively low density and potential for value addition to agricultural waste. This review summarizes reported studies on the chemical composition, physical characteristics, mechanical performance, thermal stability, surface morphology, crystallinity and chemical modification of okra bast fiber. Fiber properties are influenced by plant maturity, extraction and retting methods, as well as chemical treatments such as scouring, bleaching and alkalization. Raw okra fibers have been reported to exhibit good tensile strength and colour fastness, while chemical treatments can modify surface morphology, cellulose content, diameter, tensile properties and thermal behaviour. Studies on hybrid composites have further indicated that okra fiber can contribute positively to tensile, flexural and impact performance. Overall, the paper indicates that okra bast fiber has considerable potential for textile, nonwoven, composite and other sustainable material applications.

Keywords

Okra bast fiber, Crystallinity, Composite, Thermal Stability and Surface modification.

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Harnessing the Potential of ‘Okra Bast Fiber’ for Technical Textile Applications

1. Introduction

The increasing demand for renewable and environmentally sustainable materials has encouraged research into natural fibers obtained from agricultural crops and their residues. Natural lignocellulosic fibers are attractive because they are renewable, biodegradable and comparatively lightweight, while also possessing useful mechanical and functional characteristics (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). Among the various agricultural fibers, okra bast fiber (OBF), obtained from the stem of *Abelmoschus esculentus*, has emerged as a potential material for textile and composite applications.

Okra is widely cultivated as a vegetable crop, and its stem remains largely underutilized after harvesting. The bast portion of the stem contains fibrous bundles that can be extracted and processed for different end uses. The properties of OBF are primarily associated with its lignocellulosic constituents, particularly cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin. The proportion of these constituents can vary depending on plant maturity, extraction technique, retting conditions and subsequent chemical treatment (Kolte and Shivankar, 2024).

Several researchers have investigated the chemical composition and performance of okra fiber. Alam and Khan (2007) reported a high -cellulose content in OBF and demonstrated that the fiber possesses useful colour fastness and tensile characteristics. Subsequent studies have examined the influence of harvesting age, retting method, chemical treatment and fiber location within the plant on its physical and mechanical properties (Stawski *et al.*, 2020; Dayan *et al.*, 2020). More recent investigations have also focused on the thermal, crystalline and morphological characteristics of the fiber and its application as reinforcement in polymer composites (Kolte and Shivankar, 2024).

The objective of this review is to consolidate the available findings concerning the physicochemical, mechanical, thermal and morphological characteristics of okra bast fiber and to discuss the influence of processing and chemical treatments on its performance.

2. Chemical Composition of Okra Bast Fiber

The chemical composition of a natural fiber plays a major role in determining its mechanical strength, moisture absorption, thermal stability, dyeability and chemical reactivity. Cellulose provides the principal structural framework and contributes significantly to fiber strength, whereas hemicellulose, lignin and pectic substances influence flexibility, surface characteristics and resistance to environmental conditions.

Alam and Khan (2007) investigated the physicochemical composition of okra bast fiber and reported 67.5% α -cellulose, 15.4% hemicellulose, 7.1% lignin, 3.4% pectic matter, 3.9% fatty and waxy matter and 2.7% aqueous extract. The comparatively high α -cellulose content indicates the suitability of OBF for applications where cellulose-based mechanical and textile characteristics are desirable. The researchers further associated the high cellulose content and molecular weight of OBF with favourable dyeability, tensile strength and colour fastness.

A similar cellulose-rich composition was reported by Kolte and Shivankar (2024), who stated that okra fiber principally contains approximately 60-70% cellulose and 15-20% hemicellulose, together with pectin, lignin, fats, waxes and other water-soluble compounds. Although the exact chemical composition varies among studies, the results consistently demonstrate that cellulose constitutes the major component of OBF.

Vasugi *et al.* (2019) also demonstrated that processing can substantially alter the chemical composition of okra fiber. The α -cellulose content of untreated fiber was reported to be 65.7%, increasing to 88.8% after scouring and bleaching. This increase can be attributed to the removal of non-cellulosic constituents during processing. Such removal is important because hemicellulose, lignin, pectin, waxes and other surface impurities can interfere with fiber-matrix bonding and affect dyeing, wettability and surface uniformity. Thus, it can be said that OBF is a cellulose-rich natural fiber whose properties can be significantly modified through appropriate purification and chemical treatments.

3. Physical and Mechanical Properties

The mechanical performance of natural fibers is influenced by their cellulose content, degree of crystallinity, fiber diameter, maturity, extraction method and processing conditions. Okra fiber has demonstrated useful tensile characteristics, although considerable variation has been observed depending on the age and location of the fiber within the plant.

Dayan *et al.* (2020) investigated the physio-mechanical properties of okra fiber obtained at different harvesting ages. Four-month-old okra fiber exhibited a strength of 30.78 g/tex and a fineness of 40.50 μ m, whereas six-month-old fiber showed a higher strength of 31.98 g/tex but greater fineness value of 56.12 μ m. The whiteness or colour values were reported as 48.40% and 43.56% for four- and six-month-old fibers, respectively. These findings demonstrate that harvesting age can influence the physical and mechanical characteristics of OBF. The improvement in strength at greater maturity may be related to changes in the development and organization of the fiber's structural components.

Stawski *et al.* (2020) examined okra fibers obtained from different parts of the plant using water and dew retting methods. Fibers collected from the upper part of the plant showed higher breaking strength and lower linear density. Furthermore, water-retted fibers demonstrated higher breaking strength and elongation at break,

together with lower linear density, compared with fibers obtained through dew retting. These results demonstrate that both fiber position and retting technique can have a significant influence on the resulting fiber quality. And in a study conducted by Hossen *et al.* (2021), reported that the fiber exhibited rigid breaking characteristics. The researchers associated this behaviour with the presence of lignin on the fiber surface. The mechanical response of OBF is therefore not governed solely by cellulose content but is also affected by the presence and distribution of non-cellulosic constituents.

4. Structural, Morphological, Chemical and Thermal Characteristics

4.1 Surface Morphology

Surface morphology is an important factor in determining the performance of natural fibers, particularly when they are used as reinforcement in polymer composites. A rough and irregular surface can provide mechanical interlocking with a polymer matrix, whereas excessive surface impurities can reduce effective interfacial bonding.

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) observations reported by Hossen *et al.* (2021) showed that the longitudinal surface of okra fiber consisted of overlapping cells, while the cross-sectional view displayed an uneven polygonal structure. These morphological characteristics reflect the natural organization of the fiber bundles and contribute to the physical behaviour of OBF. Vasugi *et al.* (2019) also observed that untreated okra fiber had a hairy and relatively rough surface. Following scouring and bleaching, the surface became considerably more uniform. The removal of surface impurities and non-cellulosic materials through chemical processing therefore produced a cleaner and more homogeneous fiber surface. The morphological changes produced by chemical treatments are particularly relevant for composite applications because modification of the fiber surface can improve interaction between the hydrophilic natural fiber and a relatively hydrophobic polymer matrix.

4.2 Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy and Functional Groups

Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) is commonly employed to identify the functional groups present in lignocellulosic fibers and to evaluate chemical changes resulting from processing. Dayan *et al* (2020) used FTIR analysis to characterize okra fiber obtained at different harvesting ages and confirmed the presence of characteristic functional groups associated with its lignocellulosic structure.

The presence of cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin-related functional groups contributes to the characteristic chemical behaviour of OBF. Changes in the intensity or presence of specific absorption bands after chemical treatment can indicate the removal or modification of non-cellulosic components. Consequently,

FTIR analysis provides useful evidence for evaluating the effectiveness of scouring, bleaching and other surface modification processes.

4.3 Thermal Properties

Thermal stability is a critical property when natural fibers are intended for composite processing or applications involving elevated temperatures. Because lignocellulosic fibers contain different constituents that degrade at different temperatures, thermal analysis is necessary to establish their processing limitations.

Dayan *et al.* (2020) employed thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) to study okra fibers of different ages. Their findings showed that the six-month-old fiber exhibited better thermal stability than the four-month-old fiber. The difference was attributed to changes associated with fiber maturation.

Kolte and Shivankar (2024) reported that gradual degradation of okra fiber became evident after approximately 240°C. Their results indicate that OBF can withstand moderate processing temperatures but may experience significant thermal degradation at higher temperatures. Therefore, when OBF is incorporated into thermoplastic or thermosetting composites, processing conditions should be selected carefully to minimize thermal damage to the natural reinforcement.

The available thermal studies suggest that maturity and chemical composition affect the thermal behaviour of OBF, while the onset of degradation must be considered when selecting suitable matrices and processing temperatures.

4.4 Crystallinity and X-Ray Diffraction Analysis

The crystalline structure of cellulose is closely related to the stiffness, strength, moisture absorption and chemical reactivity of natural fibers. X-ray diffraction (XRD) is therefore an important analytical technique for evaluating the crystalline and amorphous regions of lignocellulosic fibers.

Hossen *et al* (2021) reported that the basic crystal structure of okra fiber was triclinic. Kolte and Shivankar (2024) further reported approximately 74.2% crystalline and 25.8% amorphous regions in okra fiber. The relatively high crystalline fraction indicates a substantial degree of structural organization within the cellulose component.

According to Kolte and Shivankar (2024), the high crystalline fraction influences the water absorption capacity, elongation and chemical reactivity of the fiber. Higher crystallinity generally indicates a more ordered cellulose structure, which can contribute to mechanical strength but may also influence moisture penetration and accessibility of reactive chemical groups.

5. Effect of Alkali Treatment

Chemical modification is frequently used to improve the performance of natural fibers by removing non-cellulosic constituents and altering their surface characteristics. Alkali treatment, particularly sodium hydroxide (NaOH), is one of

the most widely studied treatments because it can remove portions of hemicellulose, lignin, waxes and other surface impurities.

Duman *et al.* (2017) investigated okra stem waste treated with 10% NaOH at 60°C for treatment durations of 10, 20, 30 and 40 minutes. The alkali treatment decreased both fiber weight and diameter while increasing tensile strength and elongation. This indicates that NaOH treatment altered the fiber structure by removing non-cellulosic materials and modifying the fiber surface. The researchers also produced nonwoven materials from treated and untreated okra fibers and evaluated their thermal conductivity. Among the NaOH-treated nonwoven samples, the fiber treated for 10 minutes exhibited the best heat-transfer coefficient. However, the study reported no clear correlation between treatment duration and heat-transfer coefficient. This suggests that thermal performance is affected by several interacting structural factors rather than treatment duration alone.

Khan *et al.* (2019) also evaluated chemical treatments of okra bast and corn husk fibers, including alkalization, bleaching, maleic anhydride and vinyl acetate treatments. Their results showed that alkaline treatment decreased tensile stiffness and tenacity while increasing elongation. Both okra bast and corn husk fibers exhibited their highest mechanical strength following vinyl acetate treatment and bleaching. The authors further concluded that corn husk fiber was more susceptible to chemical treatment than okra bast fiber.

These findings demonstrate that chemical treatment should be carefully optimized because excessive removal or modification of structural components may improve some properties while reducing others.

6. Effect of Scouring and Bleaching on Colour, Fastness and Dyeability

Scouring and bleaching are important pretreatment processes for improving the appearance, cleanliness and dyeing performance of natural fibers. In okra bast fiber (OBF), these treatments remove surface impurities and non-cellulosic constituents such as waxes, pectins, hemicellulose and portions of lignin, thereby modifying the surface characteristics and chemical composition of the fiber. Vasugi *et al.* (2019) reported that untreated okra fibers had a dull appearance, whereas scouring and bleaching considerably improved their brightness. The brightness of the fiber increased by approximately 92% after scouring and by 20% after bleaching. The α -cellulose content also increased from 65.7% in the raw fiber to 88.8% after scouring and bleaching, indicating the effective removal of non-cellulosic components during pretreatment. SEM observations further showed that the untreated fiber had a hairy and rough surface, while the scoured and bleached fibers exhibited a cleaner and more uniform surface.

The removal of surface impurities during scouring and bleaching can also influence the dyeability of OBF. A cleaner and more hydrophilic fiber surface facilitates the penetration and interaction of dyes with the cellulose-rich structure of

the fiber. The relatively high α -cellulose content of OBF provides abundant hydroxyl groups that can participate in interactions with suitable textile dyes. Alam and Khan (2007) reported that okra bast fiber possessed good dyeability, which was associated with its high α -cellulose content and molecular weight. Thus, removal of non-cellulosic substances during pretreatment can improve the accessibility of the cellulose structure and may contribute to more uniform dye uptake.

However, improvement in brightness and dyeability does not necessarily result in improved colour fastness. Alam and Khan (2007) investigated the colour fastness of bleached and unbleached OBF under sunlight exposure and found that the raw, unbleached fiber exhibited higher colour fastness than the bleached fiber. This suggests that bleaching may modify the chemical structure or surface characteristics of the fiber in a manner that affects the retention of colour during exposure to light. Therefore, pretreatment conditions should be carefully optimized to achieve a suitable balance between brightness, cleanliness, dyeability and colour fastness.

The combined findings indicate that scouring and bleaching can substantially improve the aesthetic and chemical characteristics of OBF by increasing brightness, removing surface impurities and increasing the relative cellulose content. At the same time, the treatments can alter the dyeing and colour-fastness behaviour of the fiber.

7. Application of Okra Fiber in Technical Textiles

OBF has considerable potential as a reinforcement in polymer composites, widely used technical textile now-a-days. The use of okra bast fiber as reinforcement in polymer composites has received increasing attention because of its renewable origin, low density and cellulose-rich structure. And also, natural-fiber-reinforced polymer composites offer an alternative to conventional synthetic-fiber composites because agricultural residues can be converted into value-added engineering materials.

Rosa *et al.* (2010) investigated the morphological, thermal and mechanical characteristics of okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) fibers and assessed their potential as reinforcement in polymer composites. Their study demonstrated that okra fibers possess characteristics suitable for use as a natural reinforcement, while also highlighting the importance of fiber morphology and thermal behaviour in determining composite performance.

Similarly, Potluri *et al.* (2017) investigated the mechanical properties of okra-fiber-based green composites and hybrid laminates. The researchers fabricated okra-fiber-reinforced epoxy composites and evaluated their mechanical behaviour. The study demonstrated the feasibility of incorporating okra fiber into a polymer matrix to produce green composite materials. The mechanical performance of the resulting composites was influenced by fiber content, fiber arrangement and interaction between the fiber and epoxy matrix. The study therefore established the potential of okra fiber as a renewable reinforcement for polymer composite applications.

Rahman *et al.* (2018) investigated the fabrication, mechanical characteristics and interfacial properties of okra-fiber-reinforced polypropylene composites. In their work, polypropylene was used as the polymer matrix and the okra fiber content was varied from 25 to 65% of the total composite weight. The investigation focused on the effect of fiber loading on the mechanical behaviour and fiber-matrix interfacial characteristics. The study is particularly important because polypropylene is a widely used thermoplastic matrix, demonstrating that okra fiber is not limited to thermosetting resin systems and can also be considered for thermoplastic composite applications.

The interface between the natural fiber and polymer matrix is a critical factor controlling the performance of OBF-reinforced composites. Because okra fiber contains hydrophilic cellulose and other polar constituents, its compatibility with relatively hydrophobic polymer matrices can be limited. Consequently, fiber surface treatment and appropriate processing are important for improving interfacial adhesion. Removal of waxes, pectin, hemicellulose and other surface impurities can increase the accessibility of cellulose and modify the fiber surface, potentially improving mechanical load transfer between the fiber and polymer matrix. This is particularly relevant for okra/polypropylene and okra/epoxy composites, where the quality of the fiber-matrix interface can strongly influence tensile and flexural behaviour (Rahman *et al.*, 2018; Potluri *et al.*, 2017).

Hybridization provides another approach for improving the performance of okra-fiber composites. Kumar *et al.* (2021) developed okra/sisal/polyester hybrid composites using different okra-to-sisal fiber ratios. The results showed that the hybrid composites possessed useful impact and flexural properties, while increasing the proportion of okra fiber improved flexural performance. The study also reported an increase in tensile and impact strength with increasing fiber weight fraction. These findings indicate that combining okra with another natural fiber can provide a means of balancing the mechanical properties of the resulting composite and broadening the potential applications of OBF-based materials.

More recently, Raja *et al.* (2026) characterized *Abelmoschus esculentus* plant-waste fiber for sustainable composite and biomedical applications. The study examined the physicochemical, structural and functional characteristics of okra plant waste and highlighted its potential as a sustainable fiber source. The research further supports the utilization of okra agricultural residues in value-added materials rather than treating the stem as waste. The authors emphasized the relevance of the fiber for sustainable composite development, demonstrating the continuing interest in okra-derived lignocellulosic materials for advanced applications.

8. Conclusion

Okra bast fiber is a promising lignocellulosic material with potential applications in textiles, nonwovens, thermal materials and polymer composites.

The literature demonstrates that OBF is characterized by a relatively high -cellulose content, together with hemicellulose, lignin, pectin, waxes and water-soluble components. Its mechanical properties are influenced by fiber maturity, plant location, retting technique and chemical treatment.

Raw OBF has demonstrated good tensile strength and colour fastness, while scouring and bleaching can increase brightness, cellulose content and surface uniformity. Alkali treatment can reduce fiber diameter and alter tensile behaviour, whereas other chemical modifications can improve mechanical performance depending on treatment conditions. Thermal and XRD studies further indicate that fiber maturity and crystallinity influence thermal stability and structural behaviour.

The successful incorporation of okra fiber into okra/sisal/polyester hybrid composites demonstrates its potential as a renewable reinforcement material. Overall, the current study establishes OBF as a valuable agricultural residue that can be converted into functional materials. Future work should focus on standardized extraction and treatment methods, environmentally sustainable processing, long-term durability and optimization of OBF for specific industrial and textile applications.

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Mughal Monuments in Rajasthan: Revisiting Syed Miyan's Tomb at Ajmer

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Abstract

This article revisits the historical and architectural significance of Syed Miyan's Tomb at Ajmer, situating the monument within the wider political, administrative, and social history of Mughal Rajasthan. Ajmer occupied a strategically important position in the Mughal Empire, functioning as a Subah headquarters and as a significant centre of imperial authority from the reign of Akbar onwards. The article particularly examines the appointment of Syed Abdullah Khan Barha, popularly known as Syed Miyan, as Governor of Ajmer during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. The study further examines the historical background of the Barha Syeds, their emergence in the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab, and their growing prominence within the Mughal imperial establishment. Special attention is given to the Arabic stone inscription on the entrance of Syed Miyan's tomb, which records the date of its construction as 1127 Hijri (1705 CE). The monument is therefore examined not merely as a funerary structure but as an important historical source for understanding the political influence, social mobility, and regional presence of the Barha Syed family. The article also traces the subsequent rise of Syed Miyan's sons, particularly Syed Abdullah Khan Barha and Syed Husain Ali Khan Barha, who emerged as the celebrated "King-makers" in the early eighteenth-century Mughal polity. By bringing together architectural evidence, epigraphic material, Mughal administrative history, and the history of the Barha Syeds, the article seeks to foreground Syed Miyan's Tomb as a significant yet comparatively understudied monument of Mughal Rajasthan.

Keywords

Syed Miyan's tomb, Ajmer, Mughal Rajasthan, Barha Syeds, Syed Abdullah Khan Barha, Aurangzeb, Mughal administration, Mughal monuments, Epigraphy, Arabic inscription, 1705 CE, Mughal political history.

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Mughal Monuments in Rajasthan: Revisiting Syed Miyan's Tomb at Ajmer

Rajasthan occupies an important place in the history of the Mughal India and Ajmer served as a strategically significant centre of imperial administration and political authority from the reign of Akbar onwards. Its monuments therefore provide valuable material evidence for understanding the political, social, and cultural history of Mughal rule in the region. Among these, the Tomb of Syed Miyan at Ajmer merits particular attention, not only for its architectural features but also for its association with Syed Abdullah Khan Barha (Syed Miyan), an influential Mughal noble and Governor of Ajmer during the reign of Aurangzeb. The tomb, bearing an Arabic inscription dated 1127 *Hijri* (1705 CE), offers an important epigraphic and historical source for examining the presence and influence of the Barha Syeds in the Mughal establishment. Its study also provides an opportunity to connect the monument with the subsequent political prominence of Syed Miyan's descendants and, more broadly, to explore the relationship between monuments, imperial administration, and social mobility in Mughal Rajasthan. In this context, revisiting Syed Miyan's Tomb contributes to bringing an important yet comparatively understudied monument into the wider historical narrative of Mughal Ajmer.

What Mr. J.D. La Touche, an officer of the Bengal Civil services mentions about Ajmer and Rajasthan (Rajputana) is worth looking at¹:

“In the time of Akbar, Ajmer gave its name to a *Subah*, which included the whole of Rajputana. The district of Ajmer was an appanage of the royal residence, which was temporarily fixed there in this and subsequent reigns, both as a pleasant retreat and in order to maintain the authority of the Empire among the surrounding Chiefs.”

He further mentions²:

“Akbar made a pilgrimage to the tomb of the saint Khwaja Mueiyyin-ud-din Chisti and built a fortified palace just outside the city. Jehangir and Shahjahan both spent much time at the ‘Dar-ul-khair’; and it was at Ajmer that Jehangir received Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador of James I, who reached the city on the 23rd December 1615.”

Mentioning about Aurangzeb's victory on Crown Prince Dara Shikoh, he records³:

“It was at Ajmer that in A.D. 1659 Aurangzeb crushed the army of the unfortunate Dara, weakened as it was by the defection of Jaswant Singh of Marwar, and forced his brother into the flight, which was destined to terminate only by his imprisonment and death. The celebrated traveller Burnier met and accompanied Dara for three days during his flight, and has given a graphic description of the miseries and privations of the march.”

Ajmer was too important a *Subah* head-quarters right from Akbar to Muhammad Shah '*Rangila*'. Emperor Aurangzeb had to gain the royal throne here in 1659. Twenty years later in 1679, he was almost to lose it to the rebel Prince Akbar, his son. Regarding that episode, Mr. Touche rightly remarks:

“During the war with Mewar and Marwar, which was brought about by the bigotry of Aurangzeb, Ajmer was the head-quarters of that Emperor, who nearly lost his throne here in 1679 by the combination of Prince Akbar with the enemy.”

Throwing light on the Aurangzeb-Prince Akbar episode occurred in Ajmer and Rajasthan in 1679, Professor Jadunath Sarkar, the great historian of the last century, writes⁴:

“Sultan Muhammad Akbar, the fourth son of Aurangzib, was only 23 years of age at that time.....Then Akbar threw the mask. Four theologians in his pay issued a decree under seals, declaring that Aurangzib had forfeited the throne by his violation of the Islamic Canon Law. Akbar crowned himself Emperor (1 January), and created Tahawwur Khan his Premier Noble.....The Emperor's situation at Ajmer was critical.”

The *Subah* of Ajmer was considered in such a high sensitive position that the Mughal Emperors used to appoint the Princes there as the governor. No member out of royal family enjoyed that prestigious post. But Emperor Aurangzeb appointed one Syed Abdullah Khan Barha as the Governor of that prestigious province. The Syed was popular among all and was most often called as 'Syed Miyan'. The word 'Barha' in his name shew that he belonged to a Syed clan named as 'Barha'. Syed Miyan died at Ajmer during the Imperial service and so he was burried there at Ajmer. His sons built his tomb in 1127 Hijri corresponding to 1705 A.D. The archaeological evidence to this effect is the Stone- Inscription settled upon the floral design above the arch of the Entrance Gate. It is in the Arabic that reads:

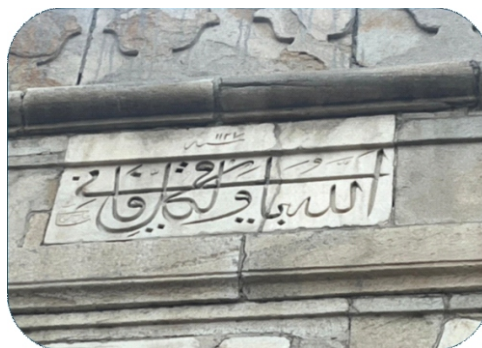
“Allahu Baaqi Vali Kulli Faani”.

This almost wholly matches with a verse of the Holy Book of the Islam.that says:

“Allahu Baaqi Min Kulli Faani.”

Simply it means that nothing in the world but God only is immortal.

Stone Inscription (in the Arabic) on the top of the Entrance Gate



As regards the **calculation of the Date of Construction** (1705 C.E.), this Stone Inscription in Arabic gives the date of its erection and that is inscribed on the top line (in centre). And this is 1127 *Hijri*.

In 2026 C.E., it is 1148 *Hijri*. So the difference of the years comes:

$$1448 - 1127 = 321 \text{ years.}$$

Thus, the date of this Mughal Monument at Ajmer can be fixed 321 ago.

So, the year in Common Era (C.E.) = 2026 - 321 = 1705 C.E.

This was during the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Later on, during the Later Mughals, his sons achieved the highest positions in the Imperial services and had become the King-makers.

There seems politically a very powerful family of the Syeds during the Greater Mughals residing in the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab region presently covered by the western part of Uttar Pradesh. The clan is known as the Barha Syeds⁵ which is named after a cluster of 12 (twelve) villages, the number being termed as 'Barha', the Hindi word to denote the number of twelve. Though there stand many a versions to explain the word 'Barah/Barha', but this seems the more appropriate.

Dealing with the 'Musalman Saiyids' in the 'Chapter III The People' there in the Gazetteer of the district of Muzaffarnagar, what Mr. H. R. Nevill records is worth-seeing⁶:

"Of the Musalman population in the district the most important are the Saiyids, although in the point of numbers they are greatly outclassed by many others. They numbered in all 13,638 persons, and belong mainly to the Zaidi and Hussaini sub-divisions."

The total of some more than thirteen thousand and a half, the Syeds had a great importance in the eyes of European officers during those days some more than 100 years ago. The fact being witnessed shows in a particular statement preserved in one line that follows⁷:

"The history of the Saiyids of Muzaffarnagar is in great part the history of the district, and a detailed account of the rise and fall of the great Saiyid families will be given later".

As far as 19th century C.E. is concerned, the term "Zaidi-subdivision"⁸ of the Syeds is actually a non-historical term used in the gazetteer. In fact, historically, it is the Barha Syed subdivision. Going back in history, again, this Barha Syed term seems too new a term. It came into existence during the very 16th century. Prior to that there existed no term as Barha Syeds at all. The stock was identified as the Punjabi Syeds⁹. Few scholars equate the Punjabi Syeds as the Sindhi Syeds¹⁰ for the same stock that itself claims to be Syeds. Their claim to be a Syed was also not beyond doubt even up to the 16th century¹¹. More historically, two of the Mughal Emperors raised doubts for their claim to be Pure Syeds. Emperor Akbar and his son and successor Emperor Jahangir were of the same opinion¹², though both of

them were fond of the traditional customary valour the brave Barha Syed stock had use to show in battlefields¹³.

It is also an opinion about their Indian origin that those are originally Brahmins of Sindh¹⁴. Whether the Sindhi Brahmins or the Punjabi Syeds or anything else, historically the Barha Syeds were considered not of the Arab origin at all and the case was same up to the reigns of Emperor Akbar and Jahangir.

The undoubtful lineage as their Muslim ancestor seems unbreakable from one Daud¹⁵ who had 3 more brothers. The names of the all four brothers were - Syeds Daud, Abul Fazl, Abul Fazail and Nazmuddin Husain¹⁶. From Punjab, the division of the family took place. One branch migrated to Bilgram and the other to Marahra. Their closely relation with the Khairabad¹⁷ and Fatehpur Haswa¹⁸ branches has been always claimed and accepted. All of these branches had their origin in the Punjabi Syeds¹⁹.

The fifteenth century seems a blessing to the Punjabi Syeds because of the reign of the Syed dynasty²⁰ over the Delhi sultanate. It ruled from 1414 to 1451 C.E. During that rule, the Punjabi Syeds received 12 villages in the upper Ganga-Yamuna *doab* region²¹. Presently these are situated in both the Meerut and Saharanpur Divisions.

Syed Daud's descendants settled in the villages of Dhasri and Kumhera. From these early settlements, the Tihanpuri Branch of the Barha Syeds expended to other villages and towns but around the same area.

What the District Gazetteer records in this context is as follows²²:

“Throughout the reign of Akbar and his immediate successor, the Barha Saiyids took part in almost every important campaign; their usual place was in the forefront of the army, and they distinguished themselves by their courage and bravery. In the twenty-first year of Akbar's reign, the Sayids were engaged against the Hindu rebels of Ajmer. In the 41st year Saiyid Jalal fought in the Deccan. In the war with Khusru, one Saif Khan, the son of Saiyid Mahmud, did excellent service having received no less than seventeen wounds, and Saiyid Jamal-ud-din was mortally wounded.”

The District Gazetteer, further, records²³:

“The Kundliwals came first to notice, and next to them, the Tihanpuris, who under the brothers Saiyid Abdullah Khan and Saiyid Husain Ali Khan, raised the family name to its highest glory. Their acquisitions in this district were not, however, of a permanent nature, and so complete was their downfall that not a tithe of their ancient possessions now remains to their descendants.”

At this point regarding the highest glory achieved arises a more relevant question. No doubt the Tihanpuris rose to the place of the highest prominence under the famous Syed Brothers: Syed Hasan Ali Khan later on assumed the title of his father and Syed Husain Ali Khan (the king-makers)²⁴; but on the other hand, it is not the contribution of merely their alone. Equally or some more historic

background was provided by their father Syed Abdullah Khan Barha popularly known as the Syed Miyan who had been posted as the Governor of Ajmer during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb²⁵. He was considered a pious man, genuine and justice-loving efficient administrator. He died in Ajmer²⁶. According to Mr. Nevill, Syed Miyan had only son named Syed Ghulam Muhammad. Mr. Nevill wrongly writes that the Syed brothers (the King makers) were the sons of Syed Ghulam Muhammad²⁷ and thus, according to his information, they were the grandsons of the Syed Miyan²⁸.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 C.E.,²⁹ the war of succession began among all his three surviving sons in which, ultimately Bahadur Shah emerged victorious³⁰. He died a natural death in 1712. Among all his 4 sons, there was fought the war of succession at Lahore. Prince Muazzam, the eldest won and sat on throne with the name of Jahandar Shah³¹. He was threatened by his nephew Prince Farrukhsiyar. After defeating him with the sole assistance of Syed Abdullah Khan Barha and his brother Syed Husain Ali Khan Barha, Farrukhsiyar became the emperor in 1713 C.E.³². Both the brothers were the Governors of the *Subahs* of Allahabad and Patna respectively. Farrukhsiyar could sit on the royal throne because of the great efforts made by the Syed brothers who had lost the lives of their real brother Nazmuddin Ali Khan Barha. They had to bear great losses in terms of lives of their so close blood relatives.

Emperor Farrukhsiyar rewarded the Syeds by raising the eldest brother Syed Abdullah Khan Barha as the *Wazir*³³ (Prime Minister). The younger brother Syed Husain Ali Khan Barha was rewarded in the same way and was made the *Mir Bakshi*³⁴ (Commander-in-Chief). Thus, The Syed brothers reached to the highest positions in the imperial services. They built the tombs of their late father Syed Miyan at Ajmer in Rajasthan. After the death of their mother Syedani Khurshida Begam (daughter of Syed Hamid Ali, a Tihanpuri Syed chief of Nawaa or Nawaa-Jadoda), they also built her tomb in the same beautiful premise of their father's tomb. These are two extremely beautiful monuments the Barha Syeds ever had.

Entrance Gate of Syed Miyan's Maqbara from outside



Entrance Gate of Syed Miyan's Maqbara from inside



Maqbara of Syed Abdullah Khan Barha alias Syed Miyan, the Governor of Suba of Ajmer during Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir



Another view of the Maqbara



It may be concluded that Syed Miyan's Tomb at Ajmer is significant not merely as a funerary monument but as an important historical and epigraphic source for understanding Mughal Rajasthan. Its inscription, association with Syed Miyan, and connection with the influential Barha Syeds illuminate the political authority, social mobility, and changing fortunes of an important Mughal-era family. A closer study of the monument thus enriches our understanding of Ajmer's place in the political and administrative history of the Mughal Empire and highlights the need to preserve and further explore its historical heritage.

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9. *Ibid.*
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12. H.R. Nevill, *op. cit.*
13. *Ibid.* 160.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Vighnesh Kumar and Zeenat Zaidi, *op. cit.*
16. H.R. Nevill, *op. cit.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. The names of the rulers of the Syed dynasty are:
Khizr Khan (1414-1421), Mubarak Khan (1421-1434),
Muhammad Shah (1434 - 1445) and Alauddin Alam Shah (1445-1451).
22. H.R. Nevill, *op. cit.*, 161.
23. H.R. Nevill, *op. cit.*, 162.
24. Syed Zahoor Mehdi, *op. cit.*, 34-48.
25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.* APPENDIX No. II gives a different evidence that shows that Syed Miyan means Syed Abdullah Khan Barha, the Governor of Ajmer had only one son named Nawab Ghulam Muhammad whose 2 sons were Hasan Ali Khan and Husain Ali Khan. This record does not match to the tradition prevailed in the oral history of the clan in itself. Syed Zahoor Mehdi, a Barha Syed, in his book mentions the Syed brothers as Syed Miyan's sons. For details, please see: Mehdi, Zahoor, *Taarikh-i-Aina, Muzaffarnagar*, 2003.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Jadunath Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 321; William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Volume I (1707-1720), London: Luzak & Co., 1922 [Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1922], 1. But the famous historian Jadunath Sarkar gives February 20, 1707 C.E. as the date of Aurangzeb's death, however, William Irvine, the historian of same repute gives this date as March 7, 1707 C.E.
29. Jadunath Sarkar, *op. cit.*,
30. William Irvine, *op. cit.*, 34.
31. *Ibid.*, 186.
32. *Ibid.*, 244.
33. *Ibid.*, 258. He was made Nawab Qutub-ul-mulk, Yamin-ud-daulah Saiyid Abdullah Khan, Bahadur Zafar Jang, Sipah-salar, Yar-i-wafadar.
34. *Ibid.* He was made Umdat-ul-mulk, Amir-ul-umara, Bahadur, Firuz Jang, Sipah-sardar. ★

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Urbanization and Social Transformation in Nepal

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Abstract

Urbanization has become an important feature of Nepal's social and economic change which is rapidly grown and reflecting in major transformation in population distribution, settlement patterns and development arrangements. This study examines the relationship between urbanization and development based on the data provided by the National Population and Housing Census, 2021. A descriptive and analytical approach is employed in this analysis. The analysis examines patterns of urban growth with new settlements, migration trends, development of housing and infrastructure, regional development and spatial inequality in Nepal. The findings show that urban areas have expanded rapidly in Nepal in recent decades. However, socioeconomic changes across social groups and regions have progressed more slowly with the compared with growth of urban population. Urban population growth is increasingly concentrated in municipalities in large size. Middle-sized urban centres are playing a larger role, particularly after improved road connectivity in the recent decade following state owned development practices. Migration is simultaneously reshaping settlement patterns and creating new demands for housing, urban infrastructure and opportunities. The study also finds clear regional differences in infrastructure, climate resilience, human development, and poverty after rapid urbanization in Nepal. These differences show that the benefits of urbanization are not shared equally across Nepal among different urban centers. The study concludes that urbanization in Nepal is a multidimensional process with administrative expansion. Balanced urban development requires stronger functional urban centres and better infrastructure and housing which is not equally distributed in Nepal. It also requires reducing regional inequalities through inclusive and coordinated planning to minimize gap between rural and urban areas and between different urban centres.

Keywords

Urbanization, Urban development, Functional urbanization, Development; Nepal.

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Urbanization and Social Transformation in Nepal

1. Background

Urbanization has become an important component of social and economic transformation in the twenty-first century mainly after industrial revolution initially expanded from global North. Cities have changed the way people work, live, maintain livelihood, and interaction in the new urban settlements. Urbanization has also influenced employment, governance, and development in both developed and developing countries with changing urban dynamics. The United Nations (2019) has projected that nearly 68% of the world's population will reside in urban areas by 2050. This makes urbanization one of the most influential demographic and social trends of modern times. It shapes people's lives and relations differently as they adjust to the new urban environment. Urbanization in each society involves more than an increase in the urban population with the expansion of the market. It also brings changes in social institutions, the economy, culture, and new modes of life.

Urbanization reflects a gradual shift from rural and agriculture-based communities to more diverse and interconnected urban societies. This transformation reshapes social relationships, economic activities, and the institutions to cope new problems that support everyday life and creates new opportunities and challenges. Similarly, it brings greater social diversity, changes in economic activities, and new forms of social organization in the city. Classical sociologists considered urbanization a major source of social change with new ideas of living than economic analysis. They believed that it transformed social relationships, occupational structures, family organization, and community life in a new environment. Urban growth from the development perspective, contributes to economic progress and expands opportunities with higher level of differentiations that support to people's education and social mobility. However, it may also widen inequality and place greater pressure on housing, the environment, and public services due to the population pressure that creates imbalance between demand and government capacity (Wirth, 1938; Harvey, 1973). It includes chances of population growth together with wider social and economic transformation mainly in developing countries.

Nepal has experienced remarkable urban expansion during the last two decades mainly after second people's movement. This transformation has been driven by major administrative restructuring following the federalization of the state and developed different government structure and historically urban-centred development priorities. The share of Nepal's population living in municipalities increased from 17.1% in 2011 to 66.2% in 2021 (National Statistics Office [NSO],

2025). This sharp increase was largely due to the restructuring and expansion of local government boundaries without properly support to the urban facilities. The number of municipalities has increased from 58 to 293 during the same period. These changes represent one of the most rapid urban transitions in South Asia within a short time period. They have influenced patterns of housing and settlement, governance system, infrastructure development, service delivery, hospitality and new ways of life which is main concern of present analysis because the gap between people's expectations and available urban facilities is in significant level

The National Statistics Office (2025) applied the internationally recognized Degree of Urbanization methodology to assess the level of urbanization in Nepal which able to explore categorization of urban center and make support to the urban planning. Based on this measurement only about 27% of Nepal's population resides in functionally urban areas which challenged to the government planning. Another, 40% people live in peri-urban settlements that have both rural and urban characteristics is under basic urban requirement. These findings suggest that Nepal's urban transition cannot be understood only through the expansion of municipalities in number. It is also important to consider the broader socioeconomic changes associated with urban growth in its particular social and political context which is important for urban studies.

Urbanization can affects differently access to education, health care, employment, housing, and other basic services across social groups which is important for proper urbanization. It creates new opportunities and expands investment for development and change is important. However, it can also increase inequality and exclusion mainly for marginalized and underprivileged groups is present challenges of present haphazardously urban growth. The benefits of urbanization are not shared equally across all regions and communities in Nepal, which is a challenge of current urban development from a social justice perspective. Most of researches in Nepal focus on demographic trends and transitions, municipal governance, land-use change, and infrastructure development. These studies examine few aspects of urbanization beyond social demography and right-based perspective. These changes also provide an opportunity to re-examine the changing pattern of urban development for the scholars.

This study examines how urbanization contributes to social transformation and sectoral development using national-level data from the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2025). It takes a broader view of urbanization rather than focusing population growth and physical infrastructure development which need to be taken importantly in sociological analysis. The study considers changes in migration, employment, housing, infrastructure, and regional development associated with urban growth in recent decades. Examining theses patterns helps to understand how Nepal's urban transition is reshaping society and creating different development opportunities and challenges across the country at different level. It is important to examine the pattern of urbanization and change. The study provides a broader understanding of

urbanization and its importance for balanced and equitable development in the context of developing countries like Nepal. Specifically, the study has follows two objectives to examine urbanization and transformation in Nepal in recent decades. First, it examines recent patterns and characteristics of urbanization practiced in Nepal using the latest census data. Second, it analyses the relationship between urbanization, migration, infrastructure, employment, housing, and social transformation from a sociological perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Urbanization and Social Transformation

Urbanization is widely recognized as an important force of social and economic change in the process of modern development mainly under liberal economies. Urbanization, as a way of development influences employment, infrastructure, public services, and people's everyday life (United Nations, 2019). It can create new opportunities compared with rural setting for economic development, innovation, and better living conditions (World Bank, 2023). Recent urban studies therefore consider poorly managed urban growth and its impact in housing shortages and environmental sectors which are make environment to increase social inequality and urban exclusion (UN-Habitat, 2022). Unmanaged urban growth without proper supporting urban plan can create unequal access to opportunities and services among different social groups.

Urban governance has become more complex as cities grow rapidly particularly in developing countries. Cities now need to address environmental, economic, and social challenges through more collaborative forms of decision-making (Long *et al.*, 2023). Recent research also shows that uneven urban development can increase spatial and social inequalities which helps to make divided society within urban places. This raises important concern in the present context of urban development when the benefits of urban transformation are not equally shared across communities (Uitermark *et al.*, 2023). Reducing diverse social and economic inequalities has become important goal of sustainable urban development and inclusive city planning (Jupp, 2023). Urban growth is a part of a broader process of social transformation that depends on inclusive urban policies. It is shaped by demographic change, internal migration, globalization, and changes in the city economy. These changes reshape family pattern and life, community relationships and cultural performances, employment, and governance which is important for sociological research and knowledge formation. In Nepal, recent census evidence in access to education, work and social security further shows that politically expanded municipalities does not fully explain the country's urban transition and development (National Statistics Office, 2025).

2.2 Classical Perspectives on Urban Society

Classical sociologist Tönnies (1887) observed urbanization as a process of social change through the shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, which means society transform gradually from kin-based rural communities to more formal and

complex urban societies. His ideas help explain how migration and urban growth in a modern society reshape social relationships and community life. Durkheim focused on changes in the organization of society during the course of societal development and social differentiations. He argued that the increasing division of labour in the modern society leads to greater occupational specialization and significant interdependence among people. As societies do not remain in static form and become more complex and diverse with new forms of social integration which are needed to maintain social cohesion to maintain social function (Durkheim, 1893). Wirth later explained that urbanization also changes every day social interaction and relationship with under new social organization. Urban life tends to encourage individualism, occupational specialization, and greater social mobility during the process of urbanization significantly. These changes can weaken traditional community ties and forms of social relationships in a long term social interaction to meet complex relations (Wirth, 1938). The Chicago School was concerned with the process of urban growth through a comprehensive approach and further developed the understanding of cities as changing and dynamic social environments. It emphasized how migration, competition for urban space, and economic activities shape neighbourhoods and patterns of urban development which is important to know the changing process of urban society. This perspective also drew attention in sociology to the exploration of the relationship between social groups and the spaces they occupy unequally in the urban growing cities. These ideas remain useful for understanding urban inequality and exclusion simultaneously with urban growth and neighbourhood changes in the cities including the formation of spatial organization and new livelihood practices in urban society (Park *et al.*, 1925).

2.3 Urbanization and Development

Urbanization and development are closely associated with the perception of modern development, new settlement patterns and social transformation. Early modernization theory viewed urbanization as an important driver of economic development (Rostow, 1960). However, later studies showed that urban growth does not always lead to better living conditions as per growth of urban centers. Cities have expanded rapidly to adjust people's perceptions without sufficient employment, housing, or public services that creating urban poverty and inequality mainly in developing countries (Davis, 2006). Modern development perspectives have broadened the meaning of development beyond economic growth mainly after the 1990's paradigm shift in development which is important for urban development policy. Sen (1999) argued that in explain people's capability and enlarging people's choices development should be understood in terms of healthy, educated, and secure lives. Similarly, the human development approach, initiated mainly after 1990s, focuses on improving people's well-being and expanding their opportunities (UNDP, 2024). More recent approaches also emphasize the need to balance economic growth with social inclusion and environmental protection which is important to measure and mitigate urban inequality. These concerns are particularly important for Nepal's urban inequality where rapid urban growth is closely

associated with spatial inequality and emerged vulnerable squatter settlements (UN-Habitat, 2022).

2.4 Migration, Urbanization, and Social Mobility

Migration plays an important role in changing population composition, employment, family life, community relationships and social belonging, which is associated to urbanization (de Haas *et al.*, 2020). Urban areas often attract migrants because they provide comparatively better opportunities for employment and social security. People migrate to the cities for better education, health care, opportunities, business and other public services. Moving to urban areas can therefore improve the livelihoods of migrants by increasing access to jobs, income, freedom and wider social opportunities (World Bank, 2023). However, migration does not always lead to better living conditions mainly for low income holder people in developing countries, where the government has not meet people's expectations through urban planning. Rapid population growth in the cities can put pressure on housing, employment, infrastructure, and public services provided by municipal authorities. It can also contribute to the growth of informal settlements due to population pressure and adequate urban planning and increase greater social inequality in urban areas in present context of rapidly growing cities (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Internal migration has played an important role in Nepal's changing settlement patterns in both urban and rural areas. Since the 1950s, Rana rule ended and the practice of state-initiated development started at first in Nepal. Particularly from the 1990s onwards, after the restoration of democracy and the end of the autocratic Panchayat system, many people have moved from the hill and mountain regions towards the Terai and growing urban centres with new political movements. These movements and changing urban dynamics have changed the geographical distribution of the population and contributed to urban growth (Goldstein *et al.*, 1983). Recent national data also show that internal migration remains an important part of Nepal's urban transition with problems and challenges (NSO, 2025). In the Kathmandu Valley, the concentration of the urban population rapidly increased due to economic opportunities and better access to services being a capital city of Nepal (Thapa & Murayama, 2010). However, these opportunities are not equally available to everyone in the city. The ability to benefit from migration often depends on people's social and economic conditions (Castles *et al.*, 2020). Migration can improve social mobility by creating new educational and economic opportunities unequally. These benefits are not distributed equally among different social groups, and they often depend on social and economic conditions of people living in urban areas (de Haas *et al.*, 2020).

2.5 Urban Inequality and Social Exclusion

Theoretically, urbanization creates opportunities for development and social transformation and reflected as modern development. However, its benefits and outcomes are not shared equally between the social groups which is weak side of urbanization, which is depend in the nature of political system and commitment.

From the imagination of political economy approach, unequal access to housing, employment, education, health care, infrastructure, and public services remains a major challenge in many cities shows capitalist injustice (Harvey, 2008). He argued that access to urban resources is shaped by political and economic power, which make situation to exclusion for underprivileged groups. Urbanization creates uneven patterns of urban development in the process of development shaped by power relations and neoliberal development processes which is not favor to underclass people (Harvey, 2008). Similarly, Silver (1994) explained that social exclusion is rooted in broader social structures, which is also reflecting in underprivileged group in the cities widely. Limited access to education, employment, housing, and participation mainly of lower class people can prevent them from benefitting equally from urban development. Inclusive urban development therefore requires appropriate policy responses to ensure equal access to housing, public services, and opportunities for all citizens in the present context of rapidly growing urban areas (UNDP, 2024).

Recent studies in Nepal show that rapid urban expansion is associated with growing social vulnerability and marginalization in the urban areas and increased informal settlements mainly in the city center. Uneven urban development without inclusive planning and increasing disaster risks have also become important concerns in rapidly changing urban areas of Nepal (Mesta *et al.*, 2022; Poudel *et al.*, 2023). At the same time as urban growth, changing patterns of migration and mobility are reshaping urban settlements differently between rich and poor people. It is reforming livelihood practices and social relationships with people's urban mobility differently. These changes contribute to wider social transformation in Nepali society and create new opportunities as well as new challenges for local communities (Abbing *et al.*, 2026). This study examines how urban growth is related to migration, development, and exclusion and social inequality in Nepal based on national-level data provided by Nepal Statistics Office in 2021.

3. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive and analytical research design to explore urban exclusion. It is based on secondary data from the Urbanization and Development in Nepal (NSO, 2025) initiated by National Statistics Office, 2021. This study depends on nationally representative census data associated with multiple indicators has taken in national census. These include frequencies, percentages, and comparative indicators to identify major patterns and trends of urbanization and development. It shows the latest data on urban dynamics and development of Nepal. The study examines how urbanization is connected with migration, housing, infrastructure, employment, and development in the context of Nepal's urbanization. It is based entirely on the official thematic report published by the National Statistics Office in 2025. The National Population and Housing Census 2021 provides wide coverage to grasp the diverse nature of data mainly concentrate on urban development. It covers all seven provinces, 77 districts, and 753 local governments of Nepal, which means

it cover widely. The census follows standard data collection procedures and analytical tools to collect and analyze data across the country. This process provides a strong national basis for understanding patterns of urbanization and development in Nepal. Its nationwide coverage also makes its reliable and useful for comparing regional differences and examining recent changes in Nepal's urban development.

The analysis focuses on key dimensions of urbanization, including urban population distribution, migration, growing cities, housing and basic infrastructure. These dimensions were selected to collect and analyze major demographic, social, economic, and spatial changes associated with urbanization. The analysis is narrow in terms of the census variables and the conditions at the time of data collection. However, its nationwide coverage provides a strong basis for understanding recent changes in urbanization and development across Nepal for a comparative study.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Urbanization Trends and Spatial Distribution

Urbanization in Nepal has expanded significantly over the past seven decades. The pace and degree of urban growth increased primarily after the introduction of the federal system in Nepal, which is controversy with state devolution and solution of underdevelopment. It is based on primarily on the restructuring process of local governments in 2015 after the declaration of the current Constitution. Much of the increase in the urban population resulted from administrative reclassification does not justify of equal development in data (National Population and Housing Census 2021). However, urbanization has accelerated since the 1990s following the restoration of democracy. This change has also brought rapid population growth in urban areas which contributes in role for shifting settlement patterns mainly in urban areas. These changes help us understand how urbanization is taking place in Nepal with changes in politics and what it means for the country's socioeconomic development.

Table-1: Trends in Urban Population and Municipal Classification in Nepal (1952/54-2021)

Census Year	Number of Municipalities	Population Living in Municipalities (%)
1952/54	10	2.9
1961	16	3.6
1971	16	4.0
1981	23	6.4
1991	33	9.2
2001	58	13.9
2011	58	17.1
2021	293	66.2

Source: National Statistics Office, *Urbanisation and Development in Nepal*, 2025.

Table-1 shows that Nepal's urban population has grown considerably over the past seven decades, reflecting in a significant form in size and pattern. Data shows the increase was gradual from 1952/54 to 2011 with rising population lived in urban areas from 2.9% to 17.1%. However, a sharp increase occurred between 2011 and 2021, which was remarkable growth of urban population. During this period, the urban population reached 66.2%. This change followed the introduction of the federal system in Nepal. It increased the number of municipalities from 58 to 293 for an administrative purpose. The findings suggest that this rapid growth was mainly driven by administrative reclassification without proper urban planning and requirement. It has not adopted the characteristics of a gradual urban transformation. Many rural areas were redesignated as municipalities after the government's policy. It resulted in a higher urban population and a huge difference between the census of 2011 and 2021. Therefore, the increase in urbanization does not necessarily reflect equal improvements in infrastructure, employment, or public services during this decade. Administrative expansion has been faster than urban development in Nepal's growth of urbanization which is not justifiable for urbanism. It creates uneven levels of development and service delivery across municipalities, which are new development issues generated by further development and planning and need to be further discussed.

4.2 Functional Urbanization and Degree of Urbanization

Urbanization in Nepal has usually been measured by the number of municipalities along without urban requirements. However, a government declaration of an area as a municipality does not mean that is fully equipped with functions as an urban settlement. The National Statistics Office used the Degree of Urbanization (DEGURBA) method which is developed by the United Nations and the European Commission is able to measure level of urbanization from the development perspective. This method classifies settlements according to their population, settlement patterns, and urban characteristics in a comparative method. It provides a more realistic way to understand Nepal's urbanization and their level. It shows the difference between administrative classification and the actual level of urban development, which is important for examining urban dynamics, achievement and level. The findings presented below help explain the spatial pattern of urbanization and its implications for balanced regional development.

Table-2: Functional Urbanization (DEGURBA) Indicators in Nepal, 2021

Indicator	Value
Population Distribution by DEGURBA	
Population living in urban areas (cities)	27.0%
Population living in peri-urban areas (towns and semi-dense areas)	40.0%
Population living in rural areas	33.0%

Local-Level Urbanization Indicators	
Total local levels	753
Local levels with no urban population	487 (64.7%)
Population living in local levels with no urban population	62.6%
Urban-classified wards within rural municipalities	139
Rural municipalities with urbanization above 40%	17
Share of total urban population living in these 17 rural municipalities	2.3%

Note: Population born in another district refers to internal migrants living in municipalities. Foreign-born population refers to people living in Nepal who were born outside the country. Source. National Statistics Office, *Urbanisation and Development in Nepal: National Population and Housing Census 2021, Thematic Report XV*, Government of Nepal, 2025.

The above table shows a clear difference between Nepal's functional and administrative levels of urbanization associating with gap between functional and administrative structure. This difference is important for understanding the gap between actual urban development and administrative expansion of municipalities, mainly political motives and voter size combination. In 2021, census data showed that 66.2% of Nepal's population lived within municipalities, which remains in significant size compared to previous census. However, the DEGURBA classification, which identifies the level of urban areas based on urban requirements, shows that only 27.0% lived in areas that met internationally recognized criteria for urban settlements in Nepal. Another 40.0% lived in peri-urban areas according to the 2021 census. It shows the growing importance of these settlements in Nepal's urban transition and urban development. Similarly, about 33.0% of the population still lived in predominantly rural areas according to the same census. These findings suggest that many areas were officially classified as municipalities without basic urban requirements and proper planning.

The distribution of local levels greatly further shows the uneven pattern of Nepal's urban transformation, which depends more on spatial relocation. However, this aspect has taken few attentions in urban development research in Nepal. The data shows that out of 753 local levels, 487 (64.7%) have no functionally urban population. However, 62.6% of Nepal's population lives in these areas, which shows a controversy whether urbanization is in minimum standard. This suggests that many areas were given municipal status even though they still have mostly rural characteristics. Similarly, although 139 wards within rural municipalities are classified as urban by this measurement. The data shows that only 17 rural municipalities have an urbanization level above 40%, and they contain just 2.3% of Nepal's urban population. These findings show that functional urban development is concentrated in only a few places. Most local governments have experienced limited urban transformation based on basic urban requirements for urban settlements. These findings show a clear gap between administrative and functional

urbanization which justified its political motives rather gradual process of development. It presents a debates to examine and explore urban challenges, trend and pattern. Many municipalities still have predominantly rural conditions. It creates challenges for adequate service delivery and urban planning for urban dwellers. Strengthening infrastructure, employment opportunities, and public services is essential for balanced urban development in Nepal in present context of haphazardly declaration of urban center. Social aspects of urban development are also important for achieving sustainable urbanization, which is basically ignored in policy debate in Nepal.

4.3 Migration and Housing Characteristics

Migration has played an important role in Nepal's urbanization and transformation. People have moved from rural to urban areas, between districts, and across different regions without have basic facilities in destiny areas. People have mainly migrated in the city center in search of better employment, education, and access to services which is associated with Nepal's imbalanced development. This movement has also changed settlement patterns in rural and urban areas. It has increased the demand for housing, and influenced urban labour markets in new places. Migration becomes important factors in shaping Nepal's urban growth and changing settlement patterns which is useful for urban planner and researcher.

Table-3: Migration and Housing Characteristics in Nepal, 2021

Indicator	Value
Migration Characteristics	
Population born in another district	25.2%
Foreign-born population	2.6%
Housing Tenure (Rental Households)	
Kathmandu Valley	50.1%
Metropolitan cities	42.6%
Other urban municipalities	34.3%
Rural municipalities	2.6%

Note: Population born in another district refers to internal migrants living in municipalities. Foreign-born population refers to people living in Nepal who were born outside the country.

Source: National Statistics Office, *Urbanisation and Development in Nepal: National Population and Housing Census 2021, Thematic Report XV*, Government of Nepal, 2025.

The above table shows that migration has become an important part of Nepal's mobility pattern. According to the 2021 census, 25.2% of people living in municipalities were born in another district, and 2.6% were born outside Nepal. This shows that urban growth is mainly determined by internal migration compare with international migration. Most migration is directed towards the Terai, especially from the Hill and Mountain regions. Similarly, the data show that the movement within the Terai has also increased as previous pattern of migration to

the Terai. These patterns have changed the country's settlement structure and contributed to the growth of urban areas. Housing patterns also reflect these migration trends. Half of all households (50.1%) in the Kathmandu Valley live in rented housing, which shows deficiency in housing mainly depend on government policy. The proportion is also high in metropolitan cities (42.6%) and other urban municipalities (34.3%) compared with only 2.6% in rural municipalities. These differences show that many people move to urban areas in search of a secure life. Such a trend of migration has increased demand for new settlement places and rented housing has become increasingly common in growing urban areas. These changes reflect changing patterns of mobility is in increasing trend and people's choices in the city is also increased.

4.4 Climate Vulnerability and Urban Infrastructure

Urban growth can be sustained when infrastructure develops together with it in a balanced way. This also helps settlements survive with environmental risk in a changing environment in which mainly affected under class people. Urban areas have expanded rapidly without proper urban safety and urban equity in Nepal. The improvement of infrastructure has not kept speed everywhere with the growth of population, which is the main problem with the current trend of urban growth. Many urban centres still face problems such as poor road access and greater exposure to climate-related hazards and risks mainly for excluded people. These differences affect people's access to services, transportation, and development opportunities. It further explores modern debates on urban development and planning. The 2021 census shows differences in infrastructure and climate vulnerability across settlements based on rural and urban and among municipalities.

Table-4: Climate Vulnerability and Urban Infrastructure Indicators in Nepal

Indicator	Value
Climate Vulnerability Index	
Rural municipalities	0.592
Municipalities	0.325
Sub-metropolitan cities	0.057
Metropolitan cities	0.005
Road Infrastructure	
Mountain wards with black-topped roads	65.6%
Hill wards without black-topped roads	53.0%

Note: The Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) ranges from 0 to 1. A higher value indicates greater climate vulnerability

Source: National Statistics Office, *Urbanisation and Development in Nepal: National Population and Housing Census 2021, Thematic Report XV*, Government of Nepal, 2025.

Table-4 shows clear differences in climate vulnerability and infrastructure across different types of settlements, which is depend on proper urban planning. It is mainly based on the level of urban growth and associated with prerequisites of development in Nepal. The data show that rural municipalities have the highest climate vulnerability index (0.592) compared with metropolitan cities which have the lowest (0.005) vulnerability index. Municipalities (0.325) and sub-metropolitan cities (0.057) fall between these two extremes is also important to analyze environmental vulnerability. The findings show that larger cities are better prepared for climate-related risks and their mitigation. They generally have better infrastructure, stronger institutions, and easier access to public services compared with peri-urban and rural areas. In contrast, urban centres within rural municipalities are more vulnerable due to limited infrastructure and weak climate-bearing planning. The data show that the differences in road networks also reflect the uneven pattern of development across Nepal.

The data also show clear differences in road conditions across Nepal's ecological regions, a problem that has been faced by Nepali people for decades. Around 65.6% of wards have access to black-topped roads in the Mountain region, in contrast with 53.0% of wards in the Hill region still lack black-topped roads. Such differences can affect people's access to schools, health facilities, markets, and government services in where a large number of people reside. Limited road access in different places mainly from rural areas may also encourage people to move to urban areas. Similarly, the migration trend is associated with the search for better infrastructure and economic opportunities mainly for urban areas.

4.5 Human Development and Regional Disparities

The thought is that the urbanization can improve people's lives and livelihoods, freedoms and choices. It can provide better access to education, health care, employment, public services, and entrepreneurship for whom is not researched as much as need. According to the different sources including those from Nepal, these benefits are not equally shared across regions or ecological belt. It indicates imbalanced development associated with economic and social characteristics among different regions. The 2021 census uses the HDI, IHDI, and MPI to measure differences in development among provinces is important for measuring intensity of development. These indicators all provide a better understanding of the relationship between urbanization, human development and multidimensional poverty.

Table-5: Human Development and Multidimensional Poverty by Province

Indicator	Province	Area Value
Human Development Indicators		
National Human Development Index (HDI)	Nepal	0.602
Highest HDI	Bagmati Province	0.650
Second highest HDI	Gandaki Province	0.624
Lowest Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)	Karnali Province	0.419

Multidimensional Poverty Indicators		
National multidimensional poverty	Nepal	17.0%
Lowest multidimensional poverty	Bagmati Province	7.0%
Highest multidimensional poverty	Karnali Province	39.5%

Note: HDI refers to the Human Development Index, while IHDI refers to the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index. Multidimensional poverty is measured using the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

Source: National Statistics Office, *Urbanisation and Development in Nepal: National Population and Housing Census 2021, Thematic Report XV*, Government of Nepal, 2025.

The above table shows that the benefits of urbanization are not shared equally across Nepal's provinces and associated municipal regions. It may be influenced by the practice of ecologically imbalanced development for decades which is affected by decades of centralized development. Similarly, human development varies across Nepal's provinces and its diverse locations. Bagmati Province has the highest HDI at 0.650 compared with national average of 0.602. Similarly, Gandaki Province obtained an HDI of 0.624 which is above the national average. Their higher levels of human development are associated with greater urbanization and urban-centered development, which has initiated by government. In contrast, Karnali Province has the lowest Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) at 0.419, which is significantly below the national average. This shows that lower living standards and greater inequality remain as important challenges to development in the province need to be addressed through inclusive development planning.

The data in Table-5 show that the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is also shows wide provincial differences in Nepal as does the HDI distribution. Nationally, 17.4% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty, which is also differs among provinces. The rate is lowest in Bagmati Province (7.0%) and highest in Karnali Province (39.5%). Many people of Karnali continue to face multiple disadvantages in education, health, and living standards. The results suggest that urbanization has brought greater benefits to provinces with larger cities and stronger economies, which benefitted from the centralized state before the adoption of federalism.

5. Discussion

The findings show that urbanization has changed migration, infrastructure development, governance system, and development differently in Nepal. Latest urbanization trend been shaped by administrative restructuring after the federalism practiced in Nepal. The data prove that the benefits of urbanization remain uneven across the country with rapid urbanization and people's mobility. Differences in infrastructure, climate resilience, and development continue to shape the urban experience significantly differently between urban and peri-urban centres based on different development indicators. One another finding is the rapid increase in the urban population after the restructuring of local governments, which shows

political motives to declare municipalities without urban facilities, it does not meet urban requirement. The census shows that about two-thirds of the population live in urban areas without basic urban requirement. The Degree of Urbanization (DEGURBA) analysis shows that only about one-quarter of the population lives in functionally urban areas. Many newly declared municipalities still have rural characteristics and are not able to meet urban basic requirement. It means that urban requirements are not fulfilled after physical separation in many newly declared municipalities. Nepal's administrative urbanization has therefore been unable to meet functional urban development.

The study also emphasizes the growing role of medium-sized municipalities. The number is large and increasing across Nepal. It is a fact that a large share of Nepal's urban population now lives outside the major metropolitan cities with under human requirements. Peripheral cities remain with minimum basic urban facilities and development infrastructure. The growth of intermediate cities can gradually improve their ability to meet urban requirements. It expands people's access to education, markets, technology, and public services through urban policies. Migration continues to be a major factor of urban growth and social transformation in Nepal. Many people move from rural areas to cities for employment, education and healthcare in the growing cities from rural areas. The study further shows that infrastructure and climate resilience are essential for sustainable urban development because climate vulnerability and urban infrastructure indicators are considered basic standards in Nepal. Similarly, they are not equally developed across municipalities. Metropolitan cities have lower climate vulnerability than rural municipalities because they have better resource, infrastructure and services.

Regional differences in human development remain another major challenge, which is also reflecting in urban development. Bagmati and Gandaki provinces show higher human development in comparison with the lower human development and higher multidimensional poverty in Karnali Province. The regional variations suggest that urbanization depends on resources, geographical locations and human capabilities. The fact justifies that provinces of Nepal with stronger economies and better public services continue to attract more investment. It creates more opportunities and support efforts to reduce poverty and exclusion. The findings show that Nepal's urbanization is still in an evolving and expanding stage with few urban requirements in comparison with developed societies. However, the number of municipalities has increased rapidly without adequately meeting urban requirements compared to developed cities. The evidences suggest that improvements in social and physical infrastructure, employment, public services, and human development have not progressed equally among the urban centres including peri-urban centres, which is a major question to the state mechanism and state politics.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between urbanization and development in Nepal in association with migration trend, infrastructure development, regional progress, and social transformation in an integrated way. The analysis shows that Nepal's urban transition has been shaped mainly by administrative restructuring and migration pattern mainly since two decades. It shows the different conditions of infrastructure development among regions, which is reflecting to the centralized development. It is associated with the regional differences in human development which is reflecting in differently in different provinces. However, the urban population has increased rapidly without adequately functional prerequisites of urbanism. The data show that many newly designated municipalities by political decisions have limited urban facilities and services. The study also emphasizes that the outcomes of urbanization vary across provinces and settlement types among metropolis and municipalities. Urban facilities and people's access to them contribute to minimizing the gap that persist in human development and poverty. Better infrastructure in larger urban centres and greater economic opportunities support higher levels of human development. In contrast, less-developed regions from the urbanization perspective continue to face higher poverty and exclusion which is associated with limited infrastructure and greater climate vulnerability. These unequal patterns of social transformation suggest that urbanization does not always lead to balanced and inclusive development equally. The findings indicate that future urban policy should focus on improving the quality of urban development with equally distributed development outcomes among social groups. It needs to expand affordable housing through inclusive urban planning and banking supports. Proper infrastructure, social development, expanded opportunities and climate resilience mechanisms are essential to reduce regional inequalities and sustainable urban development. These efforts through policy response by municipal bodies can support more balanced and sustainable urban development, which can help promote more inclusive and equitable urban transformation.

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Changing Family Structures in Urban India: A Sociological Study of Marriage, Kinship, and Individual Choice

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Abstract

Rapid urbanization, economic reorganization, increasing levels of education, and shifting cultural norms have all contributed to dramatic shifts in family arrangements in India's metropolitan centers throughout the last several decades. how these changes have affected family dynamics in metropolitan areas, namely marriage rates, familial ties, and personal decisions. examining the changes in family structures, such as the rise of nuclear, single-parent, and alternative families, and how kinship responsibilities and familial standards continue to shape daily interactions. The ways in which gender, religion, class, and caste affect individual agency through a sociological lens. Delayed marriages, love marriages, inter-caste partnerships, and the balancing act between parental authority and individual preference are some of the evolving marital customs that receive special attention. In metropolitan settings, the traditional roles of family, emotional attachments, and caregiving are being rethought. Selected empirical insights from urban contexts supplement the study's foundation in secondary data analysis. Urban families, it says, are still very much rooted in social customs and societal expectations, even as they are becoming more and more defined by individual agency and adaptability. Modern individualism and lasting familial values coexist, the study finds, in the dynamic interplay between shifting family arrangements in urban India.

Keywords

Urban India, Family structure, Marriage practices, Kinship systems, Individual choice, Social change.

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1. Introduction

Traditional Indian wisdom holds that the family is the unit most responsible for passing on values, customs, and ways of life from one generation to the next. Social order and communal accountability were traditionally upheld by the joint family structure, which is defined by co-residence, shared economic resources, and close familial relationships. But, family dynamics and economic norms have changed drastically in modern urban India as a result of major social and economic shifts. Traditional ideas about marriage, family structure, and personal freedom have evolved in response to modern trends in urbanization, industrialization, educational attainment, and women's economic empowerment. Nuclear families, two-income homes, single-parent households, and live-in relationships are some of the novel family arrangements that have emerged as a result of the intersection of traditional values and contemporary lifestyles in urban areas. In addition to demonstrating the adaptability of Indian social institutions, these changes mirror larger modernization and globalization processes. One aspect of family life that has changed significantly in metropolitan areas is marriage. Love weddings, delayed marriages, and couplings between different castes or religions are becoming more acceptable, even though planned marriages are still common. However, familial networks still have an impact due to the social, economic, and emotional expectations they instill. The tension between agency and structure is emphasized in urban family life by the juxtaposition of individual choice and familial control. Urban India is also witnessing a redefinition of kinship bonds. Inter-generational support has changed due to factors such as growing caregiving responsibilities, shifting gender roles, and physical distance from extended family members. Despite this, kinship is still a powerful social capital, identity, and security mechanism. Ritual practices, caregiving responsibilities, and obligations to parents are still very much a part of daily life. This study aims to examine how urban India is experiencing a shift in family systems, specifically looking at marriage, kinship, and personal choice. The study's overarching goal is to add to our sociological knowledge of family transformation in modern Indian culture by investigating how people manage their own ambitions within preexisting societal structures.

2. Review of Literature

Though the family, Marriage and Kinship are among the oldest and most debated topics of research in sociology and social anthropology, still the relevance of these social institutions is still experienced in spite of the fact that they have changed their structure and function with change in social structure. Pioneer works

on family structures and their transformation in context to processes of social change; changing patterns of marriage in urban society; kinship networks in urban contexts; marriage, kinship, and individual choice form part and parcel of such studies. M. N. Srinivas (1942), G. S. Ghurye (1955), S. C. Dube (1955, 1998, 1990), I. P. Desai (1964), T. N. Madan (1965, 1989), K. M. Kapadia (1966), N. K. Bose (1967, 1997), Iravati Karve (1968), Leela Dube (1974, 1996, 1997), Sylvia Vatuk (1983), A. M. Shah (1998), M. S. Gore (2000), Patricia Uberoi (2003), Tulsi Patel (2005) among many others are sociologists who have done pioneer work in this field. A number of empirical studies can be seen on family structures, marriage and kinship networks and the transformation of these institutions in context to processes of social change

Study conducted by Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) demonstrates changes in marriage criteria and practices. Education, employment, personal compatibility, and greater participation of young men and women in arranging their own marriages have become increasingly important, while child marriage and close-kin marriage have declined. It is particularly useful for your subsection on changing criteria for mate selection.

Based on an original survey of 6,030 parents and adult children in Mumbai, Mathur's (2007) study has examined the interaction between parental involvement and individual spouse choice. It conceptualizes the choice between arranged and love marriage as a process of bargaining between parents and children. The study found that stronger financial and kinship ties between parents and sons were associated with a greater likelihood of arranged marriage.

Using data covering 1970-2012, Allendorf and Pandian (2016) examined spouse choice, premarital acquaintance, inter-caste marriage, and consanguineous marriage, including differences by urban residence. They found increasing involvement of women in spouse selection and a rise in inter-caste marriage, but also show that arranged marriage remains dominant. The study therefore supports the argument that Indian marriage is undergoing hybridization rather than a simple transition from arranged to love marriage.

Using India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2011-12 data, Narzary and Ladusingh (2019) empirically examined inter-caste marriage in India. It reported that inter-caste marriage remained relatively low but was more common among women who selected their husbands themselves and among those who knew their husbands for a longer period before marriage. It provides useful quantitative evidence for your discussion of inter-caste marriage and increasing individual agency.

Using the nationally representative IHDS-II, covering 384 districts and more than 1,000 urban neighbourhoods, Ray, Chaudhuri and Sahai (2020) investigated the relationship between education and inter-caste marriage. Interestingly, it finds that the education of the spouses themselves was not significantly associated with their own inter-caste marriage, while higher education of the husband's mother was associated with a greater probability of inter-caste marriage. This provides a useful

corrective to the assumption that modernization and individual education automatically lead to weakening of caste endogamy.

Based on 48 interviews conducted in the New Delhi metropolitan region during 2018-2019 with recently married/engaged individuals, unmarried young people, and parents, Reed (2025) has shown how roka engagements create space for courtship, compatibility, romantic choice, and parental approval. It demonstrates how contemporary urban arranged marriages increasingly incorporate elements of individual choice.

Mondal's (2024) study used data from all five rounds of the National Family Health Survey (1992-93 to 2019-21) to examine long-term changes in family structure. It identifies substantial changes in the prevalence of different family forms, including increases in single-person and some forms of extended families. Although it is not exclusively urban, it provides valuable national empirical evidence for situating urban family transformation within the broader Indian context.

Based on 40 interviews with middle-class young Indians, Reed (2025) has explored how young people understand arranged and self-choice marriage. It finds that young adults often view arranged marriage pragmatically because parental involvement provides social and familial support, while some prefer self-choice marriage because of concerns about compatibility and autonomy. It is useful for analysing individualization, risk, autonomy, and changing attitudes towards marriage in urban middle-class India.

Using macro-level panel data for 1991-2021, Dey Goli (2026) examined the relationship between urbanization, modernization, and family structure. Its findings indicate a significant positive relationship between urbanization/modernization and the growth of nuclear families, providing empirical support for the transformation of traditional family structures.

The above brief review of literature indicates that family, marriage and kinship in India are undergoing significant transformation under the influence of urbanization, education, modernization, westernization, globalization, economic change and increasing individualism. These studies collectively reveal a gradual shift from purely family-centred decision-making towards greater participation of young men and women in mate selection, while arranged marriage, caste endogamy, kinship obligations and parental involvement continue to retain considerable significance. Rather than representing a complete transition from traditional to modern forms, contemporary Indian families and marriages appear to reflect a process of negotiation, adaptation and hybridization, in which individual choice coexists with familial expectations and social norms. However, much of the existing literature examines particular dimensions of family or marriage separately, and there remains scope for a more integrated sociological understanding of how changing family structures, marriage practices, kinship networks and individual choices intersect within contemporary urban Indian society. The present study seeks to

address this gap by examining these interconnected transformations and their implications for changing patterns of family and marriage in urban India.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the impact of urbanization on the structure and functioning of family in India.
2. To analyze changing patterns of marriage in urban society, including changes in partner selection, age at marriage, and marital preferences.
3. To examine the changing nature of kinship networks and their continuity and adaptation in urban contexts.
4. To understand the growing role of individual choice, education, occupation, and economic independence in family and marriage decisions.
5. To analyze the broader sociological implications of changing family and marriage patterns for contemporary urban Indian society.

4. Methodology

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based primarily on secondary sources. Relevant books, research articles, government reports, census publications, and other scholarly literature on urbanization, family, marriage, and kinship in India have been reviewed. A sociological approach is used to analyze changes in family structures, marital practices, and kinship relations in the context of urbanization, modernization, and increasing individual choice. The study is interpretive rather than based on primary field data.

5. Urbanization and Transformation of Family Structures in India

One of the most powerful factors changing family arrangements in India is urbanization. Norms of residency, power, and social interactions have changed as a result of people fleeing rural areas for urban centers in search of better work, educational opportunities, and living standards. Norms of family structure are challenged by the combination of economic mobility and exposure to varied lifestyles in cities. The conventional joint family structure is slowly dying out as a result of urbanization. The establishment of nuclear homes is encouraged in metropolitan areas due to constraints such as limited dwelling space, high living costs, and busy work schedules. More and more, young couples are opting for self-sufficient housing options that provide them more space and freedom. Therefore, families are getting smaller, and people spend less time physically living together and more time communicating digitally with their extended family. The economic foundation of the family has also been altered by urbanization. In agricultural and other family-based occupations, families frequently served as units of production in rural and semi-rural contexts. Contrarily, most urban families rely on money from salaried or professional jobs to fund their purchasing habits. More

egalitarian decision-making within homes has resulted from this transformation, which has reduced conventional power structures, particularly those based on gender and age. However, disparities still exist. A further significant aspect of this change is the shifting of gender roles. Women in urban areas have more opportunities to further their education and find gainful jobs, which boosts their economic independence and gives them a voice in public affairs. More and more families are living in two-income households, which changes the dynamics of household chores, child care, and power dynamics within the family. New difficulties, such as work-family balance and the rethinking of conventional expectations, have emerged alongside women's growing workforce participation, which has broadened individual choice. Family relationships have not entirely disintegrated as a result of urbanization, despite these changes. As always, but especially in times of crisis, kinship networks are vital in providing emotional support, childcare, financial aid, and social security. Even when families are spread out over different locations, the importance of festivals, rituals, and family obligations does not diminish. Traditional values and modern practices coexist in urban family life in India, indicating a tendency of adaptation rather than replacement. Nuclear families, reimagined economic and gender roles, and more personal freedom are all effects of urbanization in India. But these shifts take place within a larger cultural context that still places a premium on kinship and familial bonds. A dynamic process characterized by both change and continuity best describes the evolution of family arrangements in urban India.

6. Changing Patterns of Marriage in Urban Society

Education, city living, economic freedom, and exposure to different cultural norms have all contributed to a dramatic shift in marriage in modern Indian society. Marriage is still very important to society, but in modern cities, people have greater leeway in how they get married, when they get married, and how they decide. Tradition still has a lot of sway, but it is living in harmony with modern values of free will and preference.

6.1 Arranged and Love Marriages

Traditional Indian marriage has been arranged to ensure social position, caste endogamy, and familial compatibility. On the other hand, planned marriages in cities have changed over the years. More and more, in modern arranged marriages, the prospective spouses have the power to accept or decline the match. This procedure has been further modernized by the rise of online marriage sites and professional networks, which combine traditional values with individual permission.

At the same time, love marriages have become more common in city dwellers' social circles. Young adults are able to develop emotional connections outside of family mediation as a result of their exposure to co-educational institutions, workplaces, and social spaces. More and more people are choosing to tie the knot out of a sense of camaraderie, emotional compatibility, and autonomy. However,

getting everyone's OK is still crucial, and a lot of love marriages include compromising to meet everyone's expectations.

6.2 Delayed Marriage and Changing Age Norms

The average age of bridesmaids has risen noticeably, especially among females, as a result of urbanization. Many people are delaying marriage because they want to further their education, advance in their careers, become financially independent, or simply feel uncomfortable with traditional gender norms. More and more, city dwellers see marriage not as a necessary social requirement but as a personal decision among many.

Reduced family sizes, altered fertility patterns, and new expectations for parenthood are some of the larger societal effects of this postponement. Simultaneously, social pressures associated with age standards and marital status persist, which can exacerbate existing tensions, particularly for women. Accordingly, although there is some wiggle room in age norms, they are nonetheless heavily influenced by conventional wisdom.

6.3 Inter-caste and Inter-religious Marriages

Marriages between people of different religions or castes are among the most radical changes to Indian marriage customs. There is more room for such unions in urban areas, because to the anonymity and social variety that characterize urban life. Marriages between people of different religious or caste backgrounds are becoming more common as a result of factors such as more access to education and employment opportunities, as well as liberal ideals.

The fact that many communities and families still oppose these unions shows how strong caste and religious identities are. Social stigma, family strife, or outright exclusion are all possible outcomes for couples. The increasing number of weddings between people of different castes and religions in India's cities is a sign of a modest but significant trend toward greater social integration and personal freedom, notwithstanding these obstacles.

6.4 Changing Criteria for Mate Selection

In urban Indian society, the criteria for mate selection have undergone significant changes due to education, occupational mobility, economic transformation and greater individual autonomy. While caste, religion, family status and social background continue to influence partner selection, increasing importance is being attached to education, occupation, income, personality, communication skills, compatibility and shared interests. Urban youth, particularly those with higher education and professional exposure, increasingly seek partners who can provide emotional companionship and mutual understanding rather than merely conforming to traditional family expectations. Thus, mate selection is gradually shifting from a predominantly family-centred process towards a combination of family considerations and individual preferences.

The changing criteria also reflect the growing importance of gender equality and personal aspirations in marital decisions. Women's education, employment, and economic independence have expanded their ability to participate actively in selecting a spouse and negotiating marital expectations. Similarly, men are increasingly expected to value their partner's education, career, and personal ambitions. Consequently, compatibility, mutual respect, emotional security, and the ability to balance professional and family responsibilities have become important considerations in urban marriages. However, these changes are uneven, and traditional criteria such as caste, religion, class, and family reputation continue to coexist with modern considerations.

6.5 Digital and Online Marriage-making

The expansion of the internet, smart phones, social media and matrimonial websites has significantly transformed the process of meeting potential marriage partners in urban India. Digital platforms have widened the social and geographical boundaries within which individuals search for partners. Unlike traditional arrangements in which relatives and community networks played the dominant role, individuals can now create profiles, specify preferences, communicate directly with prospective partners and make preliminary assessments before involving their families. This has increased the visibility of individual choice in the process of mate selection and has contributed to the emergence of new forms of digitally mediated courtship.

At the same time, digital marriage-making does not necessarily represent a complete departure from traditional practices. Many matrimonial platforms, especially caste-based platforms, allow users to specify caste, religion, education, occupation, income, and other conventional criteria. This, by implication, reproduces existing social preferences in a new technological environment. Families may also participate in online searches and negotiations, particularly in arranged marriages. Therefore, the digital platforms represent a process of continuity as well as change—they expand opportunities for individual interaction while simultaneously allowing traditional social norms to operate through new technological channels. Issues of privacy, authenticity, deception and the commercialization of partner selection also constitute emerging concerns.

6.6 Changing Gender Roles in Marriage

Urbanization, women's education and increasing female participation in paid employment have contributed to substantial changes in gender roles within marriage. The traditional model of the husband as primary breadwinner and the wife as homemaker is increasingly being replaced by dual-earner and more negotiated forms of family life. In many urban households, both partners contribute to household income, participate in financial decisions and also share responsibilities relating to children and domestic management. Therefore, marriage is increasingly understood as a partnership based on cooperation,

companionship and mutual decision-making rather than strictly differentiated gender roles.

Despite these changes, the transformation of gender roles remains incomplete. Women in dual-earner households often continue to carry a disproportionate share of domestic work, childcare and responsibilities towards elderly family members. This creates tensions between professional aspirations and traditional expectations of femininity and family responsibility. At the same time, changing expectations of masculinity are encouraging greater male participation in household and care-giving activities. Thus, urban marriage reflects a complex coexistence of traditional gender norms and emerging egalitarian ideals, with the extent of change varying according to class, education, occupation, and family background.

6.7 Changing Attitudes towards Divorce and Remarriage

Urbanization and changing attitudes towards individual autonomy have contributed to greater acceptance of divorce and marital separation in contemporary Indian society. Economic independence, especially among educated and employed women, has increased the ability of individuals to reconsider marriages that are experienced as incompatible, abusive or emotionally unsatisfactory. Marriage is increasingly viewed not only as a lifelong social obligation but also as a relationship expected to provide companionship, emotional satisfaction, dignity and mutual respect. Consequently, urban individuals may be more willing than earlier generations to consider divorce when these expectations are persistently unmet.

Attitudes towards remarriage have also gradually become more accommodating, particularly in urban and educated sections of society. Remarriage after divorce or widowhood is increasingly viewed as an individual choice rather than necessarily as a violation of social expectations. Changing family structures, greater economic independence and reduced dependence on extended kin have facilitated this transformation. Nevertheless, social stigma has not disappeared completely and divorced women, in particular, may continue to face greater social scrutiny and difficulties in remarriage. The changing acceptance of divorce and remarriage therefore demonstrates both the increasing individualization of marital relationships and the continuing influence of traditional social norms.

6.8 Singlehood and Marriage Avoidance

Singlehood is becoming a more visible feature of urban social life as individuals increasingly prioritize education, career development, financial stability, personal freedom and self-realization. The expansion of higher education and professional opportunities has contributed to a situation in which marriage is no longer necessarily regarded as the immediate or unavoidable outcome of adulthood. Some urban individuals consciously postpone marriage, while others choose to remain unmarried. This reflects a broader shift from marriage as a socially prescribed institution towards marriage as an individual decision shaped by personal aspirations and circumstances.

Marriage avoidance may also result from changing perceptions of relationships, rising expectations of compatibility, concerns about financial

responsibilities, or the desire to maintain autonomy. For some individuals, particularly those pursuing demanding careers, marriage may be perceived as potentially restricting mobility and personal choices. However, the acceptance of singlehood remains uneven in Indian society. Family pressure, cultural expectations and the social association of adulthood with marriage continue to influence individual choices. Thus, the emergence of singlehood in urban India represents an important dimension of individualization, while also revealing the continuing tension between personal autonomy and collective social expectations.

7. Kinship Networks in Urban Contexts: Continuity and Adaptation

In Indian civilization, kinship networks have always been very important, serving as a source of emotional support, financial stability, and a sense of social belonging. Changes in lifestyle, geographical isolation, and migration have had a profound impact on these networks in urban settings. Yet, family structures in modern India have shown signs of both persistence and change by adjusting to changing circumstances. People who move to cities in quest of better job opportunities or higher education often find themselves physically separated from their extended families. The practice of co-residence, which was characteristic of joint families, has diminished as a result of this physical separation, and everyday contact with family has decreased. Because of this, urban kinship relationships are shifting away from shared housing and toward more selective forms of engagement, such as occasional visits and virtual communication through digital technology. Family networks are nevertheless very important in times of crisis, even though they are less physically close. When times go tough, people often turn to their extended families for help with childcare, money, and emotional support. Festivals, religious observances, and weddings all play an important role in strengthening familial relationships by providing opportunities for community building and connection reaffirmation. Even in densely populated areas, these customs help people feel more at home. The dynamics of familial responsibilities and power have also changed as a result of urbanization. The traditional gender, age, and lineage hierarchies are being more and more discussed and worked out in practice. Family members under the age of 35, especially women and salaried workers, have more say in major decisions. Also, culturally significant demands like taking care of parents as they age and respecting elders are often met by more adaptable means like financial assistance or taking turns caring for loved ones. An increasingly vital resource for maintaining family ties in city settings is technology. Even when members of a family live far apart, modern technologies like video calling, social media, and cell phones keep them emotionally close and in constant contact. As a result of these online exchanges, kinship has taken on a new form, one that permits families to maintain a healthy mix of autonomy and participation. Thus, urbanization has not eliminated kinship ties in India but has transformed the ways in which they are maintained, negotiated, and experienced. The emerging pattern reflects a shift from traditional forms of physical co-residence toward

flexible, selective, and technology-mediated kinship relations that combine individual autonomy with continuing family obligations.

8. Broader Sociological Implications of Changing Family and Marriage Patterns

The changing patterns of family and marriage in contemporary urban India reflect a broader process of social transformation, individualization and modernization. The movement from predominantly joint and extended family arrangements towards nuclear, modified extended and increasingly flexible household forms has altered patterns of authority, decision-making, gender relations, and inter-generational interaction. Similarly, changes in mate selection, delayed marriage, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, digital partner selection, and greater acceptance of divorce indicate an increasing role of individual choice in intimate relationships. These developments have weakened some traditional forms of social control while creating new forms of negotiation between individual aspirations and family expectations.

At the same time, these changes should not be interpreted as a complete decline of traditional family and kinship systems. Rather, urban Indian families demonstrate continuity alongside adaptation. Kinship networks continue to provide emotional, economic, and social support, even when relatives live separately. Traditional considerations of caste, religion, class, and family status also continue to influence marriage decisions, although they may operate through new and less visible forms. The coexistence of traditional norms with emerging individualistic values makes the urban Indian family a dynamic institution in which continuity, change, negotiation and contradiction occur simultaneously.

Thus, from a broader sociological perspective, changing family and marriage patterns have implications for social stratification, gender equality, inter-generational relations, socialization and patterns of social integration. They create greater opportunities for personal autonomy and more egalitarian relationships but may also generate new challenges, including role conflict (work–family conflict), weakening of traditional support systems, loneliness, marital instability and tensions between generations. Therefore, the contemporary urban family should be understood not simply as an institution in decline but as one undergoing reorganization in response to urbanization, education, occupational mobility, technological change, and changing aspirations.

9. Conclusion

Urbanization, education, economic development, and evolving cultural values are all factors that have contributed to broader societal changes in India. These changes are reflected in the modification of family patterns in urban urban areas. According to the findings of this study, the conventional joint family structure has steadily given way to a wider variety of family configurations, such as nuclear homes and alternative living arrangements. On the other hand, this change does not indicate that the family is becoming less of a social institution; rather, it indicates that the

family is adapting to the new realities of urban life. Alterations in the patterns of marriage bring to light the growing significance of individual choice, emotional compatibility, and personal objectives. A reconfiguration of societal norms is occurring, particularly among metropolitan populations, as seen by the growing acceptability of love marriages, delayed marriages, and unions between people of different castes or religions. At the same time, the acceptance of one's family and thoughts of one's kinship continue to play a role in the decision-making process about marriage, which demonstrates the continued existence of tradition within contemporary circumstances. Despite the fact that they have been changed by spatial isolation and shifting lifestyles, kinship networks continue to play an important role in urban family life. The continued operation of support systems that are founded on extended family relationships is made possible by the utilization of flexible arrangements, digital communication, and selective engagement. Despite the fact that power structures are becoming more malleable, obligations directed toward parents and relatives continue to exist, particularly in regards to problems of care and social responsibility. One of the most effective ways to comprehend the shifting family structures in urban India is to view them as a process of continuity within change. It is a challenge for urban families to manage contemporary principles such as autonomy and equality while also keeping rooted in long-standing cultural norms. This dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity highlights the resiliency of the institution of the family as well as its capacity to develop in response to the alteration of society.

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Urban Sprawl in Nepal: Changed Dynamics of Market Relationships

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Abstract

Urban sprawl is a widely discussed social phenomenon in the arena of sociology. In Nepal, urbanization is expanding rapidly that brings about various social impact and changes. According to the population census, the urban population increased from 63.2% in 2011 to 66.8% in 2021. In contrast, the rural population decreased from 36.8% in 2011 to 33.9% in 2021. This trend of population reveals the increasing migration from rural to urban areas, which leads to urban sprawl and contributes to the expansion of cities. Urban sprawl refers to the rapid and uncontrolled expansion of urban areas into the surrounding lands, with increasing new residential, commercial, and industrial developments spreading outward from city centers. This transformation leads to social, economic, and environmental impact, such as traffic congestion, the reduction of agricultural land, higher pollution, and overburdened public services. This article is focused to study urban sprawl in Lalitpur district and its impact on historical marketplaces and the process of generating new market places by it. This article has used in-depth interviews with the old market keepers and new market keeper and some inputs from observation. It is found that Urban sprawl not only expands residential areas and increases the population by occupying additional land but also transforms traditional marketplaces by shifting commercial activity to newly developed areas. This shift reduces the viability of traditional markets, leading to their decline, while congestion rises in emerging market areas, creating new economic opportunities.

Keywords

Urban sprawl, Market place, Urban population, New residence.

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Urban Sprawl in Nepal: Changed Dynamics of Market Relationships

1. Introduction

The study of urbanization is a central focus in sociology which encompasses its development, structural dynamics, and sustainability. Urbanization is the social process which is produced by extensive industrialization and shaped by political systems and economic progress. It stimulates massive migration from rural areas to urban centers with shifts in production structures. Urbanization increases employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors, and also amplifies economic disparities. Additionally, urbanization enhances the services such as education, healthcare, and transportation that influences lifestyles, cultural norms, and social behaviours (UNDESA, 2018). Urbanization concentrates economic activities with the flow of transportation, trade, and information. Similarly, these urban centers incorporate advanced and basic services, technological development, intensified spatial and economic interactions, and relatively high population density (Sharma, 2003). The urban areas are evolved specially by three key factors: natural population increase, rural-to-urban migration, and the reclassification of settlements as urban. Ultimately, urbanization functions as a spatial response to broader economic structural transformations.

Urbanization and urban sprawl are among the most recent and rapidly expanding phenomena in Nepal. Despite their significance, they have yet to be thoroughly studied from a sociological perspective. Unlike the industrial-driven urbanization seen elsewhere, Nepal's urban growth is primarily fuelled by migration from rural areas. This shift leads to the loss of agricultural land, the expansion of roads and settlements, and an increased reliance on external sources such as remittances. As urban areas absorb surrounding suburban lands, land values rise, and rural boundaries diminish. Given the profound impacts of urban sprawl, a sociological examination of its trends and consequences is both timely and essential. This paper explores the recent patterns and effects of urbanization in Nepal, with a particular focus on the dynamics of urban sprawl.

2. Methodology

This research examines the effects of urban sprawl in Wards 10 and 11 of Godawari Municipality and its impact on the local market in Chapagaun. The study is based on in-depth interviews and direct observation. I conducted interviews with ten randomly selected shopkeepers out of approximately fifty shops in Chapagaun to gather insights into how urban expansion has influenced their businesses. The participants shared narratives about the past economic boom in Chapagaun and how urban sprawl has contributed to its decline. As a resident of the area, I have

personally observed both its periods of growth and its recent downturn. The data collected through observation and interviews were analyzed using narrative approaches to better understand and illustrate the impact of urban sprawl.

3. Sociology of Urban Sprawl

Urbanization has been a significant social phenomenon that has engaged sociologists for a long time, particularly since the Industrial Revolution (1750-1900). Following the Second World War, urbanization and urban sprawl emerged as major trends alongside globalization (Glaeser, 2011). While both urban expansion and urban sprawl are related to urban growth, they exhibit distinct characteristics. Urban expansion leads to population concentration in major centers, where high-rise apartments maximize land use efficiency. In contrast, urban sprawl involves the spread of development over larger areas, prompting people to move away from city centers in search of open residential spaces, resulting in lower population density. Due to the high cost of living in central areas, migrants from rural regions often settle in suburban zones, contributing to urban sprawl (Nechabya & Walsh, 2004). This phenomenon results in unproductive road congestion, increased vehicle emissions, loss of green spaces, disparities in access to public goods and services, rising residential segregation, and the emergence of poverty-stricken areas.

Urban sprawl lacks a singular, universally accepted definition, as its analysis spans diverse aspects—from visual design to the configuration of local streets. Despite this variation, several recurring features are commonly identified in scholarly literature. One key trait is low-density development, often characterized by single-family homes occupying relatively large plots of land, which can result in the loss of potentially productive areas. As urban expansion stretches outward, reliance on automobiles increases, even for short-distance travel. A defining aspect of sprawl is its scattered or fragmented nature, where development tends to leap over vacant parcels near urban cores in favor of more distant countryside locations (Torrens & Alberti, 2000). This leapfrogging growth pattern leads to inefficient and disorganized land use. Another notable feature is “ribbon” development—linear arrangements of residential or commercial buildings along roads extending from city centers (Tsai, 2005). Such layouts, particularly along rural highways, pose traffic safety risks and encourage automobile-dependent infrastructure, often marked by wide parking areas fronting fast-food outlets and big-box retail stores. Moreover, suburban-style residential expansion on the urban fringe gradually erodes the distinction between urban and rural areas (Heimlich & Anderson, 2001). This spread frequently results in the intrusion upon open spaces and agricultural land, contributing to the transformation of natural and rural landscapes into built environments.

Urban sprawl can be categorized into two models: monocentric and polycentric. The monocentric model is based on a single dominant city center where economic activities are concentrated. High land prices in the core push resident outward, leading to suburban expansion. As a result, more housing develops in

suburban areas, and people commute from these outskirts to the city center for work. In contrast, the polycentric model emerges when urban sprawl leads to the development of multiple centers in suburban areas, expanding toward edge cities (Henderson & Mitra, 1999; Anas, Arnott, & Small, 1998; McDonald & McMillan, 2000). This model promotes mixed-use development across different parts of the city, reducing dependence on a single central hub. As a result, commuting patterns become less centralized, with people living and working in various urban centers. People are drawn to the suburbs by their appealing features, while issues within the city center push individuals away from it.

Numerous scholars have identified several negative impacts of urban sprawl. These include the loss of open spaces, urban decay, and pollution of air and water. Additionally, sprawl leads to traffic congestion, low-density housing, fragmented developments, increased reliance on automobiles, and the separation of residential and work areas. Urban sprawl significantly influences economic activities in suburban areas. Scholars highlight key economic factors such as population growth, rising incomes, transportation costs, and agricultural land rent as primary drivers of urban expansion (Seto & Kaufmann, 2003; Li *et al.*, 2012). However, the functioning of market mechanisms and the interplay among these influencing factors remain under-explored. Beyond demographic shifts, urban sprawl brings challenges related to job accessibility, housing affordability, inequality, environmental concerns, and public health. The expansion of new business centers further reshapes suburban economies. Neoclassical theories emphasize the role of markets and prices in urban expansion, pointing to agricultural land values, commuting costs, rising incomes, population growth, transportation advancements, and consumer preferences as key contributors to sprawl, particularly in the United States (Brueckner & Fansler, 1983; Gordon & Richardson, 2000). Scholars have also applied neoclassical theories to developing countries, finding that similar economic factors drive urban expansion (Seto & Kaufmann, 2003; Li *et al.*, 2012). Many residents choose to move to sprawling suburban areas to escape the deteriorating conditions of central cities, characterized by higher taxes, crime rates, aging infrastructure, and underperforming public schools (Mieszkowski & Mills, 1993; Batchis, 2010).

4. Studies of Urbanization in Nepal

Research on urbanization in Nepal has, for the most part, lacked a sociological lens. Existing studies have mainly been confined to mapping urban growth patterns and highlighting impacts such as environmental degradation and certain infra-structural challenges (Dhakal, 2003; Haack, 2009; Bista, 2017; Chapagain, 2018; Singh & Dhakal, 2024; Kandel & Pokhrel, 2024). These studies highlighted that the rapid growth of unmanaged urbanization, population expansion, and rapid land transformation have contributed to the loss of vegetation and increased pollution. They also emphasized physical problems such as traffic congestion and the rising number of residential structures. Although these studies contribute some

understanding of urbanization in Nepal, they do not offer a comprehensive examination of urban sprawl and its wider social and economic consequences. This study serves as an initial effort to trace the course of urban development in Nepal. This section of the article makes an initial effort to trace the course of urban development in Nepal.

It is generally believed that the process of urbanization began during the Lichhavi period in the sixth century and continued through the Malla period in the 11th and 12th centuries. During the Lichhavi era, various Gramas (settlements) emerged as town centers within the Kathmandu Valley (Bajracharya, 1986). The Malla period marked a significant phase in the urban development of the valley, which became a prominent urban center of the time. Kathmandu Valley, during the Malla era, maintained active trade and economic relations with both India and China. Its vast fertile lands enabled high agricultural productivity, which in turn supported dense concentrations of economic activities. Local industries, including metalwork and textile production, thrived to meet the demands of flourishing trade and commerce. The valley was known not only for its economic prosperity but also for its rich cultural and domestic production. In recent times, urban sprawl has been gradually expanding in the Kathmandu Valley, with fertile peripheral lands increasingly being converted into residential areas. However, during the Rana period in the 19th century, urban growth across Nepal remained limited, largely confined to the Kathmandu Valley, where most economic activities were concentrated. Significant changes occurred after 1951, when Nepal was divided into five development regions, prompting the expansion of urban centers across each region. According to the 1952/54 population census, the term *Shahar* was used to denote urban areas, identifying just 10 urban settlements with populations slightly exceeding 5,000. With the introduction of democracy and decentralization, urban growth began to accelerate in various parts of the country.

The concept and definition of urbanization in Nepal have continued to evolve. Kathmandu, for instance, has progressed from a municipality to a metropolitan city. Today, Kathmandu District comprises one metropolitan city and ten surrounding municipalities, reflecting the ongoing transformation of urban administrative structures. According to the Local Government Operation Act, 2017, the classification of local areas into metropolitan, sub-metropolitan, or municipal levels is primarily based on population size and internal revenue. (LGOA, 2017). The population criteria vary by region. In mountain districts, an area must have at least 10,000 residents to be declared a municipality. In contrast, the requirement is much higher in the Kathmandu Valley, where a minimum population of 100,000 is needed. Other regions have different thresholds as well. In the hilly region, a population of at least 40,000 is required, while in the Terai region the minimum is 75,000. For the inner Terai, the requirement stands at 50,000. To qualify as a sub-metropolitan city, an area must have a population exceeding 200,000. For metropolitan status, the threshold is even higher, with a minimum of 500,000

residents. Income is another crucial factor. While municipalities in mountain districts must generate more than 1 million rupees in internal revenue, a metropolitan city must exceed 1 billion rupees (10,000 lakhs) in revenue to meet the standard. In short, a place must meet specific criteria for population and income to be officially recognized as a municipality.

Table-1: Number of Municipalities, and Urban Population as a Percentage of National Population in selected Years

Duration	Year of enactment	Number of new municipalities	Total number of urban municipalities	Urban population as percentage of total population of Nepal
Before 1980	Until 1981	—	23	6.2
1981-1990	1991	10	33	9.2
2001	2001	25	58	13.9
Political restructuring	2011	—	58	17.1
	2014 May	72	130	27.2
	2014 (Dec)	61	191	38.2
	2015 (Sept)	25	217	41.6
Nepal Federated with 7 provinces	2017 (Feb)	76	293	62.4
	Later 2017	—	293	66.08

Source: Bhattarai *et al.* (2023).

Recently, in Nepal, among the country's 753 local units, 293 were designated as municipalities in 2015, where 66.08% of the population resides (NSO, 2024). Until 1981, Nepal had only 23 municipalities, and this number increased to just 58 by 2011, indicating a relatively slow pace of urbanization before that period. However, urbanization accelerated rapidly after 2011. Nepal's urban population grew significantly—from 2.9% in 1954 to 13.9% in 2001. By that year, the number of municipalities had risen from 10 to 58. According to the 2011 census, only 17.1% of the total population lived in these 58 municipalities, underscoring the gradual but persistent trend of urban sprawl driven by rural-to-urban migration. The rise in the number of municipalities has led to an increase in urban populations. The establishment of new municipalities by government through political decisions highlights the rapid rural to urban migration in recent years. This trend is also reflected in the expansion of eleven sub-metropolitan cities. The major push factors behind rural outmigration include insecurity, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure such as schools and health services. In contrast, the key pull factors attracting people to urban areas are better security, improved living standards, and increased job prospects (Shrestha, 2019). Metropolitan cities like Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Pokhara, Bharatpur, Birgunj, and Biratnagar exemplify the patterns of urban sprawl.

5. Urban Sprawl in Lalitpur

The phenomenon of urban sprawl in Lalitpur District has yet to be thoroughly explored. Separated from Kathmandu by the Bagmati River, Lalitpur lies on its southern bank. The area first developed as an urban center during the Kirat dynasty in the third century BC, with significant expansion under the Lichhavis in the sixth century. During the Medieval period, the Malla rulers further enlarged the city. Key urban settlements at that time included Patan, Champapur, Harisiddhi, Bungamati, and Khokana. Historically, Lalitpur thrived as a prosperous town during the Malla dynasty, particularly between the 11th and 13th centuries, marked by economic and cultural flourishing. This rich history highlights that urbanization in Lalitpur has deep roots extending back centuries. Urban development continued during the Rana and Shah periods, gradually shaping the modern landscape. However, it was after the restoration of democracy that urban expansion accelerated significantly.

Table-2: Municipalities in Lalitpur District

S.No.	Name of Municipality	Population (Census 2001)	Population (Census 2011)	Population (Census 2021)
1.	Lalitpur Metropolitan City	200,020	292,848	294,098
2.	Mahalaxmi Municipality	35,802	62,624	123,116
3.	Godawari Municipality	66,240	80,378	97,633

Source: National Statistics Office (NSO, 2024).

At present, there are three municipalities in the Lalitpur district: Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Godawari Municipality, and Mahalaxmi Municipality. Among them, Lalitpur Metropolitan City has the highest population and population density, although it is not the largest in terms of land area. Godawari Municipality covers the largest land area, totalling 96.11 square kilometers, and has the second-highest population. Mahalaxmi Municipality is the smallest, both in terms of population and land area, occupying only 26.45 square kilometers. In terms of administrative divisions, Lalitpur Metropolitan City comprises 32 wards, Godawari Municipality has 14 wards, and Mahalaxmi Municipality includes 10 wards. These municipalities are expanding rapidly, with new houses being built regularly, reflecting characteristics of urban sprawl. My study focuses on the impact of urban sprawl in Godawari Municipality, with particular attention to the shifting intensity of market activities from the center to the peripheral areas.

6. Impact of Urban Sprawl in Chapagaun

This research focuses on Godawari Municipality, where I explore the urban sprawl in Tahakhel, Ward No. 10, and its impact on the Chapagaun market in Ward No. 11. Chapagaun, historically known as “Stharudranga” during the Lichhavi

period and “Champapur” in the Malla era (Maharjan, & Pokherel, 2020), is situated in Ward No. 11 of Godawari Municipality, Lalitpur District. Established in the 6th century, it served as a significant settlement and a southern gateway to the Kathmandu Valley, functioning as a key checkpoint for goods entering from the southern regions. In its prime, Chapagaun thrived as a bustling market hub, catering to travellers and traders with establishments such as tea houses, sweet shops, clothing stores, and hardware outlets. Goods from southern Lalitpur were collected here before being transported into the valley. With the advent of urban sprawl and infrastructure development, commercial activities began shifting towards neighboring areas like Pyangaun and Tahakhel in Ward No. 10. Migration from southern Lalitpur has driven the urban sprawl in Godawari Municipality, resulting in an increase in population, residential housing, and market areas. This expansion is part of a broader connection between Patan and the Kathmandu Valley. Moreover, the relocation of the bus park from Chapagaun to these areas has further accelerated this transition, leading to a decline in Chapagaun’s traditional market prominence. Population growth statistics reflect this transformation: from 9,600 residents in 1991, Chapagaun’s population increased to 12,448 in 2001 and 16,420 in 2011. Following its integration into Godawari Municipality in 2017, the population reached 19,389 by 2021 (NSO, 2024). An in-depth study involving interviews with ten local shop owners in Chapagaun was conducted to assess the impact of urban sprawl on the area’s economic and social dynamics. The findings highlight significant shifts in commercial activities and community interactions, which have collectively contributed to the erosion of Chapagaun’s historical and cultural heritage.

My findings reveal five major impacts of urban sprawl on the marketplace in Chapagaun. *First*, the marketplace is experiencing growing challenges, accompanied by a generally pessimistic outlook for its future. *Second*, despite these difficulties, the market continues to persist, primarily due to its historical significance and deep-rooted presence in the community. *Third*, some shopkeepers have opened branches in newer market areas in an effort to attract more customers. *Fourth*, many property owners in the market area have alternative residences elsewhere. *Fifth*, the roads have become increasingly congested, making vehicle movement more difficult. During my visit to Chapagaun on a weekday after 4 PM, a time typically associated with peak shopping activity, I observed a stark decline in foot traffic. The market was nearly deserted, with only a few people present. Most shopkeepers were either chatting among themselves or sitting idly in their shops. This is in sharp contrast to the past, when the marketplace was lively and crowded with people from southern Lalitpur who came to shop, socialize, and rest.

In Chapagaun, only a handful of tea and snack shops remain in operation, and even these are struggling to sustain their businesses. I visited a small, timeworn tea shop that has been running for 45 years—a place I used to visit with my father during childhood, along with many other regular customers. After the original owner passed

away, his unmarried daughter took over the business. When I arrived for a conversation, she was knitting a woollen item—a quiet reflection of the idle hours she now faces. I ordered a cup of black tea, and we began to talk. She shared her memories and insights about how urban sprawl has affected her livelihood. When the bus park was located in Chapagaun, her shop used to be bustling with customers who stopped by for tea and snacks. Business was so brisk it was hard to keep up with the demand. But after the bus park was relocated to Pyangaun, farther from Chapagaun, foot traffic decreased sharply, and with it, their income. Today, only a few local residents stop by occasionally. Despite the slowdown, she still prepares traditional snacks like *Jerri* and *Sel Roti*, maintaining a link to the shop's past. On special occasions such as Father's Day, Mother's Day, and local festivals, she makes more sweets to sell, which helps offset some of the losses. On ordinary days, however, the shop serves more as a way to pass the time than as a reliable source of income.

Another sweet shop, run by a 77-year-old man, offered a glimpse into the past when Chapagaun served as the commercial hub for southern Lalitpur and even parts of Makawanpur. Recalling those vibrant times, he shared:

I have stopped serving snacks and tea for people to sit and eat. There's hardly anyone to clean the used plates. In the past, I used to collect buffalo milk and make *khuwa*. I made various sweets, and the shop was always full of people. But ever since the market shifted to Pyangaun, sales have dropped drastically. Even the traditional Newar sweet-makers, the *Rajkarnikars*, have abandoned their ancestral profession. My son now works in real estate.

His account reflects a broader trend: the decline of Chapagaun's traditional market and a shift in livelihoods as people leave behind age-old occupations in search of more sustainable alternatives. A similar sentiment was echoed by another shopkeeper, aged 76, who appeared ready to close his business. He once enjoyed a large flow of customers coming to buy vegetables, but has now reduced his stock significantly, stating that it is increasingly difficult to keep the shop running. Covering rent has become a burden. His wife, who was also present during my visit, mentioned that he hesitates to close the shop entirely, as it helps him manage small daily expenses like tea and cigarettes. They have added some potted plants to the storefront and cut down on vegetable items. During my visit, both appeared visibly frustrated and disheartened.

An older cloth shop nearby, however, appears to be doing relatively well. When I visited, the owner was busy attending to several customers. He explained that business tends to improve seasonally, especially during marriage ceremonies and *Bratabandha* rituals, when people from nearby villages come to purchase clothing. Although there are several cloth shops in Chapagaun, many of them remain deserted for most of the day, with shopkeepers sitting idly, chatting among themselves, and waiting for customers. I also entered a small grocery shop where only a limited selection of goods was on display. The shopkeeper, a 55-year-old

man, sat idle but was open to conversation. He shared both memories of the past and observations about the present. He said:

Now the market is running at just one percent of what it used to be. It was once vibrant. I used to make over fifty thousand rupees in a single day. People would stop here to rest because the bus stand was located nearby. Now, the road is too narrow, and people go straight home without stopping. I'm only continuing the shop because it has been in operation for 30 years.

This statement illustrates not only the dramatic decline in consumer traffic and income but also the emotional attachment and sense of duty that ties some shopkeepers to their businesses despite economic loss. This testimony reflects a broader trend of market displacement and economic marginalization experienced by traditional shops. The relocation of transport hubs, changing mobility patterns, and degraded infrastructure have all contributed to diminishing footfall in the old market. This frustration reveals the emotional toll and perceived inevitability of decline, further underscoring how urban sprawl disrupts not just economic systems but the social fabric and continuity of place-based livelihoods. Ultimately, urban sprawl not only reshapes population distribution but also reconfigures the spatial and economic dynamics of market systems, contributing to the erosion of traditional commercial centers and altering local economic behaviour.

The shopkeepers in Chapagaun also spoke about their long-standing relationships with customers, ties that persist even today. Some shops continue to attract customers through these older networks, reflecting what Granovetter (1985) refers to as "market embeddedness". For instance, the owner of a medical shop mentioned that customers still come to him because it is an old, trusted establishment. Similarly, a shopkeeper who sells utensils noted that people seek out his store for specific religious items that are hard to find elsewhere. One shopkeeper shared:

We have long-standing relationships with people from the nearby hilly areas. Sometimes, we even allow them to buy on credit. I keep my shop open all day just waiting for their arrival. These days, markets are opening everywhere, and people have more options and more money. Still, some of them come back to me.

This statement reflects how traditional market ties continue to support small businesses, even as such relationships gradually weaken due to changing consumer behaviour and expanding alternatives. It was also observed that some shopkeepers have moved their businesses to Pyangaun, where commercial activity is now more concentrated. In a few cases, such as a shop selling watches and sound systems, branches have been opened in both Chapagaun and Pyangaun. However, such dual operations are rare.

Chapagaun remains an old market area, but its infrastructure is increasingly inadequate. The roads are narrow, and many roadside houses are built with

traditional mud and brick, featuring small rooms. The owners of these houses have often constructed new residences behind their original homes or in nearby areas, contributing to the urban sprawl around Chapagaun. Another shopkeeper shared:

I've been running this shop for a long time, but it's no longer doing well. I've already opened a new shop for my son elsewhere. I'll stay here until this shop stops functioning completely. This space belongs to a relative, so the rent is low. A few customers still come, but the road is too narrow for people to stop and shop easily.

These narratives reveal not only the persistence of traditional market relationships but also the gradual transformation of urban space in Chapagaun due to shifting commercial centers and infrastructure constraints. A once-thriving grocery store in Chapagaun has now closed its doors. Another long-standing grocery shop in the same row continues to operate, but it is barely sustaining itself. Similarly, local television and watch shops are struggling to survive. A few vegetable shops remain, supported primarily by nearby residents. Notably, ten newly constructed market shutters were opened for rent in Chapagaun a few months ago, but none have been occupied highlighting the declining commercial viability of the area.

In contrast, a vibrant new market corridor has emerged along the stretch from Pyangaun to Tahakhel, spanning over a kilometer. This area has witnessed the establishment of numerous large and modern shops, including clothing showrooms, mobile phone outlets, gold jewelry stores, major hardware businesses, and branches of several prominent banks. The growing concentration of commerce and foot traffic has turned this area into a bustling economic hub. Goods from southern Lalitpur are now brought here for distribution, and many products are dispatched from this location as well. These developments clearly indicate the rise of Tahakhel as a flourishing new market center, drawing business away from the traditional core of Chapagaun.

7. Conclusion

This study concludes that urban sprawl has multifaceted impacts, one of the most significant being the shifting of market activities. In Chapagaun, the number of residential houses is increasing, expanding over a larger area and consuming previously open spaces. As Nechyba and Walsh (2004) note, high living costs in central urban areas often push rural migrants toward suburban zones, contributing to urban sprawl. This process encourages the development of a polycentric urban model, where new centers emerge on the periphery, evolving into "edge cities" (Henderson & Mitra, 1999; Anas, Arnott, & Small, 1998; McDonald & McMillan, 2000). In this context, Pyangaun has become a new commercial hub within the expanding urban landscape of Chapagaun.

The rise of these new centers has led to the decline of the traditional market in Chapagaun. Consumer flow to the old market has diminished, resulting in reduced income for shopkeepers, with some businesses on the verge of closure. The

once-thriving marketplace is losing its potential, and no significant new investments or market revitalization efforts are apparent. However, due to long-standing social and economic linkages with surrounding rural communities, some residents still frequent the old market. This pattern reflects Granovetter's (1985) concept of market embeddedness, emphasizing the importance of social networks in shaping market behaviour.

Urban sprawl has also created new opportunities, as some businesses from the old market have relocated or expanded into less congested areas. The older sections of Chapagaun, characterized by narrow roads, limited space, and aging infrastructure, have increasingly pushed property owners to seek alternative sites for both residential and commercial purposes. Ultimately, urban sprawl not only reshapes population distribution but also reconfigures the spatial and economic dynamics of market systems, contributing to the decline of traditional commercial centers and altering local economic behaviour.

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Cultural Exchange Between India and Sri Lanka: Through the Cinematic Lens

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Abstract

Hindi cinema, one of the world's most prolific film industries, has long transcended national borders, serving as a dynamic vehicle of soft power and cultural exchange. This article examines the multidimensional relationship between Hindi films and the cultural-diplomatic landscape shared by India and Sri Lanka, bound by historical, religious, linguistic, and geographical proximities. Drawing on Joseph Nye's (1990, 2004) conceptual framework of soft power, alongside theories of cultural exchange, media imperialism, and transnational cinema, this study traces the trajectory of Hindi film reception in Sri Lanka. It interrogates how cinematic narratives, aesthetic traditions, and popular cultural symbols mediate cross-border identity formation, shared imaginaries, and bilateral understanding. This research, which looks beyond national boundaries, aims to carefully and critically investigate how and to what degree soft power, such as cinema, has contributed to cultural exchange between India and Sri Lanka. The argument made in this paper is that video platforms can facilitate cultural exchanges between Sri Lanka and India. This paper also examines the connection between films shot in Sri Lanka, which help to promote Sri Lanka's beautiful landscapes and boost tourism and the interconnectivity of South Asians.

Keywords

Geopolitical relations, Film tourism, Indian cinema, Soft power.

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Cultural Exchange Between India and Sri Lanka: Through the Cinematic Lens

1. Introduction

This study investigates the political and cultural exchange between two regions of the Indian Ocean, India and Sri Lanka, through films. This paper attempts to shed light on the numerous film networks and activities that have taken place on both sides of the Palk Strait. India and Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) have a long history of Socio-cultural, religious, and economic ties dating back to early times due to their geographical proximity and shared historical, religious, and linguistic connections. The cultural exchange between these two countries has been significant and has influenced various aspects of their societies, including language, religion, music, dance, art, architecture, cuisine, and literature. However, within South Asia itself, Hindi films occupy a uniquely influential position, operating across linguistic, ethnic, and national boundaries to generate shared aesthetic experiences and cultural identifications that formal diplomacy rarely achieves with comparable intimacy or emotional resonance. The two nations share deep civilizational ties rooted in Buddhist heritage, Sanskrit textual traditions, and ancient trade routes that predate modern nation-states by millennia.

India and Sri Lanka have a strong history of cultural exchanges. Buddhism originated in ancient times in India and spread to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE. Rev. Mahinda, the son of Emperor Asoka the Great. He initiated the order of the monks in Sri Lanka. Later, Sanghamitta Theri also followed his brother, Rev. Mahinda, and she started the order of Buddhist nuns. The arrival of Rev. Mahinda in Sri Lanka is documented in the chronicle Mahavamsa and also mentioned in a rock inscription found in Amaparai after his departure. Buddhism has since been the fountainhead of Sinhalese literature. The teachings of Lord Buddha and Buddhist philosophy have had a profound impact on both countries. Sri Lanka is home to many ancient Buddhist temples and sacred sites, some of which have been influenced by Indian architectural styles. Tamil is widely spoken in India and Sri Lanka. Tamil literature and poetry have been shared between the two countries for centuries. Additionally, Sanskrit, the ancient Language of India, has influenced the development of languages like Sinhala and Pali in Sri Lanka. Indian classical music and dance forms, such as *Bharatanatyam*, *Kathak*, and Carnatic music, have influenced Sri Lankan traditional music and dance. There are also unique Sri Lankan dance forms, such as *Kandyan* dance, which have similarities to certain Indian dance styles. However, these two countries have a long relationship related to entertainment and politics.

2. Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

From the earliest times, international relations in political writings are mostly defined on the basis of power, including in the writings of Thucydides and Machiavelli. Joseph Nye also argued that “power has been central, and it remains perhaps the most important and least understood concept in political theory.” According to Robert A. Dahl, “power is the ability for one actor to influence the actions of another actor that would not have occurred otherwise”. Keeping in mind the complexities of defining power, the concept of soft power, introduced and established by Joseph Nye, holds that “the capacity to shape others’ preferences and behaviours through attraction rather than coercion” is a distinct and consequential dimension of international power. Nye (2004) identifies “three primary sources of a country’s soft power: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)”. Culture, in Nye’s formulation, encompasses both high culture, art, literature, education and popular culture. According to him, the global reach of the United States of America’s popular culture, including music, television and film, is a structural asset of American foreign policy throughout the postwar era, generating reservoirs of trust and identification that have facilitated diplomatic objectives in ways that military or economic instruments are not able to fulfil. Subsequent writers have extended, refined, and critiqued Nye’s framework in productive ways. Bound and Smewing (2010) emphasize that “cultural diplomacy, the deliberate deployment of cultural resources in the service of foreign policy, must be distinguished from the broader, more diffuse operation of soft power through the organic international circulation of cultural products”. The distinction is analytically significant: while the Indian state has progressively developed institutional mechanisms for cultural diplomacy, including the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the promotion of yoga, classical music, and cinema internationally, the popular reception of Hindi films in Sri Lanka has historically preceded and often exceeded the reach of state-directed cultural programming. This suggests that the soft power generated by Hindi cinema in Sri Lanka operates substantially through market-driven cultural circulation rather than deliberate state strategy, a distinction that Nye himself acknowledges when noting that soft power is often produced by civil society and private actors rather than governments.

Zaharna and Cull have further developed the concept of “public diplomacy” as a field that explicitly incorporates media and cultural production as instruments of international communication. Cull’s taxonomy of public diplomacy “activities such as listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting provide a useful analytical vocabulary for disaggregating the different ways in which Hindi cinema functions in the India-Sri Lanka cultural exchange”. Cinematic exchange encompasses cultural diplomacy in the form of film festivals and co-productions, but also involves elements of

international broadcasting through satellite and streaming platforms, and functions as a mode of what Cull calls “listening” when Indian film makers incorporate Sri Lankan settings, characters, or themes.

3. Globalization and Soft Power

In the historical context of Indo-Sri Lankan cultural, social and political relations, this study seeks to analyze cinema as a cultural and political articulation of diplomacy between these countries. The Hindi cinema Industry has a long history of existence, but it was because of globalization that these film “productions became purposefully accessible internationally”. The popular definition of globalization is “a process that exacerbates the interconnection between countries, but this definition often overlooks its cultural impact”. After the progressive expansion of globalization, Bombay-centric industry is a leading film industry in terms of film production, and the United States leads in revenue. The pattern of exploiting “soft power as a national instrument is not unique to India, nor is the film industry’s use for this purpose; many countries have integrated this strategy into their policies”. This highlights the possible influence of global soft power enterprises. Consequently, cinema and soft power maintain a symbiotic relationship, wherein filmic narratives serve as a primary vehicle for the exercise of cultural influence. Their association occurs in a “progressively global world and has consequently come to know no boundaries.” After the 1990s, the Hindi film industry producers not only deliberately went for location scouting in different parts of the world but also started exploring screens and markets there. R. B. Mehta also mentions that even “though the USA remains at the forefront of soft power, Asian powers have started to do the same. This shows how soft power is a tool for most economic global powers, specifically for India, as its international counterparts also prioritize this strategy”. The investment also increased in the use of soft power with the neighbouring countries. One of the most enduring and significant channels of cultural exchange between India and Sri Lanka through Hindi cinema is the shared religious and mythological vocabulary that animates many Hindi films, particularly those produced before the liberalisation period of the 1990s.

The liberalization of South Asian media markets in the 1990s, and the consequent proliferation of satellite television channels broadcasting Hindi film content continuously, transformed the modalities and intensity of Hindi cinema’s presence in Sri Lanka. The introduction of channels such as Zee TV, Sony Entertainment Television, Star Plus, and subsequently dedicated film channels such as Zee Cinema and Sony MAX, dramatically expanded Hindi film access among Sri Lankan audiences who had previously been dependent on theatrical exhibition or limited state television broadcasting. This expansion was further accelerated in the 2000s and 2010s by the penetration of digital platforms, including streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, SonyLIV, and Hotstar/Disney+, which now make the entire corpus of Hindi cinema available on demand to Sri Lankan audiences with broadband connectivity.

The digital era has also enabled new forms of participatory audience engagement with Hindi cinema in Sri Lanka, including fan communities organized through social media platforms, online commentary and criticism in Sinhala and English, and the participation of Sri Lankan audiences in the global fandoms of Hindi film stars. Research on media consumption patterns in South Asia suggests that Hindi film content consistently ranks among the most-consumed entertainment media in Sri Lanka, with survey data indicating high levels of familiarity with current Hindi films, stars, and music among both Sinhalese and Tamil-speaking Sri Lankan youth.

So, South Asian countries also feel the importance of soft power. Sri Lanka, being a neighbouring country of India, has been significantly influenced by Indian cinema. The first Indian film screened in Sri Lanka was in 1937, and since then, Indian Hindi films have become a significant part of Sri Lankan culture. The popularity of Indian cinema in Sri Lanka can be ascribed to numerous factors, such as shared cultural heritage, language, and religion.

4. Cultural Exchange

This study focuses on cultural exchange, and it is significant to understand the term culture. Edward W. Said mentions that ‘culture’ means two things in particular. “First, it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. Second, ‘culture’ is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought.” According to Romila Thapar, “Culture can include at least three activities: to artificially grow microscopic organisms; to improve and refine the customs, manners and activities of one’s life; to give attention to the mind as part of what goes into the making of what we call civilization, or what was thought to be the highest culture.” Raymond Williams has argued that culture is a way of life. In this context, a state that wants to nurture civilized citizens for the nation must prioritize culture. People can also learn about any country’s customs and practices by watching films. Therefore, the entertainment industry is one of the important tools of culture.

Throughout history, despite not always being obvious, there have been links between the state and the entertainment sector. From Roman politicians’ use of amphitheatres for self-glorification. The entertainment industry, including cinema and music, has seldom been free of state institutional intervention and censorship. The study of film studies focuses on the differences between popular and historical films. These writings “warn us against searching for a ‘truthful’ or ‘accurate’ rendition of the past in historicals. Instead, they reiterate that popular films have a unique relationship with history. Hence, these films based on history recreate history for the entertainment of the people.” The entertainment industry has a

significant bearing on the idea of identity. Language is an essential component of the film industry, as with the advent of sound and dialogue, communication with the audience is crucial. Akansha Chandra writes, “Language expresses and constructs identities, often taking precedence over nationalism, religion, gender, and race in defining one’s identity. Within national boundaries, collective and individual identities are often shaped by membership in regional groups. Particularly in South Asia, the tongue has proven more powerful than a flag.” In this context, one can understand the significance of cinema in diverse ways.

5. The Emergence of Sri Lankan Cinema

Sri Lanka has a wonderful cinematic history dating back to the early 20th century. The first film exhibition in Sri Lanka took place in 1903, with the screening of short silent films. In the years that followed, cinema grew in popularity, and the first Sinhalese film was screened in 1947. Sri Lankan cinema emerged in the 1940s and has undergone various phases of development. The early films were heavily influenced by Indian cinema, and many Indian film technicians worked on Sri Lankan films. However, Sri Lankan cinema soon developed its own identity, with filmmakers exploring themes such as politics, social issues, and culture. The 1950s and 1960s produced many Sinhalese films inspired by Indian cinema. These films were often adaptations of Indian movies with a Sri Lankan twist. The journey began in the 1950s with calls from Sinhala ‘cultural patriots’ for a more reliable Sinhala- language films. Within this complex diplomatic landscape, cultural exchange through Hindi cinema has performed a distinctive bridging function, maintaining popular affective connections between the two societies during periods of official governmental friction. Vilasnee Tampoe-Hautin noted that “the final paradox in the study of cinema in Ceylon is the high percentage of cross-cultural frequentation. Statistics reveal that the entertainment potential of a film, whatever language or culture it conveys, carries more weight for the viewer than the intellectual, religious and ideological barriers put up by conservative opponents of popular cinema.”

In 1972, the cinema industry was taken under state administration with the formation of the State Film Corporation. This change in the cinema industry was also mentioned by its chairman, D.B. Nihalsingha: “the nationalization of the Sri Lankan film industry enjoyed only partial success”. In the 1980s, Sri Lankan cinema returned to the private sector and became accessible to the rest of the globe. The arrival of digital technology has revolutionized the film industry, making film production and distribution more accessible and affordable. The responsibility to democratize and popularize music, song and cinema lies with the artists; to do so, they should focus on creating an audience of responsible content consumers. Rajiv Sangle suggested that “this obligation also safeguards the ability to leverage soft power lies primarily with the people, and this has been the case for India so far. When overtly recognised by the state, soft power does not sustain its ‘soft’ allure.”

6. Cultural Exchange through Cinema

Indian films, particularly those from the Hindi film industry, commonly known as Bollywood films, are widely watched in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan actors and actresses have also gained popularity in India. The film and television content exchange has significantly enhanced the cultural experience between India and Sri Lanka. Here are some key points regarding the film and television exchange between the two countries.

Nevertheless, it is logical to say that “India has developed an industry of its own: Bollywood. Bollywood is a combination of the words Hollywood and Bombay (now Mumbai), where this industry grew.” Indian films, particularly movies, have a massive following in Sri Lanka. Many Bollywood stars have a substantial fan base in Sri Lanka. Bollywood films are often screened in Sri Lankan theatres, and the colourful song and dance sequences and the dramatic storytelling have captivated Sri Lankan audiences. Hindi films are often screened in Sri Lankan cinemas, allowing Sri Lankan audiences to experience Indian culture, language, and storytelling. This exposure to Hindi films has increased interest in Indian cinema and its various aspects. Sri Lankan actress Jacqueline Fernandez has acted in many Hindi films mentions in an interview that “Hindi films are very huge here; my father actually learnt Hindi by just watching Hindi films. That is how big it is here. Most people here prefer watching a Hindi film to an English film, even though English is widely spoken here.”

Over the years, there have been collaborations between Indian and Sri Lankan actors, directors, and technicians in the Hindi film industry. Sri Lankan actors have appeared in Bollywood films, while Indian film makers have explored opportunities to work with Sri Lankan talents. These collaborations have further reinforced the cultural ties between the two countries. Notably, veteran Sri Lankan actor Gamini Fonseka achieved recognition in Indian cinema and acted in a few Bollywood films. Additionally, Jacqueline Fernandez has gained popularity in Bollywood and has appeared in numerous Hindi films. Recently, a famous actress in stage shows and theatre, Rashiprabha Sandeepani, debuted in Hindi films.

Hindi films are immensely popular in Sri Lanka and have a large audience. These films have created a bridge between the two cultures, often incorporating Sri Lankan actors, themes, and music. More than 100 films were shot in different locations in Sri Lanka. Notable examples of this cultural exchange are the Bollywood classic *Mera Naam Joker* (1965), filmed in Sri Lanka. This tradition continued, and Several Bollywood films have recently been shot in Sri Lanka, including *Sooryavansham* (1999), *Water* (2005), *Bachna Ae Haseeno* (2008), *Ready* (2011) and *Bombay Velvet* (2015). The major cinematography of *Bombay Velvet* was shot in Sri Lanka. The film was shot at Sri Lanka’s Ranmihitenna Mahinda Rajapaksa National Tele Cinema Park, Hambantota, in September 2013. The film’s shooting was also completed in different regions of Sri Lanka, such as

Colombo, Galle and Pasikudah. Recently, the ‘Over-the-Top’ (OTT) series *The Night Manager* was shot in Sri Lanka. These films have helped showcase Sri Lanka’s beauty to Indian audiences and have helped to increase tourism between the two countries.

Hindi films often feature picturesque locations in India, attracting Indian filmmakers and tourists alike. With its beautiful landscapes, Sri Lanka has also become a favoured shooting location for Bollywood films. This has increased the number of Indian tourists visiting Sri Lanka and vice versa, contributing to cultural interactions between the two nations. In this context, films also help a nation’s economy through tourism, an impact of soft power. Concerning soft power tools, according to Nye, “a country’s soft power exists primarily in three elements: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policy.” Bollywood is part of the culture category in the first element. It is also shown when the Sri Lanka Film Tourism delegation, containing a representative from the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) and six film producers, notably including veteran producer Chandran Rathnam, attended as stakeholders in the ‘India International Film Tourism Conclave’ (IIFTC), a multilateral conference convened in Mumbai during 21-23 February 2019. Sri Lanka Consulate General in Mumbai arranged an exclusive discussion with ‘Dharma Productions’, Mumbai’s most prominent film production house.

In contemporary times, there have been many occasions where state functions are enhanced by the expression and appreciation of significant cultural associations through cinema, art and music. This musical exchange illustrates the reciprocal, if asymmetric, character of cultural flows between India and Sri Lanka: while the direction of influence runs predominantly from India to Sri Lanka by virtue of the relative scale and commercial power of the Hindi film industry, Sri Lankan musical and aesthetic contributions have also found their way into the broader South Asian cultural commons. The blockbuster success of “*Manike Mage Hithe*” by Yohani is one of the defining moments for “the enrichment and upliftment of music and art, reviving cross-cultural and ancient ties that form a more significant identity of the sub-continent to which people still subjectively relate even though such an identity of oneness is not formally defined”. The reception of the above song also shows that, for music and songs, the Bombay film industry is now looking towards the south as compared to its normal dependency on the west side of the nation.

7. Collaborative Projects

India saw value in joining forces for entertainment; co-production is the right choice. This way, co-produced films would not be scrutinized by the Sri Lankan audience, as they would be believed to be Sri Lankan and Indian equally. The revenues from films would increase locally, as overseas producers get a smaller percentage than homegrown ones. Co-productions between India and Sri Lanka have been an essential aspect of the cultural exchange between these two countries.

Co-productions have enabled film makers from both countries to collaborate and learn from each other. The first Indo-Sri Lankan co-production was *Nidhanaya* (1972), directed by Lester James Peries, which was a critical and commercial success. Such collaborations facilitate artistic exchanges and foster cultural ties. For instance, the film *A Flying Jatt* (2016), starring Tiger Shroff and directed by Remo D'Souza, was a joint production between Indian and Sri Lankan production companies.

Indian Hindi Movies are also remade in Sri Lanka, like *Hera Pheri* (2000) as *Raja Horu* (2013), and *Jab We Met* (2007) as *Suwanda Denuna Jeewithe* (2010), and *Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.* (2003) as *Doctor Nawariyan* (2017). Many other Tamil movies have also been remade into Sinhalese. These Sinhalese remakes of Hindi movies help people better comprehend each other's cultural traditions by exposing them to a shared cultural experience.

Film festivals serve as platforms for showcasing films from both countries, promoting cross-cultural understanding. Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo, hosted the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) awards in June 2010. IIFA Brand Ambassador Amitabh Bachchan said, "We need to develop a greater association between Sri Lankan and Indian cinema. We can form a strong force, representing this part of the world in world cinema." The Indian Film Festival of Sri Lanka and the Colombo International Film Festival feature a wide range of Indian films, including Bollywood productions, while providing a platform for Sri Lankan filmmakers to showcase their work in India.

The Film Heritage Foundation and the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) initiated a collaborative rescue initiative in Sri Lanka, establishing institutional partnerships grounded in sustained cultural engagement. The above relationship originated approximately eight years prior, when Dammith Fonseka, son of the acclaimed Sri Lankan actor Gamini Fonseka, participated in the inaugural Film Preservation and Restoration School convened in Mumbai in 2015 under the auspices of a FIAF scholarship. The preservation curriculum further facilitated transnational participation, incorporating representatives from the National Archives of Sri Lanka, thereby establishing a framework for multilateral knowledge exchange and professional capacity-building across South Asian film archival institutions. Dammith was particularly interested in learning how to preserve his father's legacy for posterity. These collaborations indicate that soft power can spread through unexpected channels. Hard power and soft power have an interdependent relationship. Nye believes, for example, that "using English as a lingua franca, although initially cultural, is now a clear example of hard power, while using one's armed forces for humanitarian services is soft power". The dichotomy between hard power and soft power is analytically useful as a first-order categorization, but it obscures the deeper truth that these two forms of power are mutually constitutive. Hard power provides the structural credibility, the material

reach, and the enforcement capacity without which soft power appeals would be weightless. Soft power supplies, like music and films, legitimize narrative, the normative architecture, and the alliance-building capital without which hard power becomes unsustainable and self-undermining.

8. The Future of the Cultural Exchange Between India and Sri Lanka

Nye identifies soft power as a means of shaping 'others' preferences. However, it is very influential in that it can help achieve foreign policy diplomatic purposes. At the opening ceremony of the 67th annual convention of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), held at the historic Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BIMCH), the President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, suggested making the BIMSTEC region a single "borderless" tourism area. If all the members accept his suggestions, cultural exchange between India and Sri Lanka through films can continue and evolve in new and exciting ways. Co-productions, film festivals, and other initiatives will continue to promote cultural exchange and foster collaboration between filmmakers from both countries.

9. Conclusion

This research study has examined the role of Hindi cinema as a medium of cultural exchange and soft power in the India-Sri Lanka bilateral relationship, tracing the historical trajectory of Hindi film reception in Sri Lanka, analyzing specific dimensions of cinematic cultural exchange, and exploring the implications of this exchange for diplomatic relations. In conclusion, cultural exchanges between the two Indian Ocean countries can contribute to improvement in South Asia. Cinema has significantly influenced the cultural relations between India and Sri Lanka. Indian cinema has had a substantial impact on its Sri Lankan counterpart, and the latter has also influenced India. As the film industries in both countries continue to grow, one can expect to see more collaborations and exchanges. Increasing interaction between the two countries will help not only with people-to-people contact but also in terms of economic possibilities between the two countries. It is also felt that the interaction of India and Sri Lanka in every sphere, such as cultural, economic and political has increased. Looking ahead, the Sri Lankan film industry can expand its horizons to explore the beautiful landscapes in India. This could give the Sri Lankan people further exposure to Indian culture and heritage, thus promoting bilateral relations and eventually leading to better political and economic ties between the two countries. Moreover, this interaction also reflects the films' soft power and the geopolitical significance of cinema. Thus, one can argue that soft power influences the hard power of any country and can enhance it to a greater extent.

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**Perfectionism and Self-efficacy among
Working Young Adults in Kathmandu,
Nepal: A Cross-sectional Study**

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Abstract

Perfectionism and self-efficacy are important psychological constructs influencing self-evaluation, standards, and coping with life's demands. However, their relationship remains insufficiently understood outside Western populations, particularly among working young adults in Nepal, where familial, social, and cultural pressures may shape these constructs differently. This study examined the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy among working young adults in Kathmandu, Nepal. A cross-sectional design was employed with a convenience sample of 95 participants aged 18–26 years. The Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) and General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) measured perfectionism and self-efficacy, respectively. Findings showed that 83.2% of participants exhibited maladaptive perfectionist tendencies and 64.2% reported low self-efficacy. Pearson correlation revealed a negligible, statistically non-significant relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy ($r = .025$, $p = .812$). Employment status was significantly associated with self-efficacy ($\chi^2 = 6.071$, $p = .023$), while gender and education level were not significantly associated with either variable. Binary logistic regression identified employment status ($OR = 0.282$, $p = .013$) and gender ($OR = 3.339$, $p = .023$) as significant predictors of self-efficacy, while no socio-demographic variable significantly predicted perfectionism. The findings suggest that although maladaptive perfectionism and low self-efficacy are prevalent, they are not linearly related. Other contextual and psychological factors may more strongly influence self-efficacy. The study underscores the need for culturally sensitive interventions and further research in the Nepali context.

Keywords

Perfectionism, Adaptive, Maladaptive, Self-efficacy, Working young adults.

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Perfectionism and Self-efficacy among Working Young Adults in Kathmandu, Nepal: A Cross-sectional Study

1. Introduction

Perfectionism refers to behaviours where an individual is overly critical of self-evaluations, has a fear of failing, excessively worries over mistakes, and sets unrealistic standards. The extreme desire to seem perfect is termed as perfectionism and in most cases, it has adverse emotional causations (Campbell, 2023). Individuals who have such odd behaviours to make themselves seem faultless are called perfectionists. Some of the indicators of perfectionism in an individual include: setting unrealistically high expectations, quick to find fault, overly critical of mistakes, possess fear of failure, shrug off compliments, forget to celebrate their success, etc. (Psychology Today, 2025). People with perfectionist tendencies experience various issues such as stress, relationship problems, obsessive compulsive tendencies, etc. Perfectionist behaviour can mainly be of two types: Adaptive perfectionism and Maladaptive perfectionism

Self-efficacy is the conviction that one can carry out tasks and handle future circumstances with success. According to Bandura (1977a), self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. It is an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments. It influences the way individuals handle objectives, duties and problems. It is also an expression of the confidence in having the ability to exercise control over personal motivation, behaviour, and social surroundings (Carey & Forsyth, 2009).

Past researches have provided valuable insights about the detrimental effects that perfectionist tendencies can have on people's self-efficacy, however they did not show any direct relation on perfectionism and self-efficacy. In the context of Nepal, especially among working young adults, this relationship has remained unexplored.

2. Theoretical Review

This study applied Multidimensional Theory of Perfectionism which defines perfectionism as a multifaceted personality characteristic comprising three components: Self-Oriented Perfectionism, Other-Oriented Perfectionism and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (Lippman, 2025). As its name suggests, Self-Oriented Perfectionists set specific standards for themselves, Other-Oriented Perfectionism concerns perfectionist standards directed towards another person and social-oriented perfectionists believe that others will judge them according to a high standard (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). This theory therefore identifies the interplay

between perfectionism and self-efficacy that aligns with the focus of this study. In addition to Hewitt and Flett's (1991) multidimensional framework, this study also draws on Slaney's Discrepancy Model of Perfectionism (Slaney *et al.*, 2001), which underlies the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) used in this study. This model conceptualizes perfectionism along the dimensions of High Standards, Order, and Discrepancy (the perceived gap between one's standards and actual performance) and classifies individuals as adaptive perfectionists (high standards, low discrepancy) or maladaptive perfectionists (high standards, high discrepancy).

This study also applied Social Cognitive Theory presented by Bandura who argues that the interaction between the personal factors, the behavioural patterns, and the environmental factors led to the formation of human behaviour (Bandura, 1977b) or what he refers to as reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986). In this framework, self-efficacy is a critical construct and is characterized as the thoughts and the belief of the individual on the ability to organize and perform the steps that are required to control the situation that is about to occur (Bandura, 1977b, 1997). In the context of this theory, perfectionism can be treated as a maladaptive cognitive style, which negatively affects self-efficacy through the development of fear of failure and critical self-evaluations.

This study also applied the Social Role Theory which suggests that psychological and behavioural differences between men and women arise largely from socialization into distinct gender roles rather than from innate biological differences, with women socialized into communal, relationship-oriented roles and men socialized into agentic, achievement-oriented roles (Eagly, 1987). In the context of this study, this suggests that the belief that others hold on to a high standard, may be internalized differently by men and women due to role-consistent socialization around external evaluation. This suggests that gender-based socialization patterns may independently relate to both perfectionism and self-efficacy, providing a rationale for examining these associations separately whether gender moderates the perfectionism-self-efficacy relationship itself.

Moreover, this study applied Role Strain Theory to explain how employment status may relate to self-efficacy among working young adults. Role Strain Theory suggests that individuals occupying multiple roles simultaneously, such as being both a student and an employee, experience competing demands on their time and energy, which creates strain when the resources available are insufficient to meet the obligations of all roles adequately (Goode, 1960). In the context of this study, this theory identifies a plausible pathway through which employment status, particularly the demands associated with full-time versus part-time work, may relate to the self-efficacy of working young adults.

This study also draws on Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which posits that education functions as an investment that builds knowledge, skills, and competencies over time. From this perspective, higher levels of educational attainment may be associated with greater accumulated mastery experiences,

potentially strengthening individuals' belief in their capacity to perform tasks successfully. At the same time, extended engagement with competitive academic environments and evaluative standards during higher education may also shape perfectionistic tendencies, particularly the socially prescribed dimension of perfectionism tied to external academic expectations. This theoretical link provides a rationale for examining the association between education level and both perfectionism and self-efficacy in this study

3. Perfectionism and Self-Efficacy

Kyeon *et al.* (2010) explored the differential effects of multi-dimensional perfectionism on academic achievement, depression, engagement, and burnout among medical students. The findings said that engagement had mediating effects on adaptive perfectionism and Grade Point Average, and burnout had mediating effects on maladaptive perfectionism and depression. This study demonstrated that academic achievement and emotional difficulties such as depression are determined by adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism, respectively.

Yang *et al.* (2021) examined the mediator of depression between maladaptive perfectionism and Internet addiction and the moderator of gender. The findings indicated that maladaptive perfectionism was directly related to students' Internet addiction and indirectly predicted students' Internet addiction via the mediator of depression. Gender moderated the direct effect, rather than the indirect effect, of maladaptive perfectionism on Internet addiction. Even though males reported a lower score on Internet addiction, the effect of maladaptive perfectionism on Internet addiction was stronger for males than for females.

Hamachek (1978) in his study discussed the characteristics, antecedents, and behavioural symptoms of normal and neurotic perfectionism. He said that normal perfectionists set realistic standards for themselves and are capable of choosing to be less precise in certain situations, while neurotic perfectionists demand themselves of a usually unattainable level of performance, experience their efforts as unsatisfactory, and are unable to relax their standards. Most importantly, Stoeber & Otto (2006) found that healthy perfectionists show higher levels of self-esteem, agreeableness, academic adaptation and show lower levels of anxiety, depression, maladaptive coping styles, and interpersonal problems.

Hewitt & Flett (1991) demonstrated that the perfectionistic personality style is multidimensional with both personal and social components and that these components are important in maladjustment. A series of studies was conducted to demonstrate that three dimensions of perfectionism can be assessed with an adequate degree of consistency and validity and that they are related to phenomena like severe personality disorders and other symptoms of psychopathology. Similarly, Enns *et al.* (2002) suggested that adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism have unique developmental origins and that both have a differential relationship with depression proneness in adulthood. The research concluded that

under adaptive perfectionism, an individual develops the right goals, derives satisfaction and also enjoys a healthy mind. In a similar vein, Wang & Zhang (2017) also found that the maladaptive perfectionism was related to psychopathology (depression), while adaptive perfectionism was more closely correlated with positive features of mental health.

Locicero & Ashby (2000) investigated the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy among Caucasian (98%) undergraduate students from a mid-sized Midwestern university. The results showed that perfectionists and non-perfectionists differ significantly in their levels of self-efficacy. Specifically, adaptive perfectionists had higher levels of both general and social self-efficacies than non-perfectionists. Similarly, Bulina (2014) found that maladaptive perfectionism is associated with lower self-efficacy, and higher negative affect rates. The results of the study show that adaptive perfectionism is associated with higher self-efficacy, and lower negative affect.

Although the effect of perfectionism on self-efficacy has been examined in western literature, these findings cannot be directly applied to Nepali communities because of different culture, families, and social pressure. Little empirical research concerning the interaction of perfectionism with self-efficacy is involved in this regard. The significance of this study is that these pressures may affect the mental wellness of students in varying ways than western students.

4. Research Hypotheses

Based on theoretical and empirical evidence, below hypotheses have been set for this study:

- H₁: There is negative correlation between perfectionism and self-efficacy
- H₂: There is association between employment type and perfectionism level
- H₃: There is association between employment type and self-efficacy level
- H₄: There is association between gender and perfectionism level
- H₅: There is association between gender and self-efficacy level
- H₆: There is association between education level and perfectionism level
- H₇: There is association between education level and self-efficacy level

5. Methods

Cross-sectional research design is applied for this study where the Google survey form and two standardized scale questionnaire were emailed to 356 individuals however, after follow up, only 95 individuals responded the survey, so, 95 respondents were selected as convenience sample for this study. The survey form included two standardized scales Almost Perfect Scale-Revised of Slaney *et al*, (1996) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale of Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995). In addition to the two scales, the survey collected demographic information including age, gender, employment status, and educational level. Employment status was

coded as a binary variable (Emp_01: 0 = Full-time, 1 = Part-time) for use in the chi-square and logistic regression analyses. For categorical analyses, total scores on the APS-R and GSE were dichotomized into adaptive/maladaptive perfectionism and low/high self-efficacy groups based on a median split of total scores.

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics and the distribution of perfectionism and self-efficacy levels. Pearson correlation was used to examine the linear relationship between total perfectionism and total self-efficacy scores. Chi-square tests of independence were used to examine bivariate associations between each socio-demographic variable (gender, employment status, and education level) and the categorized levels of perfectionism and self-efficacy. Finally, binary logistic regression was conducted to examine whether age, gender, employment status, and education level jointly predicted perfectionism level and self-efficacy level, with overall model fit assessed using the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$ for all analyses.

6. Findings and Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was the principal software utilized for data analysis due to its extensive capabilities and efficiency of working with complex datasets. SPSS can conduct statistical procedures applicable to the current study. Use of this software has provided in-depth information regarding the strength and significance of the associations between perfectionism and self-efficacy within the sample of participants. Therefore, SPSS allowed for rigorous, accurate, and useful analysis to learn about perfectionism and self-efficacy within the local socio-cultural context.

6.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table-1: Demographic Distribution of Selected Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	44	46.3
Female	51	53.7
Total	95	100.0
Employment Type		
Full-time employed	40	42.1
Part-time employed	55	57.9
Total	95	100.0
Educational Level		
High School	9	9.5
Bachelor's Degree	79	83.2
Master's Degree	7	7.4
Total	95	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Demographic profile of the sample (N = 95) presented in the Table-1 reveals several notable patterns. With respect to gender, the distribution was fairly balanced, though female respondents formed a slight majority of the sample, while male respondents made up just under half. This near-even split suggests that the study captured perspectives from both genders in relatively comparable proportions, reducing the likelihood of gender-based sampling bias. Turning to employment status, a clear majority of respondents were part-time employed, while a substantial minority (though still representing more than four in ten participants), were employed on a full-time basis. This indicates that part-time work arrangements were somewhat more common within the sample, though full-time employment remained well represented rather than negligible. The most pronounced disparity emerged in educational attainment. The vast majority of respondents held a Bachelor's Degree, establishing it as the dominant educational qualification by a wide margin. In contrast, High School and Master's Degree holders together constituted only a small minority of the sample, with Bachelor's degree holders outnumbering Master's degree holders by more than ten to one, and outnumbering those with only a High School education by nearly nine to one. Taken together, this suggests that the sample was reasonably diverse in terms of gender and employment status, but comparatively homogeneous in educational background, being heavily concentrated at the undergraduate level.

6.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table-2: Perfectionism and Self-efficacy

Category/Variable	Frequency	Percent
Perfectionism		
Adaptive	16	16.8
Maladaptive	79	83.2
Total	95	100.0
Self-efficacy		
Low Efficacy	61	64.2
High Efficacy	34	35.8
Total	95	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table presents the distribution of participants (N = 95) across two conceptual categories (perfectionism and self-efficacy) that reveals a pronounced imbalance. The vast majority of participants were classified as exhibiting maladaptive perfectionism, establishing it as the dominant pattern within the sample by a wide margin. In stark contrast, only a small minority of respondents displayed adaptive perfectionism, accounting for less than one-fifth of the total sample. This disparity indicates that maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies (characterized by excessive self-criticism, fear of failure, and unrealistic standards), were far more prevalent among respondents than healthier, striving-

oriented perfectionism, with maladaptive perfectionists outnumbering their adaptive counterparts by nearly five to one.

Turning to levels of general self-efficacy, the sample similarly showed an uneven split, though less extreme than the perfectionism distribution. A majority of respondents reported low self-efficacy, representing almost two-thirds of the sample, while just over a third of respondents demonstrated high self-efficacy. Taken together, this distribution suggests that the sample was predominantly characterized by maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies alongside comparatively low levels of self-efficacy.

Table-3: Perfectionism and the General Self-efficacy Scores

Category/Variable	Total (N)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
PERFECTIONISM	95	12	76	51.92	12.074
GSE	95	10	39	28.34	4.476

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table presents the descriptive statistics of the two continuous variables, namely the total perfectionism score (PERFECTIONISM_SUM) and the general self-efficacy score (GSE_SUM). In both of the presented statistics, there were valid data points from all 95 participants (N = 95). For PERFECTIONISM, the lowest score was 12 and the highest was 76, with a mean of 51.92 and a standard deviation of 12.074. This shows that participants scored moderately high on average on the perfectionism scale, with fairly high variability around the mean. GSE had a mean score of 28.34 and a standard deviation of 4.476, ranging between a lowest score of 10 and a highest score of 39. The smaller standard deviation indicates that self-efficacy scores were more closely clustered around the mean than the perfectionism scores. Comprehensively, the table confirms that complete data were available for both constructs, providing a strong basis for further inferential analyses such as correlation.

6.3 Inferential Analysis on the Relationship of Testing Variables

Table-4: Correlation between Perfectionism and Self-efficacy

Category/ Variable	Correlation	Perfectionism sum	Sum of General Self-efficacy
PERFECTIONISM _SUM	Pearson Correlation	1	.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.812
	N	95	95
Sum of General Self Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.025	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.812	
	N	95	95

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table-4 presents a Pearson correlation result of the total perfectionism score with the general self-efficacy score. The result found that Pearson correlation coefficient value ($r=0.025$) between perfectionism and self-efficacy for this sample, is not significant enough to conclude any linear relationship. Since $-value(0.812)$ is way larger than $-value(0.05)$ at 0.05 significance level, it fails to reject the null hypothesis, confirming there is no statistical correlation between the perfectionism total score and self-efficacy total score among the respondents in this sample.

Table-5: Chi-Square Test of Employment and Level of Perfectionism

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.021 ^a	1	.884		
Continuity Correction ^b	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.021	1	.884		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.548
Linear-by-Linear Association	.021	1	.884		
N of Valid Cases	95				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.74.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation of result: In table 5, Pearson Chi-Square value (0.021) with one degree of freedom is not significant as $-value(0.884)$ is larger than $-value(0.05)$ at 0.05 significance level. This result failed to reject the null hypothesis which means there is no statistical relationship between employment and level of perfectionism. The likelihood ratio ($\chi^2 = .021$, $p = .884$) and linear-by-linear association ($\chi^2 = .021$, $p = .884$) tests support this conclusion, showing no significant relationship or linear trend between the variables. In other words, a person's employment status does not appear to meaningfully predict or relate to their level of perfectionism in this dataset.

Table-6: Chi-Square Test of Employment and Level of Self-efficacy

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.071 ^a	1	.014		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.050	1	.025		
Likelihood Ratio	6.066	1	.014		

Fisher's Exact Test				.018	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.007	1	.014		
N of Valid Cases	95				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.32.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table presents Pearson Chi-Square test statistics of employment status and level of self-efficacy. The result found that the Pearson Chi-Square value (6.071) with one degree of freedom is significant as χ^2 -value (0.014) is less than χ^2 -value (0.05) at 0.05 significance level. This suggests rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. This was further supported by the continuity-corrected chi-square ($\chi^2 = 5.050$, $p = .025$) and Fisher's Exact Test ($p = .018$, two-sided), both confirming the association. This indicates that there is a statistically significant association between employment status and level of self-efficacy. Which means, respondents' employment status is meaningfully related to their level of self-efficacy in this sample.

Table-7: Chi-Square Test of Gender and Level of Perfectionism

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.51 ^a	1	.821		
Continuity Correction ^b	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.051	1	.821		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.521
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.822		
N of Valid Cases	95				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.41.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table presents the Chi-Square test of gender and level of perfectionism. From the result, it is confirmed that the Pearson Chi-Square value (0.051) with one degree of freedom is not significant as χ^2 -value (0.821) is larger than χ^2 -value (0.05) at 0.05 significance level. This fails to reject the null hypothesis which means there is no statistical relationship between the tested variables. The likelihood ratio ($\chi^2 = 0.051$, $p = .821$) and linear-by-linear association ($\chi^2 = 0.050$, $p = .822$) tests support this conclusion, showing no significant relationship or linear trend between the variables. In other words, the gender of a person does not appear to meaningfully predict or relate to their level of perfectionism in this dataset.

Table-8: Chi-Square Test of Gender and Level of Self-efficacy

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.587 ^a	1	.108		
Continuity Correction ^b	1.943	1	.163		
Likelihood Ratio	2.616	1	.106		
Fisher's Exact Test				.135	.081
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.560	1	.110		
N of Valid Cases	95				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.75.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table presents Chi-Square test between gender and level of self-efficacy. The Pearson Chi-Square value (2.587) with one degree of freedom is not significant as its χ^2 -value (0.108) is larger than χ^2 -value (0.05) at 0.05 significance level. So, the null hypothesis fails to reject and confirms that there is no statistical association between gender and level of self-efficacy. The likelihood ratio ($\chi^2 = 1.616$, $p = .106$) and linear-by-linear association ($\chi^2 = 2.560$, $p = .110$) tests support this conclusion, showing no significant relationship or linear trend between the variables. In other words, gender of a person does not appear to meaningfully predict or relate to their level of self-efficacy in this dataset.

Table-9: Chi-Square Test of Education and Level of Perfectionism

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.287 ^a	2	.866
Likelihood Ratio	.312	2	.856
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.823
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.18.

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table presents the Chi-Square test statistics between education and level of perfectionism. From the result, it is confirmed that Pearson Chi-Square value (0.287) with two degrees of freedom is not significant as its χ^2 -value (0.866) is larger than χ^2 -value (0.05) at 0.05 significance level. So, this also fails to reject null hypothesis which means there is no statistical association between education and level of perfectionism. The likelihood ratio ($\chi^2 = 0.312$, $p = .856$) and linear-

by-linear association ($\chi^2 = 0.050$, $p = .823$) tests support this conclusion, showing no significant relationship or linear trend between the variables. In other words, a person's level of education does not appear to meaningfully predict or relate to their level of perfectionism in this dataset.

Table-10: Chi-Square Test of Education and Level of Self-Efficacy

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.535a	2	.765
Likelihood Ratio	.523	2	.770
Linear-by-Linear Association	.022	1	.883
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.51.

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Finally, the above table presents the Chi-Square test statistics between education and level of self-efficacy. The result found that Pearson Chi-Square value (0.535) is not significant as its p -value (0.765) is larger than p -value (0.05) at 0.05 significance level. This also fails to reject the null hypothesis and confirms that there is no statistical association between education and level of self-efficacy. This means the two variables are independent of one another in this sample. The likelihood ratio ($\chi^2 = 0.523$, $p = .770$) and linear-by-linear association ($\chi^2 = 0.022$,

tests support this conclusion, showing no significant relationship or linear trend between the variables. In other words, a person's level of education does not appear to meaningfully predict or relate to their level of self-efficacy in this dataset.

6.4 Identifying Socio-demographic Predictors: Binary Logistic Regression

A binary logistic regression is conducted to test if the socio-demographic predictors (Age, Gender, Employment, and Education) together, simultaneously predicts perfectionism level and self-efficacy level

Table- 11: Variables in the Equation Predicting Perfectionism Level

Variable		S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp ()	95% C.I. for EXP()	
							Lower	Upper
Age	.034	.168	.042	1	.838	1.035	.744	1.440
Edu			.274	2	.872			
Edu(1)	-.579	1.110	.272	1	.602	.561	.064	4.940
Edu(2)	-.480	1.610	.089	1	.765	.619	.026	14.513
Gender(1)	-.158	.588	.072	1	.788	.854	.270	2.703

Emp_01(1)	.160	.597	.072	1	.788	1.174	.365	3.782
Constant	1.349	4.069	.110	1	.740	3.854		

Note: Hosmer and Lemeshow Test statistics: Chi-square (2.559), df 7 and sig. 0.923

A binary logistic regression was conducted to examine whether Age, Education, Gender, and Employment status predicted perfectionism level (adaptive vs. maladaptive). The Hosmer and Lemeshow test indicated good model fit, $\chi^2 = 2.559$, $p = .923$, showing no significant difference between observed and predicted classifications and confirming the model adequately fits the data. However, none of the four predictors reached statistical significance. Age was not a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.838$ and Odd Ratio [OR] = 1.035 > 1). Similarly, education showed no overall effect ($\beta = .872$), nor did either dummy comparison, Edu(1) ($\beta = .602$, OR = 0.561) or Edu(2) ($\beta = .765$, OR = 0.619), both with very wide confidence intervals reflecting instability from small subgroup sizes. Other predictors Gender and Employment status also found not significant ($\beta = .788$, OR = 0.854), and ($\beta = .788$, OR = 1.174) respectively. All confidence intervals for the odds ratios crossed 1.0, reinforcing that none of these variables meaningfully predicted perfectionism level in this sample. Taken together, these findings indicate that age, education, gender, and employment status do not significantly predict perfectionism level (either individually or jointly).

Table- 12: Variables in the Equation Predicting Self-Efficacy Level

Variable		S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp ()	95% C.I. for EXP ()	
							Lower	Upper
Age	.091	.136	.450	1	.502	1.095	.839	1.430
Edu			.507	2	.776			
Edu(1)	-.129	.787	.027	1	.870	.879	.188	4.114
Edu(2)	.552	1.205	.210	1	.647	1.737	.164	18.421
Gender(1)	1.206	.530	5.174	1	.023	3.339	1.182	9.438
Emp_01(1)	-1.267	.509	6.201	1	.013	.282	.104	.764
Constant	-2.541	3.321	.586	1	.444	.079		

Note: Hosmer and Lemeshow Test statistics: Chi-square (7.429), df (8), sig. (0.491)

A binary logistic regression was conducted to examine whether Age, Education, Gender, and Employment status predicted self-efficacy level (low/high) among working young adults. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test indicated good model fit, $\chi^2 = 7.429$, $p = .491$, showing no significant difference between observed and model-predicted classifications. Among the predictors, Gender was a significant predictor of self-efficacy ($\beta = 1.206$, Wald = 5.174, $p = .023$, OR = 3.339), indicating that being female was associated with 3.34 times higher odds of high self-efficacy compared to males, holding other variables constant.

Employment status (Emp_01) also significantly predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = -1.267$, Wald = 6.201, $p = .013$, OR = 0.282), indicating that part-time employees had approximately 72% lower odds of high self-efficacy compared to full-time employees, the reference category. In contrast, Age ($\beta = .502$, OR = 1.095) and Education (overall $\beta = .776$) were not significant predictors, with confidence intervals for Exp(β) crossing 1.0, confirming no reliable association. Overall, these results suggest that gender and employment status, but not age or education, meaningfully predict self-efficacy in this sample.

7. Discussion

This study investigated 95 young adults who worked in Kathmandu and looked at both perfectionism and self-efficacy amidst that sample. The descriptive results indicated that there is a higher percentage of maladaptive perfectionists (83.2%), while 64.2% reported low self-efficacy. Similarly, the mean score for perfectionism was 51.92 and the mean score for self-efficacy was 28.34, which suggests a moderate level of perfectionist tendencies while self-efficacy scores are more tightly distributed. Further, this study offers a fresh insight into the limited body of research associated with the negative sides of perfectionism and the impact it has on the levels of self-efficacy of people. There were no variations in the self-efficacy of perfectionists in the Nepali sample in relation to non-perfectionists, which corresponds to the Locicero and Ashby (2000) study. The result is similar to a study by Locicero and Ashby (2000) on Western college students, which found no significant difference in self-efficacy of maladaptive perfectionists and non-perfectionists. The relationship of perfectionism and self-efficacy in the current research was negligible ($r = 0.025$, $p = 0.812$) and insignificant. Thus, the very existence of perfectionism issues does not necessarily destroy the trust of individuals in their capabilities.

The main theories used within the context of these empirical comparisons are Multidimensional Theory of Perfectionism and the Social Cognitive Theory. According to the Multidimensional Theory of Perfectionism, socially dictated perfectionism is a mechanism that destroys confidence under the impact of external influences. Socially prescribed perfectionism is considered to be an element that is applicable to collectivist societies, such as Nepal, where the demands of others can make the levels of self-criticism even greater and, consequently, the sense of personal failure. According to the findings, the adverse impact of socially prescribed perfectionism could be mitigated by protective factors including cohesive families, and supportive communities.

Furthermore, the Social Cognitive Theory also offers more explanation as to why the levels of self-efficacy remained relatively steady even in the presence of maladaptive perfectionism. Self-efficacy is ascertained through a bidirectional relationship among individual (personal) traits, social behaviours witnessed, and the environment (Bandura, 1986). In particular, within the community of

individuals residing in Kathmandu, community-based peer support, workplace mentoring, and culturally-based coping patterns could have alleviated the impact of perfectionistic rumination, allowing them to maintain their own level of self-efficacy, further reinforced under reciprocal determinism. Although Western literature tends to suggest that these negative relationships are stronger and mediated by culture, in the Nepali case, it seems that the direct effect may instead be mediated by intermediate variables such as social support or family expectations, indicating that culturally-specific intervention is necessary.

Further, this current study did not find any correlation between perfectionism total score and self-efficacy total score. This lack of association may be explained by several factors. Perfectionism is theoretically multidimensional, encompassing both adaptive strivings (high personal standards) and maladaptive concerns (fear of failure, excessive self-criticism), which may relate to self-efficacy in opposing directions; combining these dimensions into a single composite sum score may have masked meaningful relationships that exist at the subscale level. Additionally, the relatively homogeneous nature of the sample ($N = 95$) may have restricted the range of scores on one or both variables, attenuating the observed correlation. It is also possible that the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy is not strictly linear in nature, or that it is influenced by other variables (such as coping style, social support, or employment status) that were not accounted for in this bivariate analysis. Future research using perfectionism subscales and controlling for potential moderating variables may help clarify this relationship.

Hendra *et al.* (2025) noted several factors might influence self-efficacy and perfectionism in different ways including personality traits (such as neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness or agreeableness), emotional instability, academic burnout and cognitive difficulties (anxiety, depression, anger, hostility or fear). This study also did not find any significant association between perfectionism level and self-efficacy level. In relation to Social Role Theory applied to perfectionism, this would suggest that socially prescribed perfectionism, the dimension most tied to external evaluation, may affect self-efficacy differently across genders, since men and women are socialized to internalize outside judgment in different ways. Social Role Theory offers a plausible mechanism behind such findings and suggests that future research in the Nepali context should examine whether socially prescribed perfectionism erodes self-efficacy more strongly in one gender than the other, particularly given Nepal's distinct gender-role expectations around work and family obligation.

Role Strain Theory offers further insight when reconsidered alongside the regression results: rather than full-time employment generating strain that lowers self-efficacy, it was part-time employees who reported lower self-efficacy in this sample (25.5% high efficacy) compared to full-time employees (50% high efficacy). This pattern may instead be explained through Bandura's concept of mastery experiences: full-time roles may offer more consistent, structured

opportunities to complete tasks successfully and build a stable sense of competence, whereas part-time work may involve greater job insecurity, income instability, and fewer opportunities for skill development, all of which could constrain the mastery experiences that support self-efficacy.

The binary logistic regression added further nuance to these bivariate findings. While employment status remained a significant independent predictor of self-efficacy after adjusting for other variables ($OR = 0.282$, $p = .013$) with part-time employees showing lower odds of high self-efficacy than full-time employees, consistent with the chi-square result. The Gender emerged as a significant predictor only in the multivariate model ($OR = 3.339$, $p = .023$), despite showing no association in the bivariate analysis ($p = .108$), suggesting that employment status may have masked the true relationship between gender and self-efficacy when tested alone. In contrast, none of these socio-demographic variables significantly predicted perfectionism level in either analysis, reinforcing that perfectionism in this sample is likely shaped by factors beyond simple demographic characteristics.

A key limitation of this study is the relatively low response rate: of the 356 individuals invited to participate, only 95 (26.7%) completed the survey. This low response rate raises the possibility of non-response bias, as individuals who chose to respond may differ systematically from those who did not, potentially in ways related to perfectionism, self-efficacy, or employment status. Additionally, the smaller-than-intended sample size limits statistical power, particularly for the multivariate logistic regression models, as reflected in the wide confidence intervals observed for several predictors

8. Conclusion

This study examined perfectionism and self-efficacy among 95 working young adults in Kathmandu, Nepal, along with their associations with employment status, gender, and education level. Maladaptive perfectionism (83.2%) and low self-efficacy (64.2%) were both highly prevalent, yet contrary to expectations, no significant linear relationship was found between the two constructs ($r = .025$, $p = .812$). Employment status was the only variable significantly associated with self-efficacy ($\chi^2 = 6.071$, $p = .014$), with part-time employees reporting lower self-efficacy than full-time employees; gender and education showed no significant bivariate associations with either construct. A binary logistic regression further confirmed employment status as a significant independent predictor of self-efficacy ($OR = 0.282$, $p = .013$), with part-time employees showing lower odds of high self-efficacy, and additionally revealed gender as a significant predictor once other variables were controlled for ($OR = 3.339$, $p = .023$), a relationship not detected in the bivariate analysis alone; none of these socio-demographic variables, however, significantly predicted perfectionism level in either analysis. These findings suggest that perfectionism and self-efficacy, while both common in this

population, do not directly predict one another, and are likely shaped instead by mediating factors such as social support, coping style, and occupational role strain.

Future research should examine adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism separately, employ longitudinal designs, and explore mediating variables such as social support and coping strategies. Practically, given the significant role of employment status, workplace-based interventions addressing job insecurity, skill development, and income instability among part-time employees, alongside culturally grounded, collectivist-sensitive mental health approaches, may offer more effective starting points than perfectionism-focused interventions alone.

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Hindu-Muslim Unity through Blood Lineage, Common Ancestry and Cultural Traditions in Delhi-NCR, India: A Historical Survey of Pilgrimage

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Abstract

This paper examines Hindu-Muslim unity and cultural continuity along the Vaith-Pushpavati corridor in the Garhmukteshwar tehsil of District Hapur, Uttar Pradesh, I. Based primarily on oral testimony gathered from the villagers of Vaith, Nangla Barh, Bihuni, and Phuldi. The study documents a pattern in which present religious identities - Hindu and Muslim - sit atop a same genealogical base that both communities continue to recognize and observe in daily social life. The paper traces the two-brother founding narrative that connects Nangla Barh and Vaith through a remembered act of family division, one branch remaining Hindu, the other converting to Islam, and shows how this common ancestry is reinforced across the network through common marriage obligations, preserved gotra memory, and ritual continuity. The sacred landscape of Pushpavati, identified with the Mahabharata world of Hastinapur and recognised as India's first Ganga Gram in 2016, provides the mythological and environmental frame within which the villages understand their own antiquity. The regional tradition of two Brahmin ruler-brothers, Raja Maheshwardatt and Raja Brahmaddatt, points to an even older common ancestral root beneath the village-level narratives. The study argues that Hindu-Muslim unity in this corridor is not a recent or politically constructed phenomenon but a lived social reality rooted in blood lineage, customs, cultural traditions and a landscape of memory that has been actively transmitted across generations. The paper contributes to the growing body of oral-history research on composite village cultures in the Upper Ganga plane.

Keywords

Hindu-Muslim unity, Common ancestral identity, Tyagi caste, Oral history, Kinship landscape, Blood lineage, Customs, Cultural Traditions, Conversion narrative, Garhmukteshwar.

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1. Introduction

There exist a particular kind of unity that does not announce itself. It does not march in processions or declare itself from platforms; it does not wait for festivals to emerge, nor does it depend on the goodwill of any single generation to survive. It lives instead in the names people give their children, in the rituals they perform at birth and marriage, in the obligations they feel toward a neighbouring village, and in the quiet, almost unconscious way they speak of an ancestor as their own even across a boundary of faith. This is the unity this chapter sets out to trace—not the unity of ideology or of political arrangement, but the unity of blood, of common memory, and of a social world that has refused, across centuries and across religious change, to come apart at its deepest seams.

The villages of Vaith, Nangla Barh, Bihuni, and Phuldi; strung along the Vaith-Pushpavati corridor in the Garhmukteshwar *tehsil* of Hapur District in U.P., offer a remarkable case study in precisely this kind of unity. On the surface, they present what any map of the region would show—some villages with a Hindu majority, some with a Muslim majority, each with its own mosque or temple, its own identity, and its own daily religious life. But beneath that surface, when one sits with elders and listens carefully—to a *gotra* recalled in passing, to a wedding custom described as something the family has always done, to a story about two brothers whose paths diverged but whose blood was never divided—a different picture emerges. It is a picture of a single social world that has lived through division without being broken by it.

The thread we are following in this paper is genealogical. It begins with an act of family separation—an attack, a pregnancy, two sons born into a moment of crisis—and it traces how that one family became the root of communities that today call themselves by different religious names yet continue to honour the same ancestors, practice the same rituals, and recognize each other as kin. The question this paper asks is not whether Hindus and Muslims have lived peacefully in this region - the answer to that is visible in every shared wedding and every inter-village obligation. The deeper question is why: what are the social and historical foundations that have made this coexistence not merely peaceful but genuinely integrated, not merely tolerant but structurally bound? The answer, as the oral testimony gathered here will show, lies in the landscape itself—in a road, in a set of villages, and in a

memory that the communities of this corridor have kept alive with remarkable fidelity across generations.

2. A Landscape That Remembers

The story begins not with a single village, but with a road. From Garhmukteshwar, when one moves toward Simbhaoli, a diversion opens toward Vaith and toward Pushpavati, also known as Pushpawati Pooth. This road is not only a route of movement; it is a corridor of memory. Along it lie the villages of Vaith, Phuldi, Bihuni, and Nangla Barh, each of which carries a different part of one shared historical and social tradition.

Methodologically, treating the road itself as the unit of study—rather than treating each village in isolation—allows the oral material to retain the logic in which it was originally narrated. Village elders and genealogists rarely describe a single settlement in isolation; they describe a moving lineage, a family that travels, divides, and resettles along a known physical path. Following that same path in this chapter therefore keeps the historical narrative anchored to the geography in which local memory itself is organized. As one moves along this route, the landscape continues toward other remembered sites, including Nangli Kanaur and its *Karn ka Teela*, where archaeological and heritage references add another layer of significance to what is not merely a cluster of settlements but a wider cultural belt.

2.1 The Two Founding Brothers of the Region

Regional oral tradition remembers two Brahmin ruler-brothers as the deepest ancestral layer behind the area's villages: Raja Maheshwardatt¹, said to have held eighty-four villages, and his younger brother Raja Brahmaddatt², said to have held forty-two. Their descendants are remembered as the common root from which many present-day Hindu and Muslim Tyagi lineages, including those traced in this chapter, ultimately branch.

3. Nangla Barh: The First Branch of the Family Story

Nangla Barh is remembered as an older Tyagi settlement. This is where the two-brother story begins. In village memory it was once a fortified village with a *darwaja*³, or principal gateway. The gate is significant because it marks Nangla Barh as a protected and organized habitation. It also symbolizes the older village structure in which land, family, and honour were closely connected.

The village derives its name from a magnificent banyan tree - Barh⁴ - that once stood behind the village temple. Although the tree has long since disappeared, its memory survives in the very name of the settlement, a reminder of a landscape that lives on in local remembrance. Village elders also recall that Nangla Barh was once protected by a fortified enclosure, or *Garhi*⁵, with a surrounding wall and a principal gateway. Though these structures no longer survive, their remembrance reflects a time when the settlement was regarded as strategically significant and well defended.

Among the most remarkable traditions preserved by the villagers is the story of the Khatti, or grain storage house, of Narayan Singh Tyagi⁶. According to local accounts, this granary stored large quantities of grain that were distributed to eight surrounding villages. This tradition portrays Nangla Barh not only as an agricultural settlement but also as an important centre of food storage and regional distribution.

3.1 The Attack and the Two Brothers

According to oral history, the Tyagi landlord's wives had gone to their maternal homes when an attack took place on the village. This event is remembered as a major turning point. The family was separated, the village story entered a period of loss and transformation, and the wives—who were pregnant at the time - gave birth to two sons after a long period. Those two children became the basis of the later family branches that spread across the corridor.

The story further says that the family's records were in Urdu, and when the question arose of regaining the estate, one brother was told that conversion would be necessary.⁷ Out of the two brothers, one converted to Islam and moved away to settle elsewhere. His descendants are remembered as continuing in Vaith. The other brother remained in Nangla Barh, and his line continued there. This is the core of the village's remembered genealogy.

This is not only a story about religion. It is a story about how a family line split into two branches while remaining tied together in memory. Estate-recovery narratives involving religious conversion are a recurring motif in the oral history of landholding families across northern India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when administrative and revenue arrangements frequently intersected with questions of religious identity. As with all such family traditions, the precise administrative circumstances behind the conversion cannot be independently verified from the oral account alone; the value of the narrative lies in what it reveals about how the community itself explains the origin of its two present-day religious branches while insisting on their common blood.

3.2 The Layered Ancestry of Nangla Barh

Nangla Barh is especially significant because of its mixed population. It includes the Hindu Tyagi branch but also Muslim Tyagis, Muslim Rajputs, and Muslim families with older Brahmin-linked memory. The interview with Sahir Khan⁸ is central here: he identified his *gotra* as Maheshre Tyagi and traced his family's origin to Beerampur, showing continuity between older lineage and current identity. He also mentioned the practice of offering milk at Chamand when cattle fell ill—a ritual that crosses religious lines.

The interview with Pyar Muhammad⁹ is equally important. He identified himself as a Muslim Rajput of the Nirvan *gotra*, with family origins traced to Dasna—evidence of a second, distinct ancestral strand present within Nangla Barh alongside the Tyagi line. He also spoke of the customs of *Godbhrai*, *Chhuchak*, and

Salami, the last being structurally similar to the *tilak* ceremony among Hindus, demonstrating ritual continuity across religious identity.

The interviews with Asrar Khan¹⁰ and Abrar Khan¹¹ add a third layer. They preserved the memory of an ancestor named Sohrab Khan, who came from Ahar and is remembered as having held influence over twelve villages and as having resisted the British. These brothers also recalled an association with Nagar Brahmin ancestry—a third distinct strand, alongside Tyagi and Rajput, present within Nangla Barh's composite lineage. Taken together, all the testimonies show that Nangla Barh's population is not a single converted lineage but a composite of at least three distinct ancestral strands, all currently practicing Islam while retaining their separate pre-conversion *gotra* identities.

4. Vaith: The Second Branch of the Brotherhood

The other brother is said to have settled in Vaith. Vaith is described in interviews as a village with a very long tradition and strong historical memory. The villagers say that Vaith once had a Pandava fort and that the village was surrounded by ponds on all sides—a recognizable defensive and agrarian layout in the *Ganga-Yamuna doab*, where water bodies doubled as both natural barriers and irrigation resources.

Vaith is also remembered as a Bawan Hazari village¹², a title meaning village of fifty-two thousand, symbolizing its extraordinary size, prosperity, and regional importance in earlier times. Even today the village is recognized for its remarkably large population, including one of the most significant communities of converted Muslim Tyagis in the region, whose ancestral traditions continue to shape the village's cultural identity.

The oral accounts also mention that statues and other traces were later found in the village, which the residents take as physical confirmation of its ancient roots. One particularly intriguing tradition concerns an ancient mound¹³, or *Tila*, that once stood within the village. According to local belief, the mound marked the site of an earlier settlement, or Khera, which was later abandoned. Today the place is occupied by a graveyard¹⁴, but village elders continue to remember it as the heart of the old habitation. The combination of fort memory, encircling ponds, a buried settlement mound, and a six-foot stone idol reportedly unearthed during digging - later presented to the people of Nangla Barh—makes Vaith an unusually rich site of layered memory.

4.1 The *Gotra* Evidence from Vaith

The interviews from Vaith provide the chapter's strongest evidentiary base for the continuity of Hindu lineage inside present Muslim identity. Several residents -independently identified their *gotra* as Maheshre Tyagi without being prompted by the results of earlier interviews. This cross-informant convergence on the same *gotra* identification, obtained without the informants consulting one another, is treated in oral-history methodology as one of the stronger forms of corroboration available in the absence of written record.

Amanullah Khan and Sher Ali Mustazaf Khan¹⁵ also identified their lineage as Maheshre Tyagi, and both placed particular emphasis on the cordial relations between Vaith, Nangla Barh, and Bihuni.

4.2 Vaith as a Site of Hindu-Muslim Unity

The importance of Vaith increases when one considers all the interview material together. The village is a site where present Muslim identity still preserves older Tyagi memory. This does not diminish the village's Muslim identity; rather, it shows that the present identity has grown over an older social base. On one level, Vaith is a sacred-historical site connected to the Pandavas. On another level, it is a village of family continuity and conversion memory. These two levels together make Vaith the central node of the broader narrative.

This layering—an epic-sacred identity overlaid by a family-genealogical identity, both in turn overlaid by a present religious identity—is what makes Vaith methodologically significant for this study. It shows that a single village can simultaneously hold several distinct registers of memory without any one of them cancelling out the others. A person can be, and in Vaith routinely is, both a practising Muslim and a bearer of a remembered Tyagi *gotra*.

5. Bihuni: The Sister Village in the Family Circle

The story now turns to Bihuni, which must always come after Vaith in the narrative sequence. In oral tradition, Bihuni is remembered as the sister-linked village¹⁶ in the family network. Nangla Barh and Vaith are the villages of the two brothers; Bihuni is the village of their sister¹⁷. This makes Bihuni a necessary part of the family geography, completing the sibling circle.

According to oral traditions, Bihuni was founded by Kallu Singh¹⁸, who originally came from Gopalgarh in Haryana. He was married to a girl from Vaith and then settled in Bihuni. In this version, the land of Aabidpur Kadi¹⁹ was given as dowry, and Maharaj ki Kuti²⁰ is still remembered on that land.

5.1 The Three-Village Bond

The interviews reveal that weddings among the three villages were never considered complete until representatives from all related villages were present. If a marriage happened in Vaith, people from Nangla Barh and Bihuni had to come before the bride could be sent off. If a marriage happened in Nangla Barh or Bihuni, the people of Vaith were expected to attend. This custom shows that the villages were treated as one social unit despite their differences in religious affiliation; blood lineage was always prioritized.²¹

This rule functions, in effect, as an unwritten social contract binding three separate settlements into a single ritual kin-group. Its persistence across generations, without any formal or legal enforcement mechanism, is itself evidence of how deeply the underlying genealogical claim is believed and acted upon by the communities concerned. The marriage rule did not depend on written law; it depended on common memory and shared obligation. That is why the bond between these villages is remembered simultaneously as brotherhood and sisterhood.

6. Phuldi: The Final Branch of Continuity

Only after Nangla Barh, Vaith, and Bihoni does the story reach Phuldi. Phuldi is important because it shows how the family story continued into another settlement branch and how the kinship network opens outward rather than closing in on itself. According to one oral account, the son of the Nangla Barh line stayed in Vaith at the house of a Muslim uncle and later settled in Phuldi. Another version says that Phuldi was founded by the maternal cousin of the two brothers. Both versions remain part of living village memory.

The interviews with Nadeem Khan²² and Furqan Pradhan²³ add another layer. They say that Phuldi has a connection with Athseni, and that two old Tyagis came from Athseni and built a *garhi* there. This gives Phuldi a wider historical link beyond the immediate brother-sister story, connecting it to a larger pattern of Tyagi migration and settlement whose full extent this study can only partially map within the scope of the present villages.

7. Customs That Cross Religious Boundaries

The interviews²⁴ from Vaith, Nangla Barh, and Phuldi show that traditional customs have survived despite religious change. Marriage rituals such as *bhat*, *manda*, and *ghurchadhi* are still followed among the Muslim Tyagi families. Childbirth ceremonies—*Chhathi* and *Chhuchak*—continue in traditional form. Chaukhat puja, the ritual worship of the threshold or doorframe, remains part of village life in both Hindu and Muslim households of Tyagi descent.

One particularly important oral account notes that if an animal became ill, even families following Islam would go to Chamand and offer milk so that the animal could recover. This practice connects household life, village belief, and ritual healing across the religious boundary. Such customs show that the present village is still tied to its older social world. Ritual continuity of this kind—where life-cycle and agrarian customs persist after a formal change of religious affiliation—is well documented in composite village cultures across the subcontinent, and it typically survives longest in precisely these domains: marriage, childbirth, house-building, and animal husbandry, because these are the areas most embedded in daily household practice rather than in formal religious doctrine.

Table-1: Comparative Customs Across the Villages

Custom	Documented In	Description
<i>Bhat/Manda/Ghurchadhi</i> (marriage rites)	Vaith, Nangla Barh, phuldi	Pre-wedding rituals involving turmeric and oil application, erecting the wedding canopy, and the maternal uncle side's ceremonial gift-giving.
<i>Chaukhat Puja</i>	Vaith, Nangla Barh	Ritual worship of the threshold or doorframe, continued in both Hindu and Muslim households of Tyagi descent.

Chamand milk offering	Nangla Barh	When an animal falls ill, households go to Chamand and offer milk in the belief that it aids recovery.
Three-village wedding attendance rule	Vaith, Nangla Barh, Bihuni	A wedding in any one of the three villages is not considered complete without representatives from the other two attending.
<i>Gotra</i> memory retained after conversion	Vaith, Nangla Barh, Phuldi, Bihuni	Muslim families continue to identify a specific ancestral Hindu <i>gotra</i> (Maheshre Tyagi, Nirvan) generations after conversion.

8. Nangli Kanaur: Another Village on the Sacred Route

Nangli Kanaur is a village of great religious, historical, and cultural importance on the Pushpawati Pooth road. According to local belief, this place is linked with Sheetla Mata and the story of King Vikramaditya. It is said that the goddess stayed here for some time before moving to Jakheda and then to Gurgaon, where she became established as Sheetla Mata²⁵. Even today, a temple dedicated to the goddess exists in the village, and a fair is held every year in October-November, for five consecutive Mondays, drawing devotees from nearby villages and regions.

The village is also locally associated with *Karn ka Teela*, a site of both mythological and archaeological significance. Around six or seven years ago, archaeological remains including coins and other artefacts were found in a field, and the site was subsequently recognized by the Archaeological Survey of India. This gave Nangli Kanaur an important place in the historical map of the region that complements its sacred associations.

One special feature of this village is its concrete practice of Hindu-Muslim unity. The offerings made at the Sheetla Mata temple are traditionally given to Muslim families. This practice—rooted in long-standing custom rather than recent goodwill—shows a spirit of mutual respect, cooperation, and communal harmony that parallels the kinship-based unity documented in the other villages of the corridor. Thus Nangli Kanaur is not only a sacred village but also a living symbol of religious faith, historical heritage, and social unity.

9. Informant Testimonies in Detail

The testimonies below present each informant's account individually alongside a brief note on its significance for the chapter's argument. They are organized by village.

9.1 Village: Vaith

Tariq Tyagi²⁶ identified his *gotra* as Maheshre Tyagi during the village interviews, tracing his family's ancestral identity directly to the old Tyagi lineage said to have originally settled in Vaith. His testimony is the single clearest first-person confirmation that Tyagi *gotra* memory survives inside present Muslim identity in the village.

Mubarak Ali, remembered locally as a teacher, also identified as Maheshre Tyagi. He extended his account beyond lineage into national history: his father Abdul Rahim is remembered by the family as having taken part in the freedom struggle against British rule, linking the village's lineage memory to the wider national movement.²⁷

Athar, son of Chhote Khan²⁸, independently confirmed the same Mahsere Tyagi *gotra* tradition already recorded from Tariq Tyagi and Mubarak Ali, without any prompting from the earlier interviews. His testimony provides the third independent convergence on the same *gotra* in Vaith, considerably strengthening this strand of evidence.

Amanullah Khan²⁹ identified his *gotra* as Maheshre Tyagi and placed particular emphasis on the cordial relations between Vaith, Nangla Barh, and Bihoni—providing not only lineage evidence but social-relational evidence for the network's continued operation.

Sher Ali Khan³⁰ likewise identified as Maheshre Tyagi and mentioned the six-foot stone idol said to have been unearthed at Vaith's ancient mound and later presented to Nangla Barh—a remarkable detail that ties the physical landscape of Vaith to the social bond with its brother-village.

9.2 Village: Nangla Barh

Sahir Khan identified his *gotra* as Maheshre Tyagi and traced his family's origin to Beerampur. He mentioned the offering of milk at Chamand for cattle recovery—a ritual whose continued practice by a Muslim family is significant evidence of older social memory persisting across religious change.

Pyar Muhammad identified himself as a Muslim Rajput of the Nirvan *gotra*, with family origins traced to Dasna. He mentioned the customs of *Godbhrai*, *Chhuchak*, and *Salami*—the last structurally similar to the *tilak ceremony* among Hindus—demonstrating that lineage memory in Nangla Barh spans more than one pre-conversion community.

Asrar Khan and Abrar Khan trace their association with Nagar Brahmin ancestry together preserved the memory of their ancestor Sohrab Khan, who came from Ahar and is remembered as having held influence over twelve villages and as having resisted the British. These brothers along with Shri Bhagirath Kumar, Beersen Kashyap³¹, Rajan Tyagi, Mukul Tyagi, Rajeshwar Tyagi³², Gaurav Tyagi³³, Kishan Lal Tyagi³⁴ also recalled and mentioned Narayan Singh Tyagi's Khatti that fed eight surrounding villages - adding a third distinct ancestral strand to Nangla Barh's composite picture, alongside an extraordinary memory of regional influence and anti-colonial resistance.

9.3 Village: Phuldi

Nadeem Khan³⁵ and Furqan Pradhan and Tassavur Ali³⁶ traced Phuldi's founding to a connection with Atsaini, where two old Tyagis are remembered as having built a *garhi* before the family's presence extended into Phuldi. Their

testimony opens the kinship network beyond the immediate four villages, connecting Phuldi to a wider circuit of Tyagi migration and *garhi*-founding that this study can only partially trace.

10. Composite Memory and the Idea of Common Ancestry

The village-level evidence assembled in this paper read together with the regional tradition of two Brahmin brothers—Maheshwardatt and Brahmadatt—points toward a single underlying pattern rather than four unconnected local stories. In each case, a religious boundary that appears absolute in the present—Hindu Nangla Barh households and Muslim Vaith households, for instance—turns out on closer interview to sit atop a genealogical claim that both sides continue to recognize and act upon, whether through a common *gotra* name, a similar wedding obligation, or a common founding ancestor.

This does not mean that religious identity is unimportant to the communities themselves; nothing in the interviews suggests that the Muslim families of Vaith, Nangla Barh, or Phuldi regard their present faith as provisional or incomplete. Rather, it means that religious identity and lineage identity operate as two separate registers of belonging that the communities hold simultaneously, without requiring one to override the other. A person can be, and in these villages routinely is, both a practising Muslim and a bearer of a remembered Tyagi or Rajput *gotra*. Far from producing conflict, this double belonging appears to be experienced as ordinary and unremarkable—which is itself a significant social observation.

It is worth being cautious about over-generalizing from four villages to the wider district, let alone the wider region. What this chapter can responsibly claim is narrower: that within this particular corridor, the oral evidence for continuity of lineage across religious change is unusually dense, cross-confirmed by multiple independent informants, and reinforced by concrete social practice—the three-village wedding rule, the shared customs documented in—rather than resting on sentiment alone.

The broader significance of this density lies in what it suggests about how composite culture is actually maintained in practice at the village level in the Upper Ganga Plain—not primarily through formal interfaith institutions or public discourse, but through the much older and more durable channels of marriage obligation, *gotra* memory, and shared ritual practice that this chapter has traced village by village.

11. Closing Reflection: One Landscape, Many Lineages

The story of Pushpavati, Nangla Barh, Vaith, Bihoni, Phuldi, and Nangli Kanaur is really the story of a shared cultural world. The route itself carries sacred memory. The villages carry family memory. The interviews carry living social memory. And the customs carry continuity across generations. This is why the region cannot be understood through religion alone.

The historical truth that emerges from the interviews is that Hindu and Muslim communities in these villages have long lived within one another's social universe.

They share ancestry, rituals, village obligations, and memories of origin. That is the deepest meaning of the story told in this chapter.

Set against the wider ancestral tradition of Raja Maheshwardatt and Raja Brahmadatt, this local history becomes part of a much larger regional pattern of lineage division, migration, and resettlement—a pattern in which religious change appears repeatedly as a later chapter layered on top of an older, still remembered genealogical unity. The landscape described in these pages is best understood as a living palimpsest—successive layers of religious and social identity have been written over the villages across the centuries, yet none of the earlier layers has been fully erased. Each layer remains visible to a careful listener, in a *gotra* name, a ritual detail, or a remembered ancestor.

Hindu-Muslim unity in these villages is not only a matter of peaceful co-existence. It is a matter of common ancestry, shared customs, and a memory of origin that has been lived for generations in the form of marriage rules, rituals, *gotra* preservation, and village belonging. This is the living heart of the Vaith-Pushpavati corridor.



Interview with Sher Ali Khan and Mustazaf Khan at Vaith



Interview with Mukul Tyagi at Nangla Barh

12. Conclusion

What this chapter has traced along the Vaith-Pushpavati corridor is not simply a local curiosity or an exception to some larger rule. It is, rather, a window into the

way composite culture actually works at its most enduring—not through declarations of brotherhood, not through the goodwill of enlightened leaders, but through the slow, patient, largely unspoken work of shared memory. The villages of Nangla Barh, Vaith, Bihoni, and Phuldi did not set out to preserve Hindu-Muslim unity as a project. They simply went on living—marrying, mourning, celebrating, and remembering—and in doing so they preserved, almost by instinct, the social fabric that centuries of change had not managed to unravel.

The story of the two brothers is, in this sense, more than a founding narrative. It is a parable about how communities understand themselves across the long arc of time. One brother stayed; one brother left. One remained Hindu; one became Muslim. And yet the separation that looked like division was, at a deeper level, merely the opening of two branches from a single root—and that root, fed by *gotra* memory, by wedding obligation, by the milk offered at Chamand and the threshold worshipped at the doorframe, has never dried. That root is what this study has tried to document, and it is a root that the communities themselves, with far more grace and consistency than any outside observer could claim, have tended across the centuries.

There is a lesson here that extends well beyond the boundaries of the Garhmukteshwar *Tehsil*. At a time when religious identity is too often made to carry the entire weight of a community's self-understanding—when the question asked first of any village, any family, any individual is which side of a faith boundary they stand on—the villages of this corridor offer a quietly different answer. They say, through their customs and their kinship and their remembered ancestors, that the boundary of faith is real but it is not the deepest boundary there is. Deeper still is the boundary of blood, of common origin, of the obligation one generation carries to the next. And it is on that deeper ground, this study suggests, that the most durable forms of human unity have always been built.

The road from Garhmukteshwar to Pushpavati is, in the end, not merely a road between places. It is a road between eras—between the Mahabharata world of Hastinapur and the present, between the Brahmin brothers Maheshwardatt and Brahmaddatt and their descendants who today call themselves by the names of two different faiths, between a past of common origin and a present of composite belonging. To walk that road with open ears, as this paper has tried to do, is to understand that the story of Hindu-Muslim unity in this part of India is not a story that needs to be invented or imposed. It is the story that exists already there, in the memory of the people, waiting to be heard.

Notes and References

1. *Interview*, Date—05.07.2026, Mr. Sahir Khan (75 years) s/o Mr. Rehmat Khan s/o Mr. Sadar Khan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur.
2. *Interview*, Date—12.07.2026, 15.07.2026, 26.07.2026, Mr. Amanullah Khan (61 years; Assistant General Manager Cane, Simbhaoli Sugar Mill) s/o Mr. Hazi Osaf Ali, s/o Mr. Ali Hasan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Residence—Village Vaith, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur, Present Residence—Simbhaoli.

3. *Interview*, Date—12.07.2026, Shri Rajan Tyagi (59 years) s/o Shri Om Prakash, s/o Shri Chandra Singh, s/o Shri Mohar Singh, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—kashyap, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 10 other Villagers.
4. *Interview*, Date—12.07.2026, Mr. Mukul Tyagi (42 years), s/o Shri Krishna Kumar Tyagi, s/o Shri Devi Sahay Tyagi, s/o Ch. Kooode Singh, s/o Ch. Chhajju Singh, *Gotra*—Tushar, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 12 other Villagers.
5. *Interview*, Date—08.07.2026, Shri Bhagirath Kumar (Age-75), Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 5 other Villagers.
6. *Interview*, Date—10.07.2026, Mr. Abrar Khan (60 years) s/o Mr Abbas Khan, s/o Mr. Shamsher Khan, Caste—Brahmin, *Gotra*—Nagar, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 8 other Villagers.
7. *Interview*, Date—12.07.2026, Shri Rajan Tyagi (59 years) s/o Shri Om Prakash, s/o Shri Chandra Singh, s/o Shri Mohar Singh, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Kashyap, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 10 other Villagers.
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9. *Interview*, Date—06.07.2026, Mr. Pyar Mohammed (58 years) s/o Mr. Tasleem Hussain, s/o Mr. Yabar Hussain, Caste—Rajput, *Gotra*—Nirvana, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 5 other Villagers.
10. *Interview*, Date—08.07.2026, Mr. Israr Khan (70 years) s/o Mr. Mir Daad, s/o Mr. Sher Khan, Caste—Brahmin, *Gotra*—Nagar, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 4 other Villagers.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Interview*, Date—18.07.2026, Mr. Mubarak Ali (55 years) s/o Mr. Ishtiaq Ali, s/o Mr. Abdul Raheem (Indian Army during freedom struggle), Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Village—Vaith, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 5 other Villagers
14. *Interview*, Date—30.07.2026, Mr Saifullah Khan (32 years) s/o Raja Hussain, s/o Khursaid Ali, s/o Zabar Khan, Resident of Village—Vaith, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 4 other Villagers.
15. *Interview*, Date—26.07.2026, Mr. Mustazaf Khan (65 years; Assistant General Manager Cane, Dhampur Sugar mill) s/o Mr. Hazi Osaf Ali, s/o Mr. Ali Hasan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Residence—Village—Vaith, Post —Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur, Present Residence—Simbhaoli and 15 other Villagers.
16. *Interview*, Date—15.07.2026, Prof. Mahaveer Singh Tyagi (100 year), Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Jamdagini Vats, Residence—Village Bihuni, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 9 other Villagers.
17. *Interview*, Date—11.07.2026, 15.07.2026, Mr. Pinku Tyagi, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Shandilya, Residence—Village Bihuni, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur.
18. *Interview*, Date—15.07.2026, Dr. Bhudev Singh s/o Prof. Mahaveer Singh Tyagi, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Jamdagini Vats, Residence—Village Bihuni, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 10 other Villagers.
19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Interview*, Date—21.07.2026, Mr. Nadeem Khan (40 years) s/o Mr.Aaqil Khan s/o Naseer Khan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Village—Phuldi, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 3 other Villagers.
23. *Interview*, Date—26.07.2026, Mr. Furkan Tyagi (45 years) s/o Mr.Tohseeb, s/o Mr. Abdul Rasheed, s/o Mr. Lateef, Residence—Village Phuldi, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 5 other Villagers.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Interview*, Date—12.07.2026, Mr.Mukul Tyagi (42 years), s/o Shri Krishna Kumar Tyagi, s/o Shri Devi Sahay Tyagi, s/o Ch. Kooode Singh, s/o Ch.Chhajju Singh, *Gotra*—Tushar, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 20 other Villagers.
26. *Interview*, Date—22.07.2026, Mr.Tarikh Tyagi (43years) son of Mr. Anzar Hussain grandson of Late.Manzoor Hasan, s/o Aihmam Khan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre,Village—Vaith, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 4 other Villagers.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Interview*, Date—18.07.2026, Mr. Athar Khan (49 years) s/o Mr.Chhuttan Khan s/o Mr. Azzi Khan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Village—Vaith, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 13 other Villagers.
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30. *Ibid.*
31. *Interview*, Date—11.07.2026, Mr Beersen Kashyap (54 years), Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur.
32. *Interview*, Date—30.07.2026, Mr. Rajeshwar Tyagi (79 years), *Gotra*—Kashyap, Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 20 other Villagers.
33. *Interview*, Date—12.07.2026, Mr. Gaurav Tyagi (38 years), s/o Shri Bijendra Kumar Tyagi, s/o Shri Devi Sahay Tyagi, s/o Chaudhary Kooode Singh, s/o Ch. Chhajju Singh, *Gotra*—Tushar, Residence—Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 5 other Villagers.
34. *Interview*, Date—30.07.2026, Mr.Kishan Lal Tyagi (80 years), *Gotra*,-Kaushik , Village Nangla Barh, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur.
35. *Interview*, Date—21.07.2026, Mr. Nadeem Khan (40 years) s/o Mr.Aaqil Khan s/o Naseer Khan, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Village—Phuldi, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur and 5 other Villagers.
36. *Interview*, Date—25.07.2026, Mr. Tassavur Ali (48years) s/o Mr. Mushtaq Ali, Caste—Tyagi, *Gotra*—Mahesre, Village Phuldi, Post—Garhmukteshwar, District—Hapur.

It is quite necessary to declare that Muslim Tyagis have generally told their *Gotra* as—“Maheshrey”. Though it is their identification telling of their great Hindu ancestor’s name. The word Maheshre or Maheshrey or Mahesre means the blood lineage stock belongs to Maheshwar Bhatt, the elder brother of Brahmdukt Bhatt. In general the local population irrespective the Tyagi or non Tyagi identify all the Muslim Tyagis with this noun. The Tyagi Muslims along the Vaith- Garhmukteshwar—Meerut road are addressed as Maheshre. ★

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Reconceptualizing Peace: Feminist Perspectives

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Abstract

Although peace is widely regarded as humanity's most desired objective, the world continues to experience wars, armed conflicts, and various forms of structural and social violence. The realization of peace depends on inclusive definitions and frameworks that adequately reflect the experiences, needs, and aspirations of all members of society. Yet dominant peace discourses continue to exclude or marginalize women and their perspectives. This exclusion produces inaccurate, incomplete, and partial conceptualizations of peace. The omission of women from peace frameworks not only overlooks their lived experiences of conflict and violence but also impedes the realization of substantive, inclusive, and sustainable peace. The present paper is an attempt to examine how feminist scholars theorize peace and how they criticize the dominant state-centric perspectives that have historically marginalized women's experiences and contributions to peacebuilding. While discussing the feminist ideas of peace, the study also highlights the significance of women's agency, participation, and everyday experiences in rethinking conventional understandings of peace. It further suggests that gender-inclusive frameworks are foundational for effective, equitable, and sustainable peacebuilding and for addressing the broader social structures that perpetuate violence and inequality.

Keywords

Peace, Feminist, Gender, Liberal, Marxist, Patriarchy, Violence against women, Westphalian.

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Reconceptualizing Peace: Feminist Perspectives

1. Introduction

Peace is understood as a universal principle that operates across cultures, boundaries or nations. In an era marked by increasing conflicts, inequalities, terrorism, environmental degradation, the pursuit of peace has become a critical global imperative. Despite peace being humanity's most cherished dream, the world is often plagued by conflict and war. The end of cold war didn't bring lasting peace. Instead it lead to smaller, yet brutal conflicts in places like the Balcones, Africa and the former Soviet Union. Ethnic and religious hatreds have fuelled violence in Rwanda, Bosnia, Liberia, and elsewhere. Despite the ideals, war and conflict are more visible than peace.¹ The philosophical and theoretical traditions have shaped understandings of human nature. It is true that establishing peace and stability is a necessary foundation for preserving International ties. In order to ensure this, many theoretical perspectives have been developed and many institutions have been established. The pursuit of peace in intractable conflicts has indeed become a pressing concern in context of reevaluating the Westphalian international system. The territorial sovereignty that emphasizes rigid boundaries and absolute state control, often lead to competition and conflict over territory and sovereignty. In response, there is a shift towards a post-Westphalian International society that is more interconnected world where diverse actors including non- state actors interact and cooperate.

Peace is closely tied to the absence of violence, where conflicts are resolved through peaceful means rather than violent ones. While a world without conflicts is Elysium, peace can be achieved by addressing conflicts through non-violent, conciliatory approaches. The state of peace comes when conflicts are resolved by peaceful mechanisms.² Here, the definition advanced by Galton and reproduced by Johanson is worth mentioning: "Peace.... is having the capacity and skills to act with creativity, empathy and non violence in conflict situations."³ This definition suggests that peace is a proactive and dynamic process that requires effort, skill building, and commitment to navigating conflicts in a positive way. This perspective highlights the importance of non-violent conflict resolution in achieving peace. By using peaceful mechanisms, such as dialogue, negotiation and mediation. An environment can be created that is conducive to understanding, reconciliation and ultimately, lasting peace.

Giraudoux describes it as 'intervals between wars'.⁴ This viewpoint seems to emphasize the fleeting nature of peace and its connection to the absence of war focusing on formal agreements like peace treaties and their impact on former

conflicting parties and the international community. Peace is also seen as a psychological and emotional condition characterized by inner calmness. Anderson describes, “Peace is a state of mind”.⁵ It is characterized by a profound sense of serenity and tranquillity, extending beyond the mere absence of conflict or violence to compass a deeper state of inner calmness and harmony. The foundation of negative peace sets the stage for more sustainable and lasting peace, ultimately leading to positive peace. In a war like situation, the logical step should be the elimination of war and securing borders. By establishing effective Institutions of good governance can bring positive peace.⁶ A holistic approach to peace encompasses both the absence of violence and the presence of harmonious relationships. Effective peace building efforts must therefore focus on two key dimensions: reducing violence and fostering positive, mutually respectful relationships.

2. Objective of the Study

The study aims to critically examine the feminist reconceptualization of peace by analyzing how feminist scholars challenge dominant state-centric and militaristic understandings of peace and emphasize women’s experiences, agency, participation, and everyday forms of violence. It further seeks to highlight the significance of gender-inclusive approaches for achieving substantive, sustainable, and inclusive peace.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive and analytical research design based entirely on secondary sources. Relevant scholarly literature, including books, research articles, reports, and academic writings on feminist peace studies, gender, conflict, violence, and peacebuilding, is reviewed systematically. The study employs thematic analysis to identify major feminist arguments and critically compare them with conventional state-centric approaches to peace.

4. Reconceptualizing Peace through Feminist Perspectives

Liberal perspective on peace is mainly driven by the western understanding of democracy as democracies are less likely to go to war with each other due to the accountability of leaders to their citizens.⁷ liberals view free market as an important factor in promoting peace. Economic ties develop mutual interests and reasons for cooperation. This idea is further developed by the proponents of Democratic Peace Theory. They are of the view that democratic States tend to resolve conflict peacefully.⁸ In order to preserve social order and advance peace, the neo-Durkheimian perspective on peace places a strong emphasis on the value of social solidarity, shared values and collective identity. According to this perspective, peace results from solid social ties, common moral principles and cooperative organizations that promote mutual respect, trust and understanding between people and groups.⁹ The liberal and pluralist traditions view positive peace as an outcome of the institutionalization of universal liberal principles, law and order, human

rights, global governance structures and interstate cooperation. From the perspective of both classical and structural realism, States operate in an anarchic International system where they prioritize self interest, resulting at best in precarious balance of power. In this context, the idealist conception of peace is regarded as impractical and of limited utility for comprehending international dynamics. Realists are of the view that in order to achieve peace, Nations must attain a condition that balances the distribution of power. They realize that it is extremely challenging to accomplish because nations prioritize their relative gains.¹⁰ The Realist's conceptions that limit peace to the absence of armed conflict, while labelling it idealistic and passive; construct peace as a feminized category and this marginalize it within security studies.¹¹ Marxist theories reconceptualized peace as synonymous with economic justice and social emancipation which is attainable only through revolutionary transformation. True peace occurs only when fighting over money, land oil and power ends. When some have control over resources and others do not, war and conflict happen. It requires changing the whole society so that no one exploits others.¹²

The fundamental tenants of both liberal and illiberal peace building models are contested by feminists. These models include the false dichotomy of peace and war, the prioritization of state security over human security and colonial legacies embedded in these frameworks.¹³ Liberal feminists contend that gender inclusion into current institutions can bring about peace, while Marxist feminists contend that eradicating capitalism and class exploitation is necessary. Feminist scholarship contends that peace extends beyond the absence of interstate and civil war. The issue is not mere of definition. Peace is usually measured by the extreme of inter-state wars while overlooking structural and gender based violence. J.N Tickner is of the view that realists ignore the insecurity facing at home, workplace or community because it is not a security issue. This type of state centrism is gendered. In mainstream International Relations and Security Studies, women are seen as objects of research. Only male scholars define and decide what counts as "real" security knowledge. Women's own accounts of war, insecurity or peace building are dismissed as anecdotal or "too subjective". Tickner argues that women are data and expertise. Further Cockburn extends this perspective with the view that instead of using statistics and treaties, feminists use oral histories, interviews, and participatory research with women in conflict zones.¹⁴

Recognizing women as knower's allows their lived experiences to be treated as data in security research. It is not just state documents, troop counts, or GDP, the narratives women tell about war, safety, and peace are empirical material for studying security. This method questions the state's story that "the country is safe" by using women's stories to show that many women still feel unsafe. So, Wibben tells scholars to treat women's stories as legitimate, analyzable evidence of how security and peace really work.¹⁵ Framing women as subjects, not objects, requires that IR listen to women as producers of knowledge, because their perspectives

expose both the threats they navigate and the peace work they perform. These dimensions are absent from State Centric Perspective. Feminist Scholars content that gendered power relations lie in the social construction of war and violence. The conceptual framing of violence and war in binary opposition to non violence and peace constitutes a gendered move that replicates male/female hierarchical structures in the social order. This practice, consequently, sustaining the normative superiority of violence relative to non-violence.¹⁶ Feminist critique dismantle the war/peace binary which prioritizes spectacular violence against men while rendering women's everyday threats invisible, including domestic and community violence during "peace time". Burn illustrates this perspective with examples of post conflict areas where formal peace did not end militarized masculinity, domestic violence or inequalities.¹⁷

Conflicts often worsen existing gender inequalities. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, facing higher risks of sexual violence, displacement, and loss of livelihood. In war torn areas, especially women are vulnerable to sexual assault and exploitation. Women usually bear the main responsibility for caring for families and communities in the midst of conflict and destruction. Traditional peace building processes are typically dominated by men, and women's contributions are often marginalized or overlooked. This exclusion not only reduces the effectiveness of peace efforts but also ignores the valuable insights and experiences that women offer. A clear example is the absence of women in the formal peace negotiations and decision making bodies. Since 2000, the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security Agenda, starting with Security Council Resolution 1325, has stated that women must help in the peace processes, peace keeping, and post-conflict re-building. There are ten resolutions dealing with sexual violence, women's participation, and gender-aware peace building. A causal relationship between women's political participation and global peace is proposed by liberal feminist studies. According to a study, between 1960 and 2000, no interstate conflict was initiated by democracies with more than 25% female legislators. According to an another study, gender-balanced UN peacekeeping forces increase civilian trust and reduce complaints of abuse.¹⁸

Therefore, peace building must confront entrenched inequalities and routine oppression contesting state centric paradigms that reduce peace to the mere absence of war. Jaisi Bernard contents that patriarchal systems generate to unequal social realms. One is the hegemonic, "male world", centred on competition and power, the other is deprivative female ethos that is centred on love and duty.¹⁹ In this regard two contrasting models of social organization can be discussed here. The Dominator model is based on the hierarchical ranking of one half of humanity over the other. From a conceptual standpoint, this model may take either matriarchal or patriarchal form. The partnership model is founded on the equal participation of both halves of humanity. It ensures equal participation establishing equality among men and between women and men.²⁰ The project of constructing a post-colonial

feminist future requires critically questioning and redefining conventional understanding of peace. This vision prioritizes demilitarization and the elimination of armed conflict, while remaining acutely aware of the gendered risks posed by militarization and weaponization. According to Global South Feminists, Peace is the simultaneous destruction of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. They oppose “colonial feminism”, which justifies occupation and “rescue” narratives by citing women’s rights. Rather, women’s political agency rooted in resistance histories and territory-body-land connections are the foundations of peace. Decolonial viewpoints contend that gender equality programmes operating within capitalist structures reinforce knowledge hierarchies and harm women’s well being rather than creating peace.²¹

5. Conclusion

Structural violence and ongoing military conflict continue to be the defining characteristic of global politics. This highlights a basic problem: if peace is defined without taking into account all the individuals, it cannot be attained on a global scale. Despite comprising half of the population, women are often ignored in these frameworks. Alternative frameworks for understanding peace are provided by feminist studies. It shows how militarism legitimized through masculinity and how structural violence borne mainly by women, stems from gendered hierarchy. Peace education requires distinguishing between educating about peace and educating for peace. The former entails teaching the substantive issues central to peace research.²² For conflicts to be resolved peacefully one must identify pathways to transform harmful gender norms and incorporate gender based violence into definitions of war and organized crime. Gender equality has significant and far reaching implications for peace.²³ Gender analysis should be integrated throughout the curriculum to expose hidden inequalities. Research indicates that societies organized on partnership model characterized by gender equality experience lower number of internal and external conflicts compared to those organized on the dominator model of patriarchy

Feminists have argued that peace should not be understood as a passive idea. It seeks to challenge and transform existing power structures and the status quo. Peace is not a static endpoint but rather an ongoing, gendered process that fundamentally concerns men, women, and the nature of their relational dynamics. Conceptualizing peace as a gendered process reveals two pervasive assumptions: first, that men and women are essentially different, and second, that women are inherently peacemakers while men are inherently aggressors. This essentialist perspective has been challenged by empirical evidence demonstrating that men can also be victims of violence, and women can be perpetrators of violence and abuse. Furthermore, studies indicate that power-sharing arrangements in negotiated settlements have a positive impact on the durability of peace. Specifically, women’s participation in peace negotiations significantly enhances both the quality and sustainability of peace agreements. Feminist Scholars and peace

researchers contend that peace should not be understood as a passive condition; rather, it constitutes a transformative concept that challenges and seeks to destabilize established power structures.²⁴ Feminist Scholars argue that the definition of peace will be incomplete and peace building will not work if the voices of women are not heard and women are not treated as political leaders. Contemporary practice and policies have increasingly formalized and extended these initiatives. Gender sensitive approaches foreground women's lived realities and decision making, interrogating whose security matters and recognizing women as active agents of peace rather than passive victims.

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Equity Resource Mobilization in India: A Sector-wise Analysis

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Abstract

The primary equity stock market plays a significant role in mobilizing long term financial resources of a country for productive investment and enhancing economic growth. The present study examines the pattern of equity resource mobilization across twenty-four industry sectors, as classified by The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), over a decade, covering the period from 2016-17 to 2025-26. Taking secondary data from SEBI and stock exchange publications, the study analyses the number of equity issuances, the amount mobilized from equity issuance, average amount per issue, participation of different industrial sectors in equity issuance and ranking of different sectors on the basis of number of equity issues and funds raised from such issues. The analysis indicates a substantial expansion in India's equity issuance activity during the study period. Equity resource mobilization, however, was found to be unevenly distributed across sectors. The study concludes that issue frequency and funds mobilized do not necessarily move together, as some sectors raised substantial amounts through relatively lesser issues. Overall, the study highlights that there has been expansion of India's primary equity market but it has remained heterogeneous in sectoral access, transaction size and timing. The findings provide useful insight into the changing structure of equity resource mobilization across Indian industries and suggest the need for sector-level analysis of primary-market financing.

Keywords

Equity resource mobilization, Primary capital market, Equity issues, IPOs, Capital formation, Sectoral analysis.

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Equity Resource Mobilization in India: A Sector-wise Analysis

1. Introduction

The primary capital market plays a vital role in the economic development of a country. It enables to channelize household and institutional savings into productive investments by connecting investors seeking investment opportunities with businesses requiring funds. Out of various sources of corporate finance, equity capital occupies a unique position as it enables firms and businesses to raise long-term funds without commitment of fixed interest payments and repayment schedules associated with borrowings. Equity financing enables businesses to go for expansion, modernization, innovation and capacity enhancement etc. and thus contributing to industrial growth and overall economic development of any country. The relationship between stock market development and economic growth is also supported by Levine and Zervos (1998). In an emerging economy like India, investment requirements continue to rise across various industries. Therefore, a well-functioning equity market has become an indispensable part of the Indian financial system.

India's capital market has undergone significant transformation during the last decade. Regulatory initiatives introduced by the SEBI, such as, enhanced disclosure standards, corporate governance requirements, integrated risk management systems and investor protection measures have significantly improved market transparency, operational efficiency, investor confidence and accessibility of the primary market (Securities and Exchange Board of India, 2024 a). The SEBI has also introduced measures to simplify the Initial Public Offering (IPO) process and reduced public issue listing timelines (from T+6 to T+3 days in 2023), making the fund-raising process timelier for issuers and investors. Further, the rapid advancement in financial technology along with widespread adoption of electronic trading systems, dematerialization of securities, online brokerage platforms, mobile-based investing and algorithmic trading have significantly changed the functioning of the securities market (Mahajan, 2025). All these developments have enhanced the ability of Indian businesses to access equity capital and have reinforced the role of capital markets in corporate financing. Such developments provide an opportunity to study the primary market of an emerging country (Chatterjee *et. al.*, 2024).

The amount of funds raised through equity issues is influenced by a number of industry-specific characteristics like capital intensity, investment required, growth opportunities, technological factors, regulatory environment and profitability etc. Myers (2001) argued that financing choices of the firms depended on their circumstances, rather than a single universally applicable explanation. Rajan and

Zingales (1995) demonstrated that industry characteristics played an important role in determining firms' capital structures across countries. Their study found that firm specific characteristics, such as, asset tangibility, size, profitability etc. influenced leverage decisions of the firms for G-7 countries, (the US, the UK, Japan, Germany, Italy, France and Canada), although the strength of these relationships varied across countries. Similarly, Sibindi (2016) identified firm size, profitability, growth, asset tangibility, tax shields, risk, dividend policy and age as important determinants of capital structure. These studies provide a conceptual basis for investigating sectoral differences. Since, different sectors, such as, financial services, manufacturing, infrastructure, information technology and telecommunications have different financing patterns, it is therefore necessary to examine and analyze how capital markets allocate financial resources across different segments/sectors of the economy.

The present study examines industry-wise equity resource mobilization in India over the last decade (2016-17 to 2025-26). The period under study covers the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic times and the subsequent recovery period. This provides a perfect setting for comparing fundraising patterns across different economic conditions. The study examines both the number of issues and the amount mobilized by different sectors, as some of the sectors may record frequent but relatively small issues, while others may raise substantial funds through only a few transactions. Against this background, the present study investigates whether equity mobilization has broadened across industries or remained concentrated in selected sectors.

2. Review of Literature

A substantial body of literature has examined the functioning of primary capital markets, determinants of equity issuance, IPO performance, investor behaviour and corporate financing decisions. The theoretical foundation of equity financing can be traced to the capital structure literature. Modigliani and Miller (1958) demonstrated that under perfect market conditions, the value of a business is independent of its financing mix. But later proposition claimed that taxation, information asymmetry, transaction costs and agency conflicts influenced financing choices. In the real world, however, several scholars challenged their propositions (Sibindi, 2016).

Jensen and Meckling (1976) highlighted the importance of agency considerations and examined how the use of equity and debt affect agency costs. The authors argued that as the share of external ownership increases, the interest of managers may diverge and hence increasing the agency costs. They concluded that the ownership structure and financing decisions are closely associated with managerial incentives and value of the firm. Similarly, the paper by Ross (1977) connects the capital structure decision with the Signaling theory. The author argued that financing decision of the firm serves as signal of firm's quality, as managers have better information about a firm's future prospects. These theoretical

perspectives remain relevant in explaining differences in equity issuance across the various industry sectors.

Myers (1984) observed that the firm's financing choice depends on information asymmetry and availability of internal funds. The equity mobilization by the firms depends on the financing requirements of firms as the firms generally prefer internal funds, followed by debt and then equity because of information asymmetry.

Research in primary markets has largely focused on Initial Public Offerings (IPOs). Ritter (1991) took a sample of 1526 IPOs that went public in the US from 1975-1984 and observed that such firms significantly underperformed three years after they went public as compared to other firms matched by industry and market value. The author observed underperforming firms to be relatively young growth companies that went public in high volume years of 1980s and the possible reason of under-performance could be over optimism of the irrational investors about the future potential of firms. Similarly, Loughran and Ritter (1995) observed that IPO or seasonal equity offering (SEO) between 1970-1990 proved to be poor investments for investors as compared to non-issuing firms; offering an average return of 5% and 7% respectively for IPO and SEO. The authors concluded that the firms issuing equity during high volume periods underperform. Ljungqvist (2007) documented widespread IPO underpricing and the influence of market timing on equity issuance and concluded that IPO underpricing was influenced by multiple interacting factors and varies across countries, market conditions, institutional environments, and issuer characteristics. These studies, thus, established that investor sentiment, market conditions, firm quality and regulatory frameworks significantly affect the success of public issues.

Taking firm-level data from G-7 countries, Rajan and Zingales (1995) explored if the factors associated with leverage in the US also explained the capital structure in other countries. The authors concluded asset tangibility and firm size to be positively related with leverage, while profitability and market-to-book ratios to be negatively related. The authors also concluded that capital structure determinants were by and large consistent internationally, although institutional differences and theoretical explanations required further investigation.

Levine and Zervos (1998), while examining the role of banking development and stock market liquidity established that every equity issue may not generate productive investment. They observed that stock market liquidity and banking development predict subsequent growth, capital accumulation, and growth in productivity. Frank and Goyal (2009) also identified profitability, firm size, investment opportunities and industry effects as major determinants of financing behaviour.

Sibindi (2016) reviewed the theoretical and empirical literature on determinants of capital structure and concluded that capital structure decisions were influenced by both firm specific characteristics and external factors and no single theory explained financing choices of the firms across different economies.

Chakrabarti (2018) observed that regulatory reforms transformed India's primary market into a more efficient and credible platform for corporate fundraising. Saha (2018) observed that Public and Rights issues constituted the largest source of funds from the primary capital market to the corporate sector in India. The authors concluded that the Moving Average Model of order 1 was the most appropriate model for predicting a rising trend in funds raised through Public and Rights issue and for forecasting capital formation.

Gupta (2020) made a comparative review of the Indian primary equity market for the years 2019-20 over the year 2018-19 and observed that the year 2019-20 marked a sharp recovery in terms of resource mobilization because of SEBI initiatives and policy changes in primary market. The author observed that the end of the COVID-19 pandemic can improve activity in the primary market.

Chatterjee *et al.* (2024) in their review found post-listing volatility, IPO grading and impact of corporate governance on IPO performance as the dominant research themes. The authors also noted that relatively limited attention has been given to analyzing industry-level patterns of equity resource mobilization. The authors highlighted the need for comparative sectoral studies to examine how different industries access the primary market under varying economic conditions.

Highlighting the role of institutional investors in determining IPO success, Singhal *et al.* (2025) found that institutional participation contributes to more efficient allocation of equity capital by directing investment towards firms with stronger growth prospects.

The ability of firms to raise equity capital is closely linked to industry characteristics. Studies on corporate financing have linked sector-specific factors, such as, capital intensity, growth prospects, business risk, regulatory environment and technological change to financing decisions (Rajan and Zingales, 1995; Myers, 2001; Sibindi, 2016). Thus, different studies suggest that difference in equity mobilization across industries is influenced by both firm-specific and sector-specific factors. In India, however, industry-wise evidence remains fragmented. Most studies concentrate on individual sectors, such as, banking, information technology, pharmaceuticals or infrastructure. Also, a little empirical evidence exists regarding the persistence of sectoral leadership in equity mobilization or the changing contribution of industries over extended periods.

The volume and timing of equity issues are also influenced by macroeconomic conditions. Many factors, such as, economic growth, monetary policy, inflation, interest rates, market liquidity and investor confidence determine corporate financing decision and also the attractiveness of equity markets. During periods of economic expansion, firms generally increase capital expenditure and are more inclined to raise equity funds. On the other hand, economic uncertainty often delays investment decisions and public issues. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers India (2025), India's IPO market remained one of the strongest in the Asia-Pacific region during financial year 2024-25 and financial

year 2025-26. Their sector-wise analysis indicates considerable variation in fundraising activity across industries; financial services, real estate and materials experienced strong growth in IPO mobilization, whereas information technology, healthcare and communication services recorded comparatively weaker activity during certain periods. These shifts reflect changing investor preferences, evolving sectoral prospects and change in macroeconomic conditions.

Further, Viswan M G (2026) found underpricing of Indian IPOs to be strongly and negatively influenced by the proportion of fresh capital in the issue. The author also observed that strategic use of the secondary shares (offer for sale) particularly during favourable market conditions would allow existing shareholders to have a successful exit, thereby reinforcing the importance of issue structure as a key financial signal. Gudipati (2026) used ICICI securities as a case study for the period from 2006-2025 and examined changes in patterns in financing of different sectors through IPOs and found IPOs financing concentrated in credit-oriented sectors, such as, NBFCs, Banks and Fintech firms, which constituted a significant share of the firms financed by ICICI securities.

3. Research Gap

Literature review shows that a number of studies have been done to understand IPO pricing, corporate financing decisions, capital structure and investor behaviour, stock market performance and firm-level financing decisions/determinants of equity issuance. However, relatively fewer studies have investigated equity resource mobilization from an industry-level perspective, particularly in emerging markets such as India.

The present study seeks to bridge this gap through a decade-long comparison of twenty-four sector-wise businesses and industries in India from the financial year 2016-17 to 2025-26 by comparing equity mobilization with number of IPO issues and amount raised. This enables comparison of market breadth, transaction scale, sectoral shares and long-term growth, and show changes in industry-wise financing patterns over time.

4. Objectives of the Study

Objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the growth pattern of equity resource mobilization across industrial sectors in India during 2016-17 to 2025-26 in terms of both the number of equity issues and the amount raised.
2. To compare sector-wise participation and growth.

5. Research Methodology

The study uses secondary data compiled from SEBI and stock-exchange publications on industry-wise equity resource mobilization for twenty-four sectors in India in last decade i.e., from 2016-17 to 2025-26. The study adopts the twenty-four-sector classification used in SEBI's industry-wise equity resource-

mobilization data. The original SEBI classification has been retained to ensure consistency and comparability across the study period. Further, the indicators, i.e., number of issues and amount raised have been analyzed for every sector for the study period.

6. Data Analysis

6.1 Year-wise Growth in IPO Issue Activity and Funds Raised

India's primary market has emerged as one of the most active in the Asia-Pacific region (PWC, India, 2025). Strong liquidity, favourable macroeconomic fundamentals and sustained investor confidence have contributed to a vibrant initial IPO market. Table-1 below reports the annual growth rate of issues and amount mobilized as well as the average amount per issue for the study period. The column 'Total no of Issues' in Table-1 shows the total equity issues of all 24 sectors in the respective years. The column 'Amount / issue (₹ crore)' shows the average amount raised in the respective years. It has been calculated by dividing Amount raised from issue of equity divided by number of equity issues in that respective year. The ten-year period recorded a total of 2,344 equity issues and mobilized funds to the tune of ₹ 10,76,010.02 crores. Number of equity issues increased from 118 in 2016-17 to 506 in the year 2025-26, registering a 17.56% Cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR), while the amount raised increased from ₹32,483.37 crore to ₹ 2,34,868.39 crore for the same period (24.58% CAGR).

Table-1: Year-wise Growth of Equity Resource Mobilization

Financial year	Total no of Issues	Issue growth (%)	Amount (₹ crore)	Amount growth (%)	Amount/ Issue (₹ crore)
2016-17	118	—	32,483.37	—	275.28
2017-18	212	79.66	99,764.95	207.13	470.59
2018-19	145	-31.60	23,721.85	-76.22	163.60
2019-20	79	-45.52	77,052.10	224.81	975.34
2020-21	78	-1.27	1,10,118.35	42.91	1,411.77
2021-22	164	110.26	1,38,895.74	26.13	846.93
2022-23	238	45.12	65,823.22	-52.61	276.57
2023-24	340	42.86	83,092.52	26.24	244.39
2024-25	464	36.47	2,10,189.53	152.96	452.99
2025-26	506	9.05	2,34,868.39	11.74	464.17
Total	2344		10,76,010.02		

Source: Author's computation from SEBI/NSE/BSE/MSEI Industry-wise Equity Issue Data

It can be observed from the above table that in financial year 2017-18, 212 issues raised ₹99,764.95 crore, followed by declines of 31.6% in issue count and a decline of 76.22% in amount mobilized from equity issues in 2018-19. Further, number of equity issue counts decreased to 79 and 78, respectively in the years

2019-20 and 2020-21. However, the amount mobilized rose to ₹77,052.10 crore and ₹110,118.35 crore for the above said period. Average amount per issue peaked at ₹1,411.77 crore in the year 2020-21 owing to large funds raised from fewer issues of equity. Heightened activity in the equity market can be observed starting from the year 2021-22, both in terms of number and amount of equity issues. These findings suggest that fundraising performance depends on the size and composition of offerings as well as the number of IPOs; consequently, listing activity alone may provide an incomplete measure of primary-market strength (PWC, 2026).

Figures-1 and 2 below show the annual paths of equity issue counts and amounts raised from the period 2016-17 to 2025-26:

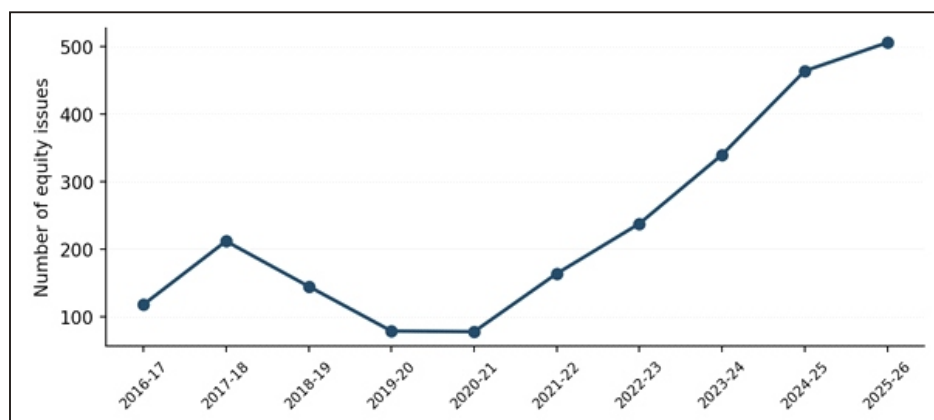


Figure-1: Number of Equity Issues (2016-17 to 2025-26)

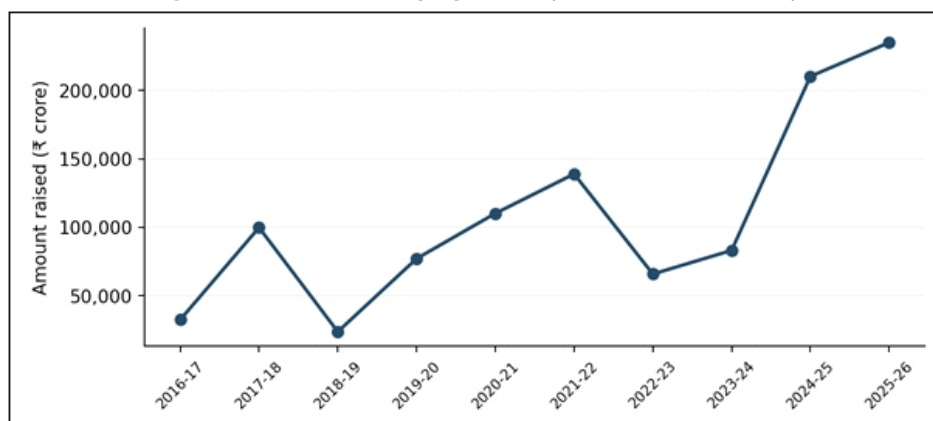


Figure-2: Amount Raised from Equity Issues (2016-17 to 2025-26)

6.2 Sector-wise Participation: Frequency of Issues and Funds Raised

Table-2 compares sector wise totals of equity issues, funds raised and average amount per issue over the decade under study. The columns ‘Total Issues’ and ‘Total amount (₹ crore)’ in Table-2, for example, imply the total number of equity issues and amount raised by different sectors (as classified by SEBI) from equity issuance from the years 2016-17 to 2025-26.

**Table-2: Sector-wise Equity Issue Activity and Funds Raised
(2016-17 to 2025-26)**

Sr. No.	Industry	Total issues	Issue share (%)	Total amount (₹ crore)	Amount share (%)	Amount / Issue (₹ crore)
1.	Airlines	1	0.04	4,113.13	0.38	4,113.13
2.	Automobile	50	2.13	59,168.40	5.50	1,183.37
3.	Banking/FIs	37	1.58	38,060.45	3.54	1,028.66
4.	Cement/ Construction	127	5.42	31,360.93	2.91	246.94
5.	Chemicals	115	4.91	24,652.79	2.29	214.37
6.	Consumer Services	92	3.92	62,576.62	5.82	680.18
7.	Electrical Equipment/ Production	258	11.01	53,151.91	4.94	206.02
8.	Engineering	66	2.82	7,690.72	0.71	116.53
9.	Entertainment	42	1.79	3,678.84	0.34	87.59
10.	Finance	119	5.08	1,14,526.86	10.64	962.41
11.	Food processing	118	5.03	26,506.04	2.46	224.63
12.	Healthcare	148	6.31	65,076.83	6.05	439.71
13.	Hotels	17	0.73	13,006.13	1.21	765.07
14.	Information Technology	148	6.31	40,007.77	3.72	270.32
15.	Insurance	12	0.51	84,707.02	7.87	7,058.92
16.	Miscellaneous	774	33.02	2,56,939.05	23.88	331.96
17.	Oil & Natural Gas	17	0.73	63,123.72	5.87	3,713.16
18.	Paper & Pulp	11	0.47	456.35	0.04	41.49
19.	Plastic	18	0.77	897.72	0.08	49.87
20.	Power	18	0.77	14,027.28	1.30	779.29
21.	Printing	5	0.21	81.15	0.01	16.23
22.	Roads & Highways	13	0.55	2,524.09	0.23	194.16
23.	Tele-communication	18	0.77	96,996.99	9.01	5,388.72
24.	Textile	120	5.12	12,679.23	1.18	105.66

Source: Author's compilation from SEBI/NSE/BSE/MSEI Industry-wise Equity Issue Data.

Note: Calculations have been done from figures taken from the above reports.

The sector, Electrical Equipment/Production recorded the highest number of equity issues (258), followed by Miscellaneous sector (not interpreted as a single homogeneous industry). Miscellaneous industry recorded 774 issues (33.02%) and raised the funds to the tune of ₹256,939.05 crore (23.88%). While Healthcare and Information Technology each recorded 148 issues, and Cement/Construction recorded 127; Finance sector ranked second by the total amount of issues, with 119 issues mobilizing ₹1,14,526.86 crore. While the highest average amount per issue was recorded for Insurance sector, the smallest average was recorded for Printing sector. Thus, it can be observed from the above Table that the differences in ranking on different basis, as, no of issues, amount raised from them and the average amount per issue differ for different sectors.

6.3 Sector-wise Growth Between 2016-17 to 2025-26

Table-3 compares the annual observations of the year 2015-16 with 2025-26. Cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) summarizes the change between those years and does not imply a smooth or sustained annual growth path.

Table-3: Sector-wise Growth in Number of Issues and Amount Raised (2016-17 to 2025-26)

Sr. No.	Industry	Issues 2016-17	Issues 2025-26	Issue CAGR (%)	Amount 2016-17 (₹ crore)	Amount 2025-26 (₹ crore)	Amount CAGR (%)
1.	Airlines	—	—	NA	—	—	NA
2.	Automobile	3	13	17.69	1,342.14	10,787.46	26.06
3.	Banking/FIs	4	1	-14.28	3,626.92	949.08	-13.84
4.	Cement/Construction	7	28	16.65	149.80	5,068.27	47.89
5.	Chemicals	4	32	25.99	19.17	4,293.72	82.44
6.	Consumer Services	3	27	27.65	281.51	26,453.93	65.66
7.	Electrical Equipment/Production	7	92	33.14	55.18	20,656.86	93.16
8.	Engineering	3	—	NA	12.51	—	NA
9.	Entertainment	3	14	18.67	511.78	1,035.49	8.15
10.	Finance	6	29	19.13	6,313.04	34,801.79	20.89
11.	Food processing	7	43	22.35	2,354.52	5,136.38	9.05
12.	Healthcare	6	33	20.85	1,882.86	9,907.99	20.26
13.	Hotels	—	—	NA	—	—	NA
14.	Information Technology	5	37	24.91	2,607.78	8,329.15	13.77

15.	Insurance	1	1	0.00	6,056.79	2,515.95	-9.30
16.	Miscellaneous	40	119	12.88	4,670.45	95,582.57	39.85
17.	Oil & Natural Gas	1	4	16.65	1,039.00	3,927.70	15.92
18.	Paper & Pulp	1	6	22.03	49.75	247.47	19.51
19.	Plastic	—	—	NA	—	—	NA
20.	Power	2	2	0.00	364.58	3,129.31	26.98
21.	Printing	—	—	NA	0.00	—	NA
22.	Roads & Highways	1	—	NA	653.98	—	NA
23.	Tele-communication	—	2	NA	0.00	844.28	NA
24.	Textile	14	23	5.67	491.60	1,200.98	10.43

Source: Author's computation from SEBI/NSE/BSE/MSEI data.

Note: CAGR is calculated over nine annual intervals only when both 2016-17 and 2025-26 values are positive. NA denotes a zero-end point base.

It can be observed from the above table that Electrical Equipment/Production sector recorded the highest CAGR (93.16%), followed by Chemicals (82.44%) and Consumer Services (65.66%) in terms of amount raised from the equity issues, whereas, CAGR for number of equity issues were 33.14%, 25.99% and 27.65%, respectively for these sectors. Such high CAGR rate of amount raised from issue reflect low amounts raised in the initial years. For example, the amount mobilized by Electrical Equipment/Production sector was only 55.18 crores in 2016-17 as compared to 20,656.86 crores in 2025-26.

Banking/Financial Institutions declined from four issues and ₹3,626.92 crore funds to one issue and ₹949.08 crore, resulting in a CAGR of -13.84%. Similarly, the Insurance sector also recorded zero CAGR for number of equity issuances, and a negative CAGR of -9.30% for the funds raised from issue of equity. Though, the Insurance and banking/financial institutions recorded relatively few equity issues during the study period, but their average issue sizes (as mentioned in table-2) exceeded the overall sector average. This indicates that lower issuance frequency does not necessarily imply less amount of funds raised/mobilized. The relatively low frequency of recorded equity issues may also imply access to other sources of capital. Moreover, in public sector institutions, like, Banking and Insurance sectors, government is the majority stakeholder and provide capital support to them. Also, under Basel-III framework, the banks can raise additional Tier-1 funds from perpetual bonds/preference-type instruments to meet RBI's eligibility requirements. Muduli and Behera (2020) also observed in their paper that retained earnings and government capitalization may also influence the availability of internal capital in the banking sector.

It can also be observed from Table-3 that India's equity market grew in 2025-26, but not all sectors benefitted equally. The insurance sector, for example,

had fewer issues but raised large amounts of money. This implies that the number of issues and the amount raised should be looked at separately.

It was also observed that the Engineering and Roads & Highways sectors had equity issuances in the base-year, but zero issue in 2025-26. On the other hand, Telecommunication sector had a zero base and positive number in 2025-26. Such cases have been marked NA in the above Table. Zero observations in the Table, however, don't mean that a particular sector had no funding, rather it implies that financing has been done through other sources/channels.

6.4 Sector Rankings by Mean Annual Equity Resource Mobilization and Total number of Issues

Tables-4.1 and 4.2 below rank sectors by mean annual mobilization, calculated as cumulative amount divided by ten, including zero-issuance years. This differs from average amount per issue in Table-2, which divides cumulative amount by cumulative issue count.

Table-4.1 gives the ranking of the top 10 sectors on the basis of mean of annual funds mobilized through equity issuance. Table-4.2 gives the ranking of the bottom 10 sectors on the basis of mean of annual funds mobilized. Further, Table-4.3 and Table-4.4 give the rankings of the top 10 sectors and bottom 10 sectors respectively on the basis of number of issues.

Table-4.1: Top 10 Sectors by Mean Annual Mobilization

Rank	Industry	Mean Annual Mobilization (₹ crores)
1.	Miscellaneous	25,693.91
2.	Finance	11,452.69
3.	Telecommunication	9,699.70
4.	Insurance	8,470.70
5.	Healthcare	6,507.68
6.	Oil & Natural Gas	6,312.37
7.	Consumer Services	6,257.66
8.	Automobile	5,916.84
9.	Electrical Equipment/ Production	5,315.19
10.	Information Technology	4,000.78

Note: Ranks in the table are from highest to lowest

Table-4.2: Bottom 10 Sectors by Mean Annual Mobilization

Rank	Industry	Mean Annual Mobilization (₹ crore)
1.	Printing	8.11
2.	Paper & Pulp	45.63
3.	Plastic	89.77
4.	Roads & Highways	252.41

5.	Entertainment	367.88
6.	Airlines	411.31
7.	Engineering	769.07
8.	Textile	1,267.92
9.	Hotels	1,300.61
10.	Power	1,402.73

Note: Above ranking is from lowest to highest.

Table-4-3: Top 10 Sectors Ranked by Number of Equity Issues

Rank	Sector	Total number of issues
1.	Miscellaneous	774
2.	Electrical Equipment/ Production	258
3.	Healthcare	148
4.	Information Technology	148
5.	Cement/Construction	127
6.	Textile	120
7.	Finance	119
8.	Food processing	118
9.	Chemicals	115
10.	Consumer Services	92

Note: Ranks in the table are from highest to lowest

Table-4-4: Bottom 10 Sectors Ranked by Number of Equity Issues

Rank	Sector	Total number of issues
1.	Airlines	1
2.	Printing	5
3.	Paper & Pulp	11
4.	Insurance	12
5.	Roads & Highways	13
6.	Hotels	17
7.	Oil & Natural Gas	17
8.	Plastic	18
9.	Power	18
10.	Telecommunication	18

Note: Above ranking is from lowest to highest.

Table-4-1 shows that the five leading sectors by amount of funds raised from equity were Miscellaneous, Finance, Telecommunication, Insurance and Healthcare and they together accounted for 57.46% of cumulative mobilization, and the top ten accounted for 83.30% (as calculated from Table-2). On the other hand, the five leading sectors on the basis of the number of issues were Miscellaneous, Electrical Equipment/Production, Healthcare, Information Technology and Cement/

Construction (Table-4.3) and they together constituted 62.07% of the total number of issues, whereas, the top 10 accounted for 86.13% of the total issues (as calculated from table-2).

Another observation was that the first five years (2016-17 to 2020-21) recorded 632 number of issues and ₹343,140.62 crore funds raised from them as compared to 1,712 issues and ₹732,869.41 crore raised in the last five years (2021-22 to 2025-26) of the study. Issue count, thus, was 2.71 times as high and the amount raised was 2.14 times as high. The corresponding average amounts per issue were ₹542.94 crore and ₹428.08 crore. Thus, issuance frequency increased faster than aggregate funds between the two halves, and average transaction size declined.

7. Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are presented below:

1. It was observed that India's equity-issue activity expanded during the period from 2016-17 to 2025-26. A total of 2,344 issues mobilized ₹1,076,010.03 crore of funds. Whereas, the number of issues increased 4.29 times, the amount mobilized increased 7.23 times during the period under study. The overall size of India's equity market has expanded substantially, but the study observed that equity resource mobilization has not been uniform across various businesses and industry sectors.
2. The year 2025-26 recorded the largest number of equity issues and amount mobilized, but the highest average amount mobilized per issue was recorded in the year 2020-21.
3. The sectors which showed highest growth in number of issues and funds mobilized depended on the indicator used. The Miscellaneous sector ranked number 1 both in terms of number of issues and average funds mobilized during the period under study.
4. The later five-year period of the study recorded a greater number of issues and funds mobilized than the earlier five-year period, but a lower average amount per issue.
5. Sector-wise participation was observed to be concentrated to some of the sectors. Also, the large number of industries categorized under Miscellaneous category by SEBI makes it difficult to understand the performance of individual sectors clearly. These findings are only descriptive and it cannot be inferred that industry sector conditions or investor sentiment impacts fund raising/mobilized through equity issues.

8. Conclusion

The ten-year analysis shows expansion in equity resource mobilization alongside differences in issue frequency, transaction size and sectoral concentration. Assessing both number of equity issues as well as amount mobilized/raised helps to differentiate between large fundraising sectors vis a vis those having frequent issues. The results show that the primary equity market has expanded over the decade, but has remained heterogeneous in sectoral access,

transaction size and timing. Thus, the expansion was neither smooth nor uniform across businesses and industries. The results support closer examination of sectors with intermittent issuance and more detailed classification of Miscellaneous sector by policymakers and market institutions.

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Women's Empowerment through Commercial Vegetable Farming: A Case Study of Panchkhal Municipality

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Abstract

This research presents a case study conducted in a semi-urban area in Nepal to understand women's empowerment through seasonal or non-seasonal vegetable farming. Drawing on feminist theories and a gender analysis framework, this study explores women's empowerment, household decision-making, financial independence, and social participation. To support this research, the study used both descriptive and exploratory research designs. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and interview schedules. The field study was conducted around the Hokse, Panchkhal Municipality, Kavre, Nepal, where most women are involved in vegetable farming. The study selected 26 women vegetable farmers. Women's involvement in commercial vegetable farming increases income, boosts self-confidence, and encourages them to improve their skills. The findings show that women are viewed as role models in their communities and are actively involved in household decision-making. Their social participation increases after vegetable farming. Women's earnings inspire more women and other community members.

Keywords

Women, Empowerment, Commercial vegetable farming, Decision-making, Social participation.

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Women's Empowerment through Commercial Vegetable Farming: A Case Study of Panchkhal Municipality

1. Introduction

Government, non-government organizations, other organizations and agencies have been working to empower women in Nepal. Agriculture has always been a source of income for Nepalese people. Women are leading in agriculture and make a remarkable contribution to household food and nutrition security in developing countries. They make up almost half of the agricultural labor force (World Bank, 2017). Although they contribute significantly to agriculture, women have less access to resources than men, especially land. Over the past two decades, the number of women has been increasing; they have been controlling and involved in family farmland, but women's land proprietorship has not grown. Female land ownership has increased by less than 3%, from 10% in 1995 to 12.8% in 2015 (Mohanty and Bhandari, 2014).

Women's empowerment in Nepal is tied to social, cultural, and economic factors that influence all aspects of women's lives. This affects not only women themselves but also the well-being of their children. They further write that Nepalese women's lives are complex webs of constraints, obligations, and sacrifices, many of which are determined from the day of her birth. The caste or ethnic group she is born into determines her position, status, and freedom (Dhakal and Seikh, 1997). Tharan (1997) further states that empowerment brings a new understanding, the ability to acquire new skills, confidence in solving problems, and conflict-resolution skills that strengthen organizations, individuals, and collectives. We do not view empowerment as hierarchical, exploitative power, but as power that leads to democratization and builds new mechanisms for collective responsibility, decision-making, and accountability.

Women's empowerment has five segments: women's pride; their right to have and to assure alternative; their right to have access to chance and supplies; their right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to discover a more just social and economic level, inside nation and universally (UNDP, 1996). As times evolve, women have realized their power. Various organizations have provided agricultural training and skills-development programs nationwide. These programs have enhanced women's ability and confidence by providing technical and other knowledge on farming, animal husbandry, and other small-scale businesses. This began the revolution for women's empowerment. Beyond household activities, women have become farming professionals and economically independent. As men

migrated to seek alternative livelihoods, women took on tasks previously done by men, such as land preparation, harvesting, post-harvest operations, and marketing produce. Women were the pioneers of modern agriculture, which began with the domestication of plants in their territories (Lal, 2009)

The increasing takeover of roles by women at both the household and community level in the absence of men should have created better opportunities for them. It should have created opportunities for them to gain empowerment, build capacity, and, more importantly, become entrepreneurial farmers rather than family farm laborers. However, social and cultural factors, along with a non-supportive policy and institutional environment, have not responded to the need to empower agriculture-dependent women to increase their ownership and control over productive resources (Tamang *et al.*, 2014). Most importantly, systematic change in laws and policies at the national level designed to advance gender equality across the socio-economic and political spectrum provides a conducive environment for women to challenge restrictive socio-cultural practices and seek program support; the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nepal in 2015 forbids most forms of gender-based discrimination and recognizes women's socio-economic and political rights.

Further, Nepal's agriculture development strategy 2015-2035 strongly advocates and promotes policies and programs to enhance women's role in various aspects of the market-based agriculture system (Balayar and Mazur, 2022). A range of new and inexpensive agricultural machinery, adapted to local conditions, could potentially enhance productivity and enable women to gain new skills and knowledge (ICIMOD, 2014). Agriculture has become a source of income for most of the people in rural and urban areas. Demand for vegetables and interest in vegetable production among women has been increasing day by day because of population growth, urbanization, awareness of health, irrigation facilities, promotion by government and NGOs, high returns, development of improved and hybrid varieties, road networks connecting markets, low economies of scale, credit availability from GO/NGOs and institutions (Malla, 2021).

Women in urban areas are also interested in farming. They can generate income for their families and support local food security. As a result, they are now actively involved in household decision-making and planning, and they are gaining more respect and support from the community. Women farmers in Panchkhal have produced off-season and seasonal vegetables for sale and earned cash income. Because gender-sensitive data is lacking, women's contributions and concerns remain invisible. Because women play crucial roles but still face inferior status in many areas, this study focuses on gender dynamics, women's empowerment, and access to women's income. As men migrate to seek alternative livelihoods, women have taken on tasks traditionally done by men, such as land preparation, harvesting, post-harvest operations, and marketing of produce. Women pioneered modern agriculture, which began with the domestication of plants in their territories (Lal, 2009).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feminist Theory

Numerous feminist theories have emerged to explain gender equality, and each is rooted in different ideologies. Liberal feminism advocates gradual changes in women's political, economic, and social status, emphasizing equal opportunities and eliminating gender-based discrimination (Ritzer, 1992). Marxist feminism combines Marxist class analysis with feminist social perspective, highlighting the interplay of class and gender inequality (Barrett, 1981; Mitchell, 1975; Sargent, 1981). Radical feminism focuses on the sex/gender system as the fundamental cause of women's oppression, delving into the dynamics of gender relationships (Jaggar, 1983). Socialist feminists critique the gender-blindness of Marxist feminism and argue for the simultaneous overthrow of capitalism and patriarchy (Ritzer, 1992).

Third-wave feminism emphasizes the experiences of marginalized groups within the feminist movement, such as women of color, and highlights women's diversity (Ritzer, 1992). The empowerment approach recognizes differences among Third World women because of caste, class, and ethnicity, and identifies women's power with their increased capacity for collective action, self-reliance, and internal strength. Empowerment is seen as the right to make life decisions and to drive change by gaining control over essential material and non-material resources. The aim is not to increase women's status relative to men but to improve women's quality of life through redistributing power within society and between societies. Thus, this approach questions the assumption that women need to be integrated into development. Women, by the nature of their social and economic roles, are already integrated into the development process and survival of their communities. They need development policies where they have a say in the kind of society they want (Moser, 1989). Third world minorities feminism focuses on empowering minority women through modest political and economic concessions (Arquiza, 2012).

2.2 Gender Analysis framework

Gender analysis frameworks are essential tools for examining gender differences and inequalities in society and understanding their implications for development. These frameworks provide a structured approach to analyze various aspects of gender dynamics. Five commonly used frameworks have emerged: the Harvard Analytical framework, also known as the gender roles framework, emphasizes allocating resources to both women's and men's development efforts, highlighting the efficiency of this approach (Overholt, 1985). The Moser gender planning framework, developed by Caroline Moser, recognizes women's roles in production and reproduction, and community management. It assesses their specific needs and examines their access to resources (Moser, 1983).

The gender Analysis Matrix is a community-based tool that encourages active participation and engagement from the community. It helps identify gender differences and challenge prevailing assumptions about gender roles and responsibilities (Parker, 1993). The women's Empowerment framework,

formulated by Sara Hlupekil Longwe (1995), takes a political perspective and emphasizes that women's poverty results from oppression and exploitation. It proposes five levels of equality-control, participation, conscientization, access, and welfare-to guide the assessment of development interventions (Longwe, 1995). Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach adopts a structural feminist perspective. It goes beyond individual roles and analyzes gender inequalities within broader social and institutional contexts, aiming to identify and address factors that constrain women (Kabeer, 1994). These frameworks offer valuable analytical tools for understanding the complexities of gender dynamics and informing the design of inclusive and gender responsive development policies and interventions.

3. Methodology

This research is carried out among the people of Hokse Panchkal Municipality, Kavrepalanchok District, Nepal. The study adopts a descriptive research design to describe the dominant conditions of women in the research area, and an exploratory design to examine women's empowerment through vegetable farming in the research area. The study used primary data and interviews. Out of 49 households, 26 were selected through a simple random sampling method. The study used both primary and secondary data sources, including observation and interview questionnaires. The study used observation to understand the lifestyle and situation of the study area, while interviews gathered qualitative data on women's empowerment. Questionnaires collected information on social and economic conditions, family size, marital status, occupation, and education.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and simple statistical methods, involving identifying relevant themes and concepts, organizing materials accordingly, and developing generalizations. Descriptive analysis covered the village's physical setting, climate, economic conditions, and agricultural system. Demographic features were analyzed descriptively and statistically. Quantitative data were analyzed using a computer software package

4. Data presentation and Analysis

4.1 Change in Economic Status of Women after Involvement in Vegetable Farming

Women started generating income for themselves and their households through vegetable farming. They spent this income on children's education and food and saved the rest in microfinance. So, the saved money could be used for different purposes to expand and extend their economic sources

4.1.1 Monthly Average Income

Most of the respondents had been depended on their families to meet their basic needs and start their businesses. Some women were housewives, who used to get limited money for their household, while a few of them were wage laborers and had awful conditions to sustain their family. Now their income has changed significantly as is evident from table-1 on the next page.

Table-1: Average Monthly Income after engaging in Vegetable Farming

Average Monthly Income	No of Respondents	Percent
2,000-4,000	5	19.23
4,000-8,000	7	26.92
8,000-10,000	10	38.46
10,000 above	4	15.38
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey 2026.

The above table shows that nearly one-fifth respondents (19.23 percent) had an income of 2,000-4,000, nearly one-fourth (26.92 percent) had an income within 4,000-8,000, whereas a little more than one-third (38.46 percent) had an income from 8,000 to 10,000. Those with monthly average income bracket of more than 10,000 were hardly one-seventh (15.38 percent) of the selected sample.

4.1.2 Buying Land from Vegetable Farming

Most of the selected women respondents bought land with money collected from vegetable farming. They have been spending a certain amount of money on other household expenses. It has been easier for the women who have been engaged in farming for several years to buy land as is evident from the following table:

Table-2: Buying Land from Earnings of Vegetable Farming

Brought land	No of Respondents	Percent
Yes	19	65.39
No	9	34.61
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data contained in the above table show that nearly one-third (34.61 percent) selected women claimed they did not own land after engaging in income generation, while remaining majority of nearly two-third (65.39 percent) were able to buy more land after doing their business of vegetable farming.

4.1.3 Women's Decision on Buying Jewelry

After becoming involved in agribusiness, women are economically active and thus want to buy and wear valuable ornaments for special functions as well as on casual days. Most have saved money from their business (as is evident from table-3), and together with other household members, they could buy jewelry. So this decision of theirs is equally important.

Table-3: Women's Decision on Buying Jewelry

Decision on Buying Jewelry	No of Respondents	Percent
Yes	20	76.92
No	6	23.08
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data contained in Table-3 shows that a little more than three-fourth (76.92 percent) of the selected women responded that they can now decide to buy ornaments for their family, while the remaining a little less than one-fourth (23.08 percent) said they did not buy valuable items for themselves or other family members.

4.2 Social Empowerment of Women

Through agriculture, women have been able to solve socio-economic and political problems in their family. Furthermore, they have become more aware of their status and organized to improve it and access opportunities; so that women take control of their lives, set their own strategies, lifestyle, and systems, gain knowledge and skills, and prepare to solve their problems. For this change, their family, friends, women's groups, and training from local corporations have assisted them.

4.2.1 Increase in Social Participation

When women are involved in different functions and social activities, it signifies women's empowerment. Most are involved in women's groups or co-operatives, which provide them with skills and training to run their businesses smoothly. From time to time, seminars, workshops, and interaction programs are conducted so women can raise their voices for their needs, participate equally in social activities with male members, and learn time management, marketing techniques, and proper money management. Previously, women were hesitant to explain their needs and ideas to their family, but now the situation has changed.

Table-4: Increase in Social Participation

Social Participation has Increased	No. of Respondent	Percent
Yes	19	73.07
No	7	26.92
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

It may be observed that a little less than three-fourth (73.07 percent) of the selected women did confirm that they have now started participating in social functions/activities more in their locality, while remaining little more than one-fourth (26.92 percent) reported no increase in such involvement.

4.2.2 Increase in Speaking Skills

Selected Respondents stated that after starting their business, they no longer felt shy or awkward about speaking in public; they can convince new customers on their own. Some have gained self-assurance from the organization.

Table-5: Increase in Speaking Skills

Increase in Speaking Skills	No of Respondent	Percent
Yes	20	76.92
No	6	23.07
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

As is evident from table-5, a little more than three-fourth (76.92 percent) of the selected women responded that they had improved speaking skills, while the remaining little less than one-fourth (23.07 percent) had not improved. Some learned on their own, while others learned through the internet and training.

4.2.3 Change in Household Decision-making

The family's decision-making system has changed considerably after women began earning an income of their own. Women are now involved in social functions, well-spoken, and able to voice their ideas and thoughts to other family members. They now have greater involvement in minor and major household decisions as is evident from the following table:

Table-6: Change in Household Decision-making

Household Decision-making	No of Respondent	Percent
Yes	21	80.76
No	5	19.23
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The above table shows that over-whelming selected women farmers (80.76 percent) were now actively involved in household decision-making, while the remaining nearly one-fifth (19.23 percent) were not involved in assisting their families in economic or other decisions.

4.2.4 Change of Husband's Behaviour

Most of the selected women claimed that there was a tremendous change in their Husbands' behaviour, such as they now being more supportive; they consulted with their wives to make minor or major household decisions, and they started to help even in the kitchen, look after their children, and help respondents in farming as is evident from the following table:.

Table-7: Change in Husband's Behaviour

Husband's Behaviour Changed	No of Respondent	Percent
Yes	24	92.40
No	2	7.60
Total	26	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Like household decision-making, an over-whelming majority of selected women (92.4 percent) reported that there was considerable change in their husbands' behaviour, while a negligible proportion of them (7.6 percent) reported no change in their behaviour.

5. Major Findings

Major findings that emerge in this study may be summarized as under:

- Women's involvement in commercial vegetable farming increases income, boosts self-confidence, and encourages skill improvement.

- ▶▶ Monthly Average income after involving vegetable farming changed. Out of 26 respondents, 19.23 percent had an income of 2,000-4,000, 26.92 percent had an income within 4,000-8,000, whereas 38.46 percent had an income from 8,000 to 10,000, and 15.38% had above 10,000 average monthly income.
- ▶▶ Women gave their ideas and thoughts on major and minor household decisions. Their husbands and other members changed their attitude and started supporting women at every step.
- ▶▶ The family decision-making system changed considerably after women began earning. Out of 26 respondents, 80.76% of them were actively involved in household decision-making, while the other 19.23% of women farmers were not involved.
- ▶▶ Being commercial vegetable farmers, women have found that their mobility outside their residential areas has increased, and they have been participating in social functions of society.
- ▶▶ Most of them have strengthened their decision-making power over where and how to use money and can use their income for household expenditures, children's studies, buying land, and purchasing jewelry.
- ▶▶ Women had economic autonomy, their own savings, and could buy needed items. No one interfered with her decision.
- ▶▶ Social participation increased after vegetable farming; of 26 respondents, 73.07% increased their active involvement in social activities.
- ▶▶ This research showed that, out of 26 respondents, 92.4% reported a change in their husbands' behaviour, while 7.6% reported no change.
- ▶▶ Most found that their shyness and hesitant behaviour had decreased. They can convince and attract more customers.
- ▶▶ Women that they were viewed as role models in their communities; women earning income inspires more women, and more community members are open to letting their wives or daughters-in-law be involved in vegetable farming

6. Conclusion

This study explored women's empowerment through commercial vegetable farming in Hokse, Panchkhal in Nepal. It mainly focused on the economic and social aspects of women's vegetable farming in the peri-urban areas of Hokse, Panchkhal, Kavre Districts. Most of the selected women used loans to start their own enterprise. As a result, women improved their economic status; they became more confident and self-dependent in doing different things in their community such as increase in social participation. Their increased income, participation in household decision-making, and considerable change in husbands' behaviour in helping in daily domestic chores and equally looking after the children, amply demonstrate their march towards empowerment.

This research concludes that vegetable farming has made a remarkable change in respondents' lives and created a positive economic impact on society by strengthening women's capacity. These income-generating business ideas have been important for the poor, needy, and women who want to sustain their lives without depending on their partners or family. This study aimed to analyze the socio-economic conditions of women in the past and today after becoming involved in commercial farming. Overall, we observed substantial changes in family decision-making after they became self-reliant. They also possess better knowledge about vegetable production, bargaining practices, and selling. These women are also highly effective in sharing skills they learned with other women in the community, motivating them to pursue or continue vegetable farming and convincing their families of their decision. All these changes lead us to conclude that commercial vegetable farming has become a powerful tool for Women's Empowerment. However, more such in-depth case studies are needed in other municipalities of Nepal to generalize the findings from Panchkhal Municipality.

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Digital Democracy Redefined: Technologies, Participation and Democratic Governance

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Abstract

The proliferation of digital technologies has completely changed the dynamics of interaction between citizens, the state and political institutions, creating opportunities for new modes of democratic participation and presenting challenges to democratic governance. This paper explores the development of digital democracy and analyses how ICTs have impacted political participation, public discourse and state-citizen interactions. It is argued that there exists a dialectic relationship between digital technologies and democracy. Further, the paper provides a critical analysis of both the liberating and repressive aspects of digital technologies. The paper makes the case for the next step in the transformation of democracy, that is, to transform e-governance and digital delivery of services into participatory digital governance, prioritising deliberation, inclusion, accountability, and meaningful citizen participation.

Keywords

Digital democracy, Participatory digital governance, E-Governance, Digital India, Citizen participation, Surveillance capitalism, Digital governance, Democratic accountability, Social audit, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

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1. Introduction

The history of mankind has witnessed several revolutions, such as the Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. Each revolution had a “deep economic, social, political and cultural impact on the societies” (Rostiashvili, 2012: 11). The successor of the Industrial Revolution is the recent Digital Revolution. The Digital Revolution consists of “digital logic circuits and related technologies, such as computers, digital cell phones, fax machines, and other gadgets. The use of computers and the Internet is rapidly transforming societal interactions and the relationships among citizens, private businesses, and the Government” (Rostiashvili, 2012).

Scholars like Castells (2009) and Meraz (2009) have increasingly argued that the digital age has drastically changed the dynamics of power in society. The earlier formal keepers of power—governments, corporations and mass media organizations—are not the sole repositories of power. In addition to these, new power centres have emerged through digital platforms (social activists, influencers, hackers, online communities, etc.) that have the potential to influence/challenge the dominant narratives. Scholars of various fields have attempted to understand the complex intersection of technology and politics and have concluded that the digital age has redefined political life around the world, providing new methodologies for governance, advocacy and public discourse in virtually every form of political system.

2. Research Gap

The emerging literature focuses largely on four broad themes: the democratic potential of digital technology, digital political participation and activism, e-government and the phenomenon of digital service delivery, and new challenges presented by surveillance, misinformation and algorithmic governance. Though these studies have significantly advanced our knowledge of the relationship between technology and democracy, they still face limitations in their incorporation of governance.

Most of the scholars have analyzed digital technology as a tool for enhancing administrative efficiency or as a medium for political communication and electoral engagement. Significantly, scholars have paid less attention to institutionalizing digital technologies so that citizen participation becomes a continuous process and not a rare occurrence; thereby, citizens become an integral part of the public policy cycle. Moreover, even though India has taken several substantial steps to

implement digital governance through initiatives such as Digital India, Aadhaar and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), the focus has mainly been on improving service delivery, digital inclusion, and technological advancement rather than exploring channels for participatory governance.

This article aims to fill the gap by proposing a Participatory Digital Governance model as an extension of the Digital Governance model. This framework will add a new dimension to digital governance, i.e. adding a citizen-centric approach to the efficiency-driven model of e-governance. By integrating democratic theory, digital governance, and the New Public Service, it seeks to make deliberation, stakeholder consultation, digital social accountability, and collaborative policymaking integral to digital governance.

3. Research Questions

The article attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What has been the impact of digital technologies on democratic processes, along with the challenges faced by digital democracies, especially in India?
2. How will participatory digital governance ensure sustained citizen participation in the public policy realm?

4. Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative, concept-based interdisciplinary approach to research to investigate the impact of digital media on democratic governance. It utilizes the existing literature, analysis of policy documents and case studies to build a framework of participatory digital governance. This is a conceptual and analytical paper. Drawing upon literature in democratic theory, the New Public Service, and digital governance, this paper articulates the concept of Participatory Digital Governance as a normative framework for institutionalizing ongoing citizen involvement across all stages of the policy process.

However, the aim of the study is not to test causal claims but to build theory through synthesizing the literature to create a robust conceptual framework for future empirical work on the governance of democracy in the digital era.

5. Digital Democracy

The rapid development of ICT has brought a tectonic effect on the multifaceted concept and practice of democracy. Digital democracy (also known as e-democracy) is best understood as a subset of the broader democratic system, wherein digital technologies are employed to deepen democratic practices. It does not replace traditional democratic institutions such as parliaments, elections, or civil society-but rather complements or extends them through digital means. InfoScipedia define digital democracy as “the promotion of democratic rule through digital technology. Also referred to as internet democracy, digital democracy is the adoption of technology in the governance process. It is the application of digital tools to entrenching political interaction and active participation in politics”

(Akinyetun & Ebonine, 2022). The Oxford Dictionary defines digital democracy as “the use of computer-mediated communication to enhance participatory democracy and political engagement” (Chandler & Munday, 2016). According to Mark Graham, digital democracy “refers to the various ways through which electronic platforms can engage the wider and more informed participation of the public in the political environment” (Graham, 2019). In other words, digital democracy is a “phenomenon that interconnects two evolving areas, that of democratic self-government and that of digital infrastructures” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021).

5.1 An Historical Overview of the Development of Digital Democracy

The evolution of digital democracy from the 1980s to the present can be categorized into four distinct phases, each marked by technological advancements and shifting democratic ideals.

1. **Teledemocracy or Electronic democracy:** Democracy started using technology to strengthen information flows in the 1980s. The phase known as teledemocracy was marked by innovative technologies like “satellites, fibre optic cable, interactive television and computer networks” (London, 1995). Electronic democracy was based on the premise that public discussions/ deliberations/ debates were the cornerstone of a strong democracy. Political communication changed drastically as “the voluntary associations, public spaces, local newspapers, and neighbourhood assemblies of their day gave way to computer bulletin boards, satellite television, and radio call-in programs” (London, 1995). It was assumed that electronically mediated communication would remedy several shortcomings of representative democracy. “Cable TV channels would allow citizens to communicate among themselves without mediators and thereby create direct-democratic opportunities” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021: 2).
2. **Virtual democracy:** Virtual democracy was the second phase in the development of digital democracy. Emerging in the 1990s, this phase was marked by the increasing usage of the Internet. The virtual world was used to create virtual communities, which sometimes functioned on the utopian idea of a “denationalised democracy” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021: 4).

Thus, this communitarian version of democracy in the 1990s witnessed the rise of civic networks and community forums, such as Seattle Community Network and Cleveland FreeNet, which provided platforms for local discussions on civic matters. “Platforms like AOL, IRC (Internet Relay Chat), and Yahoo! Chat...provided spaces for individuals to gather based on shared interests, hobbies, or professions” (Anjum, 2025).

3. **Web democracy:** The turn of the century was characterized by the era of Internet enthusiasts, with the widespread adoption of the Internet in society. The Internet facilitated the emergence of numerous forums/platforms that

enabled widespread political and policy engagement for the general populace. “Friendster (2002), MySpace (2003), and LinkedIn (2003) followed, each introducing innovative ways to connect and share. MySpace allowed users to customise profiles and share music, while LinkedIn catered to professional networking. These platforms expanded the concept of online identity and networking” (Anjum, 2025).

The collapse of many dot-com companies during 2000-2002 left a surplus of bandwidth infrastructure but no demand in the initial phases. The failure of these companies led to a reduction in connectivity costs. The survivors—Google, eBay, and Amazon, despite initial disillusionment, were the ones that helped create the commercial and social web and democratized access to information and services. This infrastructure laid the groundwork for a more accessible internet.

4. **Web 2.0:** The inception of Facebook in 2004 signified a pivotal moment in social networking. “Other platforms like Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010), and Snapchat (2011) diversified the social media landscape. Each brought unique ways of interaction, from microblogging to photo and video sharing, fostering new forms of online communities” (Anjum, 2025). Compared to larger social networks, few platforms (Reddit, Discord, etc) facilitated more specialised and personal relationships (Anjum, 2025).

A few of the present users, called netizens, have become ‘content creators’. “Emerging communication services such as blogs, ‘daily me’ diaries, podcasts, virtual radios and video channels create novel possibilities of practising but also of imagining democracy” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021: 4). Through these novel prospects, the netizens can express themselves and contribute to the public discourse (surpassing the government/ conventional channels) through “online petitions, weblogs, civic journalism, wikis (collective intelligence)” (Hacker & Van Dijk, 2000: 3).

The aforementioned note discusses the brief trajectory of ICT development while (apparently) enhancing democratic values. It is worth noting that the potential of ICTs in a democracy lies in achieving “more direct-democratic self-determination” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021: 5).

5.2 Digital Technologies & Democracy: A Dialectical Relationship

Digital technologies and democracy may have a dialectical relationship because the two influence and reshape each other in a continuous and dynamic process. On one hand, digital technologies influence democratic institutions, participation and political communication, and on the other, the development and use of digital technologies are also conditioned by democratic values, regulations, and social practices.

To understand the relationship between digital technologies and democracy, this section of the paper is divided into three parts that discuss the nature of

technology and explore the reciprocal influence between digital technologies and democratic processes.

5.2.1 Nature of Technology

Scholarly debates have centred on the nature of technology and the role it plays in a political set-up. On the one hand, some scholars (such as Marianne Kneuer) believe that technology lacks inherent values or goals. Technology is simply a tool, and it depends on humans how they utilize it. “Technology is ex-ante neutral, and its effect on political structures, processes, actors, behaviour and norms depends on the motives of use, the content that is transmitted, the way that the technology is used (quantitatively and qualitatively speaking), and, finally, on the political context in which the digital media are used” (Kneuer, 2016).

Contrary to this, some scholars argue that technology has inherent biases and is not neutral. Lance Strate, in his article—‘If it’s Technology, it’s not Neutral’, argues from a media ecology perspective that technology is fundamentally not neutral. Giving a wide definition of the term ‘technology’, he visualizes technology as just not “gadgets and machines,.....tools and implements. Technology encompasses our techniques, systems, and skills, our languages and symbol systems, our codes and modes of communication, and our media for sharing messages with each other and interacting with our environment” (Strate, 2012). He puts forward the core concept of “technological bias”, which refers to the idea that natural objects are inherently neutral, and only technologies that have been put into use inherently carry the attribute of driving specific actions and outcomes. Moreover, inventors cannot always predict the long-term consequences of the technology created.

In this regard, David Wiley has offered a few other insights. According to him, technologies inherit the biases and intentions of their creators. Also, all knowledge is culturally rooted and therefore, the seemingly “natural” use of technology is in fact a social construct. He, therefore, concludes that the nature of any technology depends on how people use it.

5.2.2 Digitalization Deepens Democracy

It is assumed that the decision-making power of the citizens increases in a democratic set-up since “it forces decision makers to take into account the interests, rights, and opinions of most people in society” Christiano (2015). The diverse and plural ‘voices’ are the foundations of a robust democracy. In a representative democracy, there is a strong reliance upon the political parties and pressure groups for these voices to be heard. With the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICT), this dependency has decreased, thereby somewhat lessening the representative character of a democracy and evoking its direct participatory aspect.

An informed ‘voice’ enhances the depth and authenticity of a democratic set-up. Digitalization, especially through social media, has revolutionized how information is accessed in real time. Instant updates through platforms like X,

Instagram and Facebook allow users, organizations, and media outlets to share information the moment it happens. Sometimes, eyewitnesses at events post before traditional media can react. Thus, digitalization has amplified the means to create an active and aware citizen who is keen to participate in public debates. Digital democracy facilitates easier participation, broader sharing of opinions, and enhanced interaction among citizens, especially overcoming geographical boundaries. This has facilitated participation for individuals who might not otherwise engage in public debate and civic involvement (Schlosberg & Dryzek, 2002). Users of the online platforms have the power to choose different political causes despite sitting remotely from the site of contestation. This is often referred to as ‘digital activism’ or ‘online activism’. Like-minded users can sign and share petitions, donate to political causes, and even participate in crowdfunding for activism-all from their devices. This fosters global solidarity.

“While often associated with electronic voting, digital democracy encompasses much more, including citizen participation in policy-making processes and the protection and promotion of democratic values” (Ravinder, 2023). E-Government, a part of digital democracy, has simplified and made government services accessible to the common man. Through channels created by information technology, the efficiency of the government can be monitored and assessed through real-time data, public feedback, and measurable improvements in service delivery. “This digital approach empowers individuals to express their opinions, provide feedback, and hold their leaders accountable” (Ravinder, 2023). Thus, digital democracy has transformed political communication and engagement in profound ways. It has “created the new role of the citizens as content provider or ‘citizen journalist’, thereby changing communication patterns in a significant way” (Kneuer, 2016: 1).

5.2.3 Digitalization and Democracy: A Marriage of (In)convenience?

While it is an acknowledged fact that digitalization has transformed the face of modern democracy and augmented more inclusive civic engagement, one cannot deny the unforeseen challenges it has posed to human society. A few years back, the optimism surrounding the opportunities thrown open due to digitalization was such that e-democracy was considered a “panacea capable of curing democratic fatigue and revitalizing or modernizing democratic process” (Kneuer, 2016: 2). However, in recent times, several exhaustive studies have been carried out to assess the negative impact of digitalization on democracy. Before elaborating on this negative impact in the future section, it may be pointed out at the outset that many of the threats posed by digitalization are context-driven. One cannot find a “consistent picture of the impact” (Kneuer, 2016: 2) of technology on democracy. One cannot find the same degree of strengthening of democratic values in a political setting that is authoritarian, or that is at a nascent stage of development. A corollary argument that follows is that “no technology can fix a lack of political will, knowledge, experience, motivation, and skills required for full participation in

various democratic activities. No technology can dissolve the social material inequalities that appear to be so strongly related to differences in the electoral process and political participation process” (Rostiashvili, 2012: 13).

5.3 Algorithmic Effect

Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, TikTok, and YouTube employ algorithms to ascertain the material displayed to users. These algorithms are capable of exacerbating specific perspectives, resulting in echo chambers or filter bubbles. Echo chambers hide the opposite viewpoints from the users while reinforcing their pre-existing beliefs/biases. At the same time, bots or fake accounts controlled by software plant fake stories as ‘trending’ news or news feeds, giving the impression to the viewers that they are receiving authentic information. Many people consider the information given on social media to be always factually correct.

By keeping track of the information consumed by the users, the technology giants are playing a detrimental role in democratic participation. Utilizing the user’s profiles, the digital platforms have “the potential to ‘nudge’ or influence undecided voters and win elections, leading to a new form of dictatorship (Helbing *et al.*, 2019; Roose, 2021) and traumatizing democracy” (Christodoulou & Iordanou, 2021: 4). They become “the centre of political information- seeking and agenda-setting, two fundamental processes of democracy.” (Unver, 2017: 128.) Thus, digital media has been known to manipulate voters instead of empowering them. In such a scenario, informed political judgements become a myth. Furthermore, these companies can control the narrative of an event by controlling the content made available for the user’s consumption. By exposing users to only one-sided perspectives, these online platforms play an important role in deciding the fate of government policies. “Research indicates that behavioural microtargeting significantly affects voter behaviour, with consequences for manipulation, privacy intrusion, and the moral limits of persuasive technology in democratic processes” (Asimakopoulos *et al.*, 2025). Also, in certain extreme cases, content showing hate speech or group targeting might aggravate political violence.

5.4 Technology Giants as Reservoirs of Citizen Data: Surveillance Capitalism

“Data and datafication exemplify new forms of power while their systematic collection and commodification as part of surveillance capital constitute novel modes of domination” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021: 13). Digital platforms are major repositories of citizen data. A large amount of data is collected by the platforms when “we navigate and interact with digital media, through clicks, tweets, likes, GPS coordinates, timestamps and sensors by smart information systems, which register information of our behaviour, beliefs and preferences for profiling citizens. Those who have access to citizens’ digital data and profiling know more about individuals than probably their friends, family members or even individuals themselves” (Christodoulou & Iordanou, 2021: 4). The data thus collected is analyzed and shared (sold) to various marketing and advertising companies by

these platforms, without any permission of the users. Claiming to be a for-profit business, the personal information of the users is sold at a very high price to advertising companies. The monetisation of data helps businesses target the consumers most likely to purchase their products or services.

The introduction of AI techniques requires information on how the human mind functions (“deep mind” judgments). This necessitates more extensive access to personal data, leading to increased surveillance of individuals. This data collection is essential for training machine learning models, but it raises significant privacy concerns. Also, data theft or data breaches leave the oblivious citizens at the mercy of hackers who can misuse this information for identity theft, financial fraud, and extortion, etc.

5.5 Surveillance vs Privacy Debate

Earlier, only the authoritarian regimes like the People’s Republic of China, Russia and North Korea were known for the extensive use of surveillance systems. In contemporary times, surveillance tactics are being used both by authoritarian and democratic regimes. It is argued that democratic governments must indulge in surveillance of their citizens since “...with the growing threat of terrorism, far-right radicalization and extremist groups emerging in western societies, surveillance is viewed not only politically necessary, but also electorally popular” (Ünver, H. A., 2018: 1). This type of surveillance is essential for the existence of democracy itself, as without such practices by the government, national security may be at risk. With the changing face of threats to national security, governments can only anticipate such attacks through surveillance practices.

In this case, the state and the technology giants share a paradoxical relationship. Surveillance processes require the cooperation of the technology companies. “As a customer of data, governments are mandating cooperation and obliging platforms to grant access to their data trove, for example, in the area of law enforcement, police work and state security” (Berg & Hofmann, 2021: 13).

Surveillance practices generate a lot of information (with limited access to the common man), which must be kept constantly in a retrievable state for the government agencies to use. This entails huge costs to the government.

The critics of government surveillance argue that by secretly collecting and maintaining large amounts of data on citizens, the government wastes a huge amount of taxpayers’ money. Secondly, neoliberals point out the loss of privacy, which every individual has an inherent right to. This data can be “accessed by government employees or exposed to the public through a hack or a leak” (Königs, 2022: 3) and subsequently may be misused for objectionable purposes. Thus, civil rights violations and potential abuse of surveillance technologies are the two concerns in the surveillance-privacy debate that might lead to digital dictatorship. There is no guarantee that a government will use surveillance practices for the ‘public good’ (national security and crime prevention). As Gopal Das writes (2019), “[d]igital dictatorship is a double-headed beast.” A government can use the data collected to

control and suppress information, thereby regulating its dissemination to manage and constrain perspectives. Secondly, restricting communication, it reduces the population's capacity to express dissenting opinions, especially by human rights activists and journalists. Supporting this argument, Ünver writes, "some of this secrecy may often take the form of using state-owned secrecy and surveillance apparatus to spy on opposition groups, political parties, or citizens despite a clear absence of a national security threat" (Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies *et al.*, 201: 4). Pegasus software, developed by Israel, is one of the most effective and controversial surveillance software in present times. It has been used by governments to extract information about dissenters and has left them vulnerable to being manipulated, blackmailed, falsified, and facing defamation charges.

5.6 States and Citizens in the Digitized World

Biometric identification of citizens is the norm of the day in every country. In other words, to some extent, citizenship rights are dependent upon technology. Digital identification reshapes the basis on which individuals are either granted access to or excluded from participation in civic life. By making digital connectivity a prerequisite for political recognition, it also serves to restrict access to public participation.

Critics point out that the technology-driven identity systems are being used beyond their stated goals. Once the biometric details (fingerprints, facial recognition, iris scans, etc) have been fed into the database, it can be used for many intrusive activities, especially in the case of a data breach. "The consequences of a biometric data breach can be severe, as stolen biometric data can be used for identity theft, fraud, or other criminal activities.....The long-term impact of such breaches can haunt individuals for years, as biometric data cannot be revoked or reset like a password" (Hendrickson, 2025).

5.7 Limitations of the State's Digital Power

Firstly, the state's sovereignty is compromised when it depends on technology firms. States are heavily relying on private firms since the ability to develop, manufacture, and manage digital technologies typically resides with private companies, rather than within government institutions. "The extent and vulnerabilities of a government's reliance on these private firms-whether domestic or international-vary based on the state's size, resources, and capabilities. Apart from assisting states in crime prevention, the telecommunication firms assist in maintaining law and order in an area. For example, the order to shut down internet services in an area requires the cooperation of the telecommunications companies" (Diepeveen, 2024).

Secondly, people do not always accept the intrusion of the state in their private matters and sometimes have resorted to circumventing state surveillance tools. This has given rise to a new, separate industry that creates innovative techniques called Privacy-Enhancing Technologies (PETs) to bypass or counter state surveillance practices. It is important to note that "the sophistication of circumvention tools owes

partly to technological improvements, but largely due to the absence of a strong legal and political social contract between states, tech companies and citizens over the extent and depth of surveillance practices” (Unver, 2018: 12).

Thirdly, territory is a key element of the existence of a state. However, the workings of a digital public sphere suggest a form of politics that is not limited by geographic location. “The physical realities of digital technologies have resulted in renewed concern for State control over territory and resources” (Diepeveen, 2024). There is a growing tension between state sovereignty and globalized data flows. The geographical location of the data centres becomes significant here. Since most of the time, these data centres are located outside state boundaries, it means that the information of its citizens is shared by an external firm (power). Some states aim to localize data, requiring that data generated within their borders be stored and processed domestically. The European Union’s GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) is cited as a prominent example of a successful regulatory framework asserting such control.

6. Digital Democracy in India: Challenges & the Road Ahead

The transformation that India, the largest democratic experiment in human history, is undergoing is profound, and its scale has no parallels. The government has been constantly shifting to a cyber government via multiple policies, institutions and plans. Initiated in 2015, the Digital India programme was built to make government services available to citizens electronically by improving online infrastructure and promoting socioeconomic digital empowerment. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter (X), and Facebook are increasingly being used as tools of political mobilization. Smartphones and affordable data have connected even remote areas to the national digital narrative. Digital India, Aadhaar, and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) are a few examples of how government programs digitised public services and financial systems (Ravinder, 2023).

The recent administrative reforms in India are aimed at increasing the proximity of the Government to the Citizens with the help of digital technology. Therefore, the Next Generation Administrative Reforms have the policy thrust of “Maximum Governance - Minimum Government.”

6.1 Challenges

With over 850 million internet users and widespread adoption of mobile phones, digital tools now play a central role in India in shaping governance, political engagement, and citizen participation. While digital democracy has several advantages, several difficulties need to be addressed. The following are some of the challenges of digital democracy in India:

- **Accessibility Problems:** Internet accessibility is still a challenge in rural areas of India. With high rates of illiteracy, digital literacy skills are a dream for the rural population. The problem becomes more glaring where the marginalized communities are concerned.

- ▶▶ **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Digital literacy is lacking not only in the rural population but also amongst the urban population, especially the elderly people. A big part of the population is still not familiar with different digital platforms and tools and does not have the skills needed to use them effectively. This lack of familiarity and skill severely restricts their capacity to participate actively in the decision-making process in a digital democracy.
- ▶▶ **Language Barriers:** The Indian population has a rich linguistic diversity. Digital platforms cannot be accessed in every local language in India. English is still the most predominant language used on online platforms. This linguistic barrier poses a significant limitation to the accessibility of e-democracy, hindering a considerable portion of the population from fully engaging in digital democratic processes.
- ▶▶ **Technological Dependence:** The infrastructure in India is in a developing stage. It still has not achieved a stage wherein technological failures, such as power outages, server crashes, or cyber-attacks, can be completely ruled out.
- ▶▶ **Cyber-attacks:** In addition to the challenges described above, cybercrime has emerged as a major threat, eroding public trust, distorting information and undermining the integrity of democratic institutions. A voter database, government portal, or digital ID system compromise could lead to privacy violations and electoral outcome manipulations.

6.2 From Digital Democracy to Digital Governance: The Need for Citizen-Centric Participation

The digital revolution has had an impact everywhere on different government systems. Most of the developments have focused on improving service delivery. Initiatives such as the National e-Governance Plan and later the Digital India Mission have resulted in significant improvements in the digitization of the redressal of complaints as well as the digital delivery of government services and welfare in India. Although these improvements have made processes faster, and there is more information available to the public, as well as ease of access to these services, there has been negligible focus on digital solutions for fostering democratic engagement and collaborative policymaking.

Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, liberalism became the dominant Ideology. This episode marked the transition from New Public Administration to New Public Management. NPA stressed on state led bureaucratic model of development, whereas New Public Management advocated a neo-liberal strategy, which is a market-driven developmental model where the state is supposed to move from rowing to steering. The major stress of New Public Management was on 3 E's: economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, but failed to acknowledge the importance of democratic values in governance. UNDP 2002 report "Deepening Democracy" stressed strengthening democratic core principles by further enlarging the concept of governance and including principles like participation,

consensus-oriented, inclusive and equitable growth along with already earlier stated principles of governance: transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

The basic idea was that without incorporating democratic principles, the whole governance system will eventually remain weak. In a democratic setup, citizens should occupy central space and everything else should revolve around them. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure active citizens' participation in governance. Democratic citizenship emerged as a central theme in Denhardt's concept of public service approach, wherein he refused to limit the role of the state to steering purposes and wanted the state to play an active role in ensuring participation of citizens. He wanted New Public Service to replace New Public Management. The state should create a conducive environment where open dialogue can take place, and citizens can collaborate at both the formulation and implementation level; for this to happen, he advocates revival of community, which in the last few decades has often been castigated as a major impediment to the development process.

True legitimacy of a state is based on citizens' trust in the regime, which in turn can be gained by enhancing participation of citizens in policy formulation and implementation. It is the responsibility of the state to provide citizens a platform to engage with them. In this context, Allan Octavian Hume's advice to the Moderates of the INC is still relevant. He, at that time, told Indian leaders to form a political party to air their grievances against the British government. By doing this, he provided them with platforms to directly engage with the British government rather than adopting undemocratic means to oppose their policies. In recent times, we have witnessed protests at both national and international levels. The Arab Spring, the Sri Lankan crisis, the Bangladesh protest and the Cockroach Janta party agitation. In all these agitations, social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X were used to mobilise large sections of society. These protests were termed as "social media revolutions" (Skinner, 2011).

The major issue behind all protests is the growing distrust of citizens towards their government, leading to a democratic deficit. This rising distrust can be attributed to the inability of the state to provide citizens a platform to engage with them. Taking a leaf out of Hume's advice, different state governments should work out ways and means to collaborate with citizens. Most of the recent protests are social media protests, as the young generation is using digital platforms to air their grievances against the state. Learning from them, the government should also use digital media to interact with them. This issue can be easily addressed by the government if it creates dedicated grievance redressal portals, online discussion forums and stakeholder engagement platforms.

The reason behind these protests and uprisings is not the misuse of digital platforms but the unavailability of government platforms where citizens can air their everyday fundamental problems that affect their livelihood, like unemployment, corruption, government failure, economic distress, etc. So, blaming social media for these protests will be a wrong diagnosis of the problem. The real problem is shrinking

space for dissent and unavailability of platforms where citizens can raise their concerns. So, rather than using internet shutdown, restrictions on social media as a strategy to control these uprisings, the government, in turn, should think in terms of using the same digital medium to interact with citizens.

6.3 Digital Service Delivery to Digital Accountability and Participatory Governance.

To date, governments across the globe have used digital platforms for service delivery. In India, the government under the Digital India Mission 2015 tried to provide services to citizens in a digital format, like E-health, E-education, Digi Locker, E-police, E-Courts, etc. Under this, the major emphasis of the government is efficient and effective delivery of services. After effectively rolling out digital plans, the government should now move toward digital democracy, whereby the digital medium will be used by union, state and local governments to engage with citizens and stakeholders. To strengthen the governance model in any country, stakeholder consultation is a must. Most of the developmental projects get stalled because of the government's unilateral decision-making process, where the government rolls out plans without taking stakeholders on board. In the absence of any consultation with stakeholders, most of the developmental projects get stuck in litigation as the dissatisfied stakeholders on issues like land acquisition, impact on the environment, etc resort to courts to address their concerns, which eventually lead to long-term litigation delays. It is for this very reason that the country's ranking on ease of doing business falls, and most of the projects go into litigation mode. So, to avoid developmental projects landing in unnecessary litigation and to improve your ratings on ease of doing business, prior stakeholder consultation is a must. So, by creating these interactive digital platforms, the government can very easily bring all stakeholders on board.

Apart from using digital platforms for consultation and collaboration, the same digital platform can be used for social audits. Social audit is community monitoring of social welfare schemes floated by the government. It is being used by the government to ascertain whether the real benefits of government schemes reach the actual beneficiaries or not. In India, social audit, as an accountability mechanism, was placed under MGNREGA and the National Food Security Act 2013. Social audit is considered an instrument for participatory governance. It is often referred to as 'RTI Plus Jan Sunwai' (Chandhoke, 2022) as information lying with the government is accessed through RTI and the same is verified by the community in public gatherings. Even though it is a great accountability tool in the hands of the community on the government, it failed to yield required results because of institutional infrastructure constraints. In the absence of institutional infrastructure, different local self-governing units find it difficult to regularly carry out such large-scale social audits. Social audits require physical meetings where all the community members should audit government records in the presence of officials, media persons and Political representatives. Due to infrastructural constraints, these meetings are sporadic. Now, by using digital platforms, the

government can easily organize social audits via digital platforms, just like most public and private institutions are using platforms like Google Meet, etc to convene online meetings and presentations. Similarly, the government, via these mediums, can interact with citizens, and an online interactive social audit session can be organized. In the same manner, digital platforms can be used to showcase records and organize public hearings.

To generate citizen trust and to increase transparency and accountability, the government should develop digital platforms to facilitate real-time monitoring of government schemes. Digital platforms can provide citizens and stakeholders a platform to air their opinions on government policies. The government should suo motu invite public opinion on draft legislation, welfare reforms, infrastructure projects and policy proposals to avoid further disputes. By doing this, the government will be able to assure foreign and domestic investors that their investments are safe in our country. Hence, the evolution of e-governance should be in a progressive manner, beginning from e-Delivery of Service e-Grievance Redressal e-Participation e-Social Audit e-Democracy. The aim should be to transform citizens from passive consumers of government services into active participants in governance, thereby realising the vision of democratic governance championed by UNDP and the citizen-centric approach of Denhardt's New Public Service. Digital media can act as a big enabler to ensure participatory governance.

7. Conclusion

Digital technology and particularly AI can offer a change which can dramatically alter the way citizens interact with the state. Things essential for achieving governance targets like participation, transparency, and accountability, which were once considered difficult to achieve, have been made possible with the emergence of digital means and AI. Digital platforms are both a boon and a bane; they do not have any value of their own; the true value of their potential lies in how it is used. If it's being used for inciting violence, propaganda, or planting false narratives, then it will be a bane and can have serious adverse consequences, but if we use the same to invite opinions on government policies and programs, for stakeholders' consultation, then it can be a boon and acts as a catalyst for positive change. So, the real value of digital platforms lies in the way we use it. There is little doubt that it needs to be regulated in such a way that it empowers citizens. To date, we have used digital technology in service delivery only, like e-district, e-courts, e-income tax filings, but now the government needs to move beyond service delivery toward digital democracy, which is to utilize digital means to enhance participation. This shift will not only make the system more responsive and participatory but will eventually help improve the overall governance structure by making the system more accountable and transparent. The government should seriously examine the possibility of raising its stake in creating digital platforms for public consultation and collaboration. This area has huge potential to strengthen democratic practices in the country rather than fearing its negative impacts

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