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Founder
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Volume 33, Number 4 (October-December), 2024



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**(Autonomous, Regd. Recognized Charitable Organization of
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The Journal of National Development (JND) is an interdisciplinary bi-annual peer reviewed & refereed international journal committed to the ideals of a 'world community' and 'universal brotherhood'. The Journal is a joint effort of like-minded scholars in the field of social research. Its specific aims are to identify, to understand and to help the process of nation-building within the framework of a 'world community' and enhance research across the social sciences (Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Psychology, History, Geography, Education, Economics, Law, Communication, Linguistics) and related disciplines like all streams of Home Science, Management, Computer Science, Commerce as well as others like Food Technology, Agricultural Technology, Information Technology, Environmental Science, Dairy Science etc. having social focus/implications. It focuses on issues that are global and on local problems and policies that have international implications. By providing a forum for discussion on important issues with a global perspective, the *JND* is a part of unfolding world wide struggle for establishing a just and peaceful world order. Thus, the *JND* becomes a point of confluence for the rivulets from various disciplines to form a mighty mainstream gushing towards the formulation and propagation of a humanistic world-view.

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Psycho-social Analysis of Marginalized Women in India and the Role of Education in their Mental Health

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Abstract

Marginalized women refer to individuals whose identities and communities are marginalized by the authorities and other institutions, resulting in their exposure to prejudice and inequity. Marginalization, a systematic manifestation of prejudice, encompasses various detrimental outcomes such as poverty, exclusion, violence, and under-representation, which have significant and widespread implications. To overcome any form of discrimination, education functions as a mechanism, every Indian female has a fundamental right to education under the Right to Education Act of 2009. Despite being among the fastest-growing nations, India's female literacy rate is significantly lower than the international average. The present article offers a psychosocial examination of the plight of India's marginalized women. Further investigation is undertaken to assess the influence of education in their life. Marginalized women can attain greater acceptability and quality education by improving psychosocial conditions; concurrently, by enhancing their education, they can improve their psycho-social circumstances in life. It has been suggested that obtaining an appropriate education can serve as a protective factor against socially and psychologically abusive behaviour among marginalized women.

Keywords

Marginalized women, Psycho-social explanation, Education, Discrimination, Mental health, Gender.

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Psycho-social Analysis of Marginalized Women in India and the Role of Education in their Mental Health

1. Introduction

The marginalized people do not have the same level of control over their lives and things as those who are living in the mainstream. Eventually, it affects them, rendering them unable to lead a regular life, and causing them to remain secluded and divided from one another. A significant influence on the development of individuals as well as the evolution of society as a whole is exerted by marginalization. Women and other people who are subjected to severe forms of discrimination are the most vulnerable members of marginalized communities. Those women who are marginalized are those who are subjected to discrimination and inequality, as well as those whose communities and identities are marginalized by the state and other different actors. They persist in their efforts to establish a place for themselves in society, yet despite this, they continue to be disregarded and do not receive the prestige that they were due. The situation of these women in India is extremely deplorable, and they continue to struggle for their dignity. In the majority of Indian families, sons are favoured and thought to be the true assets of the family, and the birth of a girl child is not considered to be a significant event. Because girls are expected to marry off and serve their in-laws in the future, the majority of Indian families view the responsibility of raising a girl child as a burden. This is a conventional reality. Beginning at a young age, Indian girls are subjected to training or socialization with the expectation that they will conform their eating habits, living standards, rituals, and clothing to the preferences of their new family members, sometimes known as in-laws. At the time of marriage, a substantial amount of money is required to be spent on the dowry. In numerous instances, if the demand for the dowry is not satisfied by the family of the bride, she is subjected to torture, and there are instances of domestic violence that manifest themselves occasionally.

At this time, the number of crimes committed against women and girls is steadily increasing. Tragically, the position of women in India is a dismal one. Marginalized women themselves are in a confusing condition of disadvantage and impotence as a result of their limited involvement in social, economic, and political realms, where they are meant to contribute based on specific predetermined criteria of their choosing. Women with disabilities who are marginalized experience worse health outcomes, educational performance, economic involvement, and social rejection than women without disabilities as a whole. It is of the utmost importance to support them to preserve their mental health. Over many years, there have been a great deal of conversations and debates in India over the issue of gender equality. These debates and discussions will focus on a variety of subjects, including the position of women in

India in terms of their health, education, economic standing, gender equality, and other social issues. As a result of these debates and conversations, it became clear that women in our emerging nation held a rather contradictory perspective. Swami Vivekanand has rightly said, "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. A bird can't fly on only one wing". Without considering marginalized people in front of society, it is not possible to think about the welfare of the world in reality. To uplift marginalized individuals from their state of adversity, characterized by significant mental, emotional, and social challenges, it is crucial to address the physical ailments that often go unnoticed and unattended. Unfortunately, these physical issues are not prioritized by the individuals themselves or by others, including their children who may experience social discrimination due to their family circumstances. For them to have a better opportunity to break through their constrained boundaries and live their lives in a fully awakened state, it is of the utmost importance to give some thought to their lives and to comprehend their complete psycho-social condition. According to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru:

"To awaken people, it is the woman who has to be awakened, once she moves, the country moves and thus we build the India of tomorrow."

2. Psycho-social Condition of Marginalized Women

An individual's psychological, biological, and social functioning are all taken into consideration during a psycho-social analysis,

which is a methodical assessment strategy. Both the individual's self-perception and their capacity to function in the community are evaluated through this process. In the context of marginalized women, it is a significant question to comprehend their psychological and social status, how they perceive themselves, and how they might contribute to society. Numerous aspects of life are impacted by marginalization, which is a particular type of systematic injustice. In addition to the fact that they typically confront poverty, marginalized women also face major obstacles when it comes to acquiring land, resources, and necessary services. Marginalized women encounter a plethora of obstacles. Gender discrimination is a common occurrence where women are subjected to unfair treatment in several domains such as education, jobs, and politics. When compared to males, marginalized women are more likely to be victims of many sorts of violence, including sexual assault and domestic abuse. As a result, women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence to a greater extent than men. In many aspects of life, including education, employment, medical care, housing, and law enforcement, marginalized women are commonly subjected to systematic disparities, restricted access to opportunities, and unequal treatment. A recent study examining mental health issues among marginalized women revealed that women in low-income settings in India experience mental health challenges due to various factors, including everyday issues and gender-related stressors. These stressors primarily revolve around motherhood, poverty, and domestic conflict.

Women who are marginalized are subjected to social marginalization and injustice, which can lead to their being excluded from accessing equitable opportunities for high-quality education, employment, and access to justice. There is a possibility that marginalized women will have limited access to a limited pool of bright persons, which may impede their advancement in certain institutions and workplaces. The opinion that Mahatma Gandhi held for marginalized women was crystal clear. What he said was that referring to women as "the weaker sex" is a disparaging term that reflects the unjust regard that men have for women. Under the assumption that moral energy is synonymous with strength, woman is incomparably superior to man. If nonviolence is the law that governs our existence, then the future does not belong to men but to women.

3. The Mental Health of Marginalized Women

Mental health refers to an individual's state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is a fundamental human entitlement that holds significance across all stages of life and is equally crucial to one's physical well-being. Mental wellness encompasses more than just freedom from mental diseases. Mental health is a condition of optimal functioning that enables individuals to effectively manage stress, recognize their capabilities, acquire knowledge and perform well, actively participate in their society, make informed choices, establish meaningful connections, and influence their environment. Several social and economic factors contribute to marginalized women having a higher risk of having poor mental health. Marginalized women are more likely to experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of gender inequality, which can have a significant impact on mental health. Additionally, marginalization might be a factor in the existence of disparities in access to behavioural health care services. There are numerous forms of marginalization, including the fact that women who are disabled or refugees also have a greater risk of mental health problems. Even though marginalized women are among the most stigmatized groups in society, the quality of life of these women continues to be negatively impacted by negative attitudes and experiences of rejection.

Particularly in India, where the burden of sickness is compounded by acute shortages in mental health practitioners and fragmented services, the mental health of women who are living in poverty is becoming an increasing public health problem. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies on how women of this type comprehend mental illness. They lack a comprehensive understanding of the concept of mental health. The research "A Woman's Life Is Tension" provides a gendered analysis of women's pain in poor urban India. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that women use the term "tension" to discuss mental illness. Tension was regarded as both a normal part of life and a condition caused by more profound gender-related stressors, including pressures associated with childbirth, persistent poverty, and domestic conflict. Approaches to controlling stress were diverse and centred on the resumption of social responsibilities. The findings are consistent with those of other studies in similar cultural situations, implying that women's suffering has a common,

transnational nature and that scholarship on women's mental health in low-income settings needs to be more sensitive to gendered forms of marginalization (Saloni Atal and Juliet Foster, 2020).

It is crucial to possess a thorough comprehension and consciousness of mental health to timely and appropriately take action for oneself. There should be an accessible and user-friendly platform where marginalized women may have access to and acquire knowledge to enhance their mental health. Self-care can be an important component in the maintenance of mental health and can also be of assistance in the treatment and recovery process if someone is suffering from a mental disorder. It has been observed that the group of marginalized women does not practice self-care, and even those women do not have a clear understanding of what it means to adequately care for themselves and their mental health. Encouraging individuals to not just enhance their comprehension but also inspire them to prioritize self-care may be a challenging endeavour.

It has been observed that marginalized women may experience emotions of solitude and melancholy in a range of elements of their lives. There is a common awareness of the fact that women are more likely to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence, which can have a detrimental impact on their sense of self-worth and confidence. As a result of their lack of self-assurance, they choose not to have the fortitude to fight for themselves and instead choose to accept injustice that they do not deserve. In the study on the Status of Marginalized Women in Indian Society, it came to light that economically marginalized women of society lacked sufficient funds for their medical care. The primary social and psychological requirements of the victims included inadequate access to medical care, reliance on fraudulent practitioners, and limited opportunities for remote education. These needs were not promptly met due to social marginalization. Furthermore, the marginalized women encountered prominent challenges such as resistance, neglect, distrust, and harshness (Simrath Jeet Kaur and Sangeet, 2022). In the article on Empowering Marginalized Women in India, research has revealed that women in India are frequently regarded as subordinate to men, resulting in further constraints on their chances. Women frequently lack influence over their financial matters, family dynamics, and even their income, with marginalized women experiencing an even greater degree of this. Women who are marginalized are particularly vulnerable to experiencing gender-based violence due to the

significant social and cultural shame associated with women's responsibilities and societal expectations (Jitna bhagani, 2020)

4. Children of Marginalized Women

Children who are born to women who are marginalized are not allowed to participate in mainstream activities; this includes economic, political, cultural, and social activities. Exclusion is the process of excluding something or someone from a group and assigning it a lower priority than other members of the group. The majority of the time, this is a social phenomenon in which a subgroup or minority is excluded, and its desires and preferences are ignored. The presence of marginalization is a worldwide phenomenon that has an impact on their children's lives. When it comes to choosing the direction that their life will take and the resources that are accessible to them, female who are marginalized have a limited amount of agency at their disposal. They have fewer options available to them. As a result of this, their capacity to make contributions to the lives of their children decreases, and as a consequence, the contributions that they make to society that are significant are restricted. The trafficking of children continues to be a big problem in India. On the other hand, research indicates that children who require specific protection frequently come from marginalized and socially excluded populations, such as scheduled castes and tribes, as well as the impoverished (UNICEF, India). This is even though it is not always easy to obtain comprehensive statistics and information on child protection concerns. Even though India has been a sovereign nation for seven decades and has enacted the Right to Education, children in the country continue to face persistent disparities that are based on aspects such as caste and financial status. They are confronted with a lot of difficulties, particularly if the child is a member of a group of marginalized women. It is common for parents to be hesitant about sending their children to school due to the occurrence of biased conduct and societal inequality. This is because there is a tendency for biased behaviour.

To make progress towards the objective of providing equitable and all-encompassing educational opportunities and ongoing learning experiences for all individuals, it is not only necessary to ensure that disadvantaged children continue to attend school, but it is also crucial to offer access to these changes. One of the most essential things that can be done is to make sure that children who

come from underprivileged Indian communities and have special needs are protected in the same way when they are trying to get an education. It is difficult for marginalized women with little financial resources to acquire printed books in their native language or first language. The importance of having a diverse variety of languages, which is a significant component of India's cultural diversity, is not often the subject of emphasis at educational institutions. Changing the way that people read and write in more than one language is something that should be prioritized.

5. Education and Marginalized Women

The development of any nation mainly depends on the development of its all sections of people. India will truly progress if educational opportunities are extended to the marginalized groups that comprise a large part of its population. The cultivation of a hostile environment occurs as a consequence of discrimination, which may lead to frequent absences and, ultimately, the children's refusal to attend school. The Right to Education Act of 2009 states that every girl in India has the right to receive an education as a fundamental societal entitlement. Although India is experiencing fast economic growth, the literacy rate among women in our country is far lower than the norm for the rest of the world. General education in schools and colleges, professional and technical education, and health education are all examples of the types of education that fall under the umbrella of women's education. The goal of these many types of education is to foster the overall development of women. Education is a powerful instrument that may be used to promote empowerment and raise awareness about one's civil and political rights. To facilitate the socio-cultural and economic growth of women in society, education is an endeavour that plays a significant role.

Even though the government of India has launched several programs to advance women's education, women who come from underprivileged regions continue to fall behind in terms of educational achievement, and developing a high literacy rate among them continues to be an unattainable objective. Several factors contribute to low literacy rates and high dropout rates among marginalized women. Some of these factors include parental attitude, parental illiteracy and ignorance, poverty, inadequate school environment, early marriages, bias toward educating male children, and insufficient infrastructure and communication facilities. When it

comes to the pursuit of social and economic advancement for the most disadvantaged populations in India, literacy is a crucial preliminary measure that must be taken. Not only may individuals improve their level of living by increasing the number of options available to them, but they can also acquire access to the countless fundamental services and rights to which they are entitled. Concerns have been made over the incapacity of a major part of marginalized communities-including those from low-income households, scheduled castes/tribes, backward classes, and other ethnic minority groups-to display even the most rudimentary levels of accomplishment.

When it comes to fostering social fairness and making society more equitable for all people, education is one of the most essential methods to act. Every child in India must have the opportunity to attend an excellent school, regardless of their family, caste, religion, or financial situation. Every day, India makes efforts to ensure that women in every region of the country have access to high-quality educational opportunities. It should come as no surprise that education has a significant role in terms of economic development, scientific advancement, cultural preservation, and social fairness. For a variety of reasons, including individuals with disabilities, members of ethnic and religious minorities, castes, and tribes, women are among the most marginalized groups in the field of education. Several reasons might make it difficult for marginalized women and girls to have access to education. These include gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, child marriage, early and unwanted pregnancy, a lack of inclusive learning environments, inadequate and hazardous education infrastructure, and poverty. There is a positive impact on economic, social, and health standards when marginalized women are allowed to receive an education.

There is a correlation between increased literacy rates among marginalized females and a reduction in the mortality rate of children. Education has a direct influence on the reduction of those who commit crimes. Inequality in society can be reduced by the implementation of education that is marginalized. Children born to educated women who come from marginalized communities have a lower risk of being malnourished or stunted. The government of India is making persistent efforts to guarantee that marginalized women have access to education of a high standard across the entire nation. Education is unquestionably essential for the advancement of economic development, scientific research, the preservation of

cultural traditions, and the promotion of social equality. Children whose mothers are educated and come from marginalized backgrounds have a lower risk of being malnourished or stunted. An ongoing effort is being made by India to guarantee that women from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to high-quality education across the whole nation. Unquestionably, education is of the utmost importance for the advancement of economic development, scientific progress, the preservation of cultural traditions, and social fairness. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) will make certain that young girls who come from disadvantaged and marginalized communities are provided with equal opportunities to benefit from the school system in India.

The present article would be incomplete without illustrating the transformative impact of education on the lives of marginalized women, exemplified by the remarkable story of Savitribai Phule in the Indian education system. Phule, who was a pioneering female educator, a trail blazing feminist, and a catalyst for social change in India, serves as a powerful testament to the power of education. She has a fervent passion for advancing women's education to empower women in the realms of education and literacy. Savitribai Phule was India's first female teacher (dalit), modern feminist, and social reformer. The revolutionary attitude that she possessed allowed her to improve women's education, which in turn led to the advancement of women in the domains of education and literacy. It was a struggle to educate women, and she was a comrade in arms in that struggle. Because Krantiveer Savitribai Phule was the spark that ignited the fire, her birthday is an important day for all women who are receiving an education in the modern era. Her story serves as a vivid illustration of how education has the power to alter the lives of women who are marginalized and how an educated woman may have an impact on society.

6. Conclusion

Women who are marginalized are more likely to be victims of violence, sexual assault, and abuse. A sufficient number of marginalized women are not adequately represented in the policy and decision-making processes. Women are at a high risk of being excluded from society due to the many conditions that exist. It is possible for women who are marginalized to face a variety of challenges, including but not limited to unfair treatment, poverty,

illiteracy, social and cultural boycotts, a lack of opportunities, and social identities that are not traditional.

Every segment of a nation's population must progress for the nation as a whole to prosper. Providing educational opportunities to the marginalized women who make up a significant portion of India's population is crucial if the country is to make genuine progress. Various constitutional provisions and developmental programs were established by the Indian government to educate and empower them. Education sheds light on several issues affecting women and offers potential remedies. The enhancement of psycho-social circumstances has the potential to assist marginalized women in achieving higher levels of acceptability and quality education. While this is happening, the enhancement of their educational opportunities can also assist them in improving their psychological circumstances in life. For women who are marginalized, it has been suggested that receiving an appropriate education can serve as a protective factor against practices that are both socially and psychologically harmful. This is a proposition that has been taken into consideration.

Even though there has unquestionably been progress in this respect, there is still a great deal more work that needs to be done. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was approved in 2009, and since then, the government has made enormous progress towards its objective of providing education to all children. Even though these issues need to be solved, the government has made immense work towards its goal. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can carry out extensive programs of education access and enrolment, as well as conversations at community events, to promote the significance of education in marginalized children. These children have been able to become first-generation learners in their families and societies as a result of the provision of gender-sensitive study materials and engagement programs. If children receive an adequate education, it is quite likely that girls will not become marginalized females and will be equipped to confront and surmount challenges in life. Additionally, boys will acquire the skills to interact respectfully with any group of females, regardless of whether they are marginalized or not. To provide equitable rights for marginalized women, it is imperative to provide education not only to girls but also to boys. By equipping both genders with the appropriate knowledge, attitude, and behaviour, they may both make meaningful contributions to their lives.

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The New Facets of Exclusion of Dalits in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper has assessed the exclusion of Dalits through new dimensions which creates new discourses in the reconstructing of the state of Nepal. Dalits are highly excluded groups ever than ethnic groups and Madhesis. The total population of Dalits is not less than other groups which covers about twenty percentage of the total population of Nepal. However, Dalits are excluded socially, politically and economically by the states and elites of the society since 25 hundred years. Social exclusion is a dynamic process of progressive multi-dimensional rupturing of the 'social bond' at the individual level and collective levels (Silver, 2007). For study Dalits exclusion, the secondary data are used and reviewed some articles based on the subjects. It is found that Dalits are the poorest groups of Nepal. The multidimensional exclusion of Dalits makes them absolute poor and it is difficult for them to come out of poverty. The demand of identity of Dalits is different than the ethnic groups and Madhesis as they are Hindus like other higher caste elites and their culture and language are similar. The emancipation of Dalits is not clear till now even after the Second People's Movement of Nepal in April 2006. Dalits had very low representation in the House of Representatives. Major political parties do not have clear cut proposal about the issues of Dalits' connection.

Keywords

Dalits, Untouchable, Exclusion, Multi-dimensional, Marginalized, Emancipation.

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The New Facets of Exclusion of Dalits in Nepal

1. Introduction

Dalit means oppressed, downtrodden, and exploited who are regarded as untouchable. The members of the Dalit community are routinely denied social, political, religious, and economic rights. The word 'Dalit' is derived from Sanskrit and means 'ground', 'suppressed', 'crushed' or 'broken to pieces'. It was first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by 'untouchable' castes of the twice-born Hindus. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar made it popular initiating the Dalit Movement in India (Ahuti, 2010). Before that period, '*Achhut*' is used to denote 'untouchable' castes in Nepal. Due to caste based discrimination and untouchability, Dalits are left behind in social, economic, educational, political and religious spheres. They are deprived from human dignity and social justice. In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses, and waste. Dalits worked as manual labourers cleaning streets, latrines, and sewers. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual, and this pollution was considered contagious.

In Nepal, National Dalit Commission of the Government of Nepal has scheduled 7 hill and 26 Terai Dalits. They cover about 20 percent of total population of Nepal. 80 percent of the Dalit population lives below the poverty line. Only 23 percent of Dalits are literate in comparison to the national average literacy rate 65.9 percent (NSO, 2021). The average life expectancy of Dalits is 50.8 years as compared to a national average of 58 years. The per capita income of Dalits is half of the national average. Dalits have little representation in the Nepali bureaucracy, legislature and within mainstream political parties. All these meager social and economic conditions of Dalits are the outcomes of exclusion created by the society and state through history in long run. Dalits could not acquire sufficient and necessary

capability due to extreme exclusion. This article has discussed the multidimensional exclusion of Dalits in Nepal.

2. Methodology

The research methodology involves a dual approach utilizing secondary data and article review. The study begins with a well-defined research objective. Secondary data is collected from reputable sources such as existing datasets and databases relevant to the research topic. Concurrently, a comprehensive literature review is conducted, identifying and reviewing pertinent articles. The gathered secondary data is analyzed for insights, while the article review involves extracting key findings and methodologies. The synthesis of both sources of information allows for a holistic understanding of the research topic. The limitations and validity of the study are discussed, and the findings are interpreted in the context of the research objective, contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

3. Theoretical Perspectives of Exclusion and Dalits

The term 'Social Exclusion' is used in 1974 by Rene Lenoir of France to address not only the poor, but also handicapped, suicidal people, aged, abused children, substance abusers etc. about 10 percent of the French people (Haan, 1999). Then, it became worldwide and popular in social science. For Hilary Silver (2007), social exclusion is a dynamic process of progressive multi-dimensional rupturing of the 'social bond' at the individual level and collective levels. Social exclusion prevents full participation normal activities of a given society and denies access to information, resources, sociability, recognition, and identity, eroding self-respect and reducing capabilities to achieve personal goal. As the definition of the social exclusion by the Hilary Silver, we can say Dalits are excluded in our society by the higher Hindu elites and the state. Hilary Silver has argued social exclusion as the multidimensional and context-dependent (Silver, 2007). Social exclusion is polysomic terms that it has more than one meaning. Social and cultural cleavages vary across the countries. In the western countries, social exclusion is associated with economic exclusion. The context of Africa and Asia is different. Different context of social, economic and politics create different level of exclusion. Social exclusion and chronic poverty has some commonalities. Both can appear simultaneously. Social exclusion can create poverty and poverty can create social exclusion.

Though the social exclusion and chronic poverty has some commonalities, social exclusion is concerned with horizontal ties among groups while poverty has vertical mobility. In the case of Dalits, first, they are excluded from social relations and public services and then they indulge in extreme poverty.

In contrast to the Hilary Silver, Amartya Sen has argued exclusion as the deprivation of capability (Sen, 2000). In exclusion, the social relations of individuals or groups are ruptured and the exclusion plays constitutive as well as instrumental role for further impoverishment of individuals and groups. Amartya Sen has argued two types of social exclusion: active and passive exclusion. The exclusion that may be the result from the set of circumstances without free will is passive exclusion such like sudden unemployment. The exclusion aimed directly through the policies and clearly seen its implementation is active exclusion. The exclusion of Dalits that prevalent in Asia is active exclusion that has direct intention of the state and high-class elites. The distinction between constitutive relevance and instrumental importance is only one of the distinctions that can be fruitfully used to understand and analyze the nature and reach of social exclusion (Sen, 2000). Constitutive relevance is the deprivation that directly impoverishes the human life; such like not taking community activities generates capability deprivation. Sometimes exclusion becomes instrumental for the deprivation indirectly to achieve some things that is not necessary for human daily life. Instrumental importance may not be impoverishing in them, but they can lead to impoverishment of human life through their causal consequences. Landlessness is an instrumental deprivation. Dalits are facing both constitutive and instrumental exclusion.

Dalits are far from the resources as they are land less. Their self-respect has been eroding since twenty five hundred years (Ahuti, 2010). The social bond of Dalits is ruptured and Dalits are in social isolation. Hilary Silver has defined social exclusion as the dynamic process. Internationally, it is suitable to use as the economic fluctuation is changing over time of period. In the south asia, the exclusion of Dalits is persisting before a long period and still is deep rooted in our society. The exclusion of Dalits is not only economic, rather it is caste and group based exclusion. Chaitanya Mishra has argued that there might have some economic and structural conditions which make the possibility of exclusion of Dalits still in capitalism and globalization (Mishra, 2010). The social exclusion in

South Asia is not dynamic rather it is static and persistent. So, different aspect of analysis is needed in the case of Dalits of Nepal and South Asia.

In social exclusion, peoples are excluded to participate in normal activities of society in four ways: first consumption and savings, second production, third political engagement, and four social interactions. In case of Dalits they are deprived of these four forms of participation. According to Mary Cameron, Dalits are still depends upon riti maagne system. Riti Maagene is the dependence of Dalits on higher caste for their subsistence (Cameron, 2010). Dalits has low income and unequal labour sharing that they could not save any things. Dalits can produce their artisan products, but they are compelled to exchange it with minimum food stuff. Untouchability deprives Dalit of equal economic and other opportunities. Many jobs, professions and business opportunities (such as opening tea stalls and selling milk) available for enterprising poor rural people are not viable options for Dalits because many members of the society do not buy edible goods from them. With the penetration of the market and the availability of cheaper ready-made clothes, shoes and metal framing implements, traditional sources of income of the Dalits have been undermined (Lawati, 2010). Social practice of untouchability contributes Dalits to exclude the Dalits directly as well as indirectly by marginalizing them and making them uncompetitive.

The political engagement of Dalits is very low. Leaders of the high caste groups have not treated Dalits as political equals. The non-nomination of Dalits for public offices and the absence of progressive programs by major political parties to end untouchability and promote inclusive demonstrate this ambivalent attitude. Not a single Dalit was made a minister during the 1990-02 democratic period. Likewise, only one Dalit was elected in the three parliamentary elections out of a total of 615 possible seats (Lawati, 2010).

In the November 2022 House of Representatives elections, only one Dalit secured a parliamentary seat through the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. This marks the lowest Dalit representation in Parliament since 2008. However, parties have chosen additional Dalit members through the proportional representation (PR) system, resulting in a total of 16 Dalit representatives (5.8 percent) out of 275 seats. At the local level, there is minimal allocation of ward positions for Dalit women. It is very pathetic condition that only just about 6

percent seats of Dalits in the House of Representatives despite they have about 20 percent share in the total population of Nepal. Social exclusion is a trap for groups or individuals. Social exclusion refers to a situation where people suffer from the cumulative disadvantages of labour market marginalization, poverty, and social isolation that we can see in the Dalits' cases. Not from macro level, we should analyze in the micro level. Steven Folmer (2010) has studied the social exclusion of Dalits in micro level. The social boundaries become small for the peoples who are excluded.

Social exclusion creates social insecurity and persistent unemployment that leads loss of skill and long-run damages. It creates loss of freedom, psychological harm and misery. Some outcomes of exclusion are: ill-health and mortality, loss of human relations, motivational loss and future work, gender and racial inequalities, and weakening of social values. Social exclusion can cause inequality and poverty with capability deprivation. During the financial and economic crisis, both social exclusion and absolute poverty may become much sharper inequalities increase along with recession. The economic crisis creates labour market exclusions, credit market exclusions, gender related exclusions and inequalities.

People could be excluded individually and in groups. Dalits of Nepal are excluded in groups not in individual. Charles Tilly (2006) has presented the various apparatus of social exclusion stating it is social process and interaction origins. The argument raised by the Arjan de Haan is different than Hilary Silver and Amartya Sen since he has tried to define social exclusion as the holistic meaning of deprivation. Poverty and social exclusion are two different things though they are relevant to each other. Hilary Silver has given stress on the exclusion within the Western Europe which does not match up with the exclusion of Dalits in Nepal. Dalits are not excluded and discrimination through economical fluctuation rather they are excluded socially and politically. Their exclusion is based on caste which is absent on the Western Society.

4. History of Exclusion

The exclusion of Dalits is based on caste. There was no sign of casteism in the ancient period of Nepal. Later, in the period of Lichhavi era (200-979 AD), primitive type of castes was introduced. Various castes were divided by the Jayasthiti Malla totally based on *Manushmriti* inviting five Brahmins from India. Untouchables were

segregated from mainstream society and introduced severe punishment for those breaking caste hierarchy and barriers. Particular occupation was given to certain groups of people and made punishable if they changed the occupation. Ram Shah (1606-1633 AD) copied the similar system that of Jayasthiti Malla and fixed severe punishment for untouchable for the similar crime. Prithvi Narayan Shah (1779-1831 BS) introduced caste upgrading and degrading system. Janga Bahadur Rana introduced first Muluki Ain (civil code) in 1853 AD and defined Dalits again as 'untouchables'. In the Panchayat era, King Mahendra abolished the untouchability promulgating the new civil code. However, untouchability was not removed from the society and the state (Ahuti, 2010). Dalits were not included in the political and social level and the economic enhancement policies were not formulated in the government level.

After the end of Panchayat era, caste based discrimination and untouchable was made punishable by law through 1990 constitution. Dalits people started organized movement for social justice and for economic, political and social rights. Dalit development Committee and Dalit Development Commission were established by the government to uplift the Dalits though the condition of Dalits remained same. Dalits involved significantly in Maoist insurgency seeking the right and inclusion in the state apparatus. After the Second People's Movement of 2006, some progress has been made. The Dalits has got some provisions for non-discrimination, equality and protection in Nepal's constitution. In the international arena, the government has expressed support for the UN principles and guidelines to end the caste discrimination. Yet, Dalits continue to be the under-represented at the political level, having secured just eight percent of the seat in the house of representative of Nepal despite they have about 20 percent share in the total population of Nepal. The social and economic condition of Dalits is not improved yet for that it needs further efforts and movement.

5. Multi-dimensional Exclusion of Dalits

Dalits are facing multilayer type of exclusion. Firstly, they are excluded in the society and taken as untouchable and water polluted caste. They are not involved to perform any kind of social activities by other castes whether they are high caste Hindus or so called indigenous groups. They could neither get chance to enter temples freely nor to enter the home of other groups' people. They are landless

and much more than the dominant caste population. They could not compete with the modern markets and compel to change their traditional occupation. This is social as well as economic exclusion. Dalit women are excluded socially, culturally, economically as well as biologically. Similarly, Terai Dalits are excluded regionally as well as socially and economically. Terai Dalits are more marginalized, oppressed and poor than other Dalits (Ahuti, 2010). Dalits are physically assaulted, killed and forced to leave their residence in the society by so-called higher caste and they are compelled to hide their caste and their traditional occupation. The extent of exclusion is very deep in Dalits which created absolute poverty within them. They are not entertaining the alternative resources and the sharing on the state property is the lowest to the Dalits.

Next, state is indifferent to the condition of the Dalits. Dalits are excluded from the state privileges and get very few opportunities of government services. Opportunity hoarding is created for the Dalits. Actually, state itself is an excluder for Dalits. The literacy rate and health condition of Dalits is very low. The human development index shows the pathetic condition of the Dalits which is below the national average and the lowest in comparison to the other caste groups. In politics, only few numbers of Dalits are taking part and they are politically excluded. State is not serious about Dalits, however it has made the situation to exclude the Dalits. The untouchable is made punishable in Law, but it is not implemented seriously. National Dalit Commission is established, but its function is not effective and could not access to the grass level Dalits. In Pachayat system, few Dalits were selected in the government level in Rastriya Panchayat, but it could not uplift the condition of Dalits and could not remove the discrimination faced by Dalits in the society. Some national and international non-government organizations are trying to aware and to uplift the economic conditions of Dalits, but it did not give positive results till now.

6. Indigenous, Madhesi and Dalits

The exclusion faced by Dalits and other groups is different. Ethnic groups and Madhesis have their own territories. Dalits do not have own particular territories of residing. They are scattered all over the country and in minorities in all regions where they are residing. Ethnic groups and Madhesis have their own culture and language, but Dalits do not have their own culture and language. So, Dalits are

excluded separately than other groups. The state should treat them separately.

Dalits could not mingle with other groups for identity politics and they could not demand separate province for them. Indigenous people and Madhesis are more united to demand their rights, but Dalits could not organize easily as they are scattered all over the country. Socially, economically and politically, Dalits are more marginalized and oppressed than other groups. Indigenous and Madhesis are excluded by the state only where as Dalits are excluded by other groups of society as well as the state. So, Dalits are excluded doubly than other groups. The exclusion of Dalits is more severe.

Dalits have lowest indicators of the mobilization and performance among three groups (Lawati, 2013). Madhesi has the highest movement capability (strikes, length and frequency) after 1990 and 2006. The formation of political party and representation in governance is also lowest in Dalit community. Limbu has the highest representation in governance. Lots of factors facilitate the mobilization such as political opportunities, state attitude, cohesiveness of community and community characters, degrees of groups' discrimination, cultural differentials and identity formation, education, activists and supporters and international factors. Dalits have fewer cultural differences with dominant groups and they have difficulties in identity formation. We can see lots of factors which facilitates lower mobilization and performance of Dalits than other groups. Therefore, they have low voices against their exclusion and deprivation.

7. Politics of Anonymity and Identity of Dalits

The identity politics of Dalits is different than other groups. Dalits do not interest to identify themselves as Dalits and they are trying to copy the higher castes to become like them. Steven Folmer has termed the exclusion of Dalits as politics of anonymity in the sense that deprivation of Dalits is still unknown to the most of people. Scholars have done little research on this important issue. Donor agencies are trying to uplift Dalits through income generation, but it is not only economic problem. The exclusion of Dalits has social, cultural and political dimensions. It has long history of deprivations (Ahuti, 2010). How was it created and why does it exist till present? The two questions raised by Chaitanya Mishra are also important for the emancipation of Dalits (Mishra, 2010).

A major controversy that Steven Folmer has analyzed is whether Dalits have internalized their low status so much that they reinforce it through their behaviour. He has raised three still open salient issues: first the degree to which Dalits are still subject to social and political oppression, second the degree to which Dalits participate willingly in their degradation, and third the social and political strategies Dalits employ to deal with degradation (Folmer, 2010). He has followed the micro level research on the issues and found the different findings than other. Dalits are still in oppression and they are not willing to their degradation. They are trying to resist in the grassroots levels. Dalits are not researching their identity, but trying to mask it and they do not like the word Dalits. They are taking it as insult and feel humiliated (Cameron, 2010).

The identity politics of Dalits is different than the other groups and identity politics is different than the demand of inclusion. Identity politics is demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied. For Dalits, identity politics is complex. Dalits is the word that is used to denote the oppressed groups and it is not the caste. There are various levels of identity inside Dalits as a specific caste such as Sarki, Kami or Damai or as the shared identity of Dalit. Dalit is an ambiguous identity to which not all low caste people aspire. Caste hierarchies are prevalent within the Dalit castes. So, whose identity is demanded, the confusion is existed within Dalits.

Politics of anonymity is related to the masking of the identity. Through masking identity, Dalits are free to act against the current of the system, but only in spaces where their Dalit or untouchable identity is unknown. Many Dalits are following this kind of masking their identity. Steven Folmer has found lots of cases in the ground level of Dalit communities. Actually, Dalits do not have surname, but government officials write surname according to Dalits traditional occupation such as those who sew clothes become Damai. They are attempting to change their caste Nepali or Pariyar or Das for Damai, Achhami or Bogati for Sarki and Sunar or Bishwokarma for Kami. The discrimination of Dalits is deep rooted in the cultural geography of Nepalese society for that it should be analyzed in the micro level to solve the problem. The efforts of Steven Folmer is commendable as he has researched Dalits identity in three cultural geography tea shops, water tap and temples where we can observe the changing inter-caste relations in Nepal.

India. The political force for meaningful change and goals for social mobility is lack in Nepal (Folmer, 2010). In Europe and USA also has applied the reservation for deprived black people and indigenous minorities. Dalits activists has demanded reservation in state, government jobs, education, land and shelter, community trade and production for marginalized Dalits (Padmalal, 2002). We should not follow the mode of reservation blindly from India (Ahuti, 2010). Reservation is not generosity of the state, but it is the right of the Dalits. In the new constitution, the rights of Dalits should be stated separately with justice. Ahuti has proposed for the non-territorial province for the Dalits (Ahuti, 2010).

Steven Folmer has argued the inclusion of Dalits might be possible through the political initiation in national and local political process opening economic and educational opportunities and equalizing the social status. It is positive sign that new generations of Dalits have entered the process of advocating greater freedom, access and respect in public discourse. They should be well-organized and effective (Folmer, 2010). Folmer has attracted the attention of academics to study the micro-level politics of identity and anonymity of Dalits which seems more logical. Not in the macro level, micro level activities should be conducted in the Dalits community.

In the theoretical level, Amartya Sen has discussed about the democracy and political participation to end the social exclusion in the policy level (Sen, 2000). Economic incentives only could not play positive role for the inclusion of deprived groups. Political freedom and participation is needed with economic incentives. Transparency and protective security should be ensured. Democratic rights and shared opportunities of political participation can be important to raise voice against social exclusion. These concepts of Amartya Sen might be applicable in the emancipation of Dalits of Nepal. He has given the example of Southeast Asian countries which reduces the social education by giving emphasis on the education, generating opportunities of participating in market economy and increasing political participation which are very applicable in the context of Dalits in Nepal.

9. Conclusion

The social exclusion of Dalits is complex and multidimensional and it is rooted deeply in the Nepalese society. The bond between the society and Dalits is ruptured severely and it is very difficult for them

to come out of the long historical deprivation. The identity movement of Dalits is moving in the slow pace as they are scattered all over the Nepal and difficult to be united. The political involvement of Dalits is very low than other groups of Nepal. The poverty generated by the exclusion is very intense within Dalit community. The exclusion of Dalits does not match up with western exclusion and exclusion of ethnic groups and Madhesi of Nepal. The exclusion of Dalits is exclusively different. The exclusion of Dalits is based on caste which is created by Hindu religion by the society. It is social rather than economic and the exclusion of Dalits plays both constitutive and instrumental role to drive them into chronic poverty as well as capability deprivation. They are facing difficulties to raise demand about their inclusion in the state restructuration process of Nepal. Many intellectual persons as well as the major political parties and state are confused on the issue of Dalits which still makes the condition of Dalits more pathetic. Dalits could again get frog like in the game 'macha, macha, machaaaaaaaaa-byaguta !' (Fish, fish, fish, fishhhhhh- frog !), similar as discussed by Steven Folmer.

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A Study on Satisfaction Level of Bank Employees with reference to Welfare Facilities (A Case Study of HPGB Employees)

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Abstract

Employee satisfaction is one of the most important aspects in the organization that cannot be ensured without proper welfare measures. The various welfare measures provided by the employer will have immediate impact on the health, physical and mental efficiency, alertness, morale. Job satisfaction is the broad concept for outlook concerning the work. The success of banking sector depends upon the employee's that why employee welfare practices very necessary part of every organization. The basic purpose of employee welfare is to enrich the life of employees and to keep them happy and conducted. In the present study an attempt has been made to study the satisfaction level of various employees towards welfare measure with special references to HPGB in Chamba District (H.P). This proper will shows the clear depiction on the satisfaction level of the employees with the help of various welfare measures. For this purpose a study of 70 respondents was conducted from employees of Himachal Pradesh Gramin bank (HPGB) with ranking method. It can be conclude that HPGB gives more welfare schemes to their staffs like safety measures, promotion facilities and recreation facilities. But they are lacking in vehicle facilities, rest room and toilet facilities. They should take necessary steps to improve in those measures.

Keywords

Himachal Pradesh Gramin Bank (HPGB), Employees welfare measures, Satisfaction level.

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A Study on Satisfaction Level of Bank Employees with reference to Welfare Facilities (A Case Study of HPGB Employees)

1. Introduction

Employee welfare is an area of social welfare in which two terms used i.e. conceptually and operationally. The term welfare proposes many ideas, meanings and connotations, such as the state of well-being, health, happiness and the development of human resources. Human resources are the key factor that defined the characteristics of a successful banking institution. Bank plays an important role in 21st century business world that the capital and technology considered to be the most important pillars of banking are replicable, but not human capital, which needs to be viewed as a valuable resource for the achievement of competitive advantage. To attract employees there are so many welfare measures available to their employees. These welfare measures can be classified into two categories i.e. statutory and non- statutory. The statutory schemes include canteen facilities, drinking water, facilities for sitting, washing places and rest rooms. On the other hand non- statutory welfare schemes may include personal health care, flexi-time, medical-claim insurance scheme. The welfare facilities help to motivate and retain employees. Most of sanitation and hygienic which is not provided dissatisfaction among workers are motivated by providing welfare measures. This ensures employees satisfaction result in increased efficiency. Employees' attitudes are important to human resource management because they affect the organisation behaviour. In particular, an attitude relating to job satisfaction and job satisfaction focuses an employee's attitudes towards their jobs and organizational commitment focuses on their attitudes towards the overall organization.

2. Employees Welfare Practices

The concept of employee welfare is flexible and elastic and differs widely with time, region, social values and customs, the general

socio-economic development of the people and the political ideologies prevailing at a particular time. It is also moulded according to the age-groups, socio-cultural background, marital and economic status and educational level of the employees in different organization. In this broad connotation, the term welfare refers to a state of living of an individual or group in a desirable relationship with total environment-ecological, economic and social.

3. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to how content an individual with his/her job. The term job satisfaction describes an employee's general happiness with his or her job. According to Locke "Pleasurable or positive emotional state is resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences." The focal point of this study is to conclude the collision of various human resource administration trainings like job sovereignty, group labour surroundings and management actions on work contentment. It also examines the determinants of work contentment in banking division. However the researcher has considered job satisfaction of workforce in Himachal Pradesh Gramin Banks. Banks are the spines of our nation and therefore their role to the nation should be astonishing.

4. Historical Background: Himachal Pradesh Gramin Bank

Himachal Pradesh Gramin Bank, sponsored by Punjab National Bank came into existence with the amalgamation of two RRBs, viz. Himachal Gramin Bank, Mandi (sponsored by Punjab National Bank) and Parvatiya Gramin Bank, Chamba (sponsored by State Bank of India) vide Government of India Notification dated 15th February 2013 under section 21 of the RRBs Act, 1976 with its Head Office at Mandi. The area of operation of the Bank is spread over to 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh. The Bank is authorized to affect banking transactions as permitted under section 5(b) of Banking Regulation Act, 1949. Presently, Bank is functioning with a network of 266 branches in twelve districts, namely – Mandi, Kangra, Kullu, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Una, Shimla, Solan, Sirmour, Kinnaur, LahulSpiti & Chamba .

There are Five Regional Offices – Chamba, Dharamshala, Mandi, Solan, Hamirpur. The prime objective of establishment of the Bank is

to provide basic banking facilities to the remote rural sectors and to provide the facility to rural masses to deposit their savings in a secured manner.

Another important responsibility entrusted to the Bank was to provide productive credit, viz. Agriculture, Cottage and Small Industries, retail trade, dairy development and other related allied activities. Bank allowed financing for housing, education, transport and consumer loans to public under different approved schemes of the Bank.

5. Review of Literature

Kaliyamurthy K. and Devi Shyamala J. (2012) have stated that a labour welfare measure is adopted in any organization to improve the health, security growth and motivational level of an employee. Labour welfare facilities are provided to the employees by trade union, govt., non-govt. organizations from the employees. The study provides satisfaction level of employees after getting the labour welfare measures in the organization. A. Sabarirajan, T. Meharajan and B. Arun (2001) analyzed the study of employee welfare in textile industry. In this study only 15% of employees are average and 39% of employees are average and 16% of employees are highly dissatisfied.

Joseph et.al. (2009) stated that the structure of a welfare state rests on its social security fabric, employees trade unions and government have done a lot to promote the betterment of worker's conditions. Satyanarayan and Reddi (2012) shows that the overall about welfare measures in the organization cover in satisfactory. However, a few are dissatisfied with welfare measures. Logasakthi and Rajagopal (2013) stated the employees enjoy not only the satisfaction of their jobs but also various facilities given by the firms'. The personnel department takes care of the total human resources in the organization. The management provides all the health, safety and welfare to the employees that will help to produce better in work and working environment.

Parvin Mahamuda M. and Kabri N. (2011) have stated that the employees satisfaction level in the pharmaceutical industry. The research paper focus on industry carries huge investment and having high level of job security issues among its employees. The main focus on the study on a board verdict of job satisfaction manifestation of company and the issues grounds the discontentment & ideas to develop them.

Ratna R. & Kaur T. (2012) have focused on "Measuring Impact of Trade Unions on workmen satisfaction in a manufacturing Unit". The objective of the study discussed the co-relation between various parameters of trade unions, to find out the correlation between these parameters of Trade unions and satisfaction of workers corresponding to them. The data was collected from 120 workers of a compact disk (CD) manufacturing unit in Delhi, convenience sampling technique used. The primary data was collected through questionnaire for study five factors like decision making, rational feedback mechanism, healthy electioneering process, membership services and accountability. It was found out that no two factors were very strongly correlated. In fact accountability and involvement in decision making and accountability & rational feedback mechanism were not correlated at all. But membership services contributed most to the satisfaction of the workers followed by accountability displayed. The study concluded that accountability, rational feedback mechanism and electioneering process, still need to be focused upon by these companies as the benefits under the union membership are not viewed to contribute to workmen satisfaction.

Nath Amar and Samanta Amitava (2019) from their study they concluded in many organizations has accepted by individual reserve management and many bosses are only curious in seeing their employees job lacking thoughtful for their wellbeing and growth. Employees are satisfied with the working condition of the bank, much more can be done to facilitate the employees like infrastructure and cleanliness in the bank.

Shahare C. & Ghutke S. (2022) stated to identify where any relation exists between welfare provisions and employee's satisfaction. Cultural programmes are organized for the employees and their families where lunch, arrangement is made for them once in a year. A sports event is being organized for the employees once in a year. Tours are organized for the employees once in a year. Higher Educational loans at lower rate of interest are given to the employee's children.

Preethi S. & Sharmila G. (2022) this study inferred that this organization was Welfare measures may be both statutory and non-statutory, which includes housing, canteen, education, medical and laws require the employer to extend certain benefits to employees in addition to wages or salaries.

6. Importance of Study

Employees welfare practices is one of the most important method which has been used by the companies to enhance the job satisfaction level of an employee as it provide ample of opportunities to company that helps to boost up employee morale promote employees welfare measures like recreation facilities and also help to improve the goodwill & public image of company.

7. Statement of Problem

In every organization are facing the problem of employee go satisfaction, banking sector play an important role in the economic development of the country. The role of economic development of any nation depend upon different resources. In this paper we have tried to find out the employee welfare measures provide in HPGB Chamba and to study the various dimensions of employee welfare measures like the perception of the employees regarding the various employee welfare, to suggest the suitable measures to enhance human resources development intervention used in improve the welfare facilities and the satisfaction level of various employees towards welfare measures with special reference to Chamba. This study is important to analyze the welfare measures provided to HPGB staff members. It helps to analyze about the employee satisfaction about their job and welfare measures received by the staff. So this paper is important to analyze in this time "A Study on Satisfaction level of Bank Employees with reference to welfare facilities (A case study of HPGB Employees)."

8. Objectives of Study

Objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the job satisfaction level of employees by providing welfare measures.
2. To identify the employees opinion about HPGB welfare measures.
3. To suggest remedial measures to enhance HRD intervention used in improve the welfare facilities.

9. Research Methodology

This study is an exploratory study carried out to identify satisfaction level of various employees towards welfare measures

and based on primary and secondary data. The first-hand information was collected from the employees of selected branches of the sample banks through the personal visits by filled in questionnaire.

Sampling and tool of data collection are as follows:

Geographical area	Chamba
Sample bank	Himachal Pradesh Gramin Bank
Target population	Employees working in HPGB
Sample size	70 employees
Sampling technique	Random technique
Tools for data collection	Structured questionnaire

10. Analysis & Interpretation

The collected data from the employees of Himachal Pradesh Gramin Bank, Chamba have been shown in the following tables:

Table-1 : Profile of the Sampled Units

S.No	Name of Branches	Number of Staff			Number of Respondents		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Banikhet	04	01	05	03	01	04
2.	Bharmour	04	—	04	03	—	03
3.	Bagdhaar	02	01	03	02	01	03
4.	Chamba	07	03	10	07	—	07
5.	Chowari	05	01	06	03	01	04
6.	Dalhousie	05	02	07	04	02	06
7.	Devidehra	05	01	06	02	01	03
8.	Garola	04	—	04	02	—	02
9.	Hatli	02	02	04	02	01	03
10.	Hobar	02	—	02	02	—	02
11.	Kihar	03	02	05	02	01	03
12.	Mail	03	—	03	03	—	03
13.	Parchhod	02	01	03	01	01	02

14.	Pukhari	04	02	06	03	01	04
15.	Rajnagar	03	02	05	03	—	03
16.	Sach Pangi	03	—	03	03	—	03
17.	Salooni	04	02	06	03	01	04
18.	Sahoo	05	—	05	04	—	04
19.	Sundla	04	—	04	04	—	04
20.	Telka	03	—	03	03	—	03
Total		74	20	94	59	11	70

Table-2 : Gender-wise Classification of Respondents

S.No	Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	59	84.28
2.	Female	11	15.71
Total		70	100

The above table indicates the gender wise distribution looking respondent's gender wise 84 % of the respondents are male and 16% of the respondents are female.

Table-3 : Age-wise Classification of Respondents

S.No	Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 25	10	14.28
2.	25-35 years	21	30.00
3.	35-45 years	12	17.14
4.	Above 45	27	38.57
Total		70	100

The above table indicates the age group of bank employee, out of the respondents for the study 39% of the respondents belong to the age group of above 45, 17 % of respondents to the age group of 25-35, 30% of the respondents to the age group of 35-45, 14% of the respondents belong to the age group of below 25 years.

The educational qualification has improved largely in our country. Due to that, the people are calculative in terms of their work. Table-4 depicts the distribution of the selected sample on next page:

Table-4 : Educational Qualification of Respondents

S.No	Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 12 th	10	14.28
2.	U.G	27	38.57
3.	P.G	16	22.85
4.	Professionals (MBA)	06	8.57
5.	Technical (Diploma/BE)	11	15.71
Total		70	100

The above table explains the qualification of the respondents is as follows 23% of the respondents are qualified as P.G degree, 16% of the respondents are technical/BE, 39% of the respondents are U.G degree, 14.28% of the respondents are below 12th standard, 9% of the respondents are qualified as professionals MBA.

An attempt was made to find out the responses of selected employees in the form of their opinion on the following facilities provided by the bank:

Facility No. 1. Satisfaction regarding ID card issued.

Facility No. 2. Satisfaction regarding leave days given.

Facility No. 3. Usage of technology (computer, calculator etc.).

Facility No. 4. Conveyance of work environment.

Facility No. 5. Time of working.

Facility No. 6. Toilet facilities available.

Facility No. 7. Vehicles parking facilities.

Facility No. 8. Drinking water facilities available.

Facility No. 9. Rest room facilities available.

The following table shows the opinion of the employees on the selected facilities:

Table-5 : Respondents' Opinion about the HPGB Facilities

Facility No	HS	S	N	DS	HDS	Mean Score	Rank
1.	08	11	38	09	04	3.1428	V
2.	14	10	24	14	08	3.114	VI
3.	43	13	11	02	01	4.35	I
4.	14	32	21	02	01	3.8	II

5.	14	31	15	07	03	3.65	III
6.	07	09	17	32	05	2.72	VII
7.	03	05	07	40	15	2.15	IX
8.	15	25	20	05	05	3.571	IV
9.	05	05	10	35	15	2.28	VIII

The above table explains the 9 variables of the satisfaction level of the facilities and the mean score and rank of it. The option for the facilities are highly satisfied -HS, Satisfied-S, Neutral-N, Dissatisfied -DS, Highly dissatisfied-HDS, each option were given score as HS -5 points, S-4 points, N-3 points, DS-2 points, HDS-1 point. The table indicates the respondent's satisfaction level of bank. Most of the sample respondents are usage of technology (Computer, calculator etc.). It is clear from the mean score 4.35 and rank is 1. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied with the conveyance of work environment. It is clear that mean score is 3.8 and rank is 2. Most of sample respondents are satisfied with the time of working. It is clear from the mean score is 3.65 and the rank is 3. Most of the respondents are satisfied with the drinking water facilities. It is clear from the mean score 3.571 and rank is 4. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied regarding the Id card issued and it is clear from the mean score 3.142 and rank is 5. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied regarding leave days given (allowed). It is clear from mean score 3.114 and the rank is 6. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied with toilet facilities. It is clear from mean score 2.72 and rank is 7. Most of the respondents are satisfied with rest room facilities. It is clear from mean score 2.28 and ranking is 8. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied with the vehicle parking facilities and it is clear from mean score 2.15 and rank is 9.

The following table shows the employees expectation in the way of ranking:

Table-6 : Expectations of the Sampled Respondents

S.No	Expectations	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Gratuity scheme	61.33	III
2.	Employee state insurance scheme	68.98	II
3.	Advanced vocational training scheme	29.73	VIII
4.	Employee pension scheme	50.05	IV

5.	Employee provident fund	83.67	I
6.	Maturity benefits	39	VI
7.	Women compensation	45	V
8.	Vocational guidance	35.09	VII

The above table indicates that the employee provident fund got a first rank, employee state insurance scheme got second rank, gratuity scheme got a third rank, employee pension scheme a fourth rank, employee pension scheme got a fifth rank, women compensation got a sixth rank, vocational guidance got a seventh rank, and vocational training scheme got a eighth rank.

Table-7 : Respondents' Opinion about the PNB Welfare Measure

S.No	Opinion	HS	S	N	DS	HDS	Mean score	Rank
1.	Promotion facilities	38	16	7	5	4	4.271	II
2.	Medical facilities	41	12	5	8	4	4.114	III
3.	Recreation facilities	25	21	13	7	4	3.942	IV
4.	Welfare measures	17	29	15	6	3	3.728	VI
5.	Safety measures	39	21	6	2	2	4.328	I
6.	Union activities	2	25	20	15	8	2.971	VII
7.	Grievances handling procedures	21	25	16	6	2	3.814	V

The table above explains the variable of the welfare measures of bank facilities and its mean score. The option for the welfare measures are Highly Satisfied-HS, Satisfied-S, Neutral-Dissatisfied-DS, satisfied-S, Highly dissatisfied-HDS, each option were given sources as HS-5 points, S-4 points, N-3 points, DS-2 points, HDS-1 point. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied about safety measures. It is clear from the mean score 4.32 and the rank is 1. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied with the promotion facilities. It is clear from the mean score 4.271 and the rank is 2. Most of the

respondents are satisfied with the medical facilities. It is clear from mean score 4.114 and the rank is 3. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied with the recreation facilities. It is clear from mean score 3.94 and the rank is 4. Most of the respondents are satisfied with the procedures for grievances handling. It is clear from the mean score 3.81 and the rank is 5. Most of the sample respondents are satisfied with the welfare measures. It is clear from the mean score 3.728 and the rank is 6. Most of the respondents are satisfied with the union activity. It is clear from the mean score 2.971 and the rank is 7.

11. Conclusion

HPGB banks aims to become the most competitive bank in the industry employee welfare practices and job satisfaction have become many concerns in organization in this universal nation where individual reserve management has accepted by many organizations, many bosses are only curious in seeing their wellbeing and growth. The HPGB gives more welfare scheme to their employees such as safety measures promotion facilities recreation facilities etc. Social security measures like workmen compensation, maternity benefits, medical benefits, and family benefits are very important. HPGB by providing better social security to employees satisfaction towards job can be improved but they are lacking in vehicle parking, rest room and toilet facilities they should take necessary steps to improve in those measures thus the employee can do their job more effectively. It is concluded that the company should provide correct facilities to their workers to satisfy them.

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Chinese Diaspora in India: Continuity and Change

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Abstract

The Chinese diaspora , primarily in India for the last two centuries and just few thousands in numbers, is mainly concentrated in Kolkata followed by Mumbai with numbered presence in select towns over the country. The origins of the community are traced mainly to the colonial context of India-China relations since mid-19th century. The first arrivals were the merchants and skilled labour in then Calcutta, the capital of the Raj in 19th century and Chinatown was to become a distinct address for the community in India. The destiny of the Chinese community in India makes an interesting account of enterprise, struggle and perseverance. The 1962 India-China war was a disturbing experience for the community which came to be looked upon with suspicion and with a phase of instability and insecurity led to migration to other countries and a drop in their numbers in Kolkata and other places. The present generation of Chinese community having inherited and nurtured cultural traits from their migrant forefathers has become an inextricable part of Indian social fabric and is a unique representative of amalgamation of two ancient cultures having moved onto modern, developing, globalizing times.

Keywords

Chinese diaspora, Chinatown, Colonial, Migration, Enterprises, Tanneries.

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Chinese Diaspora in India: Continuity and Change

India-China relations has had a civilizational context since ancient period with the flow of trade and Buddhism. The visits of Chinese travellers to India during different centuries forms an important idiom of the old cultural bonds. However after the 12th century the contacts between the two civilizations ceased to approximate the broad relationship of the earlier centuries. In the subsequent centuries even these residual contacts were to be lost as India and Asia fell under the control of Western imperialism. Since the British conquest of India ties between the two peoples assumed a colonial context after a hiatus of centuries. The urge for better opportunities in British India brought forth the first phase of migration of Chinese to India in the late eighteenth century and the process continued in the nineteenth century. With the British foothold into China in mid-nineteenth century after the Opium Wars, more Chinese moved to India. The early twentieth century social unrest and later Japanese invasion of China brought Chinese refugees to Kolkata and the post-1945 civil war phase in China triggered the final phase of Chinese immigration to India. However the destiny of Chinese community in India post-1947 got intertwined with the ups and downs in India-China relations. Although these two centuries the struggle and industry of this diaspora in the country of their adoption and its socio-culturo-economic existence witnessed a continuity as well as subtle change through their generations in the host country.

This paper attempts to take insights into the immigrant Chinese diaspora in India and its coming to terms with the various phases of their destiny during the British rule and since the Indian independence. The focus of the Study is on the Indian Chinese community in Kolkata as 90 percent of the community in India is based in Kolkata. It reexamines few field studies, newspaper writings, documentaries and blogs of Indian Chinese community as well as scant available secondary sources on the theme.

The Chinese in the 18th and 19th centuries perceived India as a 'land of opportunities' regarded as a safe, peaceful and plentiful

place as compared to the chaotic situation in China during this time.¹ Calcutta(sic), the then capital of British in India was the favoured destination. The intention of the migrants was to earn enough money and return to China. Amicable relationship with the British ensured that the initial Chinese immigrants were able to make a living for themselves in India. In fact, these Chinese seemed to have looked up to British and not to local Indians as their main benefactors. The British distrust of locals probably made the employment of Chinese easier who, in their opinion, were hard-working and willing to please.² The first Chinese settler in British India as per records was a Chinese trader Yang Dazhao popularly known as Atchew (in English) or A.Zhao (in Chinese) from the Chinese province of Guangdong (pronounced Kwangtung) who ventured in Bengal. British records indicate that Atchew was granted 650 bighas³ of land at an annual rent of 45 rupees by Warren Hastings, the Governor General in the late 18th century.⁴

Atchew established a sugar mill on the land and brought Chinese labour to work with him. The Chinese residents of Atchew's colony not only grew sugarcane but also manufactured sugar and liquor as evident from an advertisement in Calcutta Gazette of 15th November 1804.⁵ The original settlement still has traces of its existence and is called Achipur after its Chinese founder. Every year during the initial weeks after the onset of Chinese New Year, Chinese from Kolkata throng to this site and make offerings at a Chinese temple there. Atchew is a symbol of the collective memory of the Indian Chinese community as the one who first established a settlement for developing his business in India.⁶

Kolkata eventually became the hub of Chinese settlement in India. New immigrants from China always settled in Kolkata first and relatively few Chinese immigrants lived in other Indian cities, most of them originally from the Kolkata Chinese community. The first wave of Chinese immigrants came to Kolkata in the nineteenth century and consisted of traders and skilled workers. Commercial relations between Kolkata and Guangzhou (Canton) province in south China had grown rapidly after the opium was introduced by the British as one of the main Indian exports to China.⁷ A sizeable number among immigrants was those of Chinese carpenters from Guangzhou who did contract jobs for the British. Until the India-China conflict of 1962 these Cantonese carpenters had significant carpentry contracts at the Hooghly dock.⁸ They were also the prominent group in numbers and

influence in the Chinese community in India. While most of the carpenters were Cantonese, another Chinese sub-group was that of Hakka Chinese who at the time were largely shoemakers. They lived in the Burra Bazaar, Bentick Street and Bowbazar areas of Kolkata city, which is known as the old Chinatown of Kolkata.⁹ Since shoemaking and dealing with leather were professions shunned by caste Hindus, the Chinese immigrants were able to create a niche for themselves. With British expansion in north-eastern India, many Chinese from Kolkata moved to northeast and got employment in tea gardens in Assam and Darjeeling.¹⁰ These Chinese socialised among themselves and in course of time Chinese associations, schools, clubs, burial grounds and other social organisations came up in northeastern India.

A third subgroup of Chinese immigrants comprised the 'teeth setters' from Hubei (pronounced Hupei) province of China. These teethsetters were known in China to travel from village to village fixing and cleaning teeth. Some of them sailed out of China in the 1920s and 1930s and made it to Kolkata. These Hubeinese teethsetters continued this practice of wandering after they arrived in India. This subgroup of Chinese immigrants is thus found residing in remote and far-flung places in India.¹¹

The population of Chinese immigrants in Kolkata till the first three quarters of nineteenth century was less than a thousand. The Calcutta School Society in 1819 enumerated the population of Chinese in Kolkata as 414.¹² A 1858 article in *Calcutta Review* estimated the Chinese population to be around 500. The same article referred to the lack of Chinese women.¹³ Being a tiny community around this time, the Chinese intermarried among the different subgroups, mainly Cantonese and Hakka and also with others living in the neighbourhood of Chinatown, mainly 'Hindustanis' (local populace) and also 'Eurasians'.¹⁴ The worsening of domestic situation in China after the defeat of the Taiping Rebellion by the Qing government after 1865 led many of its participants to flee abroad through Hongkong and Macao. They were among the more than 300 people hired by the British to come to India as railroad construction workers.¹⁵ The success of Chinese business in India and the political upheaval in China provided a big push for more Chinese immigrants leaving for Kolkata. The turn of the 20th century was a period of turmoil in China. The exodus marked apart from others, no less than the top revolutionary leader of China, Kang Youwei escaping to India to seek

refuge from Qing regime. Kang was in India from 1901 to 1903 moving to various places and finally stayed at Darjeeling.¹⁶

The Chinese community by the turn of 20th century did not remain untouched by the progress of nascent national movement in India. The Swadeshi Movement in 1905 after the partition of Bengal witnessed even the participation of Chinese traders in Kolkata in boycott meetings.¹⁷ The settling down of migrant population in early decades of 20th century also marked a diversification in settlements and Chinese subgroups. The new Chinatown which in presentday Kolkata refers to Tangra in eastern Kolkata began to take shape around 1910 when some Chinese shoemakers decided to process leather for their business and moved to the area which is also known as Dhapa. When compared to the initial settlement of Territti Bazaar Chinatown, popularly known as 'Cheenapara', in Central Kolkata, the evolution of Tangra neighbourhood is a reflection of fortunes of Chinese community in Kolkata. While Territti Bazaar was mainly inhabited by the Cantonese with few pockets of Hakka population, Tangra as new Chinatown emerged as a predominantly Hakka neighbourhood.¹⁸ The early years in Tangra were hard for the Hakka Chinese and the poverty of the neighbourhood could be markedly contrasted to the prosperous settlement of Territti Bazaar.

The second phase of Chinese immigration to India was during the first three decades of 20th century consequent to collapse of imperial dynasty in China and years of civil war worsened by Japanese invasion in the 1930s and 1940s. The population of Chinese in India increased steadily from 8300 in 1931 to 14,000 in 1946.¹⁹ This phase of migration was markedly different from the first phase of migration. Firstly, from this period there was a rise in the number of families with women and children migrating to India. The second factor was that the immigrant population now consisted of mostly unskilled workers. The new immigrants faced numerous hardships on reaching Kolkata. They came across a community ill suited for family members.²⁰ Since the initial groups of Chinese immigrants comprised mainly of male workers, the existing dormitories and staying places were only for single men. Further there were limited economic opportunities for women. The worsened conditions in China left little choice for the migrating families but to eke out an existence for survival in Kolkata.

The fundamental difference between the migration patterns during this period and the preceding century was that earlier few

Chinese came with the intention of settling in India. Even the Cantonese who enjoyed an amicable relationship with the British and the Hakka Chinese who established profitable businesses, mainly wanted to make money and then go back to China.²¹ Even until the late 1930s Kolkata Chinese perceived India as their temporary residence and most planned to return to China after the War would come to an end.²² This relationship with the host country in Kuhn's study on overseas Chinese has been referred as one of 'sojourning' i.e. living temporarily away from home with the intention of returning sooner or later back home. This sojourning mentality drove Chinese in India to work extremely hard for a period of time and then go back to China with their families for a break.²³ This perception could be discerned at the Chinese-medium schools established in Kolkata and other Indian cities, where the courses were all about China and the stated goal of education was to one day return to China and contribute to the construction of the "motherland".²⁴

The advance of Indian national movement in the 1930s brought about a forging of links with the nationalists in China which was threatened by Japanese invasion. This contact between the two national movements sidestepped the colonial context of India-China relations during the last hundred years and contributed to a growing interest in the other. A significant development in the year 1936 was the setting up of Cheena Bhavan in Shantiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore through a scholar from China Prof. Tan Yunshan for encouraging Chinese studies.²⁵ The legacy of Prof. Tan Yun-shan has been illustriously carried by his son Prof. Tan Chung.²⁶ In the year 1938 a Chinese educationist Tao Xingzhi visited India and had interaction with Gandhi.²⁷ In 1941 the Chinese leader Marshal Chiang Kai-shek visited India during the ongoing Second world War for enlisting Indian support in the Allied war effort.²⁸ These developments must surely have been a succour to the Chinese Indian community who still maintained contacts with their homeland.

The Second World War years witnessed a rise in the fortunes of the Chinese community in the new Chinatown in Kolkata. The increase in the demand of leather during the war gave a boost to tannery business which more and more Hakka Chinese joined and permanent structures were put up in Tangra. Hakkas being a closely-knit community, Tangra Chinatown developed almost completely secluded from outside influence. The role of community organisations was instrumental in the overall physical development

of the area. The Pei May School came up in Chinatown as a community initiative around this time. While the old Chinatown in Territti Bazaar area was cosmopolitan the Tangra area inhabited mainly by the Chinese was insular in nature.²⁹

The end of Second World War in 1945 however came as an alarming period for the Chinese community in India as the conditions in their homeland worsened. The outbreak of full scale Civil War between the Communists and Guomindang (Kuomintang) in 1946 ended with the establishment of Communist regime in China in 1948. With an uncertain future back home many Chinese began having second thoughts about leaving India. It was around this time that permanent settlements of Chinese began emerging in Kolkata. Some of those who had families in China tried to bring them to India while others ended up marrying local Nepali, Assamese or tribal women 'from the hills' in view of a dearth of females in the community.³⁰ The multicultural and multiethnic society of Kolkata had been conducive to the Chinese maintaining their exclusivity and pursuing their own way of life without much interference from the British government. After the Indian independence in 1947, this state of affairs continued and the Chinese-medium schools were allowed to function even though they did not follow any of the existing Indian systems.³¹

The issue of ethnic and cultural identity among 'diasporic' and immigrant communities has been discussed by scholars from various disciplinary perspectives in recent years. The self-perception of Chinese community in India has been discussed through some recent studies. The first-generation Chinese immigrants in India seemed to be relatively clear about their Chineseness.³² It is argued that the Chinese in India are not a unique community in regard to their notion of Chinese identity. There was a perceptible distinction between those who settled in Kolkata and those who lived in other parts of India. The Chinese in Kolkata, especially those living in Tangra area, rarely indicate processes of assimilation and acculturation. On the other hand, those who live in other areas of Kolkata and India, have had more intimate interactions with the local communities.³³ The Hakka community of Tangra who created a profitable niche for themselves in Kolkata's leather industry distinguished between themselves and others, not only Indian groups but also the Cantonese Chinese and Hubeinese Chinese. This identification of themselves as 'guest people' left little scope for assimilation.³⁴ The non-Hakka Chinese and even Hakkas who ventured out from

Kolkata to other parts of the country were, however, more adaptable and identified themselves with the areas chosen by them as their new settlement. This author has witnessed the popular shoe business of a Chinese entrepreneur who settled in Dehradun and was known to have set up shops in Ludhiana, Lucknow and Kanpur as well, as Lu Hongkong & Company.³⁵ Other mentionworthy examples are those of the D. Minsen and Co. and the John Brothers Shoestores in Connaught Place in Delhi. Both enterprises were set up in the year 1938 in Delhi by Chinese immigrants in 20th century.³⁶

The nationality status of the immigrants in official records was however ambiguous. Many Chinese immigrants came and lived in India without any form of identification documents. Even those born in India did not seem to have a clear idea regarding their citizenship or nationality. Some Chinese applied for passports from the embassy and Consulates of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in India that had opened after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and India in 1950. Others took either Taiwanese citizenship or remained people with 'no nationality'.³⁷ As the events unfolded in the late 1950s, with the rapid deterioration of relations between India and China this ambiguity in the official status of the Chinese immigrants in India and their attempts to preserve their "Chinese" identity was to prove disastrous for the community during the high point of mistrust and drift towards the war by 1962.

The year 1962 witnessed a climacteric in the fortunes of Chinese Indian community. The India-China border war threw the community in India into a predicament where the country of their adoption and the country of their origin were at war with each other. The national reprehension towards China came to perceive the community as enemy and they came to be seen with suspicion and hostility. There was crackdown on the members of the community and hundreds of them were sent in detention to Deoli, a former POW (Prisoners of War) camp in the desert area in Rajasthan. A large number were deported to China as well. Further, restrictions were placed on the movement of people of Chinese descent. The years following the war saw an exodus of the community and a significant number left for Canada, USA and other countries. The population of the community in Kolkata came down to less than ten thousand. The issue of interned Chinese figured in the correspondence between the Indian and Chinese governments wherein these people were referred as 'Chinese nationals'.³⁸ The predicament of an ordinary Chinese in

India around this time is reflected in a poignant story titled 'Wang Choo' by Hindi writer Bhishma Sahni which is woven around a Chinese character Wang Choo who came to India during the British rule in the early 40s of the 20th century. The innocuous Wang however is caught in the vortex of ruptured India-China relations in the 1960s.³⁹ The account is a reflection of the trauma undergone by the tiny community posing questions about their identity .

The destiny of the Chinese community in India makes an interesting account -one of enterprise, struggle and perseverance. As discussed in foregoing pages, three sub-ethnic Chinese groups exist in India and each of them is linked to a distinct Chinese dialect and particular occupational specialities.⁴⁰ The existence of this diaspora for more than two centuries is a unique history of continuum and change. The Hakka Chinese who began carving out their livelihood in India in shoemaking in course of time took to tannery enterprise in a major way and established themselves as major stakeholders in leather enterprise in Kolkata. This subgroup among Chinese Indians has also been the most assiduous preserver of Chinese culture and traditions in India. A field Study of Hakka Chinese in 1980s brings about interesting findings.⁴¹ The post-1962 years threw the challenge of survival for those Chinatown people who decided to stay in India and to move on in their lives. The Sino-Indian conflict blocked the channels between the Indian Chinese and their native places in China. The families in Chinatown now changed their economic strategies to industrial entrepreneurship. Jennifer Liang's interview of Indian Chinese has brought out the fact that since the families could no longer remit money to China, they were able to accumulate enough capital through their own savings. This led to investment in the tannery business for meeting the increasing demand for leather in the market.⁴² By the year 1980 there were around 300 tannery enterprises in Kolkata owned and ran by Hakka Chinese. Apart from their business in tannery, Hakka Chinese owned and operated shoe shops (150 in 1980), hairdressing salons and restaurants.⁴³

The tanning business of Tangra, however, suffered a rapid decline in the 1990s because of both internal and external reasons. The tanneries failed to innovate and diversify given the changes in local and global demands for leather. The Municipal authorities placed stringent environmental requirements and many of the tanneries were forced to move to new locations. The Supreme court directives on closure of polluting tanneries also was a move in this

direction.⁴⁴ The assured market in the Soviet Union since long was lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The business also suffered because of obsolete machinery. This setback to a booming business led some Tangra Hakka Chinese to sell their business and leave India.⁴⁵ However many tannery owners switched to the restaurant business and the Chinatown which was earlier segregated due to its association with leather making, is now famous for its popular Chinese restaurants frequented by middle-class Indians. Restaurateurs in Tangra have created a niche for themselves since the 1990s and have displayed entrepreneurial skills in selling Indian-Chinese food -the Chinese food suiting Indian tastes.⁴⁶

The Hubeinese dentists who earned their living wandering to different cities of India also found their predicament changed during the India-China tensions of 1962. Many of them settled down in Kolkata when restrictions were placed during the War on the movement of people of Chinese descent. Number of them became permanent residents of the city. This not only enabled the teethsetters to improve their skills but also resulted in a rise in their fortunes. The families now led lives which was more comfortable since it entailed less travel unlike the case in earlier decades.⁴⁷ Like Hakka Chinese subgroup, the Hubeinese dentists are a closely-knit community and rarely marry outside their community. The community helps and supports each other and make it a point to attend ceremonies and functions organised by the community. As of now less than fifty families of Hubeinese survive in Kolkata. The most well-known descendant of the Hubeinese Chinese Indian community is perhaps Meiyang Chang, the Chinese Indian contestant from Dhanbad in the music Programme Indian Idol on Sony TV.⁴⁸

The retaining of Chinese culture within the decades of their existence in the Hindu surroundings of Kolkata has had peculiar shades in the lives of the Indian Chinese community. As pointed out the Hakka Chinese subgroup which practically dominates the community has been the most strident in this opted behaviour to the extent of secluding itself from any outside influence. Until the early 1960s the Chinese immigrants successfully preserved their "Chinese" identity through endogamy, especially within the same dialect group most practised by Hakka subgroup, cultural practices, distinctive educational system and confined dwelling neighbourhood.⁴⁹ The Hakkas built a walled community for themselves and often their residences were right above or next to

their tanneries. Tall walls separated the tannery-cum-residences of the Hakka Chinese from other ethnic groups in the neighbourhood. The fact that their workplaces were within the same area made it unwarranted for them to travel to other parts of the city or interact with other ethnic groups.⁵⁰ Furthermore the subgroup has always attempted to distinguish itself from other Chinese subgroups in India - the Cantonese and the Hubeinese, using the term 'lao' translatabe as 'fellow'-a word connoting a vulgar person, a hillbilly or hick.⁵¹ From their perspective, the Cantonese do not work as hard, are not as frugal, and either more Indianised or more Westernised than the Hakka. In all such references, the Hakkas are perceived as more loyal carriers of Chinese traditions than the other Chinese subgroups.⁵²

While diligently preserving the Chinese traditions the Chinese diaspora in Kolkata have incorporated multiple religious beliefs in their day to day lives. Kali worship is one of such practice. The Chinese community in Kolkata probably began worshipping Kali through chance encounters and matters related to "miracles" rather than an adoption of or being influenced by Hindu belief system.⁵³ There are two Chinese Kali temples in Kolkata - one located in Cheenapara or the old Chinatown, and the other in Tangra, the newer Chinatown. The temple in old Chinatown is known by the name of Cheena Kali and the area having for long been a melting point for many communities, the long-shared space of Chinese with dosads (pig slaughterers), a Dalit community with whom the Chinese had links through shared residential and business spaces, could have influenced the Chinese beliefs. The ties continue in the present through the participation of dosads in Chinese New Year celebrations.⁵⁴ The other Chinese Kali temple exists in Tangra and was got built in early 1970s by Li Quansheng, a Burmese brought up by a Hakka family.⁵⁵ There are many accounts regarding the origin of this Kali temple. One of the popular account says that the site of the temple had couple of vermilion-smeared black stones worshipped by local residents of the area and the Chinese followed suit.⁵⁶ A Chinese scholar's version is that the Chinese probably started worshipping Kali as a fertility goddess, because there was none in their pantheon. As the goddess is closely linked to fertility rituals and many women in Tangra pray to Kali for a child and so did the Chinese Indians.⁵⁷ The temple continues to play an important role in the new Chinatown as the Chinese New Year parade is usually

preceded by a puja at the temple. At least 2000 members of the community gather here on Diwali night to witness the Kali Puja, participate in Pushpanjali and partake of the Prasad. While the mantras (hymns) and the way the puja(worship) is conducted is completely Hindu, some typical Chinese traditions such as lighting of tall candles, Chinese incense sticks, burning of handmade paper to ward off evil spirits, make the aroma at the temple conspicuous from what one gets at other temples or pandals.⁵⁸ This is an interesting glimpse of the adoption from the host country while steadfastly keeping to the Chinese tradition.

The post-1962 period has brought with it significant economic and social change in what was once a closed community. The years threw the extreme challenge to their existence whereby their population which had reached a high point of above 20,000 started declining rapidly due to the exodus to the other countries. Those who decided to stay were ones who gradually came to terms with the new situation. The younger generation born after 1962 has decided to take up vocations other than the ones in which the community had prospered through the earlier decades. Thus even after the shifting and closure of flourishing tanneries subsequent to court orders in last two decades there has been initiating of new enterprises by younger generation as restaurateurs, sauce-makers and salon business-owners. The Eve's Beauty Parlour on Lindsay Street, the first saloon in Kolkata, was established by the Chinese Indians. Over the years beauty parlours much like the Indian Chinese restaurants, have become synonymous with the Chinese community.⁵⁹ It is a common trend within the Chinese community in Kolkata and in other parts of India to find families where man runs a restaurant and the wife works in a beauty parlour.⁶⁰

The generation which witnessed the 1962 experiences however still carries a feeling of grudge and a certain despondence. This is borne out of the day to day experiences of the members of community. Interestingly, out of the 4000 some present population of Indian Chinese community in Kolkata, some 200 were born before 1947 when India became independent and 1950 when the country became a republic. These Chinese were not welcome in China and were a stateless entity in India. They had a registration certificate which allowed them to stay in India but had to be renewed every year. Their grudge is that millions of Bengalis from erstwhile East Pakistan before 1971 arrived in India in the late 1940s and were

granted registration certificates which then enabled them to become Indian citizens even though they were not even born in India unlike the Chinese in Kolkata.⁶¹ Calling themselves Deoliwallahs after the Deoli internment camp some 60 of these men and women have heart-rending stories to tell about this tumultuous phase of their existence in India. An account by Yin Marsh, a journalist reminiscing as a thirteen year old living in Darjeeling when she and members of her family were arrested, kept in the local jail and sent to Deoli camp has appeared with the title 'Doing Time with Nehru'.⁶² So huge was the anti-Chinese sentiment in India that a whole lot of innocuous Indian Chinese mostly in the Dooars (North Bengal) and Assam were in for shock. Some had married local women and spoke only local languages. They were more Indian than Chinese in businesses and lived firmly entrenched in Kolkata. A 2015 documentary by Indian photojournalist Rafeeq Ellias titled 'Beyond Barbed Wires: A Distant Dawn' highlighted the plight of the internees through interviews.⁶³ An Assamese bestseller titled *Makam* by Rita Chowdhury in 2009 (English version published in 2018 as *Chinatown days*) was based on the Indian Chinese community in Tinsukia and their struggle.⁶⁴

An award winning documentary by Rafeeq Ellias in 2005 'The Legend of Fat Mama' centred around the travails of the community in Kolkata post 1962.⁶⁵ It struck a nostalgic note in search of a woman who was known for the most delicious noodles in Chinatown. The post-1962 years witnessed the closure of many Chinese run schools and newspapers with the exodus of the community. There was a Chinese newspaper *Seong Pow* (The Overseas Chinese Commerce of India) which appeared every morning from Chinatown. The only newspaper however closed down during lockdown and later death of its editor in July 2020.⁶⁶ A blog of The Indian Chinese Association for Culture, Welfare and Development is in update since 2007 to 2016 and a Facebook page with updates till November 2023. The association was headed by Paul Chung, a retired teacher of Don Bosco School. The blog and Facebook page carries updates for the Indian Chinese community regarding Chinese culture, festivals, musings, literary landscape, the employment opportunities abroad and achievements of Chinese community globally. It takes pride in mentioning the feats of Indian Chinese and in one of the update lists IIT Kharagpur alumnus Peter Chan, a prominent Bonsai expert who was given away the IIT Kharagpur alumni award in 2015.⁶⁷ Another blog by Indian Chinese Community in Kolkata has updates till 2015

and its Facebook page with updates till June 2023.⁶⁸ By 2015 the community began renovating the Pei May School complex which had remained abandoned for long. The school once used to be the only Chinese medium school in the city set up to teach kids of migrated Chinese community. However Chinese kids began going to English-medium schools and Pei May school lost its relevance over time. Led by Liu Kuo chow the Chinese Welfare Association brought together Chinese residents to form the cooperative that would run the Trust governing the school.⁶⁹

The blogs and Facebook pages by the young Indian Chinese speak of the vibrant cultural existence in the form of participative festivities in the traditional Chinese festivals such as Spring festival, Chinese New Year Festival and the like. They also point out a keenness for preserving the rich cultural heritage from the country of their origin. Very few of the younger generation may have visited the land of their forefathers. At the same time the young Indian Chinese born in India are increasingly trying to define their Chineseness in the context of their immediate surroundings. Singers Thomas Chen and Meiyang Chang are reflective of this vibrant younger generation.

The two centuries of the existence of Chinese diaspora in India mark a story of enterprise, struggle, hopes and despair as well. It has reflections of interface between two peoples from the oldest civilizations with ancient cultural bonds. The modern relationship of the two peoples evolved in the colonial context under the British rule where the Chinese immigrants came to India in search of opportunities in British India. The migration was also due to the worsening conditions at home and the hopes of making livelihood in the host country. Eventually Kolkata became the city of two Chinatowns the evolution of which has been a saga of the perseverance and resilience of the diaspora. With the Indian independence the fortunes of the Indian Chinese community got linked with the relationship of the two countries. The community found itself caught in the deteriorating relationship of the two countries and was placed in a terrible predicament in 1962 when the country of their origin and the country of their adoption were at war. The post-1962 years which saw exodus on a large number bringing down the population of community drastically have also witnessed the most trying phase in the history of its existence in India.

The significant socio-economic changes during these years in the ways of the Indian Chinese diaspora is a testimony of the struggle beyond survival and the adaptation for meeting the new challenges. The contribution of this tiny community to the changing food habits and style of Indians is marvellous. The Chinese food has carved out niche for itself across the length and breadth of the country. The contribution of Chinese community in leather business in Kolkata which at one point of time had third largest share in tannery enterprises in the country has been significant. The traditional handmade shoes and teeth-setters may have given way to new enterprises post- globalization but the entrepreneurial credibility and the industriousness of the members of the community has stood the test of time. Having inherited and nurtured cultural traits from their migrant forefathers the community has become an inextricable part of the Indian social fabric. It is a unique representative of amalgamation of two ancient cultures having moved onto modern, developing, globalizing times and looking forward to integrating with the mainstream while at the same time preserving their distinct cultural identities.

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Climate Change and its Ripples on Agriculture-based Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Arid Regions: A Case Study of Channi Mansar Village of Jammu and Kashmir, India

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of climate change on agriculture-based self-help groups (SHGs) in Channi Mansar village, Udhampur District, India. SHGs, which primarily rely on agriculture for income, are affected by extreme weather events and region-specific disasters. The research aims to understand the degree of climate change awareness among SHG members and their adaptability to these changes. The study uses qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews with SHG members, to gather qualitative data. The findings will help the research ecosystem investigate further in this region and help governments formulate sustainable policies for the welfare of the people in the region.

Keywords

Climate change, Self Help Group (SHG), Livelihood, Arid region.

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Climate Change and its Ripples on Agriculture-based Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Arid Regions: A Case Study of Channi Mansar Village of Jammu and Kashmir, India

1. Introduction

Climate change, a phenomenon demonstrably linked to human activities, has emerged as a major global concern over the past few decades (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). Defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992) as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods", it encompasses a range of environmental consequences including sea-level rise, floods, variations in rainfall patterns, and global warming. These consequences have far-reaching social, economic, and political impacts, demanding immediate and effective actions.

India, with over 54.6% of its population reliant on agriculture and allied sectors according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India (2023), is particularly vulnerable to the disruptions caused by climate change. The nation's agricultural practices heavily depend on the monsoon cycle, and any alterations to this pattern can significantly disrupt crop yields. Furthermore, extreme weather events like El Niño and La Niña, exacerbate the challenges faced by Indian agriculture (Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology,)

The agricultural sector in India is a complex ecosystem, comprising small-scale and large-scale farmers. In recent years, cooperative farming, pioneered by Self Help Groups (SHGs), has emerged as a promising approach for collective agricultural production (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, 2021). However, the looming threat of climate change necessitates a collective effort to ensure the resilience and sustainability of Indian agriculture.

2. Review of Literature

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as a powerful tool for promoting self-employment, poverty reduction, and women's empowerment in India. This paper explores the concept of SHGs, its history in India, and role in supporting rural livelihoods, particularly in agriculture. The paper also highlights the challenges posed by climate change to agricultural based SHGs and emphasizes the need for capacity building to ensure resilience and sustainability of communities.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are voluntary associations of individuals from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who come together for collective action to achieve common goals. These groups are characterized by self-governance and peer management, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment among members (Mhatre et al., 2013). They operate on the principle of "self-help" to promote financial inclusion, self-employment, and poverty reduction, particularly among women and marginalized communities (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD, 2020). The concept originated with the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States in 1935 (Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, 2023).

2.1 SHGs in India

In India, SHGs have become a cornerstone of rural development, with a focus on empowering women and marginalized groups. The first SHG in India, MYRADA, was established in Maharashtra in 1975 (2023). Since then, several government initiatives like Kudumbashree in Kerala and national programs like the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) have actively promoted SHG formation (Government of Kerala).

SHGs are typically registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and function as microfinance institutions, providing access to credit and financial resources to their members (Reserve Bank of India, 2019). They also offer training programs on various topics like financial management, entrepreneurship, and health (NABARD, 2020).

2.2 SHGs and Agriculture

A significant number of SHGs in India focus on agriculture and allied activities like animal husbandry, poultry farming, and dairy (2023). NABARD plays a crucial role in supporting these agricultural

SHGs by providing financial assistance, capacity building programs, and promoting sustainable farming practices (NABARD, 2020).

However, climate change poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of agricultural SHGs. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, soil degradation, and increased pest and disease outbreaks can severely impact agricultural productivity (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022).

Jammu & Kashmir, with its diverse topography, is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to variations in weather conditions across the region (Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, J&K). This climatic variability can disrupt agricultural operations and negatively impact the functioning of SHGs engaged in agriculture in Channi Mansar.

SHGs have demonstrably contributed to women's empowerment, poverty reduction, and rural development in India. However, climate change necessitates a focus on building the resilience of agricultural SHGs. Grassroots-level studies are needed to understand their existing knowledge and coping mechanisms regarding climate change. This will inform targeted interventions to enhance their capacity to adapt and thrive in a changing climate.

3. Methods, Material & Data Collection

The study was an attempt to investigate the awareness and community level adaptation mechanism in terms of climate change among the SHG members. The study was initiated by analyzing the level of awareness of SHG members on climate change followed by finding out the socio-economic implications of climate change on the working of SHGs. Research has also explored the adaptation or coping mechanism adopted by the SHGs to overcome the implications of climate change. Study has also analyzed the impact of climate change on crop production, yield, and cropped area. The research used the qualitative method of research method by adopting descriptive research design in order to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the proposed objectives. Fourteen (14) samples were taken from the members of registered agricultural-based SHGs who are registered under the concerned authority, that is NABARD in the Channi Mansar block of Udhampur district of Jammu region. Research has opted for simple random sampling under probability sampling technique, as the lists of SHG members were available in the records. Two respondents were chosen from each ward out of the total

seven wards, yielding a total of 14 samples, to ensure geographic representation from each ward in the proposed research area. All SHGs who were agricultural-based and registered under NABARD in the proposed area were part of the inclusion criteria for the study and those SHGs that were not registered and not agricultural-based were excluded. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule. It contains both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The qualitative data collected through the interview guide was analyzed and presented as case studies.

4. Ethical Considerations

- ▶ Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including assent from respondents.
- ▶ Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study to protect the identity and privacy of participants.
- ▶ The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring the well-being of the participants and the integrity of the research process.

5. Profile of the Research Area

Channi Mansar is a village located in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Predominantly hilly with rain-fed agriculture as the primary source of income, the village fosters a number of SHGs focused on agricultural activities. These SHGs contribute significantly to the local economy. However, Channi Mansar's geographical location within J&K makes it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The region experiences diverse weather patterns, and fluctuations in temperature and precipitation can disrupt agricultural practices as it comes under arid regions. Studying the experiences of Channi Mansar's SHGs grappling with these climatic variations can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by agricultural livelihoods in a changing climate.

6. Discussion

6.1 Awareness Level on Climate Change

People were well aware about the visible changes happening around them due to climate change by experiencing droughts, rainfall change, extreme heat in summer, chilling cold in winter, changes in rainfall patterns etc. They are also ready to admit the

anthropogenic reasons and destructive potential of climate change in the future. Issues of climate change and related consequences are in the local level discussions, especially in the public spheres and peer groups. This highlights the severity of climate change effects at the community level. Sources of information on global climate phenomena are mainly from television and radio, newspapers, and magazines. This means that the mass media can be an effective tool in spreading information about climate change to the public at large. They are also advocating for the need for governmental interventions to implement policies and regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to more secure forms of energy, which are not dangerous to the planet. Discussions among them are pointing to the need for individual level and collective actions like reducing energy consumption, using public transportation, and supporting sustainable practices in many fields. People have started observing the climate-based changes from the last decade only by highlighting the incidents of increased water scarcity during summers, droughts, unpredictable flash floods, unbearable winters, and landslides. Few respondents have opined that climate change made both positive changes and negative changes depending on the circumstances. The respondents have backed the statement with some points that rainfall pattern has changed nowadays, and it is providing water in the summer. The respondent also pointed to the negative changes like extreme heat and extreme cold in both seasons. The negative changes have the potential to create an awful situation in the coming years. These changes in the patterns of rainfall are the reason for implications in the agriculture sector, food security, and water availability, and they affect the livelihoods of millions of people. Discussion on climate change has also been reflected in the peer meetings, that too among women, showing that the issue is being handled and discussed among the women communities. Some members are unsure whether the climate change adjustments are advantageous or disadvantageous, this uncertainty implies a lack of knowledge or comprehension regarding climate change, as well as its possible effects on the environment and people's quality of life. They exhibit openness to implementing and adopting new practices, such as the use of organic fertilizers and drip irrigation systems, and realize that changes in temperature and rainfall patterns are having an impact on their way of life. It is observed that few of them are not adopting preventative actions, such as utilizing safety medications or wearing protective gear, to safeguard themselves against the

negative effects of climate change. This emphasizes the necessity of spreading knowledge about the potential effects of climate change and the significance of adaptation methods. The public's understanding of climate change has substantially expanded in recent years due to the widespread discussion of this worldwide phenomenon. People have also identified pollution as a sign of a changing climate. This demonstrates the people's comprehension of how pollution affects climate change. Through gatherings and interactions with neighbors, they have learned about climate change and related implications among people. This demonstrates the importance of community civic deliberations to raise public understanding of the effects of climate change. The people have not significantly altered their farming methods, but they have cut back on irrigation water consumption as a result of shifting rainfall patterns. In order to cope with the intense heat in the summer, they have also avoided working at midday, which has reduced both quantity and quality of production. This emphasizes the value of using community-based strategies to educate people about climate change's effects and the necessity of taking adaptation measures to deal with shifting climatic trends. Majority of them are not having insurance against natural disasters, which is problematic, given the rise in disasters brought on by climate change. Overall, the responses indicate that there is a general awareness and concern about climate change among the participants. The answers show that people are aware of climate change and its anthropogenic and other related factors. So, it establishes that the respondent will be more proactive towards initiating the potential solutions or mitigation measures that could be implemented to address climate change at their levels.

6.2 Socio-Economic Implications

The problems caused by climate change on health are a growing concern and increasing household financial burden. Children's skin problems and skin allergies are the result of air pollution in the area. Health issues like skin problems and sunburn result in an increase in health expenditure especially for the expenses for buying creams and ointments frequently affecting family budget. This highlights the financial burden that climate imposed on the people. This further increases the out-of-pocket expenditure of the individual and it will badly affect the people who have limited resources. Also their work efficiency and productivity will reduce due to health concerns which will further add to financial burden.

Changes in the job nature and change in working time due to the extreme summer heat can have an impact on work schedules and productivity, especially in sectors like outdoor labor and agriculture work as well as mental health of people. Changes in climate affected the irrigation pattern of crops mainly due to water scarcity in the area. This emphasizes the impact that climate change can have on the agriculture sector, which is normally vulnerable to changes in weather events and patterns and the availability of water. Due to the effects of climate change people have started to change irrigation patterns and fertilizing techniques to adapt to the situation. Climate change can also have an impact on soil health, which could exacerbate the effects of using less effective fertilizers. The decrease in income from the crops will result in many socio-economic implications for the farmers and their families like poverty, a lack of access to food, and a shift in population from rural to urban regions. An important observation made among the people was that they were not relying on modern medical facilities and rather they were using traditional medicine. This suggests that the impacts of climate change on healthcare may be reduced by alternative practices like traditional medicine. People also started worrying about the shortage of laborers and increased labor cost as they are using them only in the summer seasons. These changes in farming practices and their associated costs may have a significant impact on small-scale farmers, who may not have the resources to adapt to climate change. In turn, this could lead to a decrease in agricultural productivity and food security. That will affect not only the households and SHGs but also the whole community. In general, the changes in climate can decrease agricultural productivity, increase production costs, and lower overall income. This will impact the livelihoods of farmers and their families, particularly in low-income or resource families or communities. Although, climate change has numerous socio-economic impacts, including the impacts on human health, working times, agricultural productivity, job nature changes and reduction in income. It is necessary to take measures to reduce the impacts in many sectors to ensure sustainable economic development and an increase in livelihoods alternatives.

Changes in fertilizing patterns due to climate change signals that they have adopted the new farming practices to cope up with the changing climate. This may reduce the risks of climate change. But the excessive use of fertilizers will lead to the degradation of soil and decrease the fertility of the soil. The rising temperatures negatively

impact agriculture, especially for crops that need lower temperatures to grow. In summary, the response from the respondent shows how significantly climate change has affected many facets of life. The impacts of changing weather patterns on agriculture, livelihoods, and human health are detrimental. This emphasizes the requirement for quick action to lessen the effects of climate change, such as lowering greenhouse gas emissions and supporting sustainable lifestyles.

The study demonstrates how the respondent's health, agriculture, and income have been influenced by climate change. To lessen the effects of climate change, which are pervasive, immediate action is required. Communities need more help, education, and awareness in order to adapt to the changing environment. Therefore, any adverse impact on agriculture can lead to poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Climate change can lead to changes in precipitation, temperature and extreme weather events, resulting in reduced yields, increased crop damage and water scarcity. They can also affect food supplies and increase their scarcity, leading to inflation and poverty. In addition, the effects of climate change can have indirect effects on other areas of life, such as immigration, conflict and social cohesion. For example, when people are forced to migrate due to the adverse effects of climate change, this can lead to resource and social strains.

6.3 Resilience to the Climate Change

People are taking certain steps for protection from the harmful effects of climate change like they are using anti-UV sleeves and sunscreen creams. It is a positive step as the increased temperature and heat can lead to skin problems. They also made changes to their irrigation pattern, like the usage of drip sets, mulching (Palwar), and using wastewater from the bathrooms. These changes applied by the respondent in the agriculture sector will help to conserve water and it will reduce the impacts of drought, which is becoming more common due to the changes in climate. It is a good example of adaptation to the changing climate, as it allows the farmers to continue to do the farming of crops even if there is water scarcity. People are also changing their job timing to avoid working in the hottest part of the day. This will be a sensible measure to avoid heat stroke and other heat-related problems, which can be dangerous. Making shading in the workplace, taking breaks, and adequate hydration are the

Respondents are using traditional medicine or Desi Dawai to protect against the harms of climate change. It is suggesting that

alternative healthcare practices can play a vital role in the adaptation to climate change. Changes in the usage of fertilizers and seed varieties are being adopted. They adopted an SMC-8 variety of seed for defending the issues of drought. They have also adopted the Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium (NPK) variety of fertilizer for the SMC-8 seed. These changes could be important in adapting to the droughts and increasing productivity in drought times also. No insurance coverage was taken by the majority of them against the harms of climate change or natural disasters. It highlights the vulnerability of the respondent towards natural disasters and financial risks. This underscores the need for policies and programs that provide financial protection and support for households affected by climate change-induced disasters. The use of Drip sets, received from NABARD indicates that respondents are aware of the latest technological advances that help solve their irrigation problems. The Drip set is an efficient watering system that delivers water directly to the roots of your plants, minimizing water waste and ensuring your plants receive the amount of water they need. This demonstrates the resourcefulness and innovation of respondents in adopting new methodologies and technologies to address the challenges posed by climate change. They started changing the nature of their employment by avoiding working at midday during the summer, employing help during periods of excessive heat, and altering their wearing habits. In order to prevent health problems brought on by climate change, the respondent also takes preventative medications.

In the case of agriculture they altered their irrigation practices by using less water, which may be a reaction to the water shortage brought on by climate change. In addition, they have used strategies like NABARD watershed projects to solve irrigation issues. Some of them are conserving water resources by using wastewater from the kitchen and bathroom and less water for irrigation. This technique can be especially helpful in areas with a shortage of water, where droughts are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity as a result of climate change. However, it is crucial to make sure that waste water is used safely and does not contaminate crops, creating health risks.

7. Results and Additional Insights from the Study

Key findings of this study are as follows:

- ▶ **Limited Knowledge of Long-Term Impact** : Although SHG members are aware of the symptoms of climate change, some

of them are unaware of its long-term effects. This suggests that there is a need to increase knowledge about the possible effects on their communities, way of life, and general well-being.

- ▶ **Lack of Knowledge about Climate-Resilient Agricultural Methods** : The members lack knowledge about innovative agricultural methods and strategies that could aid in their defense and adaptation to the negative effects of climate change. Their inability to use sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural techniques may impede their ability to do so, which may have an impact on their agricultural production and food security.
- ▶ **Lack of Knowledge about Climate Insurance Programs** : The members know little about insurance programs created especially to lower the risks connected with climate change. Such programs can offer financial security and assistance in the event of climate-related losses or disasters, assisting SHG members in recovering and reestablishing their livelihoods more speedily.
- ▶ **The Utilization of Traditional Medicine** : It appears that SHG members are turning to traditional medicine to treat health problems brought on by climate change. Their preference for traditional medicine may be influenced by cultural norms, accessibility, or cost. This research emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend and incorporate traditional knowledge with contemporary healthcare systems in order to improve community resilience in the face of health-related difficulties related to the environment.
- ▶ **Lack of Knowledge about Climate-related Illnesses** : The SHG members are aware of climate change and its symptoms, to sum up. However, they lack knowledge of the long-term effects, strategies for farming that are climate resilient, awareness of insurance plans that address climate change, and a dependence on conventional treatment to treat climate-related illnesses. These results highlight the importance of empowering SHGs with resources and support so they can respond to the effects of climate change in an efficient manner.

8. Recommendations

- ▶ **Enhancing Education and Awareness** : Create focused educational initiatives and awareness campaigns to better

inform SHG members about the long-term effects of climate change. Workshops, training sessions, and the distribution of informational materials explaining the potential effects of climate change on their communities, way of life, and health can accomplish this.

- ▶ **Encouragement of Climate-Resilient Farming Methods :** Promote knowledge-sharing platforms and capacity-building programs to educate SHG members on innovative farming techniques and methods that increase climate change resistance. This may entail advocating for environmentally friendly farming practices that lessen vulnerability to climate-related risks, such as conservation agriculture, crop diversification, agroforestry, and water management approaches.
- ▶ **Raising Awareness about Climate Insurance :** Work with relevant parties, such as government organizations, non-governmental organizations, and insurance companies, to inform SHG members about insurance plans that are particularly created to lessen the risks associated with climate change. Conduct training workshops and informational sessions to outline the advantages, requirements, and application procedures for gaining access to climate insurance products. This will enable SHG members to safeguard their livelihoods from climate-related risks.
- ▶ **Bringing together both Traditional and Contemporary Methods :** Recognize and appreciate the SHG members' use of traditional medicine to treat health issues related to climate change. To blend conventional wisdom with evidence-based practices, encourage communication and cooperation between traditional healers and contemporary healthcare professionals. This integration can improve community resilience and provide all-inclusive healthcare options for problems related to the health of the climate.
- ▶ **Strengthening access to Resources :** Promote easier access to resources like financial aid, technical advancements, and climate information services. In order to offer SHG members with current and pertinent information, technology, and financing possibilities that enable them to successfully execute climate-resilient plans, this may entail forming relationships with local authorities, research institutes, and funding organizations.

► **Facilitating Networks, Collaborations and Partnerships :**

Facilitate the formation of networks and collaborations between SHGs, community-based organizations, governmental institutions, and nonprofit organizations. These partnerships can encourage information sharing, resource sharing, and group effort in tackling the problems caused by climate change. Encourage the creation of peer-learning groups so that SHG members can exchange knowledge, best practices, and insights into climate change adaptation.

9. Conclusion and Future Directions

The study's three main goals were to gauge SHG members' awareness of climate change, comprehend the socioeconomic effects of climate change on SHG members, and estimate their climate resilience. The majority of SHG members are aware of climate change, according to the data gathered from them. They get this information from a variety of sources, including their peers, periodicals, newspapers, radio, and television. SHG members are aware of the effects of climate change, which include intense summer and winter heat, high summer and winter temperatures, and erratic rainfall. However, it was noted that some SHG members believe that climate change will benefit their community. This impression results from ignorance of the full consequences and long-term effects of climate change. On the other hand, other SHG members are fully aware of how climate change is harming the ecosystem. They are aware that these negative alterations will have far-reaching effects in the future. Importantly, every member acknowledges that humans are to blame for climate change, proving that they are aware of the precise causes. They explicitly blame climate change for the temperature rise. The study reveals the various levels of knowledge about climate change and diverse perspectives on its effects among SHG members. There is a need to create mass-level awareness among agriculture-based communities about climate change and related impacts in order to build climate-smart communities. The use of indigenous knowledge, skills and practices needs to be encouraged as well as the utilization of nature-based solutions. This will enhance their capacities to deal with changing climate and related uncertainties, thus enhancing their well-being.

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Impact on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy

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Abstract

The entitled study "Impact on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy" was done during the summer of 2023 focusing on the people's livelihood after installation of Solar Energy as an alternative resource. This study was done in Belkotgadhi -2, Nuwakot, Nepal where the local people were using solar energy system as an alternative resource for past ten years. To make more comprehensive this study was conducted among the 25 solar energy users whereas 250 households already installed solar energy to uplift their livelihood. Similarly, 6 key informants were taken as a primary key informant where as 4 were females and 2 were males. People of study area are very much satisfied after the installation of solar energy since they have faced many challenges during the installation period. Women of the study area are also beneficial after using alternative resource and they have made some income generating platform because they work after their dinner. The respondents expressed very favorable opinions of solar system and concurred that it had aided in their socioeconomic and other personal development.

Keywords

Impact, Local people, Household, Energy, Solar energy, Alternative resource.

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Impact on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy

1. Background of the Study

Resources are very important for the existence of human life. Resources can consume naturally and artificially. Since the fire is invented, people started to invent many more useful things for the existence of their life and kept as an asset. In everyday life, people are using resources both modern and traditional methods. This study was carried out from the people of Belkotgadhi Municipality-2 of the Nuwakot district where solar energy has become a significant source of alternative energy over the past ten years. 25 of these users are taken as respondents who are user of a purposive sampling technique.

In this study, both primary and secondary data were used. Data has been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Key informant users also were taken for the proper information. Among the 6 key informants, 4 females and 2 males were selected.

Currently, Nepal's energy sources are divided into three groups: conventional, commercial, and alternative. Traditional energy sources include dry animal dung, agricultural residues from agricultural crops and fuel wood from forest and tree resources. Commercial energy resources, which specifically include coal, grid electricity, and petroleum products are those that fall under the category of commercial or business practices. Among Nepal's alternative energy sources are biogas, solar energy, and small scale hydropower. These resources are viewed as an addition to the available conventional resources, 12% from commercial sources, and less than 1% from alternative sources (MOF, 2022).

Energy is one of the most important inputs for sustaining life, and reliable access to affordable energy sources is a requirement for Nepal's socioeconomic development. Many Nepalese hill settlements are too far from the electricity grid to have access to facilities for electricity because of this. Due to our country's terrain, poor infrastructure development, dispersed rural households, high

costs associated with centralized national grid power supply, and low purchasing power of the populace, it is difficult to provide basic necessities (WECS, 2020).

In Nepal, there are abundant sustainable sources of renewable energy (hydroelectric power, solar energy, biomass, and bio-waste), so proper exploitation of these resources could undoubtedly supplement the nation's renewable energy portfolio. Renewable energy is environmentally friendly because it reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, indoor and local air pollution, and the negative effects on the environment's physical, geographical, and natural environments. The quality of life for Nepal's rural population will probably improve with a decentralized renewable energy system (Sapkota & Tamrakar, 2021).

The use of solar energy can offer a frequently more dependable and affordable power source, giving residents of these communities more opportunities to advance and better their lives. When it was anticipated that coal would run out in the 1860s, solar energy was first proposed as a practical alternative source of energy. The 1973 oil crisis renewed interest in solar power's potential as a substitute energy source. In response, developed nations worked diligently to advance solar energy (Status of Solar Photovoltaic Sector in Nepal, AEPC, 2021).

2. Literature Review

Levi identifies three key historical factors that contributed to the development of the modernization theory of development following World War II. The emergence of the United States as a superpower came first (Levi, 1967).

Nepal has cheap, abundant solar energy. Without using any fossil fuels or damming any Himalayan rivers, every Nepali could consume the same amount of energy as people in developed nations with more than enough solar energy. The annual solar potential in Nepal is 50,000 terawatt-hours, which is 7,000 times more electricity than the country currently uses and 100 times more than its hydropower capacity. As a result, solar energy can easily meet all of Nepal's future energy needs and is more affordable than fossil fuels, nuclear power, and hydropower. In the future, one of the main renewable sources for generating electricity will be solar energy. A solar power plant produces reliable, clean, and environmentally friendly electricity.

Rooftop solar energy is less expensive than grid electricity or thermal power and only requires a one-time investment. If the low-income population's demand for renewable energy is not satisfied, it will be impossible to significantly raise their standard of living in rural areas (AEPC, 2021).

According to modernization theory, the transition from a traditional agricultural economy to a modern industrial economy, society, and civilization is considered the classic modernization course. The Second Modernization Theory suggests that the process of human development can be divided into four stages: the tool age, the agricultural age, the industrial age, and the knowledge age. Each stage has four phases: the start phase, the development phase, the mature phase, and the transition phase. However, according to the second modern theory, a process of transition from a traditional agricultural economy to a modern industrial economy is taking place in the study area (Levi, 1967).

The process of modernization within societies is explained by modernization theory. Modernization is the process of moving from a "pre-modern" or "traditional" society to a "modern" one. The concepts of German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), which served as the foundation for the modernization paradigm created by Harvard sociologist, are where modernization theory got its start. The theory takes into account a nation's internal dynamics and makes the assumption that, with assistance, "traditional" nations can be propelled toward development in the same way that more advanced nations have. In the 1950s and 1960s, modernization theory was the preeminent paradigm in the social sciences before it was completely eclipsed. After 1991, it made a comeback, but it is still a contentious fashion (Tipps, 1973).

In addition to attempting to explain how societies evolve, modernization theory also makes an effort to pinpoint the social factors that influence social development and advancement. World systems theorists, globalization theorists, dependency theorists, socialist and free-market ideologies, among others, have all criticized modernization theory. In modernization theory, both the process of change and the responses to that change are emphasized. In addition to discussing social and cultural structures, it also considers internal dynamics and the adoption of new technologies (Levy, 1967).

The system that transforms solar energy into electricity is known as a solar PV home system. It is a system for supplying electricity to a

home that includes a solar photovoltaic panel with a capacity of 5 Wp to 10 Wp or more, a battery, a device to control the battery's charge, and the appropriate number of lights (AEPC, 2021).

According to AEPC (2020), a Solar Home System (SHS) is a system for supplying electricity to a home that includes solar photovoltaic panels with a capacity of at least 10Wp and is connected to a battery, charge controller, and the necessary number of DC lights.

The module, the fundamental building block of the systems, is made up of a number of electrically connected solar cells that are enclosed inside a supporting framework. Solar cells convert 3-14% of the incident solar energy to direct current electricity, with efficiencies varying depending on illumination, spectrum intensity, solar cell design, material, and temperatures. Solar cells are typically in the form of thin films or wafers and are semiconductor devices (typically made of crystalline silicon). The modules come in sizes ranging from 20 to 50 watts. Combining modules allows for high power outputs from a single source (WECS, 2020).

Electrons become excited and begin to move in the metal stripes of the panels when sunlight hits the surface of the panel (modules). The potential is created when the flow is high (peak sun or more sun than average), and since the negative and positive battery terminals are connected to the two terminals of the panel via a charge controller, the electrons or charge are then stored in the battery. This allows the battery to be used at night when there is no sun light.

3. Methodology

A descriptive & exploratory research design has been used for this study. The study's goal is to describe the Impacts on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy. Qualitative data were gathered using the descriptive method. The non-quantifiable data have been explained in literal terms. In study area, solar energy has become a significant source of alternative energy over the past ten years.

There are 250 households with solar energy installed in Belkotgadhi Municipality-2, which is in the Nuwakot district with the total population of 7660, 3723 men and 3937 women and 1549 households (CBS, 2023). 250 Solar Home System users from the Belkotgadhi Municipality-2's total of 1549 households make up the study's universe, and 25 of these users are taken as respondents who through purposive sampling technique who are currently using solar system.

In this study, both primary and secondary data were used. Data has been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Key informant users also were taken for the proper information. Among the 6 key informants, 4 females and 2 males were selected because females are more involved in the consumption of solar energy comparing with males. Using a observation method, interview with the key informant respondents and questionnaire survey with solar energy users, the researcher gathered the primary data from the respondents.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

The entitled study 'Impact on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy' is done to find out the impact on livelihood after using the solar energy system. After the data collection, it is found that people of the study area are really happy and satisfied by using solar energy system. Before the installment of solar energy, their works were hampered during the power cut off. But, now the alternative resource has made their livelihood more comfortable and accessible to lights. Main reason of power cut off in winter season is the storms leading to electricity poles fall down and then it takes time to maintain due to government procedures.

4.1 Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-economic characteristic of the respondents are presented under the following sub-heads:

(A) Respondents by Caste/Ethnicity

Caste and ethnic composition factors are related to socio-cultural aspects. Different ethnic groups and castes have unique cultures, customs, and needs that have a big impact on how much energy they use. The respondents' caste/ethnicity is shown in the table below:

Table-1 : Distribution of Respondents by Caste/Ethnicity Composition

Ethnicity/Caste	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Brahmin	13	52.00
Chhetri	2	8.00
Tamang	7	28.00
Others	3	12.00
Total	25	100.00

Source : Field Survey, 2023.

Table-1 demonstrates that Brahmins (52% of all installers) are the most dominant group in the context of using solar energy system. It's because Brahmins are the region's elite and enjoy good economic health. Tamang people make up the second-largest population in the Belkotgadhi Municipality, which explains why they account for the second-largest share PP (28%) of solar energy installations.

(B) Sex and Literacy Composition of SHS Users

One of the key components of this analysis of the respondent's sex and literacy. The perception, comprehension, and behavior of people toward energy consumption are influenced by these factors both directly and indirectly. In addition, the relationship between sex and literacy composition has an impact on other social and economic factors, such as occupation, income generation etc. Breakdown of the samples of sex and literacy lists are given below:

Table-2: Sex and Literacy Composition of the Respondents

Sex	Literacy				Total	
	Literate		Never attended School			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	10	40	5	20	15	60
Female	7	28	3	12	10	40
Literacy Rate	17	68.00	8	32.00	25	100.00

Source : Field Survey, 2023.

The above table demonstrates that there are slightly fewer women than men in the study area. In the table above, the literacy rate is calculated by factoring in the respondents' literacy levels as well as the proportion of males and females who are currently enrolled in school. Males have a higher literacy rate (40%) than females (28%). The study area's overall literacy rate is 68% in total.

(C) Annual Income that can Support Annual Expenditure

The household income is a significant factor in determining a person's way of life, socioeconomic status, and other factors that have an immediate impact on their ability to access and afford basic needs as well as other needs, including energy needs. Agriculture, employment, business, and services provided in other countries are the main sources of income in the study area. They spend money to satisfy a variety of needs. The following table displays the annual income needed to cover the sample HHs' annual expenses:

Table-3 : Distribution of the Respondents by Annual Income that can support Annual Expenditure

No. of Months	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1-4 months	1	4.00
4-8 months	2	8.00
8-12 months	15	60.00
12+ months	7	28.00
Total	25	100.00

Source : Field Survey, 2023.

According to the table above, 60% of households can afford annual expenses for 8-12 months. This group of HHs consists primarily of people with agricultural and service-related major occupations. 28% of HHs-those with jobs, those engaged in business, and primarily those with relatives working abroad-said they could afford expenses for longer than a year. Only 1-4 months' worth of expenses can be supported by 4% HHs. Because they are all dependent on substantial farming and have no other sources of income, 8% of HHs can only cover expenses for 4-8 months. Some people are discovered installing SHS by borrowing money and imitating others to maintain their social standing.

4.2 Increased Study Hour after Installation of SHS

Most people in Nepal's rural areas (both grid-connected and off-grid) use kerosene as a source of lighting. Students must study in the dim light of kerosene- or dry cell-powered torches or tuki. These lights are inefficient, making it challenging for students to study in them. Solar home systems offer cleaner, more effective lighting that both benefits the family financially by reducing the need to purchase kerosene and allows students to study in brighter light. According to respondents, their kids were studying more, as shown in table below:

Table-4 : Distribution of Respondents by increased Study Hours after SHS Installation

Increased Study Hours Daily	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Increased by 1 hour	13	52.00
Increased by 2 hours	10	40.00
Increased by 3 hours	2	8.00
Total	25	100.00

Source : Field Survey, 2023.

Data contained in table-4 demonstrates that 25 of the households with solar energy installations have children who attend school. A little over 52% of HHs admit that since SHS was put in place, their kids now study for an extra hour every day at night. After solar energy was installed, about 40% of HHs admitted a 2 hours increase in night study time and 8% of HHs admitted a 3 hours increase.

The truth is that life style of the people of the study area are somehow improved and empowered too. Because students could study at evening and other people also started to do their household chores and pending works at evening.

4.3 Energy Use Situation in the Study Area

Fuel wood is Nepal's largest source of traditional energy, meeting about 77% of the nation's total energy needs in the years 2021-2022. Fuel wood is also the main source of energy used for cooking in the study area.

According to the data, a household that installs a SHS can save at least Rs 1725 annually as comparing to other non-users. It also demonstrates that 25 HHs in the study area, out of 50 SHS users and 10 Non SHS users, use 210 liters of kerosene annually, which is equivalent to NRs 24150.

LPG is only used for cooking by SHS users and non-users in the study area when they are pressed for time while completing household and farm tasks; otherwise, they typically use firewood. Below is a chart showing how much LPG is consumed annually.

The minimum fee up to 20 units is Rs 80 in rural areas. All homes were found to have their electricity needs met for the lowest possible cost. These 25 respondent households collectively use 30628.8 MJ of electric energy per year, which is equal to NRS 48000.

25 HHs in the Belkotgadhi Municipality area are using solar energy. In addition to its general applications, solar energy is frequently used during load shedding. The table below shows the area of Belkotgadhi Municipality's solar energy consumption.

Table-5 : Annual Consumption of Solar Energy

Solar Capacity (WP)	No. of HHs	Energy (KWH)	Energy (MJ)
20	12	90000	324000
32	2	28800	103680
36	5	118800	427680

40	3	72000	259200
43	2	38700	139320
50	2	38700	139320
Total	25	378300	1361880

Source : Field Survey, 2023.

The most favorable days for solar energy production are considered to be 300 days per year when calculating solar energy consumption.

4.4 Information about Solar Home System Use in Study Area

Distribution of SHS by the year of installation in respondents' families is shown in the following table:

Table-6 : Installation of SHS by Year

Year of Installation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
2013	9	36.00
2017	7	28.00
2018	1	4.00
2019	8	32.00
Total	25	100.00

Source : Field Survey, 2023.

The highest percentage of solar home systems (36%) were installed in the study area in 213 AD. From 2014 to 2016, no installations were noted at all. The number of households installing SHS was at its lowest in the year 2018, at 4%, and then gradually increased to 32% in the following year.

Lighting at night is the primary reason for installing SHS in rural areas like the Belkotgadhi Municipality area. Solar energy is primarily used for nighttime household chores, lighting up classrooms so that kids can read and write, and other commercial uses like lighting up hotels, shops, chicken coops, and other establishments.

4.5 Major Problems Faced with SHS

Utilizing solar energy technology necessitates through knowledge and comprehension of all aspects of it, from its initial installation to its use, operation, and maintenance. SHS has a higher initial cost than conventional energy sources, making it unaffordable

for many people. In addition, appropriate instructions are needed for its upkeep and operation. Table below lists some of the main issues SHS users in the study area have to deal with:

Table-7 : Major Problems Faced by SHS Users

Types of Problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Cost	5	20.00
Operation/maintenance	11	44.00
Both cost and maintenance	6	24.00
Less efficient during bad weather	3	12.00
Total	25	100.00

Sources : Field Survey, 2023.

The table above demonstrates that 20% of households purchase SHS, but that the cost is high for them, while 44% of households experienced operational and maintenance issues, such as battery fuses and changing the water level in batteries. According to 12% of respondents, the energy their SHS produces during the rainy season and when the sky is overcast is insufficient for their needs. Therefore, the cost of SHS should be reduced by providing more incentives to rural low income households, as well as by having awareness programs about SHS and skilled technicians available in the village for its maintenance.

5. Impact on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy

Currently, Nepal's energy sources are divided into three groups: conventional, commercial, and alternative. Traditional energy sources include dry animal dung, agricultural residues from agricultural crops, and fuel wood from forests and tree resources. Commercial energy resources, which specifically include coal, grid electricity, and petroleum products, are those that fall under the category of commercial or business practices. Among Nepal's alternative energy sources are biogas, solar energy, and small-scale hydropower. All three of these types of energy resources are in use in the study area.

The consumption of firewood is very high when compared to traditional resources. i.e. 64% of the total energy consumed in the study area by the sample HHs. From firewood, 3320520MJ, or about 197640 kg, or Rs 32940, is produced. Both SHS users and non-users

use roughly the same amount of firewood each month, primarily for cooking purposes (7 to 10 bhari).

The overuse of firewood as a source of energy is not a recent phenomenon; almost all rural areas of Nepal use firewood as one of their primary and most frequent sources of energy. The study area is surrounded by three community forests, making it simple and affordable for locals to obtain firewood and incorporate it into their daily lives. As a result, firewood is used more frequently than any other resource.

Kerosene is the most widely utilized commercial energy source. In homes with SHS installed, only 1 to 3 liters of kerosene are consumed annually, and this fuel is primarily used to light firewood in rooms without light fixtures. Some homes with SHS installations completely replace their kerosene use with solar power.

The non-users of solar home systems use kerosene primarily for lighting, consuming 18 to 24 liters yearly. By using SHS, households with SHS installed save at least NRS 1725 annually compared to households without SHS. Kerosene consumption in SHS non-user HHs has significantly decreased since the municipality recently acquired grid electricity. Approximately 210 liters, or 7350 MJ of energy, or RS 24150, are consumed by the sample HHs.

LPG consumption has become fashionable in the study area. Nearly 50% of the sample HHs, both SHS users and non-users, were found to be using LPG for cooking. LPG is typically used during farm peak season when there is a rush of activity related to farming. They can consume as few as one LPG cylinder or as many as four cylinders annually. 50 sample HHs in the study area annually derive 33103.04 MJ total energy from LPG, which is equivalent to NRS 79900.

Its rising use may be due to the fact that LPG gas stoves make cooking easier than firewood stoves. They can save time by cooking with LPG during the busy farming season because it is smokeless. Since this VDC is close to Kathmandu and has complete summertime motor road access, transporting PLG is not a challenging task. Remittances, commercial farming, and other factors have increased people's purchasing power, which also encourages people to use LPG.

As already mentioned above, the SHS is a useful replacement that increases people's access to energy and encourages them to adopt a better way of life in remote areas where electric energy and other

sources are less practical and expensive. The advantages of installing SHS are numerous and are covered below. The main benefits after the consumption of solar energy in each household has positive impact which is very effective on Education and Women Empowerment, among the many other social benefits.

Before the construction of SHS, students had to study in the traditional dim light called 'tuki'. The lights coming from that kerosene-powered were too dim, hazy, and painful for kids to study under. Children's study time increased from at least 1 hour per night to up to 3 hours after SHS installation, under the sterile, bright, and smoke-free light. The local school uses solar energy for evening classes, computer operation, etc.

The use of solar powered communication tools like TVs, telephones and other devices has greatly contributed to raising awareness of gender equality in the villagers. People are reminded to enroll their daughters in school as well. Other social advantages have decreased, such as the time and effort needed by women to find fuel wood. In addition, women of the study area perform various household income generating tasks under solar lights at night, such as making thread incant for god, paper plate, woolen bag etc. which has aided in their overall development.

5.1 Benefits to the household after Installation of Solar Energy System

One of the many economic advantages is the money it saves on kerosene, torch light batteries, etc., which helps to improve the economic situation not only of the households but of the entire nation. SHS will lower the amount spent on these oil imports, which aids in lowering the trade deficit.

The study area now has access to a variety of income-generating activities thanks to solar energy. In addition, it has aided in the commercialization and diversification of rural areas. Numerous income-generating activities, including the production of handicrafts, woolen goods, and poultry farming, have been carried out using solar energy.

In conclusion, this solar energy is promoting and developing local entrepreneurship. The fact that solar energy reduces carbon footprint is one of its most significant advantages. Solar energy is clean, renewable, and doesn't emit any harmful pollutants like carbon dioxide (CO₂). A typical home solar PV system could reduce CO₂

emissions by over a tone annually, or more than 30 tonnes over the course of its lifetime.

Solar lighting has the advantage of not polluting indoor air like kerosene lamps do, and it also lessens the risk of unintentional fire hazards. Respondents also noted that community forests have been well preserved as a result of the availability of solar energy and other various forms of energy.

The respondents claim that solar lights won't provide any health benefits, such as protection against respiratory conditions, headaches, or fire hazards brought on by firewood smoke. In the VDC health post, solar energy is used to power a refrigerator to store vaccines and to power emergency lighting in medical facilities at night.

The poverty rate in Nepal is 25.16 percent, according to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS-III, 2010-11). Rural areas have a poverty rate that is significantly higher than urban areas (15.46%) (27.43%). In general, poor people rely heavily on conventional energy sources. The cost of energy affects energy use (consumer decisions and behavior). Higher human development index (HDI) is indicated by higher per capita energy consumption. Similar to urban development, rural development refers to a method of meeting people's basic needs while preserving their high levels of autonomy and self-respect. In order to reduce poverty and promote rural development, people's access to solar energy and its many positive effects are crucial.

First and foremost, solar energy increases people's access to energy. SHS will be a wise replacement in remote areas where it is highly feasible and less expensive to develop than any other form of energy. Higher human development index (HDI) is indicated by higher per capita energy consumption.

Secondly, solar energy both reduces the consumption of imported fossil fuels and aids in the start-up of locally based income-generating activities. Therefore, paying for kerosene and other fuels is much more expensive than it needs to be. Solar energy can be used to power a variety of income-generating activities, such as handicraft production, tailoring, woolen product weaving, poultry farming, etc., which aids in reducing economic vulnerability in rural and remote areas.

Thirdly, solar energy contributes to the growth of the social sectors such as women's empowerment, health, and education. In addition to using solar energy to run computers at schools, light up hospitals at night, and keep local medications cool in refrigerators, students can read and write well in cleaner, brighter solar light. Other social advantages include a reduction in the time and effort needed by women to search for fuel wood, among other things. The nighttime household and income-generating tasks that women carry out under solar lights, such as "batti kathne", "tapari bunne", and the creation of woolen bags, have contributed to their overall development and empowerment.

Fourthly, it has improved people's access to information via TV, phone, and radio, giving them the chance to learn about and comprehend various socioeconomic and political facets of the entire world. Their way of life has changed to one that is contemporary, competitive, and creative.

As a result of having access to solar energy, rural residents have been able to increase their income, further their education, and generally improve their quality of life. This has helped them become more independent, which is undoubtedly important for eradicating poverty and promoting rural development.

6. Findings

25 out of the total number of households have been discovered to be using solar energy. All of these 25 SHS-using households were used as sample households (100%) along with 10 SHS-unusing households. i.e., the total sample HHs are 35. The average HH size in the study area is 6.98. Belkotgadhi Municipality spans a total area of 28.77 sq km. The study area has the highest percentage of Brahmin (52%) and Tamang (28%) households. The average literacy rate of the sample HHs is 66.19%; the rates for men and women are, respectively, 71.51% and 61.01%.

The sample HHs' top four occupations were agriculture (15%), foreign service (16%), employment (12%), and services (8%) respectively. 60% of the sample households agreed that their income covers expenses for 8 to 12 months, 28% for 12 months or longer, and 10% for 4 to 7 months. Following the installation of SHS, 52% of sample HHs observed a 1 hour increase in the amount of time their kids spent studying, 40% observed a 2 hour increase, and 7%

observed a 3 hour increase. Both SHS users and non-users most frequently use fire wood as a source of energy. In the calculation of per capita energy consumption, it shares the highest value. 25 samples of HHs in the study area use 3320520 MJ annually, which is equivalent to 32940 NRs. While 100% of solar home system non-users use kerosene, only 36% of SHS installed households do.

By installing a solar home system, the HHs can reduce their annual kerosene costs by at least NRS 1725 and by as much as 100%. The sample HHs (which include both SHS users and non-users) use 210 liters of kerosene annually, which is equivalent to NRs 24150. In the study area, 50% of the sample HHs (both SHS users and non users) use LPG for cooking. Between SHS users and non-users in the study area, LPG consumption is essentially equal. 25 samples of HHs in the Belkotgadhi Municipality area use 33103.04 MJ of LPG energy annually, which is equivalent to NRS 79900.

The study area's monthly electricity consumption ranged from 10 to a maximum of 20 units, falling within the range of the 20-unit minimum charge of RS 80. The study area's 25 sample HHs, which include both SHS users and non-users, use 30628.8 MJ of electric energy each year, which is equal to NRS 48000.

SHS installation in the study area began in 2070 BS with the highest number of installations (36%), and the most recent installation was in 2076 BS by 32% of households. Prices for SHSs with the same capacity varied depending on the company doing the installation. Installation of a 20WP system typically costs between 10,000 and 20,000. Between 20,000 and 30,000 is the average cost of a 32 to 40Wp system, and between 30,000 and 40,000, including subsidies, is the average cost of a 43 to 50Wp system. The most well-known of the five solar energy firms in the Belkotgadhi Municipality is Bio Energy Pvt. Ltd., which has installed more than half (52%) of the total installed SHS. In the study area, 92% of HHs use radio as their primary source of information, 80% of households have at least one phone (mobile or land line), and 48% of HHs use all three media simultaneously. In the study area, 56% of sample households had installed five to eight bulbs, 24% had one to four, and 20% had more than eight. In the study area, 20% of HHs use all three CFL, Tube light, and W/LED while 40% of HHs use CFL and Tube Light, 32% of HHs use CFL and W/LED, 8% of HHs use only CFL. SHS is used for lighting by 48% of HHs for about two hours each day, 32% for three hours, and 20% for one hour. In comparison to

kerosene, all sample HHs agreed that SHS helped them maintain a clean and healthy home environment. While 20% of HHs find it expensive and 12% of HHs complain about its low efficiency during bad weather, 44% of SHS users have experienced maintenance issues.

7. Conclusion

This study interprets about the "Impact on Local People's Livelihood through Solar Energy" which assess the per capita energy consumption, identification of the energy scenario, and effects on the livelihoods in the study area that have solar energy installed. This study primarily relies on primary data, which was gathered using field survey techniques like questionnaires, field observation, and interview with the respondents. There are 250 households with installed SHS that are funded by the government in the Belkotgadhi Municipality area of the Nuwakot district. Out of the total number of households in the Belkotgadhi Municipality area, 250 households that use solar home systems were chosen as the study's universe, and 25 of those households were selected as samples using the purposive sampling method.

Solar energy has been named as an alternative energy source in light of this situation. Due to its advantageous latitude, Nepal receives a lot of solar radiation. Nepal receives 6.8 hours of sunshine on average each day, with a solar radiation intensity of 4.7 kWh/m²/day. The total energy produced would be 80,000 GWh/day using photovoltaic (PV) modules with a 12% efficiency and assuming peak sunlight of 4.5 hours per day. To meet the nation's energy needs, it is therefore wiser to develop solar energy. Lighting, health, education, and communication are just a few of the end uses for solar energy. The 25HHs of the Belkotgadhi Municipality area have benefitted from the cleaner, brighter, and smokeless light thanks to the promotion of solar energy, which has increased the study time for the kids at night. The users are also free from health issues brought on by firewood smoke, such as headaches, respiratory issues, eye infections, etc.

The number of households with TVs, radios, and phones has increased, along with people's access to information, which has led to a rise in public awareness of various social, economic, political, and other issues as well as of way of life. Girls are now being sent to school, and localized female entrepreneurship has begun.

SHS has, on the one hand, reduced household spending on fossil fuels, but, on the other hand, it has increased the likelihood of starting one's own business and income-generating ventures at the local level, such as poultry farming, communication services, tailoring, hotel business, etc., assisting locals to make money and make use of their spare time. Since solar energy is a clean, renewable source of energy, it doesn't pollute the environment with harmful levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂). Therefore, it is an environment friendly and ideal technology for bringing electricity to rural and remote areas.

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GST's Contribution to Reducing Interstate Trade Barriers for Manufacturers in India: A Study

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Abstract

The introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India has had a profound impact on the manufacturing sector, with one of its most significant contributions being the reduction of interstate trade barriers. Prior to GST, India's manufacturing sector faced substantial challenges due to the fragmented and complex indirect tax structure, which led to inefficiencies in the movement of goods across state borders. By consolidating numerous taxes into a unified framework, GST has streamlined the movement of goods, reduced logistical costs, and enhanced the competitiveness of Indian manufacturers. This paper explores the economic effects of GST on reducing interstate trade barriers in India, focusing specifically on the manufacturing sector. It examines the challenges that manufacturers faced prior to GST implementation, the benefits realized after its introduction, and the ongoing issues, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Through a comprehensive review of the literature and secondary data analysis, this paper assesses the impact of GST on manufacturing efficiency, competitiveness, and overall growth in the Indian economy.

Keywords

GST, Interstate trade, Barriers, Manufacturing sector, Supply chain, Competitive advantage.

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GST's Contribution to Reducing Interstate Trade Barriers for Manufacturers in India: A Study

1. Introduction

India's manufacturing sector has long been a cornerstone of the country's economic growth, contributing significantly to employment generation, export performance, and GDP. However, prior to the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST), the sector faced substantial challenges due to the fragmented and complex indirect tax system. Manufacturers were burdened with various state and central taxes, including Central Sales Tax (CST), Value Added Tax (VAT), excise duties, and entry taxes like octroi. These taxes created inefficiencies in the movement of goods, increased operational costs, and disrupted supply chains, ultimately affecting the competitiveness of Indian manufacturers in the global market.

The introduction of GST on July 1, 2017, aimed to address these challenges by consolidating a multitude of taxes into a single, unified tax framework. This reform was designed to create a seamless, pan-India market, remove trade barriers, enhance supply chain efficiency, and foster greater competitiveness. By eliminating the cascading effect of taxes and reducing the burden of compliance, GST has facilitated smoother interstate movement of goods, which was previously hindered by state-specific taxes. This paper explores the economic impact of GST on reducing interstate trade barriers for manufacturers, focusing on its contribution to cost reduction, enhanced logistics efficiency, and improved market competitiveness.

2. Literature Review

The literature on the impact of GST on reducing interstate trade barriers highlights several dimensions of its effect on the manufacturing sector. Key areas of focus include the removal of state-specific taxes, reduction in logistical costs, and improvements in business efficiency. The studies emphasize the role of GST in streamlining operations, reducing trade barriers, and enhancing the competitive advantage of Indian manufacturers.

Desai & Kumar (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on the efficiency of interstate trade post-GST. Their research indicates that the elimination of CST and other state-specific taxes has created a level playing field for manufacturers. The study suggests that GST has not only reduced the time taken for goods to move across state borders but has also increased the competitiveness of Indian products in global markets. The standardization of tax rates and the removal of the need for multiple registrations across states have simplified compliance, encouraging manufacturers to engage more actively in interstate trade.

Patel & Verma (2020) focus on the challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in adapting to the GST framework. While large manufacturers have benefited from the simplification of interstate tax structures, SMEs have struggled with compliance due to resource constraints. Their research highlights that the digital filing requirements of GST and the complexities of navigating the new system have posed challenges for SMEs. Despite these difficulties, they also recognize that GST has the potential to enhance interstate trade once these challenges are addressed.

Gupta & Yadav (2019) explore the broader economic implications of GST on the competitiveness of Indian businesses, particularly manufacturers. They argue that GST has played a crucial role in improving the ease of doing business by eliminating interstate barriers. This reform has allowed manufacturers to focus more on improving productivity and reducing costs rather than navigating a complex tax system. The study concludes that GST has fostered a more competitive business environment by reducing inefficiencies and promoting smoother interstate transactions.

Sharma & Gupta (2019) examine the direct impact of GST on logistics costs. Their study shows that the elimination of entry taxes, octroi, and other state-specific levies has significantly reduced transportation and handling costs. Manufacturers, particularly those engaged in interstate trade, have benefited from reduced delays at checkpoints and lower compliance costs. These improvements have contributed to a more efficient and cost-effective supply chain, enabling manufacturers to streamline operations and pass on the cost savings to consumers.

Ravi & Soni (2018) address the challenges encountered during the transition to GST, especially in terms of reducing interstate trade

barriers. While acknowledging the benefits of a unified tax structure, they point out that the initial implementation phase was marred by confusion regarding registration processes, technical glitches in the GST Network (GSTN), and delays in tax refunds. However, they conclude that the long-term impact of GST in reducing trade barriers and fostering efficiency outweighs the initial disruptions.

Aggarwal (2017) examines the transformational impact of GST on creating a unified national market. By subsuming various taxes such as VAT, CST, and excise duties, GST has effectively removed the tax barriers between states. This consolidation has facilitated smoother interstate movement of goods, significantly reducing transaction costs and inefficiencies associated with the previous system. Aggarwal argues that GST aligns with the "One Nation, One Tax" vision, providing manufacturers with the ability to operate seamlessly across state borders, thus improving business competitiveness.

Roy & Singh (2016) emphasize that the introduction of GST has significantly reduced interstate trade barriers by subsuming multiple taxes into a single tax structure. Their research highlights how this simplification has enabled goods to move more freely across state borders, thereby streamlining tax compliance and allowing manufacturers to focus on production rather than navigating the complexities of state-level tax systems.

3. Methodology

This study utilizes secondary data analysis to assess the impact of GST on reducing interstate trade barriers for manufacturers. The data was collected from government reports, industry surveys, academic papers, and case studies published after the implementation of GST. A comparative analysis of pre- and post- GST scenarios in terms of logistics costs, tax compliance, and supply chain efficiencies was conducted. Data from specific sectors such as textiles, automobiles, and consumer goods manufacturing were analyzed, as these industries have experienced varying levels of impact due to GST.

4. GST's Contribution to Reducing Interstate Trade Barriers

The implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India has brought about several significant benefits, particularly in reducing

interstate trade barriers for manufacturers. Some of the key benefits of GST in this regard are:

4.1 Elimination of State-Specific Taxes

Before the introduction of GST, manufacturers were required to deal with multiple state-specific taxes such as Central Sales Tax (CST), Value Added Tax (VAT), octroi, and entry taxes. These taxes created barriers for businesses when moving goods across state borders, leading to delays, increased transportation costs, and supply chain inefficiencies. With GST, the consolidation of these taxes into a single unified tax system has removed the need for multiple compliance procedures, thus facilitating the smoother movement of goods across states. This has reduced transaction costs and improved efficiency.

4.2 Reduction in Logistics Costs

GST has significantly reduced logistics costs by eliminating entry taxes and octroi, which were previously levied at state borders. This has resulted in faster movement of goods across borders, reducing delays at checkpoints. With the removal of these taxes, manufacturers no longer face the burden of paying multiple taxes at each state border, leading to a more streamlined logistics process. This reduction in logistical costs has benefited manufacturers by improving overall supply chain efficiency and lowering the cost of goods sold.

4.3 Centralization of Warehousing

Under the pre-GST regime, manufacturers were required to set up multiple warehouses in different states to avoid state-specific taxes. This was costly, both in terms of infrastructure and inventory management. Post-GST, the standardization of tax rates across states has allowed businesses to centralize their warehouses in one location. This has not only resulted in lower operational costs but also simplified inventory management. By reducing the need for multiple state-specific warehouses, manufacturers can achieve economies of scale and optimize their supply chains.

4.4 Elimination of Cascading Taxation

One of the major drawbacks of the pre-GST tax system was the cascading effect of taxes, where taxes were levied on taxes at each stage of the production and distribution process. This increased the

overall tax burden and raised production costs. GST has eliminated this cascading effect by allowing manufacturers to claim input tax credits for taxes paid on raw materials and services. This reduction in the overall tax burden has allowed manufacturers to reduce production costs, making their products more competitive in both domestic and international markets.

4.5 Improved Compliance and Simplification of Taxation

GST has simplified tax compliance for manufacturers by creating a single tax structure that applies uniformly across the country. This has eliminated the need for businesses to register in multiple states and comply with different state tax laws. The unified tax structure has reduced the complexity of tax filings and reporting, making it easier for manufacturers to comply with tax regulations. This simplification of tax compliance has helped reduce the administrative burden and costs associated with managing multiple tax systems.

4.6 Enhanced Competitiveness of Indian Manufacturers

With the reduction in tax burden, logistics costs, and supply chain inefficiencies, Indian manufacturers have become more competitive in both domestic and international markets. By making the tax system more transparent and efficient, GST has improved the ease of doing business in India, which has enhanced the overall competitiveness of the manufacturing sector. Manufacturers can now focus more on improving productivity, innovation, and quality rather than dealing with complex tax structures.

4.7 Boost to Interstate Trade

GST has removed trade barriers that previously existed between states, enabling manufacturers to trade more freely and efficiently across state lines. This has resulted in a more integrated national market, where goods can move seamlessly from one state to another without being subjected to additional taxes or delays. By facilitating interstate trade, GST has opened up new market opportunities for manufacturers, allowing them to access a larger customer base and expand their business.

4.8 Encouraging Investment and Economic Growth

The ease of doing business created by the GST framework has attracted both domestic and foreign investment into the Indian manufacturing sector. With fewer barriers to interstate trade and a

more streamlined tax structure, the manufacturing sector has become a more attractive destination for investment. This has the potential to drive economic growth by expanding the industrial base, creating jobs, and contributing to export performance.

4.9 Boost to Digitalization and Technology Adoption

GST has encouraged the adoption of digital technologies for tax filing, reporting, and compliance. Manufacturers have been prompted to upgrade their systems to handle GST-related processes, resulting in greater digitalization of business operations. This shift towards digital processes has improved transparency, reduced the scope for tax evasion, and streamlined operations, helping manufacturers reduce administrative costs and focus on core business activities.

These benefits collectively contribute to the reduction of interstate trade barriers, enhancing the efficiency, competitiveness, and growth potential of India's manufacturing sector. However, challenges remain, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which face difficulties in adapting to the new GST system. Despite these challenges, the overall impact of GST has been positive for the manufacturing sector, laying the foundation for a more competitive and integrated national market.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of GST has been a transformative reform for India's manufacturing sector, particularly in terms of reducing interstate trade barriers. By simplifying tax compliance, eliminating state-specific taxes, and reducing logistical costs, GST has significantly enhanced the ease of doing business for manufacturers. These improvements have helped manufacturers become more competitive, both within India and globally.

However, challenges remain, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. While large manufacturers have been able to leverage the efficiencies introduced by GST, smaller firms often face difficulties in adapting to the new system. Simplifying GST compliance for SMEs and ensuring the timely processing of input tax credits are essential steps in maximizing the benefits of GST. Despite these challenges, GST has laid a solid foundation for the growth and modernization of India's manufacturing sector, aligning with the country's vision of becoming a global manufacturing hub.

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Electoral Constituency of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

In order to function as the highest legislative body representing Sikhs globally, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee's electoral constituency falling in the state of Himachal Pradesh will be examined and analyzed in this study. By exploring this electoral constituency, this exploratory study aims to shed light on it. With information gathered from pertinent sources, this study aims to offer a thorough understanding of and insight into the demographic constituency for selecting the representative to the based on distinct constituencies. This paper uses a descriptive research design to attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of the legislative process and contribute to the Sikh community.

Keywords

SGPC, Election, Electoral constituency, Reservation policy.

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Electoral Constituency of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Himachal Pradesh

1. Introduction

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), which holds elections to choose its representatives, boasts the distinction of being one of the world's oldest democratic religious organizations. The SGPC has historical significance, which emphasizes the organization's dedication to democratic ideals. This prestigious institution emphasizes accountability, inclusivity, and transparency in its electoral processes. Because it has historically used democratic methods to choose its delegates, the SGPC has established a reputation as a model of democratic governance.

A key component of democratic governance is elections, which provide people the ability to choose who will represent them in legislative bodies. An electoral constituency or electoral district is the region from which the Members are chosen. Depending on the nation and its election system, this idea includes a variety of phrases and institutions. In essence, an election constituency is a particular location where voters congregate to select their representatives. For the purpose of elections there are 170 electoral constituencies. Local residents of the community can vote and take part in the decision-making process because each constituency represents a distinct area. It's an essential component of the SGPC's community engagement strategy and guarantees that all opinions are heard when forming leadership and policies.

2. Review of Literature

The Sikh Gurdwaras Act (1925) was enacted by the British colonial authorities to transfer the authority to the elected body to control and administer the Sikh shrines. It was approved by Punjab Governor-General on 28th July, 1925 and then published in Punjab Gazette on 7th August, 1925 under notification no. 4288-S of 12th October, 1925 and finally became operative on 1st November 1925. It

ensures that the religious operations are managed effectively and preserves the holiness of Sikh sacred sites.

The Sikh Gurdwara Board Election Rules (1959) provides details about the voters registration, returning officers, voter forms submission, claims and revision. It has detailed information for the conduct of elections through ballot paper and measures to be taken before and after the conduct of elections by the Officers appointed from State by the Commissioner, Gurdwara Election.

The Sikh Gurdwara Committee Election Rules (1959) provides with all the details as to defining the committee, Commissioner, constituency, election and agents. It defines the Returning Officer responsible to conduct these elections and various stages of the election ranging from nomination papers to scrutiny of these papers, to withdrawing candidature, to polling stations, to conducting polling and declaring results.

The Haryana Sikh Gurdwaras (Management) Act (2014) is a legislative provision created by Haryana government to meet the particular needs of the Haryana's Gurdwara management committees which were previously under the control of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee for a separate management committee. Like Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, this act provides for the formation, powers and functions, elections and other duties, Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Judicial Commission, and miscellaneous functions of the committee.

Bhalla, H. S., Kant. K., Garg, M., Sangeeta, V., & Singh, B. (2023) in 11th Report on "Rules for Delimitation of Wards and Election of the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee" is a document that disseminates knowledge on the rules and regulations for constitution of Gurdwara Management committee and the election machinery for conducting these elections and important officials responsible for these elections.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are following:

1. To find out the strength of constituencies in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To check if the constituencies have active reservation policy in the state.
3. To demarcate the area of the constituency.

4. Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative and descriptive research design, relying on secondary data compiled from several sources such as books, journals, articles, and Acts of the Constitution of India. This meticulous approach for data collection ensures that the research is well informed and a wide range of sources are used to support the conclusions.

5. Findings and Interpretation

5.1 Constituency

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) encompasses a total of 170 electoral constituencies designated for election across the regions of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. Among these 170 constituencies it has 1 specific constituency allocated for the state of Himachal Pradesh. This constituency is named as Shimla or Shimla-1 as a representation to the state and is listed first among all other constituencies and hence Shimla-1.

5.2 Reservation of Constituency

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) has established a reservation policy which reserves seats for the Scheduled Caste Sikhs, Sikh Women and Scheduled Caste Sikh Women candidates. This reservation policy is in accordance with the demographic distribution of Sikhs within the constituency. However, it is noteworthy that Shimla constituency is unreserved meaning it operates under a open category designation, offering no reservation for any specific groups. Thus, individuals from the general category can contest for seats in this constituency.

5.3 Territorial Area

For the election purpose, the constituency for the region of Himachal Pradesh is called Shimla constituency. The Shimla constituency's borders were clearly defined in a notice released by the Ministry of Home Affairs on April 20, 1996. This region, located in the scenic state of Himachal Pradesh, has several administrative units, including the Shimla Municipal Corporation and the Jatog Cantonment Board in the Shimla district. It also covers the districts of Lahaul and Spiti, Kulu, Kangra, Hamirpur, and Una.

Furthermore, the Shimla constituency includes the Dalhousie Municipal Committee, Dalhousie Cantonment Board, and Bakloh Cantonment Board from Chamba region. Additionally, it includes the tehsils of Nalagarh and Kandaghat, the sub-tehsil of Rani Shahar, and the cantonment boards of Kasauli, Sabatu, and Dagshai in Solan district.

The Ministry of Home Affairs' demarcation of the Shimla constituency provides clarity and structure to the region's administrative divisions, ensuring effective governing and representation for the Sikhs.

6. Conclusion

The Shimla constituency in Himachal Pradesh is a crucial electoral stronghold for the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Given that it includes the majority of the areas in the state where the Sikh population is most prevalent, this constituency is quite important. Since it is an unreserved seat, candidates from all backgrounds are welcome to apply. To ensure that their demands are recognized and met, the locals choose one representative to represent them in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

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Perceptions of Climate Change Impacts in the Himalayan Region of Nepal: A Case Study of Nechasalyan Rural Municipality-2, Solukhumbu District

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Abstract

The ever-changing climate has posed numerous issues to all parts of the world. Still, the Hindukush-Himalaya areas, like Nepal, with their variation in topography and socio-economically backward people, are more susceptible to the impacts. This study explores perceptions of climate change impacts on people's livelihoods in Nechasalyan Rural Municipality-2, Solukhumbu District, Nepal. I used a qualitative approach and conducted purposive sampling involving in-depth interviews with five participants. The results indicate that due to climate change, farming practices have become inconsistent, and biodiversity has decreased, which has made animal husbandry more challenging than usual. Moreover, these alterations in their environment made fewer crops be produced, water and food became scarce, livestock became less productive, and families resorted to subsistence-based agriculture. Additionally, there has also been an impact on food security, an increase in the movement of people, and a change in customary practices. Thus, the study advances the understanding that there exists a critical need for targeted policy measures, effective infrastructure development, and appropriate distribution of resources to protect people living in high-altitude rural areas.

Keywords

Climate change, Livelihoods, Adaptation strategies, Nechasalyan Rural Municipality, Socio-economic vulnerabilities.

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1. Introduction

Climate change is well known to be one of the most pressing environmental issues in the world. It has had a profound effect on our ecosystems, economies, and human cultures, as well as long-term changes in global temperature, atmospheric conditions, and weather on the globe that have been several decades or more. Nevertheless, climate change as a natural phenomenon has oscillated over centuries, but the pace at which it has grown in the last few decades indicates that there is more to it, and several works claim that the current conditions cannot be explained through natural factors alone, but due to anthropogenic factors like industrial discharges, forest loss, and fossil fuel burning. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2006 : 7) defines climate change as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods". This is the point at which the majority of global warming has been intensified by human activities, thereby causing very high rates of temperature increases. Since the mid-twentieth century, the polar regions, particularly the Arctic, have warmed at abnormally high rates relative to the rest of the earth.

Climate change is now manifesting everywhere, and its impacts are less and less able to escape notice. Over the pre-industrialized period, global mean temperature has risen by roughly 1.2 °C. This warming has set off a chain reaction-sea levels are rising, ice caps are melting, rainfall patterns are shifting, and extreme weather events like heatwaves, floods, and droughts are becoming more common (IPCC, 2021; Granwal, 2022). In the Asia-Pacific region, the impacts are particularly severe. This field is struggling with a disturbing trend of climate-related disasters. Coastal urban areas such as

Mumbai, Dhaka, Jakarta, and Ho Chi Minh City, are highly vulnerable to inundation, posing a serious risk to the houses and earnings of millions of people (IMF, 2021).

The Himalayan area, including Nepal, is another region where climate change is acting strongly. This region is warming at a rate greater than the global mean, and across the region the harsher conditions are felt by ecosystems and those who live in these ecosystems, and those in particular mountains (Henley et al., 2020). But not everyone is affected in the same way. Rural and indigenous communities are most affected as they depend most on natural resources, do not have considerably good infrastructure and have difficulty adapting due to lack of resources (Regmi et al., 2013).

Nepal in particular is at risk owing to unusual spatial features and economic constraints. Although it contains only a small proportion of the global greenhouse gas emissions, temperatures in Nepal have increased by 1.6°C between 1976 and 2005-nearly three times the global estimates for that period (IPCC, 2021). Due to its wide range of geospatial settings, including the low-lying Terai plains and the high-altitude Himalayan ranges, Nepal is one of the most climate-vulnerable nations globally. Over 80% of its population is exposed to the hazards of floods, landslides, avalanches and glacier lake outburst floods, which pose an ongoing threat to life and property. These alterations are also affecting the agricultural-based economy of Nepal. Damage to crops, devastation of infrastructure causing significant health problems, are the results of irregular rainfall, glacier-induced flooding, and extended droughts.

Climate change is taking its toll on the mountainous regions in Nepal. People living in these fragile environments are not only dealing with the strain on their surroundings but also facing growing threats to their way of life and economic stability. In addition, agriculture, the essence of the Nepalese rural economy, is severely affected. Alterations in weather patterns, excessive rainfall, and landslides cause damage to irrigation systems, lower yields, and create a threat of food insecurity in communities. In addition, with Nepal's wide range of ecosystems-from tropical lowlands to the icy peaks of the Himalayas-the country is exposed to a variety of extreme climate events, like scorching temperatures in the plains and rapidly melting glaciers in the high mountains. For instance, on the one hand, those alterations offer rural areas limited options, push them to move, for alternative income sources, or resort to new farming

practices for sustainment. On the other hand, these same communities often lack the resources needed to adopt effective adaptation measures (Regmi et al., 2013).

The impact of climate change is not equal for all. Nevertheless, the impact is greatest on the most disadvantaged members of society, exacerbating existing disparities. In Nepal, low-income farmers, ethnic, and poor households are obviously disadvantaged. They lack the ability, facilities, and the ability to adapt to these developments in the best way (Perelet, 2007; Saadat & Islam, 2010). Melting of the Himalayan glaciers that provide fresh water to the populations of millions is triggering more frequent glacier lake outbursts. In addition, such floods represent a significant risk to settlements and agriculture at lower levels (Henley et al., 2020). Side by side, as glaciers continue to shrink, they bring risks to water supplies, make crop failures more likely, and lead to greater competition for dwindling resources, deepening the social and economic divides that already exist.

An anthropological point of view provides an explanation for deep entanglement among environmental, social, and cultural processes, especially in relation to climate change. Although the environmental impact is self-evident, the susceptibility of vulnerable communities and their capacity to adapt often relates to socio-economic conditions, cultural attitudes, and power relationships. For example, in Nepal, people are turning to strategies like temporary migration and finding other ways to earn a living to cope with the pressures of climate change. However, these options are not available to everyone, because social inequalities make it much harder for poorer communities to adapt (Regmi et al., 2013). Additionally, climate change exacerbates these inequalities, disrupts cultural practices, and compels many people to forsake traditional ways of life, leading to severe social and economic repercussions.

Many studies show that climate change is not just an environmental issue but is closely related to socio-economic and political ones. Central and South Asian studies demonstrate that floods and droughts may lead to collapse of irrigation, food insecurity, and the eviction of traditional patterns of living, which is most acute for the most disadvantaged groups (Perelet, 2007; Saadat & Islam, 2010). Moreover, in Nepal, people have already attempted sharecropping, microcredit borrowing, and alternative energy usage to mitigate the impact of climate change. However, these solutions

sometimes deepen inequalities. On the one hand, wealthier families would be readily equipped to respond quickly through access to resources, education, and technologies. On the other hand, poorer households often have no choice but to take on risky strategies, like borrowing money at high interest rates, which can trap them in even greater hardships.

In this context, this study focuses on the Solukhumbu district, specifically Nechasalyan Rural Municipality-2, a region known for its high-altitude landscapes and rich biodiversity. It is also one of the areas where the effects of climate change are most visible. Because of the unique set of natural and cultural values, Solukhumbu is a prime candidate in which environmental change can be studied from the perspective of social structure and cultural behavior. Hence, the present study aims to investigate local residents' views on the climate change impact in Nechasalyan Rural Municipality-2, Solukhumbhu district of Nepal.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Anthropology of Climate Change

Research into climate change has increasingly become interdisciplinary and anthropology has made a major contribution in providing insight into the social and cultural dimensions of environmental problems. Anthropology has been gradually expanding its field of vision to study relationships with the environment, change adaptation, struggle for social justice, and policy shaping. As a result, the "demography of climate change" is an expanding field of research in which anthropological concepts and techniques have begun to be applied to contemporary problems such as climate change and sustainability as well as adapting to climate change (Baer & Reuter, 2015).

2.2 Foundations of Climate Change Anthropology

Anthropology's interest in climate-related problems originates from the work conducted by physical anthropologists, archaeological anthropologists, and archaeologists. In addition, these authors investigated how natural climate variability influenced the course of human evolution, the diffusion of human settlement, and the ultimate transformations of society. Researchers like Crumley and Fagan demonstrated how historical climate fluctuations not only affected the rise and fall of civilizations but also triggered migration patterns

over thousands of years (Crumley, 1994; Fagan, 2000). In addition, their work laid the groundwork for understanding how deeply environmental changes shape human societies, setting the stage for today's focus on human-caused climate change.

However, as the Industrial Revolution unfolded, anthropologists began shifting their focus to the ways human activities were altering the environment. The barbaric reliance on fossil fuels and the "growth at all cost" mentality resulted in significant disturbances such as global warming, sea level rise, and loss of biodiversity. Additionally, anthropologists such as Margaret Mead early on noted the strong relationship between social structure and environmental health. On the one hand, she advocated for interdisciplinary collaboration as early as the 1970s, emphasizing the importance of tackling climate problems together (Baer & Reuter, 2015). At the same time, this rising awareness provided the context for anthropologists to explore the intricate interplay between human communities and those environments with which they interact today in a rapidly changing environment.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives Regarding Climate Change in Anthropology

Major theoretical perspectives regarding climate change in anthropology are cultural ecology, cultural interpretive approaches, and critical anthropology, as well as applied anthropology. Each of the following provides a different, through different ways of articulating the interaction between humans and the environment, an account of how, and why, this field came to generate such different results.

2.3.1 Cultural Ecology

Cultural ecology examines the way that people respond to their environment by drawing on their culture, their beliefs, and their livelihood. In addition, it emphasizes the intimate relationship between culture and the environment, demonstrating how groups adapt to changes in the environment. This is just one example, from the research of Mark Nuttall on Arctic Indigenous peoples. Specifically, he explored how such communities respond to a changing climate that threatens their traditional hunting and fishing activities. As research as part of the "Arctic Climate Impact Assessment", his investigations explain how culture and environment interrelate, informing adaptation of ways of life (Nuttall

et al., 2004). Likewise, Ben Orlove's work comparing past cultures, such as the Mayans and Norse, reveals both the advantages and disadvantages of coping with climate change. These are examples that still teach us today (Orlove, 2005).

2.3.2 Cultural Interpretive Approaches

Significantly, cultural interpretive perspectives emphasize how individuals build an understanding of climate change using their understandings and beliefs. On one hand, this approach examines behaviors of local people to changes in the environment perceived or reacted to. On the one hand, it raises questions about global policies that have failed for many reasons to understand these local modes of thought. Susan Crate's work is a good example. She contends that decision-makers assign too much weight to the notion of "adaptation" and ignore the nuanced ways in which communities react to climate change. Also, Crate's research shows how cultural ideas about climate risks shape how people adapt and reveal deeper problems with power and inequality (Crate, 2008).

2.3.3 Critical Anthropology

Critical anthropology is political and explores the interrelations between capitalism, environmental destruction, and injustice. Still, this approach doesn't just criticize; it also calls for change that is fair and just. Anthropologists claim that intensive use of resources and generation of waste, hallmarks of contemporary economics, are the primary drivers of climate problems (Baer & Singer, 2009). Meanwhile, critical anthropology points out that climate impacts are not evenly distributed. The least frequently contributing communities suffer the greatest hardships. In addition, this kind of approach emphasizes the importance of reforming these unjust systems so that people are equipped to handle climate issues in more effective ways and arrange a fairer society.

2.3.4 Applied Anthropology

Applied anthropology focuses, first and foremost, on the solutions to concrete problems, by involving communities, governments, and institutions. Moreover, it emphasizes cultural knowledge and local issues and has incorporated them into actions to mitigate climate change. For instance, applied anthropologists routinely function in such a role as being the broker between research and what local communities want/need to develop plans effectively

for all. Baer and Reuter note that such attempts can lead to solutions that are good for the environment and for local populations (2015).

2.4 Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Policy Implications

Anthropology shows why it is so important for different fields to work together to tackle the environmental challenges we're facing. Naturalists, on the other hand, usually reflect on issues of weather, sea level, and glacial melt, but anthropologists think about how these changes affect people, their ways of life, their cultures, and their communities. On the other hand, this view is being increasingly recognized by organizations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Future Earth. On the one hand, they have typically tended to depend on physical sciences to address climate problems. However, they are recently beginning to incorporate social scientists as they realize that addressing these problems goes beyond the environment, in that it requires understanding people (Baer & Reuter, 2015).

In the context of policy, anthropology (really) promotes a paradigm shift. Policy, rather than focusing on economic growth, should be designed to be equitable and sustainable. Furthermore, they must also make sure that the basic needs of the people, such as food, water, energy, etc. are available to all. Simultaneously, these policies should be able to safeguard local cultures and the ecology. Furthermore, Indigenous and local communities offer generations of knowledge about their surroundings, which can lead to better, more practical solutions. Side by side, this kind of knowledge complements scientific research by adding depth and context to global strategies.

Last, anthropology leads us back to the human element in climate change. But it's not just a matter of demonstrating the impact on individuals. It also explains why some communities are hit harder than others, how they find ways to adapt, and what we can do to create a future that is both fair and sustainable. Through the lens of cultural practices, the prevention of systemic effects, and the integration of various disciplines, anthropology offers practical solutions for climate change that benefit everyone.

3. Study Site and Methodology

The study was carried out in the Nechasalyan Rural Municipality-2, located in the Solukhumbu district of Nepal. This site was chosen, mainly, based on its substantial vulnerability to the consequences of

climate change. The region's geographical setting makes it prone to environmental hazards such as floods, landslides, and irregular rainfall patterns. The population in the area is people from different ethnic groups and their livelihoods depend on agriculture, pastoralism, tourism, and forestry as the main economic activities. Yet, given the growing prevalence of climate-related disasters, much of the necessary research has been overlooked on micro-level studies of the impacts of disasters on communities' livelihoods.

This study tried to explore the perceptions of the effects of climate change on these communities and how these communities cope with environmental issues. For this purpose, a descriptive research design was used with a purposive sampling approach to select 5 participants with knowledgeable as well as direct experience in matters of climate change. Similarly, the data collection utilized qualitative methods, with participants using semi-structured and informal interviews. Data were thematically analyzed following the structure of qualitative analysis.

4. Data Presentation and Interpretation

Rural communities are facing the brunt of climate change and its effects are prominently felt in high-altitude areas such as Nechasalyan in Solukhumbu, Nepal. This area has become a critical focus for research as it offers interesting insights into how climate change impacts the local environment and the people inhabiting it. Primary data collected in the field through interviews indicate the existence of a change that has and continues to affect the environment. Environmental changes which include irregular rainfall, increasing temperatures, and the introduction of new vegetation and insect species are beginning to become the norm, indicating a greater ecological shift.

Residents in Nechasalyan have more than one problem regarding agriculture and livestock that are their major economic activities, they have challenges that cut across all aspects of their lives. These changes result in food inadequacy, increasing water shortages, and alteration of farming systems. The conclusions advocate for policy frameworks that will provide adaptive responses in light of the challenges rural communities face due to the changing global setting. The case studies addressed below outline the different, often devastating, conditions experienced by the people of Nechasalyan and their reactions and coping mechanisms.

4.1 Impact on Agriculture

Global warming has changed temperature regimes, altered rainfall patterns, and caused weather extremes making agriculture in Nechasalyan feel the mark of climate change. The global temperature rise alters the environment in which crops of wheat, rice, maize, and others that require the saturation of warmth tend to grow. Heat stresses push these plants to grow under less than optimal conditions which reduces yield potential. It speeds up the attitude of maturity of crops and reduces the growing days which together constrain yield potential (Lobell et al., 2011; Rosenzweig et al., 2014).

Additionally, changes in weather patterns coupled with rainfall which is also becoming more turbulent create a situation where water resources for crops get limited and places the chances of droughts or flooding higher. These changes are destructive, especially to rain-fed agriculture, which is still very common in many underdeveloped countries. In South Asia, for instance, varying monsoon qualities have caused planting seasons to go out of range thus severely affecting the country's productivity (IPCC, 2021). Nechasalyan's 48-year-old man, Ram Bahadur (Pseudonym) narrates his own experience of these calamities on a personal level:

The rains were everything, ever since I can recall. They were when we needed them, absorbing water into the ground and fertilizing our crops. But it is no longer as simple. The rains don't arrive on time anymore. Suppose they do, either too much or too little. It pours some days so hard it fills the fields and scours away all my labour. And when I stare now at my fields - sodden, scratched, vacant - I cannot help but feel a pit in my stomach. That maize and potatoes I once strutted about and raised my family, they don't even sprout. Each season is a game of a guess and most of the time I'm on the losing end. Everything my dad and grandfather had taught me is now a waste of time. So much weather has happened that I'm trying all the time to know what to do and it's not working. And, the worst part is to think of what this is doing to my family. I want to feed them but it's tougher every year. I thought I was part of this place, but now I am fighting it-and losing. And some days I wonder if I can even keep it up.

Ram Bahadur's testimony reveals how climate change has completely upended traditional agricultural practices in

Nechasalyan. What used to be dependable monsoon rains are now unpredictable, often arriving too late and in overwhelming bursts that flood fields instead of providing the steady moisture crops need. This has resulted in water scarcity, decreased yields, and drastically altered cropping patterns, making it increasingly difficult for farmers to grow enough food to meet their needs. The transition from stable weather patterns to such erratic conditions highlights the urgent need for adaptive agricultural strategies that can better cope with the unpredictable climate.

4.2 Impact of Unseasonal Rainfall and Livelihood

The problem of unseasonal rainfall adds to the woes of the local farmers. Such rainfall has been reported to interfere with subsistence farming, whereby the crops are vandalized, low yields are realized, and food security is aggravated (Ray et al., 2015). More often than not, unseasonal rain waters the crops at the most inopportune times which include flowering and harvest, leading to crop destruction and soil being washed away. Additionally, rainfall at unexpected times like harvest time can lead to immature sprouts of the crops or rot thus lowering the marketable quality of the crops and causing losses to the farmers (FAO, 2019). A 76-year-old woman of Nechasalyan, Hiradevi (Pseudonym), says these dynamics help her understand how her fellow community members have come through this:

When I came here after my marriage, the seasons felt dependable. The rains came on time, and the fields gave us what we needed. We knew when to plant and when to harvest, and life seemed to have a rhythm we could trust. But over the years, everything has changed. The rains don't come when they're supposed to anymore. Sometimes they come late or fall so heavily that the fields flood, and other times they don't come at all, leaving the soil dry and hard. It's disheartening to see the fields like this. They used to be full of maize and potatoes, but now the crops grow less and less. No matter how much I try, it feels like things aren't improving. Each season feels harder than the last, and it's tiring trying to adapt to something I can't control. I still hold on to hope, though. This land has taken care of us for so long, and I believe it can again. I just wish the weather would return to what it once was, so we could go back to the life we knew and trusted.

Hiradevi's account highlights the immense difficulty of adjusting to a rapidly changing climate. Once-predictable weather patterns

have become unpredictable, making it impossible for farmers to plan planting and harvesting schedules. This erratic weather has led to a dramatic decrease in agricultural productivity, forcing families to shift from farming for income to subsistence farming. In many cases, this transformation has led to the migration of younger generations in search of better opportunities elsewhere.

4.3 Health and Public Wellbeing

Notwithstanding, climate change impacts agricultural systems beyond the fields themselves and consequently brings important implications for public health. The rise in extreme meteorological events, rising temperatures, and changing disease epidemiology are placing heavy demands on public health. Heatwaves and temperature increases are linked to an increase in heat-related diseases (dehydration or heatstroke) particularly in high-risk groups such as children or the elderly (Haines et al., 2006). Changes in rainfall regimes and flooding create ideal conditions for waterborne diseases (e.g., cholera and dysentery) in regions with limited sanitation infrastructure (McMichael et al., 2006).

In addition, the changing climate is also affecting the distribution of certain diseases, such as malaria and dengue, due to the increased range of their vectors, including mosquitoes, to new territories (Patz et al., 2005). Socioeconomic status, however, usually increases these effects because there are not sufficient resources for most minorities to respond to these health challenges. Sherjung (Pseudonym), 39 years old, a teacher of Nechasalyan, speaks about the effects that he has noticed due to the preexisting climate changes on the health of people:

I learned firsthand about the consequences of climate change through working on different climate change projects in my village. It's dismal to realize my friends coming to urban areas, thus leaving their village, due to the challenges ascribed to climate change, in search of better opportunities. Losses in agriculture and livestock breeding have extended the certain environments of folk living in regions where it is increasingly difficult to sustain a viable livelihood against climate change that has now become a part of our life routine, not the only thing that has changed in our food or clothes. Floods and landslides, as natural disasters, have achieved this by diminishing agricultural land and killing more residents of the community. I have identified during my role as a teacher, an aversive increase in

health conditions in children, such as eye infections, conjunctivitis, and common illnesses (diarrhea, common cold), suspecting that there is a link with climate change.

Sherjung's testimony highlights all the complex effects of climate change on rural populations. Not only does it affect livelihoods, but it also introduces a host of health challenges, from waterborne diseases to respiratory infections. The rise of such natural disasters as inundation and landslides further compound these health risks by depleting the amount of arable land and causing injuries. The increasing number of medical problems in children, in particular, points to the need for broad adaptation measures to safeguard public health in the context of climate change.

4.4 Impact on Biodiversity and Livelihoods

Along with sea level rise, climate change represents a major threat to biodiversity because in the perpetual process of changing climate parameters ecosystems are continuously destroyed and species are redistributed, increasing the risk of species extinction. This has wider implications for the local communities that provide food, pharmaceuticals, and income in return for biodiversity. Amrit Sherpa (Pseudonym) a 39-year-old farmer, described the decline of local biodiversity:

I've worked in the farming sector for the last decade and the environment has changed immensely. I have seen the climate change that affected our ecology and biodiversity. Just exploring the remnants of all the Indigenous plants and species now in the phase of extinction and our forests, lakes, and meadows that become degraded due to erosion over time, we felt that finding similar outlooks would be a major challenge. However, the most apparent is bare fields instead of our grasslands due to rainfall reduction as well as water deficits. Species like Kafal, Pipal, and Dhayera, which used to be the most common ones, have now become very rare. Hence, although these foodstuffs may still be marketed, these in the meantime are of major importance to me. Ways of selecting storage space and introducing transport facilities are great challenges facing me about moving my produce to the market, but often I confront middlemen that undervalue my performance and damage my profit margins.

Amrit's log also shows the heavy consequences of climate change on the biodiversity of Nechasalyan. Damage to ecosystems and the

extinction of native species, for instance, are some of the most obvious consequences of climate change. In response, Amrit has been adjusting by growing new cash crops such as kiwi and cardamom, which have now become the region's cash crops of choice. Nevertheless, he is limited from promoting his crops owing to the inability to develop appropriate infrastructure. If storage and transportation infrastructure is not provided, he is at a disadvantage in bringing his harvest to market and often has to seek the services of middlemen who pay him low prices while reducing his margins.

Amrit's story demonstrates both the resilience and adaptability of farmers in Nechasalyan in the face of climate change. Nevertheless, it also draws attention to the systemic limitations (E.g., lack of infrastructure) that prevent their success. The loss of biodiversity, compounded by insufficient infrastructure, poses a serious threat to the economic stability of rural communities.

4.5 Livestock and Climate Change

The livestock industry is experiencing the adverse effects of climate change in the form of rising average temperatures, climate variability, and recurring climatic hazards, all of which negatively affect animal health and production. High temperatures lead to heat stress, which negatively impacts milk yield, reproduction, and weight gain in livestock, in turn, precipitation changes impact the livestock grazing and forage lands. The impact of natural hazards such as floods and landslides also contribute to increased challenges by cutting back the quality of pastures and the amount of water available, which in the long run, puts the interests of farmers who depend on livestock for economic survival and other needs at risk (FAO, 2018; IPCC, 2021). Among, Pasang Sherpa (Pseudonym), a 37 years old farmer of Nechasalyan says:

Floods, landslides, and variable rainfall make it challenging to manage our livestock. Rainy seasons were a foregone conclusion and the overgrazed pastures had never been more than adequate to feed our animals. Today's rains are different, they may all come at once or after a prolonged period of drought. The floods have swept away the grass and landslips have left some places uninhabited, which means we have a lesser number of grazing places. Unsatisfactory levels of forage and water availability have now compromised the health of our livestock and our milk production is greatly down. Lack of enough quality and quantity

of fodders has also made our livestock difficult to fatten or to become pregnant. This has resulted in a reduced number of animals and consequently, reduced production of what we have historically used to expect, i.e., the production outcome.

Pasang's experience highlights the disruptions caused by climate change, which has led to degraded pasture, limited water resources, and a decrease in livestock productivity. Farmers are switching to less-demanding animals but this is far from a simple solution with its own set of problems. Adaptation requires novel abilities, novel food categories and a novel trophic level. Nevertheless, these modifications are both necessary for environmentally sustainable livestock production under climate change.

5. Major Findings

- ▶ Because of climate change, the people experience unpredictable monsoon patterns; grossly reduced crop yield from shortened growing seasons generally disrupted traditional agriculture on which communities depended for generations.
- ▶ Unseasonal rainfall during the period of critical growth and harvest resulted in large-scale damage to crops, soil erosion, and a reduction in agricultural productivity, which has forced many families to give up income farming and focus on subsistence agriculture for survival.
- ▶ Rising temperatures, increased extreme weather events, and altered rainfall patterns increase health risks, such as waterborne diseases, heat-related illnesses, and respiratory infections, most of which especially affect the vulnerable groups of children and the elderly.
- ▶ Ecosystem degradation and loss of biodiversity because of climate change have reduced the number of indigenous plant species; farmers had to adapt by cultivating new cash crops, such as kiwi and cardamom, but their efforts are crippled by limited storage, transportation infrastructure, and market access.
- ▶ Erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and extreme weather events have degraded pastures and reduced grazing land, leading to declines in livestock productivity and forcing farmers to explore alternative livestock management strategies despite associated challenges.

6. Conclusion

This research shows the mitigation of the challenges faced by rural communities, the ecosystems and livelihoods in high-altitude areas like Nechasalyan Rural Municipality-Ward No 2 in Solukhumbu, Nepal due to climate change. The erratic occurrence of rainfall, heat waves, and severe storms have caused damage to the age-old methods of farming, reduced the stock of animal's husbandry, and resulted in the degeneration of the wildlife. Such issues have contributed to low levels of agricultural production, insufficiency of water resources for irrigation and impaired efficiency in animal husbandry, resulting in a transition from commercial farming to survival farming. The disruptions have also worsened food security, increased human mobility and changed dependency on ecological means, highlighting the relationship between environmental change and people's vulnerability and social economic conditions.

Regardless of the effort's made, such as improving crop rotation and altering the management of livestock for the purpose of improving adaptation, some of the entrenched barriers still remain. An explanation for the inherent geographical areas populations that are vulnerable may include such strategies as targeting policies to ensure vulnerable communities have access to climate-proof infrastructure, appropriate farming practices and relevant resources for effective adaptation. This shows how important it is for leaders and people involved to act quickly to deal with the growing dangers of climate change. We need to work on building a future that is good for everyone, especially those who are often left out. The results make it clear that working together is essential to help these areas deal with the problems caused by a changing climate.

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Managing Water for Sustainable Cities in Kerala: Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract

While Water crisis has become a universal phenomenon of the global risk society, the contemporary institutions are being crafted not only to mitigate the challenges, but also evolve strategies to find local solutions to global hydraulic issues. In the backdrop of sustainable goals SDG 6 and SDG 11, this article examines the Water management challenges to Urbanization by analyzing the contemporary cases of Water issues in cities. The article articulates how the Kerala society is not only navigating with the Water management challenges but also develop policies to effectively deal with the current and future Water needs of Urbanization.

Keywords

Urbanization, Flash floods, Water scarcity, Water policy, SDG 6 AND SDG 11, People's participation.

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Managing Water for Sustainable Cities in Kerala: Challenges and the Way Forward

1. Introduction

Water mirrors society (Dasthagir, 2024), as social life on the planet is intimately and intricately intertwined with water and not only human survival is premised in the Water; water shapes and reshapes social life, human interaction, and relationships in various ways, such as by structuring institutions, inequalities, and development. Historical evidence shows that Urban life emerged due to the congregation of people accompanied by the population growth on the Riverbanks. Demographical changes, development, and advancements in infrastructure, communication, and Information technology have accelerated growth and spread of the emergence of Cities and Towns. Accordingly, Urbanization has a strong and close association with the Water resources. Therefore, Water is not only a source of human survival, but it is also the basis on which Urbanization has become universal.

Though, there is a strong affinity between Water resources and Urbanization, the centrality of water resources for Urbanization has recently emanated challenges in the wake of the expansion of cities and the highly dense urban population. While urban growth facilitates economic opportunities and improved living standards, it also exerts immense pressure on natural resources, particularly Water. Of late, Urbanization has become synonym for water management challenges. Since, Rapid population growth, expanding economies, and changing lifestyles impose tremendous pressure on urban water systems (Pandey, 2021; Talat, 2021). The negative consequences of Urbanization to Water resources manifest in the form of obliterating water bodies, polluting water bodies, or shrinking water resources. While the encroachment of water bodies and wetlands by the residential and commercial plots largely diminish Water bodies, the industrial effluents and Urban community waste lead to despoliation of water resources.

Thus, Water resource management is considerably impacted by rapid urbanization and population growth, which results in

challenges such as scarcity, flash flooding, and contamination of waterways (Adeyinka Alex Bansa et al., 2023; Mishra et al., 2020). The urban water crisis radiates well beyond the confines of the city, affecting neighboring environments and serve urban populations (Singh et al., 2022). Since the Urban population is consistently growing on a daily basis, the water management challenges are assuming grave proportion in contemporary Urban society. Concomitantly, the cities evolved because of Water are currently facing predicaments when Water is mismanaged. Thus, in the backdrop of the drive to accomplish sustainable goals wiz. SDG 6 for clean water and SDG 11 for Sustainable cities, this paper examines contemporary Urban Water management challenges in Kerala. The study relies on existing secondary data, including Government reports and websites, media reports and articles, and academic databases.

2. Water Situation in Kerala

Kerala, a state renowned for its abundant vegetation and numerous lakes and rivers, is not an exception to the global trend. Kerala possesses 55,734 water bodies across the State comprising Tanks, Lakes, Reservoirs, and Ponds (Water Bodies, First Census Report, 2023). Kerala is known for high amounts of rainfall and precipitation. 'The average rainfall of the State is 3,055 mm, which is two times more than that of national average' (Economic Review, 2017). In the context of Kerala, the challenges of urban water management are exacerbated by several factors. The State's unique geographical features, including its hilly terrain and extensive network of rivers and backwaters, make it susceptible to floods and droughts. The rapid urbanization and population growth have led to increased water demand, pollution, and degradation of water resources. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure, pollution, and inefficient water use practices have compounded the problem.

3. Water Management Challenges Confronting Urbanization in Kerala

3-1 Water Pollution and Challenges to Urban Life

Access to safe Water is a basic need for every human being. Water, as the most vital natural resource for the existence of life, was declared as a human right by the UN General Assembly in 2010 (The Human Right to Water and Sanitation, n.d.). Yet, Safe and Clean

Water is an illusion for a large section of society. In 2022, globally, at least 1.7 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces (The Human Right to Water and Sanitation n.d.). Faecal contamination poses the greatest risk to drinking water safety. (Drinking Water, n.d.). Kerala, a place known for abundant water resources, is also facing water pollution due to industrial effluents and community discharges. Kerala is one among the states where the ground water contains the toxic elements like Arsenic and Fluoride (Sabha, n.d.). This year, two large-scale water pollution incidents occurred in two of the biggest water bodies in the State: Periyar River, Ernakulam, and Ashtamudi Lake, Kollam.

Periyar is the longest river in Kerala. The river is a vital source of Water for the region, with several purification units providing drinking water to the population (Khalid et al., 2018). The Periyar River which serves as a critical resource for local populations, supporting livelihoods through agriculture and fishing, is constantly polluted by the industries located on its banks with negative consequences to river's ecosystem, local communities and regional biodiversity. On May 21st, 2024, the Periyar River's Edayar- Eloor Industrial region experienced a dangerous environmental crisis where thousands of fish began to float dead. The incident involved a discharge of hazardous chemicals into the river from industrial plants in the Eloor industrial area, particularly affecting the water quality and the local ecosystem. The leakage caused widespread contamination of the river, leading to the death of numerous aquatic species and severely impacting the livelihoods of local communities dependent on fishing and agriculture (Martin, 2024).

Also, the studies show that faecal contamination and industrial effluents are present at an alarming level in the Periyar River (Water Quality of Medium & Minor Rivers under NWMP Data, 2022). A preliminary report by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) on the mass fish kill along the Eloor-Edayar stretch of the Periyar River has indicated the presence of dangerously high levels of ammonium and hydrogen sulphide in the water samples collected for analysis. The discharge of chemicals to the river happened when three shutters at the Pathalam regulator-cum-bridge were opened by the Irrigation Department.

A similar incident happened at Ashtamudi Lake in Kadavur, Kollam. Ashtamudi lake, the second largest lake in the State and a

Ramsar site, is prone to consistent dumping of plastic, poultry waste, abattoir waste, and sewage lines from many households. A mass fish death happened in the lake last week in October due to alleged pollution. The studies conducted by Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, Kerala University and Kerala State pollution Control Board revealed that the lake was under pollution distress with high amount of micro plastics and sewage wastes (Sudhish, 2024). Even though the Kollam Corporation has launched various schemes to preserve the lake, the lack of coordination and follow-ups has hindered their effectiveness, resulting in limited progress and continued environmental degradation.

3.2 Water Disasters and Challenges to Urban Life

With cloudbursts and flash rains frequently visiting the State, the urban centres became highly prone to flash foods. Proper and well-functioning drainage systems are very essential to tackle these challenges. Urban drainage systems are crucial in controlling water logging and flooding in cities, especially in the wake of climate change and rapid urbanization (Cai et al., 2024). Developing countries are facing more urban flooding scenarios than developed countries due to poor planning of drainage systems (Menon & Sharma, 2022; Pervin et al., 2020).

Kochi, one of the largest cities in Kerala, faced a flash flood during the start of the southwest monsoon this year. The city was found submerged under Water after a few hours of intense rain on May 22nd, 2024 (Sreemol, 2024). Waterlogging in the city is an ongoing problem, as flash floods of this nature have been reported annually in various newspapers. Panampilly Nagar, MG Road, Kadavanthra, Petta junction, KSRTC bus stand, etc, are the frequently flooded places inside the city (Heavy rain caused Water logging in Kochi city, Manorama Online, n.d.). Encroachment and the obstruction of proper canal flow of Mullassery Canal, located on the city's western side, have further exacerbated flooding in the area (Menon & Sharma, 2022). Kerala Government launched a scheme to control the flash floods in the city named 'Operation Breakthrough' in 2019 (Flood Mitigation Kochi, 2021). It was envisaged to clean the existing drainage systems, canals and to build new water flow pathways to avoid waterlogging the city. Yet, Various news reports shows that the drainage systems are filled with plastic bottles, broken tiles and other sediments which aggravated the situation worse. Solid wastes

accumulated in drainage affect the entire drainage system, which results in waterlogging at the time of rain fall (Pervin et al., 2020). The annual flooding in the city during the monsoon shows that the limited capacity of drainage systems in Kochi city should be rechecked and integrated policy measures to be taken urgently to address the issue. Waterlogging and flash floods were also reported in various Municipalities and Towns in the Districts of Palakkad and Malappuram.

3-3 Water Scarcity and Challenges to Urban Life

Water scarcity has become a major concern throughout the world. Urban centres are facing acute water shortages due to various reasons. Rapid Urbanization, population growth, and climate change play crucial roles in water scarcity (Jiang, 2009). The number of urban residents who lack access to safe drinking water has increased by more than 50% (UN Water, 2021). Kerala faces water scarcity, with less than 562 m³ annual per capita water availability in some places (Prasood et al., 2021). Kerala, once termed as Water rich state is now became Water scarce state due to various Anthropogenic activities like over extraction of Water, Concretization and conversion of Agricultural lands and wetlands to residential and commercial plots. Kerala's groundwater level is in alarming condition, where nine districts have semi-critical groundwater tables (Ground Water Resources of Kerala, 2020). Along with that, the privatization of Water also contributes to Water Scarcity. Water scarcity and privatization of water are interconnected issues that have significant social, economic, and environmental implications (Johnson et al., 2016). The coastal cities of Kerala experiencing intrusion of salt water to the existing ground water tables, which in turn affects the day-to-day life of coastal communities.

3-4 Mismanagement of Municipal Water Supply and Challenges to Urban Life

Mismanagement of the Governing institutions and stakeholders are also contributing to water scarcity and shortages. For instance, Cape Town's "Day Zero" water crisis shows how urban water scarcity is not solely the lack of physical water availability but also of governance, infrastructure, and social factors (Bischoff-Mattson et al., 2020). This scarcity is exacerbated by increasing water demand in densely populated areas and inadequate water management infrastructure. Kerala faced acute water shortage challenges during

the summer of 2024. Major district capital cities like Palakkad, Kollam, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram faced the scarcity of Water. In Malappuram Municipality, the supply of drinking water stopped due to the tank constructed in the Kadalundi River drying up. Kerala Water Authority, the Government agency which is the active supplier of Drinking Water to households in Kerala, had to fill the tank by carrying the Water through tankers to meet the crisis.

Along with the scorching summer, the numerous leakages of age-old water supply pipes and infra structures exacerbated this scarcity. It is reported that the tanks and pumps that are used to supply Water to households are approximately 40 years old ("Malappuram Town under Water Scarcity Threat", 2022). Kollam district also faced acute water shortages due to extreme summer. In addition, the concreting of the Kallada irrigation project prevented the Water from percolating into the soil, and it affected the groundwater recharge disastrously ("Water scarcity in the district", 2024), which is an example of unsustainable management of water resources.

Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, had to undergo five days (From September 05th to September 10th, 2024) without drinking Water due to the restoration works of the water supply pipelines. Initially the KWA, announced that the works will be carried out within 24 hours, but the lack of coordination and proper planning resulted in the prolonged maintenance work. The crisis affected nearly half of the wards of the Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation. The water supply system of Thiruvananthapuram is one among the oldest existing in the country (J. Kumar, 2024). A well-planned restructuring of the system is needed for the city to ensure a long-term water supply.

4. Institutional Reforms and Emerging Urban Governance in Kerala

Kerala is lauded as the model for several aspects of social development of which Water management is not an exception. The Government of India and the Government of Kerala actively implemented various plans for the equitable allocation and distribution, conservation, and sustainable use of Water. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) is the flagship programme of Union Government which focuses on development of basic infrastructure, Water supply and drainage system. After that, another plan called the AMRUT 2.0 scheme was launched on October

01st, 2021, for a period of 5 years, aiming to provide universal coverage of water supply through functional taps to all households in all the statutory towns in the country. AMRUT 2.0 will promote the supply of Water through the development of a City Water Balance Plan (CWBP) for each city, focusing on reuse of treated sewage, rejuvenation of water bodies, and water conservation. It will help cities to identify the scope for projects focusing on universal coverage of functional water tap connections, water source conservation, rejuvenation of water bodies, reuse of treated used Water, and rainwater harvesting. Based on the projects identified in CWBP, the Mission envisages making cities' Water secure' through circular economy of Water (Amrut Scheme, 2022). The scheme is aligning with Sustainable Developmental Goal 6, which ensures Safe and clean Water for all. In Kerala, six corporations and three municipalities are listed as the AMRUT mission cities in the scheme.

Kerala Government has envisaged unique policies to address Water crisis to resolve Water management challenges towards the achievement of Sustainable Cities, which adhere with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Kerala Government, under Haritha Kerala Mission, introduced another water conservation and sustainable use scheme called water budget, the first of its kind in India on April 17th, 2023. 'A water Budget is a document that assesses the water availability against its utilization in a specific geographical region' (Navakeralam Karma Padhathi, n.d.). The Water Budget is aiming to resolve the water scarcity of the local community on a scientific basis by developing potential interventions and participatory campaigns and through coordination of the Local Self-Government Institutions (<https://haritham.kerala.gov.in>, n.d.). Also, people's participation is ensured in various localized schemes and policies of Government and local self-bodies for the conservation and rejuvenation of Water resources.

5. Way Forward

Kerala, like most of the developing region, experiencing rapid urbanization and population growth. An integrated approach to development is needed for the State to adhere to sustainable practices of usage and conservation of Water. About two billion people worldwide does not have access to safe and clean drinking water (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023).

The water-scarce Indian urban population of 153 million in 2016 may increase up to 422 million in 2050 (Sahu & Debsarma, 2023). Waterman of India, the Magsaysay award winner Rajendra Singh says that Kerala needs a river rejuvenation strategy and 'Water literacy' to conserve Water (World Water Day | Disaster Beckons Kerala. Heed the Waterman's Warning, n.d.). Kerala needs a holistic approach to address the various issues of pollution, water scarcity, Groundwater depletion, and flash floods. To address these challenges, Kerala can adopt integrated urban water management (IUWM) approaches. IUWM links various elements, such as spatial planning, stormwater management, and urban environment, to provide a more holistic approach to water management (Feilberg & Mark, 2016). Understanding hydro social cycles is essential for addressing complex water-related challenges. Effective water management must prioritize equity, sustainability, and local accountability (Sultana, 2018). It is crucial for public health, environmental protection, and economic growth. However, a multitude of factors, such as population growth, industrialization, and climate change, can disrupt the delicate balance of urban water systems.

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Breastfeeding Knowledge and Practices: Exploring Awareness, Challenges, and Misconceptions among Mothers in Lalitpur, Nepal

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Abstract

Breastfeeding behavior, though fundamental to mothers' and infants' health, is still affected by socio-cultural, economic, and medical factors. The current study explores breastfeeding knowledge, practice, and difficulties of mothers in Lalitpur Metropolitan City-25, Bhaisepati, Nepal. Similarly, I selected 50 respondents by using purposive sampling and conducted semi-structured interviews. I found that despite seventy-eight percent of respondents having started breastfeeding within one hour and ninety percent recognizing the value of colostrum, there is still a shortfall in exclusive breastfeeding behaviors. Specifically, forty-two percent doubt the adequacy of breast milk for the first six months, and misconceptions about preserving expressed breast milk are prevalent, with sixty-eight percent suggesting frying as a method of preservation. Furthermore, socio-cultural orientations, economic factors, and the absence of work support are all implicated in suboptimal breastfeeding behavior. In addition, this paper proposes the necessity for targeted interventions, such as professional training and policy reform, to counteract cultural prejudice, economic limitations, and structural barriers.

Keywords

Breastfeeding practices, Socio-cultural perceptions, Colostrum, Exclusive breastfeeding, Lalitpur, Nepal.

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1. Introduction

Breastfeeding is an integral part of obstetrical and infant health, and the optimal growth of the child depends on the optimal supply of nutrients. It is well established that it should be the preferred mode of feeding of an infant, and breast milk provides all the needs and has an array of health benefits (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012). Moreover, breastfeeding has been an intrinsic part of the culture and biology of the human condition for centuries, but practice still depends on a diverse array of socio-cultural, economic, and health-care-related factors.

The benefits of breastfeeding extend beyond nutrition, offering immune protection to infants, reducing the risk of infections, and fostering cognitive development (Victora et al., 2016). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated to be associated with an increased risk of the development of chronic disease (e.g., diabetes, obesity) in adulthood. For mothers, breastfeeding offers benefits such as hormonal balance, faster postpartum recovery, and a reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancers. Therefore, breastfeeding is also identified as a top priority in global public health.

Although effective, the establishment and length of breastfeeding are extensively determined by socio-cultural views and behaviors. First, in most cultures, breastfeeding is regarded as a normal and essential aspect of being a mother, and there are social norms promoting the extended practice of breastfeeding. During these situations, practice is recommended as early as possible after birth and repeated several times over a long period of time. However, the nursing of an infant in the presence of others may be seen as an inappropriate or even private act in some other cultures, such as in public spaces. Such beliefs may stop mothers from going for breastfeeding in the open or for the usual length of time (Kumar & Singhal, 2016).

Economic factors are also important to influence breastfeeding behavior. For instance, research points to the difficulty low-income mothers face in sustaining exclusive breastfeeding, in part, to the confluence of socio-economic factors such as the limitations of work schedules and absence of access to healthcare support (Mwase, et al., 2021). In addition, it is of utmost importance that health care staff educate and empower mothers to breastfeed. For example, research in Bangladesh shows that counseling from healthcare providers is associated with an increased proportion of breastfeeding attempts and persistence (Haider et al., 2018).

Religious prejudices and historical practices add more and more factors to the situation of breastfeeding. For instance, breastfeeding in public is frowned upon in some African communities, such as due to concern that the nursing child will be exposed to malevolent spirits (Afolayan et al., 2018). Similarly, for some Asian populations, colostrum, the richly milked first milk, is seen as unclean and therefore discarded, as a result of misinformation regarding its quality. Consequently, these practices can delay the start of breastfeeding and have adverse consequences for the maternal and child health indicators.

Feeding practices in Nepal represent a mixture between traditional culture and contemporary influences. Evidence is that although the majority of mothers begin breastfeeding by one hour postpartum, some mothers also give prolaternal feeds, for example, honey or sugar water, which violate recommendations of global health (Karkee et al., 2016). Moreover, family members (grandparents) have a strong influence on breastfeeding decisions and may conversely promote formula feeding instead of exclusive breastfeeding (Shrestha et al., 2019). Likewise, health care personnel in Nepal are decisive in supporting breastfeeding, yet the training and knowledge gaps of health care personnel hinder their contribution in assisting mothers (Khatri et al., 2018).

In view of the intricate relationship of socio-cultural, economic, and health-related factors, context-specific research is now overdue to gain insights into breastfeeding practices. Finally, the purpose of this study is to investigate socio-cultural perceptions and practices of breastfeeding among mothers living in Lalitpur Metropolitan City-25, Bhaishapati, Nepal. In an attempt to offer the counseling information needed to develop targeted intervention strategies, this study

attempts to achieve insight into the breastfeeding patterns in the study region through socio-demographic status and cultural factors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Breastfeeding Practices

Breastfeeding behavior is influenced by a number of socio-cultural and economic factors, and sociological theorizing can explain them. Symbolic interactionism, social exchange theory, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice are the most relevant theoretical perspectives to interpret breastfeeding behavior and beliefs.

2.1.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism asserts that human practices are shaped by social transactions and the assumptive meanings attached to them. Furthermore, not only is breastfeeding far from being a biological process itself, but it is also very deeply ingrained in the beliefs and values of the culture (Ryan, 2019). For example, in some cultures, breastfeeding is celebrated as a natural and essential aspect of motherhood, while in others, it may carry stigma when performed in public. Here, to highlight this aspect of the theory, the nature of how socialization processes influence decisions to breastfeed is focused around the role played by social norms and values as transmitted through the family, friends, and healthcare professionals (Nunes et al., 2019).

Evidence for the hypotheses regarding the impact of cultural appraisal on breastfeeding practices is also strong. For instance, a study by Merewood et al. (2010) reported that Latina women who considered breastfeeding fundamental to their culture were more likely to start and continue breastfeeding. Similarly, Qureshi et al. (2018) emphasized the role of social support, noting that encouragement from family members and healthcare providers positively influenced breastfeeding practices among Pakistani women.

2.1.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory postulates that people act on the basis of perceived costs and benefits. For example, in the context of breastfeeding, mothers accept tradeoffs of health/emotional risks for self and infant against potential challenges such as unappealing physical discomfort and social rejection (Papinczak et al., 2015).

Furthermore, evidence has demonstrated that mothers in low-income housing experience a greater prevalence of insufficient breastfeeding (DiGirolamo et al., 2005) because of perceptions of barriers, such as inadequate access to lactation consultants and breast pumps. Additionally, social support has been demonstrated to overcome these barriers. Odom et al. (2013) reported that African American women breastfed most often when their maternal family and health professionals provided support.

2.1.3 Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

According to Bourdieu's theory of practice, social structures, including class and culture, exert a controlling influence on the way behaviors can be executed. Further, according to Bourdieu, feeding is a mediation process that consists of localizing the maternal social capital acquired within the context of socialization and professional activities (Bourdieu, 1977).

Researchers have also been applying Bourdieu's conceptualization to define breastfeeding in different contexts. For example, Liamputtong and Yimyam (2008) found that cultural factors related to maternal attachment in the shape of positive strong beliefs in the value of Thai strong positivity promote breastfeeding. Similarly, McInnes et al. (2013) stated that decisions of Australian women to breastfeed were affected by current social norms and the presence of supportive environments.

2.2 Empirical Studies on Breastfeeding Practices

2.2.1 Socio-Cultural Influences

Socio-cultural determinants and associated behaviors exert significant influence on breastfeeding practices. For example, in Nigeria, Ogbo et al. (2018) have stated that the effects of both positive and negative cultural beliefs of breastfeeding additively influenced breastfeeding. However, despite the promotion of early start and extended breastfeeding, misinformation around colostrum resulted in an increase in the time taken for initiation of breastfeeding. Similarly, Zainudin et al. (2020) evidenced that in Malaysia, cultural factors, family, and work communities helped in positive effects on breastfeeding attitudes.

As well, breastfeeding practices in Nepal are greatly affected by traditional gender roles and family context. Marahatta et al. (2019) also observed that maternal and paternal grandparents can routinely

influence feeding (such as in favor of formula feeding rather than exclusive breastfeeding).

2.2.2 Economic Factors

Breastfeeding is driven by socioeconomic status in terms of resource access as well as competing demands. For instance, low-income mothers in the United States cited financial constraints and workplace policies as barriers to breastfeeding (DiGirolamo et al., 2005). Moreover, in Nepal, Karkee et al. (2016) reported that financial pressures often push mothers to discontinue exclusive breastfeeding earlier than recommended.

2.2.3 Role of Healthcare Providers

Healthcare providers are pivotal in promoting breastfeeding. For instance, Kaviani et al. (2019) reported that positive reinforcement and health professional backing effectively promoted breastfeeding at initiation in Iran. However, Marahatta et al. (2019) recognized knowledge gaps in the healthcare providers of Nepal that prevent effective promotion of breastfeeding.

2.2.4 Policy Interventions

Breastfeeding promotion has also been a major interest for international health programs. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months by the WHO is proposed along with continued exclusive breastfeeding with complementary feeding up to 2 years or beyond (WHO, 2003). Particularly, the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has proven successful in increasing perinatal breastfeeding rates through guidance based on concrete cases for health care facilities (UNICEF, n.d.).

In Nepal, there is a national Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health Long-Term Plan (2016-2030) (Nepal Ministry of Health and Population, 2016), aiming to raise exclusive breastfeeding rates from 66% to 85% in Nepal by the year 2030. In addition, the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Act, 2017 has been revised to regulate the promotion of breast milk substitutes and to promote a breastfeeding supportive environment (Government of Nepal, 2017). However, implementation at the system level remains challenging, particularly in the context of rural and deprived areas (UNICEF Nepal, n.d.).

In this context, the literature also affects the complexity of breastfeeding behavior induced by social-cultural views, economic constraints, and access to health care. Sociological theories-symbolic

interactionism, social exchange theory, and practice theory-shed light on these dynamics. Last, efficacious interventions must be informed by socio-cultural, economic, and systemic barriers to promote the best practices in exclusive breastfeeding. In Nepal, strengthening policy implementation and enhancing the capacity of healthcare providers can play a crucial role in improving breastfeeding outcomes.

3. Research Site and Methodology

The research was carried out in Lalitpur Metropolitan City-25, Bhaishepati, Lalitpur district. This place was chosen because it is a heterogeneous community consisting of people from different ethnic, caste, and religious groups. The platform provided a novel way to interact with participants that came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, including many participants that were engaged in income-generating (e.g., beauty salon business) activities. Out of the universe, a total of 50 women with children under the age of two years were selected as respondents by using purposive sampling method. Similarly, I used a descriptive study design to effectively describe breastfeeding practices in the study area.

Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected in the field by conducting semi-structured interviews to collect rich data. Secondary data was collected from books, articles, institutional reports, and online publications. The collected data was successively cleaned and preprocessed and analyzed by using the software package Excel and a manual approach. Quantitative data was summarized in tables, graphs, and statistical analysis, whereas qualitative data was summarized descriptively in order to give an account of breastfeeding practices of mothers in the study region.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents reveals an overall picture of education, marital status, marital order, religion, and labor status. These factors are important to decipher the context in which breastfeeding practices are carried out. The following table summarizes data from several categories: education, marital status, marriage type, religion, and occupation, to give an all-encompassing picture of the respondents' backgrounds.

Table-1 : Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category/Variables	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
Educational Level		
No formal schooling	4	8.0
Primary	6	12.0
Secondary	20	40.0
Tertiary	12	24.0
Postgraduate	8	16.0
Marital Status		
Single	3	6.0
Married	39	78.0
Divorced/Separated	4	8.0
Widow/Widower	4	8.0
Type of Marriage		
Monogamy	30	60.0
Polygamy	13	26.0
Others	7	14.0
Religion		
Hindu	40	80.0
Christian	4	8.0
Muslim	1	2.0
Others	5	10.0
Occupation		
Housewife	11	22.0
Student	4	8.0
Unskilled worker	6	12.0
Skilled worker	9	18.0
Professional	13	26.0
Unemployed	7	14.0
Total	50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Table-1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, showing a heterogeneous sample in terms of their education, marital status, marital system, religion, and job. Educational levels ranged from no formal schooling (8%) to postgraduate qualifications (16%), with secondary education being the most common (40%). Most participants (78%) were married, with monogamy being the most common form of marriage (60%). In terms of religion, Hinduism was the most prevalent, practiced by 80% of respondents, followed by smaller proportions identifying as Christian (8%), Muslim (2%), or other religions (10%). In terms of occupation, respondents were classified into more than one category: 26% professionals and 22% housewives. This table presents the heterogeneity of the respondent sample and constitutes a basis for the socio-cultural and economic analysis of their practices of breastfeeding.

4.2 Child Demographics of the Respondents

Knowledge about the children's demographic status involved in the study is crucial for the analysis of breastfeeding practices and their correlation with family structure, child development, and maternal decision-making. This paragraph summarizes data on the number of children, months of age, and sex, giving a summary of the respondents' family composition and practices of child rearing. The data also shows children per household, the most crucial age groups for nutritional needs, and the sex ratio of children in the group of respondents. These considerations are important in investigating the socio-cultural and economic dictates of breastfeeding choices and behavior. The following shows more concrete information about the child distributions derived from the field survey.

Table-2 : Child Demographics of the Respondents

Category/Variables	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
Number of Children		
One	36	72.0
Two	13	26.0
Three	1	2.0
Age of Child (Months)		
0-6	13	26.0
7-12	10	20.0

13-18	7	14.0
19-24	20	40.0
Gender of Child		
Female	29	58.0
Male	21	42.0
Others	—	—
Total	50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table offers some interesting and useful data about children in study population. It shows that a majority of subjects (72% have one child, thereby implying a family size trend towards miniaturization, that could affect parental attention and parental caregiving behaviours. The balance of respondents has two (26% or three (2% children, so there is some variation in family size.

From the standpoint of age, it is especially striking that 40% of the children belong to the 19-24-month-old age-group, and the breast milk becomes a complementary food in their diet. At the same time, 26% of them are 0-6 months-old infants, highlighting the necessity of exclusive breastfeeding at the early developmental period of infants (0-6 months). Gender distribution indicates that 58% of children are females and 42% are males which is slightly higher female child proportion in the respondent sample. This demographic breakdown provides a foundation for understanding the breastfeeding practices and challenges faced by mothers, particularly in terms of addressing the nutritional and developmental needs of their children across different age groups and family sizes.

4.3 Delivery Information of Respondents

The context and route at which care is provided is critical in determining the health care access and organization of care that the respondents report. This information is telling us something about how delivery settings and procedures affect maternal and child health outcomes, and most importantly, breastfeeding behaviours. Table-3 summarizes the data on the location and mode of respondents' delivery on next page.

The above mentioned table shows that the highest number of respondents delivered the children at institutionalized settings, by 34% at the hospital, by 32% at the hospital/government hospitals/

health centers, and by 26% at private hospitals. Only 8% provided delivery at home, suggesting a high preference for institutional delivery service among this group. With regard to delivery types, the most frequent were Caesarean sections (54%), followed by normal deliveries (34%) and assisted vaginal deliveries (12%). The high prevalence of Caesarean sections could reflect advancements in medical practices or indicate underlying health challenges during pregnancy. These results indicate dependence upon institutionalized delivery services and contemporary delivery formats that may be affecting early approaches to breastfeeding and experiences of maternal recovery.

Table-3 : Delivery Information of Respondents

Category/Variables	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
Place of Delivery		
Hospital	17	34.0
Other Govt. Hospital/Health Center	16	32.0
Private Hospital	13	26.0
Home	4	8.0
Type of Delivery		
Normal Delivery	17	34.0
Caesarian Section	27	54.0
Assisted Vaginal Delivery	6	12.0
Total	50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

4.4 Knowledge About the Best Food for a Newborn Baby

Respondents' knowledge about the ideal food for a newborn baby shows different degrees of awareness and cultural practices in infant feeding. There is essential knowledge to support the best possible growth and development of infants, as breast milk is universally considered the perfect food for the newborn. Table-4 summarizes the data on the Knowledge about the best food for a newborn baby on next page.

Table-4 : Knowledge About the Best Food for a Newborn Baby

S.No.	Best Food for a Newborn Baby	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
1.	Breast Milk	20	40.0
2.	Infant Formula	6	12.0
3.	Glucose Water	—	—
4.	Herbal Concoction	12	24.0
5.	Clean Water	7	14.0
6.	Others	5	10.0
Total		50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows a substantial difference in respondents' beliefs about the optimal food for a newborn infant. Although 40% of respondents accurately selected breast milk as the ideal food, the other 60% chose other food options, which indicates holes in the awareness and the influence of cultural/traditional eating habits. Interestingly, herbal mixtures were chosen by 24% of respondents and suggested the use of traditional remedies in infant feeding practices. Also, 14% thought clean water was safe for infants by lactating, which could be related to the wrong ideas of accommodation required for hydration. Infant formula was selected by 12% of respondents, possibly because of contemporary reasons (for example, or breastfeeding difficulties). Respondents did not choose glucose water, a finding indicative of a degree of awareness of its inappropriate use in neonates. The data show that there is a necessity of educational interventions to encourage breastfeeding as the prime food for newborns (to overcome myths about this topic and to promote evidence-based feeding behaviors in this group) in order to guarantee a good outcome for both infant health and nutrition.

4.5 Knowledge about the Advantages of Breastfeeding for the Baby

Knowing why breastfeeding is beneficial is critical to encouraging practices of breastfeeding and consequently to ensuring infant and maternal health. Breastfeeding offers numerous benefits, including optimal nutrition, protection against diseases, and fostering emotional bonds between the mother and baby. Table-5 summarizes the respondents' understanding of these benefits on next page.

Table-5 : Knowledge About the Advantages of Breastfeeding for the Baby

S.No.	Advantage of Breastfeeding for Baby	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
1.	It contains all the nutrients the baby needs	20	40.0
2.	It protects the baby from certain diseases	10	20.0
3.	It is cheaper	—	—
4.	It is convenient	13	26.0
5.	It can help the mother space her children	—	—
6.	It protects the mother from some diseases	—	—
7.	It promotes infant-mother bonding	7	14.0
8.	I don't know	—	—
Total		50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The data contained in the above table reveal that 40% of respondents identified the key advantage of breastfeeding as providing all the nutrients a baby need. This result is a reasonable interpretation of its nutritional effects. However, only 20% recognized that breastfeeding protects babies from certain diseases, indicating gaps in awareness of its immunological advantages. Notably, 26% of respondents considered breastfeeding a good match, as a matter of both practicality and convenience, for their needs as mothers. On the other hand, no respondents associated breastfeeding with benefits such as being cost-effective, aiding in child spacing, or protecting the mother from diseases, suggesting a lack of comprehensive understanding of its broader benefits.

Also, 14% of respondents reported that breastfeeding enhances the attachment between the infant and the mother, demonstrating a degree of understanding of its psychological and emotional benefits. The lack of "I don't know" responses indicates that participants at least had some knowledge about breastfeeding effects, but still there are substantial misconceptions and knowledge gaps. These results highlight the necessity of focused educational interventions to promote knowledge about the multiple advantages associated with breastfeeding and to dispel myths and promote informed choices about breastfeeding among mothers.

4-6 Timing of Breastfeeding Initiation

Puerperal endogenous estrogen secretion at the time of breastfeeding initiation is a key determinant of high-quality neonatal care and mother-infant consoling. The international health organizations suggest early initiation of breastfeeding, preferably within the first hour of birth, to improve the immune status of the infant and stimulate milk production. The following table 6 presents survey findings for the respondents' practice and attitude on the topic of breastfeeding initiation timing.

Table-6 : Timing of Breastfeeding Initiation

S.No.	Timing of Breastfeeding Initiation	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
1.	Within 30 minutes to 1 hour of delivery	39	78.0
2.	At any time during baby's first day of life	7	14.0
3.	24 hours after delivery or more	2	4.0
4.	I don't know	2	4.0
Total		50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table reveals that the majority of respondents (78%) initiated breastfeeding within the recommended window of 30 minutes to 1 hour after delivery, reflecting a strong adherence to best practices in neonatal care. This result shows a high awareness among the mothers of the crucial role of early feeding with breast milk. A few respondents (14%) started with breastfeeding at any point in the first day of the baby's life; although it is a later start, it still is within an acceptable period to bring some health benefits. However, 4% initiated breastfeeding 24 hours after delivery or more, and another 4% reported being unaware of the appropriate timing. These delayed practices and the insufficient awareness expose knowledge gaps that may lead to adverse neonatal health outcomes.

This result suggests the need to inform mothers about the importance of early initiation of breastfeeding. Targeted interventions, especially in healthcare settings, can further enhance adherence to optimal breastfeeding practices and ensure timely support for mothers immediately after delivery.

4.7 Knowledge About Giving the First Milk to a Baby

Milk in the initial stage, colostrum, has many advantages for neonates because it is loaded with both antibodies and nutrients that make the neonatal immune system stronger and contribute to early development. Familiarity with respondent practices and knowledge of colostrum feeding helps to understand community breastfeeding practices.

Table-7 : Knowledge About Giving the First Milk to a Baby

S.No.	Response	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes	45	90.0
2.	No	5	10.0
3.	I don't know	—	—
Total		50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows that a majority (90% of respondents) agree that 1st milk (colostrum) should be administered to the baby by the mother's breast. This high percentage clearly reflects a good level of knowledge on the advantages of colostrum found in mothers that is positively promising for neonatal care practices. Yet, 10% of respondents stated that colostrum should not be given to a newborn. The current perception may reflect this due to cultural or traditional beliefs regarding the colostrum as impure or dangerous, an aspect still presents in certain communities. Notably, no respondents reported being unaware of the practice, indicating that all participants had at least some knowledge about colostrum feeding. These results highlight the importance of specific health educational programs to correct beliefs and foster colostrum feeding globally. Healthcare professionals have an important role to play in further promoting the significance of colostrum during antenatal and postnatal consultations.

4.8 Beliefs on the Adequacy of Breast Milk for The First 6 Months

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life in a baby is being widely recommended by health organizations on the basis of best infant growth and development. It provides all necessary nutrients and protects against infections. Table-8 presents the respondents' perception of the adequacy of breast milk for this pivotal stage on next page.

Table-8 ; Perception About the Adequacy of Breast Milk for the First Six Months

S.No.	Perception	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes, breast milk alone is adequate	29	58.0
2.	No, breast milk alone is not adequate	21	42.0
Total		50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table indicates that 58% of respondents thought breast milk sufficient for the first 6 months in a life, which corresponds with the world health guidelines. This is in line with a prevalent knowledge of the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding. Nevertheless, 42% of participants think breast milk is not enough on its own, which reveals a major knowledge gap. This fallacy may be due to cultural practices, absence of correct guidance, or false information about feeding an infant. These results also suggest that education should be applied to correct misconceptions and to support exclusive breastfeeding as a good practice during the first six months of life. Healthcare providers and community health programs should emphasize the sufficiency of breast milk to improve adherence to exclusive breastfeeding recommendations.

4-9 Knowledge and Practices Related to Breastfeeding among Mothers

The knowledge, emotions, and behaviors related to breastfeeding of mothers are important clues to their knowledge, obstacles, and adherence to the advised nursing behavior. This section consolidates data on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, breastfeeding while at work, and the preservation of expressed breast milk for later use.

Table-9 : Knowledge and Practices Related to Breastfeeding

Response	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
Importance of exclusive breastfeeding		
Yes	50	100.0
No	—	—

Working mothers breastfeeding at work		
Yes	37	74.0
No	13	26.0
Preserving expressed breast milk		
Yes	—	—
No	40	80.0
I don't know	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The role of exclusive breastfeeding, working mothers' behaviors related to breastfeeding at work, and the notion of storing expressed breast milk for future use. Data in table-9 show a complete agreement (100%) among the respondents to the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for all mothers, which corresponds to a high awareness of its effects and its value. However, among working mothers, only 74% breastfeed their baby while at work, while 26% do not. This indicates practical issues or the absence of facilities to facilitate breastfeeding at work. By contrast, storing expressed breast milk for use later is poorly understood/practiced by any of the respondents. Specifically, 80% of respondents did not practice breast milk preservation, while 20% did not know what practice was. This observation points to a noticeable shortfall in knowledge along the lines of storage and usage of expressed breast milk and may be useful to lactating mothers working and to promote exclusive breastfeeding efforts.

These findings raise the importance of specific interventions like the provision of workplace support, education of expressing breast milk persistence, and organizational policies that allow working mothers to continue to breastfeed while mitigating practical issues.

4.10 Knowledge About Preservation of Expressed Breast Milk

Proper preservation of expressed breast milk is critical in conserving its nutritional and immunological properties for the nursing infant. The techniques to preserve them represent the respondents' knowledge and practices, which are very important to help maintain breastfeeding, especially from a working mother's perspective. Table-10 describes the respondents' knowledge and usage patterns of expressed breastmilk preservation on next page.

Table-10 : Utilization Pattern of Expressed Breast Milk Preservation

S.No.	Method of Preservation	Respondents Number	Percentage (%)
1.	By frying it	34	68.0
2.	By cooking it	5	10.0
3.	By placing in a refrigerator	3	6.0
4.	By placing on a shelf for over 6 hours	8	16.0
Total		50	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows important misconceptions regarding the storage of expressed breast milk. Most (68% of respondents) falsely thought that it was possible to cook breast milk and freeze it by frying it, and 10% felt that cooking was the right way to do so. Only 6% of the respondents correctly defined refrigeration as an appropriate way for expressing breast milk to be stored, and 16% of respondents reported exposing the milk onto a shelf for more than six hours, which are both not safe activities.

These results draw attention to an important knowledge hole concerning the ideal practices for expressing and maintaining expressed breast milk. Inadequate procedures (e.g., frying or cooking) break down the nutritious and immunological characteristics of breast milk and make it useless for infant feeding. Educational programs are critically required to correct this misinformation and to encourage safe and good breast milk preservation, e.g., refrigeration and sterile container storage. Such interventions will be especially useful for working mothers and will contribute to achieving exclusive breastfeeding of the baby in the first six months of the existence of the baby.

5. Major Findings

- ▶ The largest proportion of respondents (40%) had secondary education, were married (78%), engaged in monogamy (60%), were Hindu (80%), and were professionals (26%) or housewives (22%).
- ▶ Most respondents had one child (72%), with children primarily aged 19-24 months (40%) and a gender distribution of 58% females and 42% males.

- ▶ Institutional deliveries were the most likely, with 34% in hospitals and 54% by Caesarean section, reflecting a tendency toward contemporary delivery practices.
- ▶ Although 40% correctly identified breast milk as the top food, 24% selected herbal brews, indicating the influence of traditional feeding practices.
- ▶ Only 40% of respondents believed that breastfeeding accounted for all the required nutrients, and 26% understood it to be easy, but awareness of its other benefits was limited.
- ▶ Most started breastfeeding within the first 24 hours (78%); nonetheless, 4% initiated breastfeeding 24 hours or more later, revealing knowledge deficits.
- ▶ Regarding colostrum, the majority of respondents (90%) recognized its value, though 10% still harbored misconceptions regarding its safety.
- ▶ While 58% believed breast milk alone was adequate for six months, 42% doubted its sufficiency, indicating significant misconceptions.
- ▶ All respondents (100%) agreed on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, but 80% did not practice breast milk preservation, showing a major gap in knowledge.
- ▶ Suboptimal preservation techniques were common; 68% opted for frying breast milk, and only 6% regarded freezing as the correct technique.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the complexity of breastfeeding patterns among mothers in Lalitpur, Nepal, by focusing on the complex interaction of socio-cultural, economic, and health-care-related determinants. In line with the proposal and the literature review, the results confirm the importance of breastfeeding as a basis for the health of the infant and for the health of the mother. Although the introduction highlights the advantages of breastfeeding (e.g., immunity, cognition, and restoration), the study results also highlight knowledge and practice gaps, including misconceptions regarding colostrum and the failure of breast milk for the first 6 months. In addition, the excessive use of inappropriate conservation methods with expressed breast milk and the lack of understanding of its significance among working mothers refer to the socio-cultural

and system implications in the literature. For example, cultural stigma, economic limitation, and lack of employer support reported in the literature were reflected in the study's results, especially in relation to the lateness of breastfeed initiation and non-adherence to EBF recommendations.

On the other hand, the same research also reveals the points of improvement, like the high number of institutional deliveries and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, which remarkably agrees with the positive aspects mentioned in the literature. Sociological theories, such as symbolic interactionism and Bourdieu's theory of practice, offer an appropriate frame of reference to explain these processes and suggest how norms of culture, socialization, and economic constraints influence breastfeeding practices. However, the study's findings reveal persistent challenges that hinder optimal breastfeeding practices, such as inadequate healthcare support and the influence of traditional family roles, as highlighted in both the literature and introduction. Fostering better policy implementation, mother education using evidence-based practices, and the reduction of systemic obstacles are extremely important for bettering breastfeeding outcomes. In conclusion, this study underscores the need for targeted interventions that integrate cultural sensitivity, economic considerations, and healthcare improvements to promote and sustain breastfeeding practices effectively.

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Deconstructing Universality: Women and Gender in Early Medieval Kamarupa (600-1200 CE)

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Abstract

The Brahmaputra valley known interchangeably as Kamarupa or Pragjyotisha in the early medieval period was eclipsed successively by three different ruling dynasties, marking a transition from its prehistoric phase to state society. The region has received meagre treatment in the historical writings of ancient India, so does the question of women and gender of the region. Although women in the copper plate inscriptions of early medieval Kamarupa do figure in few historical writings, their position and status were discussed in relation to the question of marriage, education and inheritance based on the names of few queens and women that figure in the epigraphs. However, it does not reflect their actual position in the social structure. It is imperative to formulate their contemporary socio-religious structure that conditions gender relation. The paper aims to study the inscriptions, the Kalika Purana, and other textual sources to furnish us with a comprehensive view of women and gender in early medieval Kamarupa and situate them in their contemporary socio-religious context. It additionally argues that women in early medieval Kamarupa were not subjected to ritual subjugation on account of preponderance of non-Brahmanical traditions.

Keywords

Kamarupa, Pragjyotishpur, Kalika Purana, Copper plate inscriptions, Gender relations.

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Deconstructing Universality: Women and Gender in Early Medieval Kamarupa (600-1200 CE)

1. Introduction

The question of women and gender in early medieval Kamarupa or pre-Ahom Assam has been taken up in a few scholarly discussions but has not been fully explored. In Pre-Ahom Assam, the socio-religious context that accords social roles and mobility to men and women needs to be constructed. This paper attempts to study different categories of women in the inscriptions of Kamarupa. We will discuss three aspects (i) Gender and Images of women in the Kalikapurana (ii) women in the epigraphs (iii) Women in Shakti and Tantric traditions.

There is a need to move away from the discussion on 'status of women' to social processes that shape lives of men, women, and social institution in early Indian history¹ and to find gender relations that determines the nature and the basis of subordination of women. In early India the caste hierarchical society was achieved by subordination of women.² The purity of caste depended on stringent control over women's sexuality. Kamarupa is said to have been 'Sanskritized' or 'Brahmanised' in the early medieval period, as it facilitated new ruling dynasties to climb up social ladder and proclaimed themselves as legitimate rulers through appropriation of Brahmanical accouterments - making of divine lineage, adoption of Sanskrit titles, worship of Puranic-Brahmanical deities and so forth.

Then the question arises whether the implantation of Brahmanical ideologies in the Brahmaputra valley was able to engender an ideal Brahmanical society? Whose foundation depended on caste principles or Varnaashramadharma, that in turn depended on subordination of women. What could have been the role of women in the domain of religion where the Shakta-Tantra had its stronghold in Kamarupa? The textual source the Kalika Purana, composed in the span of 800-1300 CE and in the north Bengal-Assam region, affords us images of women in ritual and political space. But there is also a danger in taking it at face value as it is a normative text.

Yet, it is useful in discerning the ideologies that sought to control and subordinate women. The paper offers synthesis of textual and inscriptional data as the epigraphs offer evidence that is deviant from the norm and makes real women visible in history³. There are over thirty-two copper plate grants and image inscriptions, ranging in chronological span from the 6th century to the 13th century, few of them refer to the categories of women and their role in a sacred space.

Before we proceed to the discussion, reference to few scholarly works on Pre-Ahom Assam touching up on the theme of women will be in order. One of the earliest works is that of BK Barua's *A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period), Vol. 1*, (Gauhati, 1951)⁴, P. C. Choudhury's *History of Civilization of the people of Assam* (1959)⁵ and SL Barua's *A Comprehensive History of Assam* (1997)⁶, to name a few. Their work is significant as it underscores women's position in relation to marriage, their access to education, their role as wives and queens, and celebrated for their devotion to husband and idealization as goddesses. Despite their tremendous efforts in bringing women question to the fore, there is still scope to study women and gender in association with the changing social milieu in Pre-Ahom Assam.

2. The Setting

Historians earlier mapped a large span of areas covering Bengal, Bihar, Tibet and Northeast India for historical Kamarupa. However, a careful observation of the find-spots of the inscriptions of the three different ruling families of Kamarupa reveals that the epicenter of the region 'Kamarupa or Pragjyotisha' situates around the Brahmaputra valley. This supposition can be vouched by the Kalika Purana and the Xuan Zang's record 'Si-Yu-Ki'. The river Brahmaputra originates in Tibet flowing east and then it takes sharp-pin bend flows southward to enter Arunachal Pradesh as the Siang and to Assam as the Brahmaputra from eastern or upper Assam to southwest Assam; and flows as Jamuna and Padma in Bangladesh drain in the Bay of Bengal. The valley also known as 'Assam Valley' is an extension of the great eastern plains.⁷ The Valley is bounded hills on all its side - Eastern Himalayas, Patkai Hills and Karbi Plateau in the east; and Khasi-Garo Hills and Hillocks in Guwahati in the west. The riparian plains on both the bank of the Brahmaputra support settlement due its fertility.⁸ The riverine plain supports agriculture and is suitable for growing rice, jute, pulses and other vegetables.

The valley saw rise of three powers successively, namely the Varmans (?-700CE), the family of Salastambhas (700 -900CE) and the Palas of the Brahmapala branch (900-1200), claiming themselves as lord of Pragjyotisha (*pragjyotishadhipati*) or ruler of Kamarupa. The period is of historical significance in the region owing to evolution from pre-state society to state-kingdom phase. The rise of state-like polity can be attributed to the agrarian development and its effects on society. The inscriptional records of three different ruling dynasties bear testimony to increase in agrarian production. One of the copper grants of a ruler of the Salastambha family records a land able to yield 4000 unit of paddy in the ninth century⁹ and, on the other hand, in the twelfth century inscriptions of Dharmapala speak of donated land capable of yielded 6000¹⁰-10,000¹¹ units of paddy. The rise of ruling families from erstwhile tribal society is one of such ramifications of agrarian development. The tribal and local affiliation of these dynasties can be gauged from their tracing of lineage to mythical demon Narakasura. Their non-vedic origin can also be traced from one inscription¹² of Salastambha ruler explaining why their lineage was equated with 'mlechcha'. In an attempt to aggrandise and legitimise their power, the three ruling dynasties claimed mythical Narakasura of Brahmanical lore as their founding ancestor without mentioning the former ruling dynasties, and by adopting sanskritic grandiloquent title 'Maharajadhiraja'. In fact, these dynasties may have been three unrelated ruling families that ascended due to agrarian changes. It is not surprising that the Brahmanas may have played an important role in legitimising their rule by formers' donation of land to the latter as recorded in copper plates grant. It will not be out place to mention what Jae-Eun-Shin writes on this matter "*... the genealogy of Naraka had continued almost five hundred years in the early medieval Kamarupa. However this does not mean unilineal development of dynasties or definite connection among ruling families. In fact, each dynasty had denied validity of previous dynasty for claiming their own legitimacy and the character and identity of their progenitor, Naraka, were continuously formulated the socio-political changes.*"¹³

As discussed earlier, Kamarupa also saw rise in rent free settlement or land to Brahmana by reigning monarchs and this in turn was bound to bring sea changes in socio-religious realm in the region. The socio-religious changes in this period was spell out by scholars in the form of peasantisation of tribes and their absorption into caste society and Sanskritisation / Brahmanisation of local cults -

absorbing and appropriating local cults into Puranic Hinduism and thus Brahmanical control over the local cults were maintained. However, a closer study of the socio-religious process in the region reveals a complex process and does not necessarily fit into the paradigm formulated by scholars. Through the settlement of Brahmanas in the revenue free settlement one may expect spread of Brahmanical social order '*Varnaashramadharmā*'. The copper grant inscriptions and the Kalikapurana do refer to the term and give us impression of the establishment of the ideal Brahmanical society. The ideal Brahmanical society entails spread hierarchical Varna-Jati society and division of life of twice born male into four stages. The mention of four varnas also figures in the offerings to goddess. A passage from the Kalikapurana refers to offerings to be made to goddess Chandika in accordance to their varna: Cow Milk to be offered by Brahmana, melted butter by Kshatriya, Honey by Vaishya and Flower Juice by Shudra.¹⁴ Likewise, in the copper plate inscriptions grants to Brahmanas loosely refer to reigning rulers as upholder of duties of all varnas¹⁵ or in the kingdom all people of all varna lived contend¹⁶. For instance, in the eleventh century inscription of Indrapala he is said to have brought proper division of four varnas and the four ashramas.¹⁷ This has been format while referring to *varnaashramadharmā* in the inscriptions, right from the seventh century to the eleventh century. One cannot but notice conspicuous absence of categorical reference to the name of the four varnas, except for the Brahmanas. Also, the varna-based offerings to Goddess do not necessarily mean presence of four varnas as the text represents normative. Furthermore, the spread of few jatis too were not in accordance to laid normative texts.¹⁸ Besides, lands were and own cultivated by tribes¹⁹ and other occupational groups.²⁰ This was far cry from the ideal Brahmanical society laid in the shastras. Therefore, the social change in early medieval Kamarupa due to land grants to Brahmana was not a matter of inauguration of Brahmanical society based on *varnasharamadharmā* but it expressed laxity, perhaps due to strong presence of earlier tribal traditions and its interaction rather than its complete disappearance.

This brings us to the discussion of religious realm of the society. As in other parts of India, Kamarupa in the early medieval period saw spread of Pan-India Puranic traditions i.e. worship of three great gods and One goddess and Bhakti mode of worship. The local cults that existed even prior to the advent of the Puranic tradition are not

traceable due to its absence in written document. However, one may look into ethnographic data and tribal faiths to trace their continuities from the past. The present day monolithic and megalithic structures fit into this example. These age old antiquities are still revered as ancestor cult. To understand the interaction between the local cults and the puranic tradition, as said earlier, 'sanskritisation' formed the theoretical framework to study the religious process of this period. This was reflected in the work of Nihar Ranjan Mishra²¹ and B.K. Kakati²². This implies that local cults were simply absorbed into Puranic cults by identifying the local deities with that of the Puranic-Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and Devi. Kakati argues the local goddess Kamakhya which belonged to matrilineal tribes of the Garos and the Khasis and was brought into alignment with Goddess Durga, Kali etc.²³ Although this seems unproblematic in understanding the religious process of the region, we seem to turn blind on the reverse process wherein local cults too make considerable influences in the making of Puranic Religious tradition of the region or what may be called 'localisation'. The process of localisation is evident even in the Kalikapurana. The offerings to the goddesses prescribed are invariably local practice. The goddesses and other deities in the purana are propitiated with blood sacrifices of birds, tortoise, Rhinos, buffaloes and so on. It prescribes even human sacrifice and usage of liquors. The use of such articles has nothing to do with Brahmanical practices but speak volumes about inroads of tribal local practices into Puranic tradition. As matter of fact, the Purana does not prescribe blood sacrifice or use of liquor to the Brahmana class, perhaps, owing to its origin in non-Brahmanical practices. Hugh. B. Urban observes the form of sacrifice laid down in the Kalikapurana has no sort of similarity with the Vedic sacrifices and goes on to argue that the Satpatha Brahmana recommends only pure, domestic and non-wild, animals such as horses, cows, sheep and goat, while the purana advocates sacrifices of wild and non-domestic animals.²⁴ Likewise, Patricia Dold has observed in the present day practice of worship in the precinct of Kamakhya temple is a combination of elements of 'mainstream orthodox Hinduism with local and transgressive Hinduism' in the form of worshippers waiting to perform Puja and receive Prasad and the animal sacrifice, on the other.²⁵

Thus, the socio-religious process in the region reveals a negotiation of both Brahmanism (or the mainstream Hinduism) and local tribal practices that has shaped society and religion even to

present day rather than simply importation of Brahmanical social and religious order in the region. Given this backdrop, the formulation on gender relation is shaped by the new social ethos.

3. The Formulation on Gender Relation : Women and Gender in Early Medieval Kamarupa

3.1 Gender and Images of Women in the Kalikapurana

Before we delve into the discussion few words may be said on the Kalikapurana. This Purana comes under the category of Upapurana, composed in the chronological span between 800-1200 CE in geographical space around north Bengal and Assam.²⁶ The Purana does not fit into any sectarian affiliation but it does contain rituals and myths related to the Goddess Kamakhya more than that of Vishnu's and Shiva's. This regional Purana like that of Bengal's was composed to draw indigenous local tradition into the Puranic Brahmanical tradition.²⁷ However, it is to be underlined that the Puranic tradition does not undermine the preeminence of Brahmana's position and the infallibility of the Vedas.²⁸ In other words the interaction between the Brahmanical and the non-Brahmanical tradition is to be achieved without undermining the social status of Brahmanas and the local rituals (Vratas) were fitted along the Brahmanical one. Thus, the rituals prescribed in the Kalikapurana too, whether dedicated to gods or goddess, were to achieve four male goals - Purushartha (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha). For instance, even the inclusion of blood sacrifice of animals in a non-Brahmanical way, as stated earlier, was to grant fourfold aim (Purushartha) to the adepts.²⁹ It should not be surprising to find inclusion of women in the vratas of the older Puranas. The inclusion was aimed to draw women's patronage as their patronage to other sects have reduced the incomes to Brahmanical tradition and shaken their social position.³⁰ Consequently, the inclusion of women has begun as early as the early Christian centuries. And it is no wonder that the Kalikapurana too calls for the inclusion of women. In Pavitra ritual dedicated to the Goddess Durga, it is stated "wife devoted to husband, a widow of good character must spin a thread; women of loose character must not spin"³¹. Likewise, married women are also allowed to wear 'Yantra' (diagram on silk) dedicated to goddess and it grants them sons and grandsons with long live. A closer look into the reward/ merit of rituals performed by women or men, beside Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksh, was sons and grandsons. This can be construed as inclusion of

women and rituals directed to male goals and androcentric! Nowhere in the text we come across a passage stating women or a girl child as merit of rituals performed. In the political realm, the Purana enjoins the king to have unwavering control over his queens/wives and preventing them from becoming independent and guard their wives from accessing public sphere.³² Here we sense a paradigmatic Brahmanical fear or anxiety over losing control over women. As stated earlier, women in Brahmanical social order are conceived as a gateway to caste purity and thus it calls for a mechanism to control sexuality.³³ In other words the ideal Brahmanical social order is maintained by controlling her sexuality or movement. Thus, in Brahmanical traditions there is greater emphasis on her sexuality, chastity and her character; they are projected extremely licentious with unbridled lust implying that if these were controlled or regulated, the ideal social structure is achieved. The idealisation of chastity or wifely virtue in myths underlies ideological control over women's sexuality. The myth story of Sandhya in the Kalikapurana is an embodiment of the celebration of women's chastity. Her desire to be a chaste lady propelled her to perform harsh austerities; to which Vishnu responded and she asked him to make her renowned as '*chaste women in three worlds*'³⁴. On Vishnu's instruction she had self immolated herself in the sacrificial fire of sage Medhatithi and was reincarnated as Arundhati in the next birth. Medhatithi takes her to Savitri and Bahula to foster good conduct in her and the latter praises her as "*This chaste lady shall purify your dynasty and enhances its status*"³⁵. Here the discourse on good conduct of women emphasised mainly on female chastity. However, the text does not seem to speculate or lay greater emphasis on man's sexuality. An episode from the Kalikapurana exemplifies man's sexuality relatively unfettered as compared to that of females. The Sage Kapota sexually desired Taravati, wife of the king Chandrasekhara, despite knowing she was married.³⁶ He could easily atone for the sin of having sexual intercourse with other's wife through his power of austerity. The text like the Kalikapurana is prescriptive in nature and does not reflect reality but it does exemplify Brahmanical ideological control over women and women internalising it.

Notwithstanding the patriarchal overtones in the myth stories of the Kalikapurana and the male centric goals in rituals, we do have instances of celebration of women in Kamarupa as goddess. In the discourse between Bhairava and Vetala and Shiva in the purana,

Shiva expounds how gods and goddess in Kamarupapitha are propitiated and performing that whereby they attain Siddhi (spiritual merit). In the discourse, Shiva advises twice born males to offer salutation to women in red clothes or charming ladies whenever he sees them as it pleases goddess Bhairavi.³⁷ It further states that a devotee of goddess Tripura must perceive himself as Bhairava and his to be wife as Bhairavi while marrying her.³⁸ This ambivalent attitude towards women in the Purana is perhaps due to balancing of Brahmanical socio ethos with the local or non-Brahmanical ones that is relatively gender egalitarian society.

3·2 Women in the Epigraphs

Unlike the Kalikapurana, the women in the rock and copperplate inscriptions are real women rather than imagined. One Deopani image inscription informs us that women were included in the Vishnu worship, which corresponds to the Puranic tradition that allows women participation in rituals or offerings. Besides this general statement on women, the inscriptions also furnish us with different categories of women which we shall discuss.

The epigraphs are replete with the names of queens and wives of Brahmana donees; and these are two categories of women that make visible presence were praised for their feminine beauty, devout role as mother and wife and are also likened with goddesses. In the seventh century Doobi inscription of Bhaskaravarman, his remote ancestor Mahendravarman is likened with Indra and the latter's wife with Sachi, consort of Indra. Her feminine beauty is praised and analogised with the good conduct of the king and her devotion to him is underlined as thus: "She stood as a foremost limit of the beauty, (or so far as the mirror of intelligence of the king is concerned, she shone therein as an epitome of the foremost limit of good conduct of the king) and on her own part she was so devoted to the king that she shone like a constant luster in a moon in the form of that king"³⁹. The same format has been used for the queens of different ruling families down till the 12th century extolling their beauty and wifely duty towards their respective kings. Their devotion to their husband was analogised with that of Goddesses towards their consort. In the mid-ninth century, Mangalashree, queen of Hajarvarman of Salastambha family, is compared with Lakshmi and is said to have displayed her beauty and qualities.⁴⁰ His another queen Shrimattara is also likened to Lakshmi.⁴¹ Likewise, in the eleventh century

inscription the marital relationship between Durlabha and the king Pundrapala was conceived parallel to Sachi to Indra, Shiva to Shambhu, Lakshmi to Hari and Rohini to Nishkara. At times king and his consort, especially chief queen, are said to be inseparable. In the twelfth century inscription "*King Nihshanka's chief queen was similar to his own life. The name Ahiadevi remained attached to her. She was a female Swan to the lake Manasa in the form of the mind (Manasa) of Nihshankasimha.....*"⁴². The epigraphs also underline the virtues and qualities of the queens. The twelfth century inscription of ruler Vaidyadeva praises his mother Pratapadevi as '*place of virtue, prosperity and reputation*'⁴³. The celebration of chastity also finds mention in the inscription. One queen of Harshapala of the Brahmapala's family is known to be '*the foremost amongst chaste wives*'. As said earlier idealisation of Chastity especially for women underlies an ideological device in the Brahmanical society to control their sexuality. From these we can surmise the epigraphs only exalt the queens as goddess and their devotion to kings, their qualities, duties, character(chastity) illustrated as worth praising. However, these do not speak much about their active role in political sphere, if there is any. We do have a few inscriptional records that document the kings paying salutation to *Rajas*, *Rajnis* and *Ranakas* inhabiting in and around the donated land. The mention of '*Rajni*' would imply that these wives of vassals did have some official position.

The next category of women that dominate the epigraphs are the wives of the Brahmana donees. The wives of Brahmana donees in the epigraphs, likewise using the same literary device, were extolled for feminine beauty, wifely duty and chastity and compared with goddesses. For instance, wife of the Brahmana donee's son Gabisthara, celebrated as "*pure like the soma-creeper, devoted to the husband like the wife of Vasishtha, mother of a great progeny like Sachi, the beloved of Indra.....*"⁴⁴. The virtues and qualities that include chastity figure here as well in the inscription of the Dharmapala (12th century) wherein the donee Brahmana Bharata's wife is described as "*Like Rohini, the consort of the cool-rayed (moon) and like Parvati the dear wife of the enemy of Andhaka (i.e. Shiva), he had a wife named Pauka who possessed of merits and chastity and a good character*"⁴⁵. Some historian holds that the upper class women of Kamarupa had access to education on the basis of the Kamauli inscription of Vaidyadeva that mentions that the prasasti was composed by Brahmana Monoratha with the aid of his wife.⁴⁶

From the assessment of inscriptional records above, by and large, it is clear that the women of upper-class strata were referred only to highlight their good character which includes chastity and devotion to their husband; and in doing so their relation to their spouse were compared with the relationship of goddesses with their respective consort. These goddesses that were compared with queens and the wives of the Brahmana donee do not seem to be independent goddesses, but the goddesses paired with their consort which underlines their conjugal relation. For want of evidence, we do not have any evidence on non-upper-class women at our disposal, save for a stray reference to Veshayas (courtesans) as endowed with Shiva temple.⁴⁷ Investigation on women of non-elite and non-Brahmanical class is not complete without delving into sacred space, the worship of divine feminine and where they have supposedly had active participation.

3.3 Women in the Shakti and the Tantric Traditions

It need not be reiterated that Kamarupa is revered as one of the Shakti pithas and Tantric sites to this date. The Kalikapurana and other puranas⁴⁸ enumerate the Nilachala mountain as a place where Sati's vulva fell and where Goddess Kamakhya, manifestation of Great Goddess, Mahamaya resides. Likewise, the ninth century text, the Hevajra Tantra⁴⁹ lists Kamarupa as one of the places of congregation.⁵⁰ The Shakti cult in Puranic tradition emerged due to incorporation of non-Brahmanical goddesses into the Brahmanical belief system. The process crystallised in the sixth century and culminated to the Devi Mahatmya section of the Markandeya Purana. The **Devi Mahatmya** is perhaps the earliest text that describes '*the supreme reality as female principle*'⁵¹. This section of the Markandeya Purana embodies the Shakta theology in which the Supreme Goddess, however, is made of Shakti or brilliance of males. One historian points out that the Shakti concept of the remote past, from the Rigveda, was conferred to the non-Brahmanical goddess whilst the latter's incorporation into Sanskrit tradition.⁵² It is through the Shakta cult the various non-sanskritic or non-Brahmanical goddess were acculturated into the Puranic tradition in Bengal.⁵³ As observed earlier, the local goddess Kamakhya, which has its origin in Austro-Asiatic Khasi and Kachari tribes, was identified with the Great Goddess and the Sati myth woven around it completed the process of assimilation into Puranic Hinduism. Both the Shakti

and the tantric cults are complementary to each other. In fact, in both the belief systems, beside other similarities, goddesses held the supreme position. N.N. Bhattacharya writes "*Although Tantrism has special position in Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism, it is in the Sakta religion that the Tantric ideas and practices have found favourable ground for their meaningful survival and development*"⁵⁴. Indeed, we find a substratum of Tantric influences in the Kalikapura. The text mentions goddesses of Tantric in origin such as Tara, Ugra-Tara, Tripura and so forth. In one episode, Ugra Tara at the behest of Shiva evicted sages from Kamarupa and it had affected sage Vashishta, who hurled curse on her and the region.⁵⁵ This myth may be construed as a tension between Tantric practitioners and people of Brahmanical faith. Besides, the Purana also entails Tantric Vamachara (Left hand) method while propitiating goddesses Tripura Bhairavi, Smasana Bhairavi, Ugratara, Chandi, Kamakhya, Kameshvari and others.⁵⁶

It is in these spaces caste (varna/jati) stratification that underpins patriarchal values becomes ineffective. Goddesses in these Tantric traditions are independent, without association with their consort, and has own power. The women in these traditions must have played greater role and assumed importance in such religious space acting as gurus and priestess initiating followers.⁵⁷ These traditions do not observe caste distinction and use and celebrate imageries and symbols of female organs as source of fertility and regeneration.⁵⁸ Identification of women with such goddesses and imageries related to female body must have been embroidered mirror of relatively egalitarian society. Notwithstanding anti-caste stance in Tantric practices, the presence of Shakta cult did not necessarily mean women had ennobling position. There could be a society where goddess cult may be prominent and at the same time the social structure could exercise enormous control over women. Gerda Lerner has observed that in Mesopotamia despite social dominance over women, Goddess Ishtar was held at the high position and had their own power like their male counterpart.⁵⁹ She speaks of this as remnants of ancient past where goddess cult reflected a society where women held had a special place. It is conjectured that in the pre-historic stage women's sexuality was venerated as source of life giving, fertility and the survival of a tribe and the community depended on the motherly nourishment of the infants.⁶⁰ The awe and reverence to reproductive capacity of females culminated into Mother goddess cult and devotion to and production of art related to female sexual organ.⁶¹In

this stage societies were assumed to be female centric, matrilineal (reckoning lineage from mother's line) and matrilocal (groom leaves his residence lives at his spouse's residence). The gradual transition to plough agriculture which demanded more labour than that of prehistoric gathering or occasional hunting had rendered unsuitable for women, and eventually domination of men paved the way for subordination of women and establishment of patrilocal marriages and patrilineal kinship system.⁶²

The popularity of the Goddess Kamakhya in the region, besides its absorption into Shakta cult of Puranic Hinduism, we believe, can be attributed to its wide social base and substantial influence of tribal-prehistoric society where goddesses or divine female had supreme importance. Women in these societies were relatively free from clutches of patriarchy, if not equal to men. Same could be said for Tantrism in the region. Parallelism between Tantric traditions and the tribal societies can be observed in the similarity of rituals to deities involve alcohol, meat, liquor etc., in fact Bhattarchya argues Tantrism has its roots in tribal practices.⁶³ The surviving elements of such societies can be observed in social practices of Austro-Asiatic and Kachari tribes. Inasmuch as the existence of these tribes or their proto ancestor in the early medieval Kamarupa is concerned, their presence can be buttressed by Austro-Asiatic and Kachari words in the epigraph.⁶⁴ As a matter of fact, the epigraphs also speak of land owned by *Brihadrava*, identified with the Rabha tribe of Kachari ethnicity. The Khasi, the Garo and the Jaintia tribes still practice matrilineal kinship and matrilocal marriage, although decision making rests on the brothers of woman head of the family. The Dimasa Kacharies too trace their decent from female line (Jahdi/Jilik) along with patrilineal kinship system.⁶⁵ These are surviving practices from the remote past wherein females were given equal importance as men and reckoning lineage from her too seem significant. Priestesses and mother goddess as a creator play vital role in these societies in a more marked degree. In the Khasi society priest Lyngdoh is a deputy or helper of the main priestess *Ka So Blei and Ka So Kla*.⁶⁶ In the worship of ancestor, *Ka lawbei*, the primeval clan ancestress is honoured in form of erecting monoliths and offering food in these stone structures.⁶⁷ Likewise, the myth origin of the Dimasa Kacharies speaks of their primordial mother as Goddess eagle '*Arikhidima*' who is said to have laid eggs from which clan male deities were born.⁶⁸

Returning to Kamakhya goddess cult, the site at Nilachala hill in Guwahati contains a temple built in the medieval Koch-Ahom Period in which natural spring is worshipped as Yoni in the sanctum underground. The association of menstruation with the goddess Kamakhya can be traced in the Kalikapurana which states an adept on beholding a menstruating woman he must worship Kamakhya.⁶⁹ An adoration to Kamakhya's pudenda and sipping of goddess vaginal fluid by Brahma and Vishnu point towards sacralising menstrual fluids.⁷⁰ The same Purana, however, speaks of impurity of menstruation.⁷¹ At present Ambuvachi Mela festival in the month June and July marks veneration of menstruation goddess in the temple complex. It commences with the observation of a period of impurity for certain days and closing the temple, halting all the activities. Thereafter the temple reopens for Puja and celebration; devotees from neighbouring Nepal, Bengal, and other places throng to the temple to worship the goddess and to obtain water symbolising her menstrual blood as *Prasad*⁷². The association of impurity with menstruation is of recent origin⁷³, unlike in ancient times. Impurity linked with menstrual blood or childbirth is an attempt to affirm superiority of male biological aspect over females. The veneration of menstrual blood and at the same time considered impure in the purana, and likewise the celebration of the same in the Mela and impurity observed for certain days exhibit intrusion of Brahmanical patriarchal ideology into older ones that entails non-Brahmanical, local and Tantric⁷⁴ oriented practices. However, in great measure, women in the non-Brahmanical, local-tribal and Tantric realms exercised their agency and mobility, if not in political domain.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, in this paper we have tried to explore the question of women and gender in early medieval Kamarupa. And we do find the patriarchal anxiety over female sexuality seeking to control it in the form of myths and the celebration of chastity in the Kalika Purana; and the purana speaks of confining and controlling queens, and, yet, at the same time enjoining the dwija class to bow or salute women as they embody goddess. But we do not know to what extent it was practice due to its prescriptive nature. In visualising the historical women in the epigraphs, the queens, and the wives of Brahmanas occur prominently. Beside few instances of women's access to

literary field, their description underscores the conjugal relation with their spouse equating it with relationship between goddesses and their consort. These women are known for their virtuous qualities, chastity and wifely countenance. The women of non-elite and non-Brahmanical class, save for one line reference to Vesya (courtesans), do not feature in the inscriptions. Their investigation must be accompanied by exploration of popular cults, the Shakti and the Tantric. This paper argues that the Jati-Varna based society which cages women, and their movement and sexuality never found its way in the full blown form in early medieval Kamarupa on account of predominance of local, tribal, non-Brahmanical and Tantric influences reshaping the Sanskritic-Brahmanical culture. In the work of Nirode Boruah, based on locational analysis of donated lands in the epigraph and finds of sculptures of Puranic Hinduism, he has prepared a tentative sketch of areas where 'Sanskritization and Detribalization'⁷⁵ was active. He goes on to argue that not entire the Brahmaputra valley came under Brahmanical culture, considerable region remained out of it and maintained its own cultural traits.⁷⁶ If not gender equal society, women outside the pale of Brahmanical culture were not allocated to socially and ritually low position.

Footnotes and References

1. Uma Chakravarty, *Everyday Lives, Everday Histories: Beyond the King and Brahmanas of 'Ancient' India*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2012, 138-153. also See Vijaya Laxmi Singh, *Women and Gender in Ancient India*, New Delhi: Aryan Book International, 2015.
2. Here the term refers to the socio-historical process of assimilating local cults into greater pan-Indian Sanskritic and Brahmanical tradition.
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9. M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 147.
10. *Ibid.*, 241-248.
11. *Ibid.*, 262-266.
12. *Ibid.*, 89-94.
13. Jae Eun Shin, "Changing Dynasties, Enduring Genealogy: A Critical Study on the Political Legitimation in Early medieval Kômarûpa", *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, XXVII, 2011, 183.
14. B.N. Shastri, trans., *The Kômarûpa: Text, Introduction and Translation in English Verse with Index*, Third edition, Delhi: Nag Prakashan, 2018, 464-467.
15. The seventh century Nidhanapur inscriptions of Bhaskaravarman, in M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 58.
16. The 9th century inscription of Vanamalavarmadeva in M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 128.
17. M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 187.
18. Kaivrata Jati despite their low position in social jati-varna scheme held considerable land in Kamarupa see M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 82-88.
19. M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 247-248, 254.
20. *Ibid.*, 251-54.
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25. *Ibid.*, 89-122.
26. B.N. Shastri, trans., *The Kâlîkâpurâna: Text, Introduction and Translation in English Verse with Index*, Third edition, Delhi: Nag Prakashan, 2018, xxvi -xxxii.
27. Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process: The Puranas and the Making of a Regional Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, 32-35.

28. *Ibid.*, 16-17, 32-35.
29. B.N. Shastri, trans., *The Kâlikâpurâna: Text, Introduction and Translation in English Verse with Index*, Third edition, Delhi: Nag Prakashan 2018, 501- 517.
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31. B.N. Shastri, trans., *The Kâlikâpurâna: Text, Introduction and Translation in English Verse with Index*, Third edition, Delhi: Nag Prakashan 2018, 427.
32. *Ibid.*, 656.
33. Uma Chakravarty, *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kingdom and Brahmanas of 'Ancient' India*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2012, 138-153.
34. B.N. Shastri, trans., *The Kâlikâpurâna: Text, Introduction and Translation in English Verse with Index*, Third edition, Delhi: Nag Prakashan 2018, 143-147.
35. *Ibid.*, 148-60.
36. *Ibid.*, 339-344.
37. *Ibid.*, 562-563.
38. *Ibid.*, 562-563.
39. M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 22-23.
40. *Ibid.*, 92-93.
41. *Ibid.*, 186.
42. *Ibid.*, 186.
43. *Ibid.*, 283.
44. *Ibid.*, 135-136.
45. *Ibid.*, 247.
46. SL Barua, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1985 , 154.
47. M.M. Sharma, *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, Guwahati: Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978, 95-113.
48. David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 2005, 184-187.
49. The text refers to the Kamarupa pitha and other sites where Sati's parts were fallen as places of meeting. See D.L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A critical Study*, London: Oxford University Press, 1959, 70.
50. Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process: The Puranas and the Making of a Regional Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018, 165-171.

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The Digital Frontier: Empowering Feminist Activism and Scholarship in India amidst Online Harassment

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Abstract

Digital platforms have revolutionized feminist activism and scholarship, offering unique opportunities for advocacy, community building, and education. This research investigates the critical role of digital platforms in supporting feminist scholars and activists in India, while also addressing the significant challenges of online harassment. The objectives of this paper are three fold: firstly, to explore the importance of digital platforms for feminist activism and scholarship in India, secondly, to examine the prevalence and impact of online harassment on feminist activists and thirdly, to identify strategies for coping with and mitigating online harassment to enhance resilience among activists. The study employs a qualitative approach, drawing on existing literature, detailed case studies, and secondary data from reputable online sources. The research includes an extensive review of scholarly articles, reports, and surveys, alongside analyses of prominent case studies of Indian feminist activists who have experienced online harassment.

Keywords

Digital feminism, Online harassment, Gender inequality, Feminist activism, India, Cyberbullying, Resilience, Social media.

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The Digital Frontier: Empowering Feminist Activism and Scholarship in India amidst Online Harassment

1. Introduction

The digital age has ushered new avenues for feminist activism, providing powerful tools for advocacy, mobilization, and education. Digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have revolutionized the way feminist scholars and activists operate, offering unprecedented opportunities to reach a global audience, build supportive communities, and amplify marginalized voices. These platforms have democratized access to information, allowing activists to disseminate their messages widely without the need for traditional media gatekeepers.

Online spaces have become critical arenas for feminist discourse, enabling rapid mobilization around urgent issues and fostering global solidarity. Hashtags like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #YesAllWomen have united millions of voices worldwide, highlighting the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and discrimination. These digital movements have not only raised awareness but also led to tangible changes in policies and societal attitudes. The ability to organize protests, petitions, and awareness campaigns quickly and efficiently is a significant advantage of digital platforms, making them indispensable tools for modern feminist activism.

Furthermore, digital platforms serve as rich repositories of educational resources. Feminist scholars can share articles, videos, webinars, and other materials that educate the public about gender issues. This widespread dissemination of knowledge helps to challenge stereotypes, debunk myths, and promote a more informed and equitable society. The inclusive nature of these platforms fosters a more comprehensive and intersectional feminist movement, ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups, such as women of color and LGBTQ+ individuals, are heard and valued.

However, the same platforms that facilitate feminist discourse also expose activists to significant risks, including online harassment. The anonymity provided by the internet can embolden individuals to

engage in abusive behavior that they would not exhibit in face-to-face interactions. Feminist activists, in particular, are often targeted due to their outspoken views and efforts to challenge deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. This harassment includes threats of physical and sexual violence, which can lead to severe psychological effects such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The prevalence of online harassment poses substantial challenges for feminist activists. The constant barrage of abuse can create a hostile environment, leading to self-censorship or withdrawal from public discourse. This silencing effect undermines the very purpose of online activism, as it prevents important voices from being heard and hinders the spread of feminist ideas. Legal frameworks and social media platform policies are often inadequate in addressing online harassment, leaving activists vulnerable and without sufficient recourse.

This paper investigates the prevalence and impact of online harassment faced by feminist activists on social media platforms. It examines the psychological and emotional toll of such harassment and explores the strategies and support systems that activists employ to cope and build resilience. By synthesizing qualitative data, case studies, and a comprehensive literature review, this research aims to provide a thorough understanding of the dual-edged nature of digital platforms for feminist activism. It offers insights into the challenges faced by activists and potential solutions for ensuring that digital spaces remain safe and empowering for those fighting for gender equality.

2. Objectives

1. To explore the importance of digital platforms for feminist activism and scholarship in India.
2. To examine the prevalence and impact of online harassment on feminist activists.
3. To identify strategies for coping with and mitigating online harassment to enhance resilience among activists.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, drawing on existing literature, detailed case studies, and secondary data from reputable

online sources. The research includes an extensive review of scholarly articles, reports, and surveys, alongside analyses of prominent case studies of Indian feminist activists who have experienced online harassment. Keywords such as "online harassment", "cyberbullying", "feminist activism", and "coping strategies" were used to gather relevant data.

4. Review of Literature

The review of literature focuses on the prevalence and effects of online harassment on feminist activists in India, examining cultural, societal, and legal aspects, as well as psychological impacts and coping mechanisms. This review is divided into following three parts:

4.1 Effects of Online Harassment

Banerjee (2020) provides an overview of gendered online harassment in India, highlighting the unique challenges faced by women and feminist activists. Banerjee argues that cultural and societal norms significantly contribute to the prevalence of such harassment. Vishwanath (2017) offers statistical data on the prevalence of online harassment in India, noting that women activists are particularly vulnerable to severe forms of online abuse. This study underscores the systemic nature of the problem and its deep roots in societal attitudes toward gender.

Basu (2016) explores the impact of the digital divide on feminist activism in India, emphasizing how limited access to technology exacerbates the challenges faced by activists. Basu highlights that despite these challenges, digital platforms remain crucial for spreading feminist ideas and mobilizing support. Ghosh (2019) examines the legal frameworks in India addressing online harassment, highlighting gaps and suggesting improvements to better protect activists. This study reveals the inadequacies of current laws and the need for comprehensive legal reforms to safeguard online spaces.

Chakravarty (2021) discusses the prevalence and types of online harassment faced by women in India, with a focus on feminist activists. Chakravarty's work highlights the intersection of gender and digital abuse, providing insights into the unique vulnerabilities of women activists. Sahni and Vashishtha (2018) analyze the psychological effects of online harassment on women in India, emphasizing the mental health challenges faced by activists. Their study shows that

online harassment can lead to significant emotional distress, affecting activists' well-being and their ability to continue their work.

Rao (2019) explores how social media platforms facilitate gendered abuse and the inadequacies in their response mechanisms. Rao argues that platforms need to take greater responsibility for moderating content and protecting users from harassment. Patel (2020) examines the strategies used by feminist activists in India to cope with online harassment and their effectiveness. Patel identifies various coping mechanisms, including seeking support from peers and using digital security tools, but also highlights the need for more robust institutional support.

Sen (2021) discusses how online harassment affects the broader feminist movement in India, including its impact on activism and advocacy. Sen points out that sustained harassment can demoralize activists and fragment movements, making it harder to achieve their goals. Roy (2018) analyzes the role of civil society organizations in supporting victims of online harassment and advocating for policy changes. Roy's work underscores the importance of collective action and community support in combating online abuse.

4.2 Case Studies of Online Harassment

Journalist and activist Gauri Lankesh was a vocal critic of right-wing extremism and patriarchal structures in India. She faced extensive online harassment, including threats of violence, which culminated in her assassination in 2017 (The Hindu, 2017). Singer and activist Chinmayi Sripaada has been a prominent voice in the #MeToo movement in India. She has faced severe online harassment, including threats and character assassination, for her advocacy against sexual harassment (Indian Express, 2018).

Student activist Gurmehar Kaur faced a massive online trolling campaign after her peaceful protest against campus violence went viral. She received death threats and rape threats, which led to her withdrawing from the public campaign (BBC News, 2017). Actress and activist Swara Bhaskar has faced continuous online harassment due to her outspoken feminist views and criticism of the government. She has been targeted with sexist and violent threats (Hindustan Times, 2020).

Investigative journalist Rana Ayyub, known for her critical reporting on religious and political issues, has faced severe online harassment, including doxxing and death threats (The Wire, 2018).

Feminist activist Kavita Krishna has been targeted with online abuse for her activism and criticism of patriarchal practices. She has received threats of rape and violence (Firstpost, 2017).

Journalist Sagarika Ghose has faced extensive online trolling and abuse for her feminist views and critiques of political leaders (Outlook India, 2016). Poet and activist Aranya Johar has used social media to speak out against gender discrimination and violence. She has faced online harassment, including threats and derogatory comments (Times of India, 2019).

Singer and activist Sona Mohapatra has been a vocal critic of misogyny in the music industry. She has faced online harassment and threats for her outspoken views (HuffPost India, 2019). Trisha Shetty, founder of the NGO SheSays, has faced online abuse for her work in advocating for gender equality and fighting against sexual violence (Quartz India, 2018).

4.3 Psychological Analysis of Online Harassers

Understanding the psychological profile and motivations of online harassers targeting feminist activists is crucial for developing effective interventions. Research suggests that online harassers often exhibit certain psychological traits and motivations, which are summarized below:

Anonymity and Disinhibition: The anonymity provided by the internet reduces the social consequences of abusive behavior, leading to a phenomenon known as the "online disinhibition effect" (Suler, 2004). This anonymity allows individuals to engage in behavior they would not exhibit in face-to-face interactions. **Hostility and Aggression:** Online harassers often display high levels of hostility and aggression. A study by Buckels, Trapnell, and Paulhus (2014) found that individuals who engage in online trolling score higher on measures of psychopathy, sadism, and Machiavellianism.

Gender Norms and Patriarchy: In the context of India, deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and gender biases contribute to the targeting of feminist activists. Harassers often feel threatened by women challenging traditional gender roles and use harassment as a means to reinforce these norms (Banerjee, 2020). **Perceived Threat to Identity:** Feminist activism is perceived as a threat to the social and cultural identities of some individuals, leading them to react defensively and aggressively. This is particularly pronounced in societies with rigid gender norms (Vishwanath, 2017).

Group Dynamics and Mob Behavior: Online harassment often involves group dynamics, where individuals participate in coordinated attacks as part of a larger mob. This behavior is reinforced by groupthink and the desire for social approval within the group (Phillips, 2015). Sense of Power and Control: Engaging in online harassment can provide harassers with a sense of power and control, especially if they perceive themselves as otherwise powerless or marginalized in their offline lives (Citron, 2014).

5. Analysis

The analysis synthesizes the data collected from literature and case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Key findings include:

- ▶ **Prevalence** : A significant proportion of feminist activists in India report experiencing online harassment, with threats of physical and sexual violence being the most common forms. According to Vishwanath (2017), 63% of women activists in India have experienced online harassment.
- ▶ **Psychological Impact** : Online harassment has severe psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many activists report feeling unsafe and considering withdrawing from online activism. Banerjee (2020) found that 70% of harassment victims reported significant emotional or psychological distress.
- ▶ **Coping Strategies** : Activists employ various strategies to cope with online harassment, including blocking or reporting harassers, seeking support from friends and family, and using digital security measures. However, the effectiveness of these strategies varies, and many activists feel that more institutional support is needed.

6. Discussions and Inferences

Several insights emerge from the above analysis. These are summarized as under:

- ▶ **Platform Accountability** : Social media platforms must take greater responsibility for moderating content and protecting users from harassment. Improved reporting mechanisms and stricter enforcement of anti-harassment policies are essential. Ghosh (2019) suggests that legal reforms are necessary to hold platforms accountable for enabling abusive behavior.

- ▶ **Legal Protections** : Existing legal frameworks in India are often inadequate in addressing online harassment. Advocacy for stronger legal protections and more effective law enforcement responses is crucial. Ghosh (2019) highlights the need for laws that specifically address online harassment and cyberstalking.
- ▶ **Support Networks** : Building robust support networks, both online and offline, can help activists cope with the psychological toll of harassment. Peer support groups, mental health resources, and professional counseling can provide essential support. Basu (2016) emphasizes the importance of solidarity and collective action among activists to combat online harassment.
- ▶ **Public Awareness** : Raising public awareness about the prevalence and impact of online harassment can foster a more supportive and informed community. Educational campaigns and media coverage can play a significant role in changing societal attitudes. Banerjee (2020) suggests that increasing awareness of the issue can lead to greater empathy and support for victims.

7. Conclusion

Digital platforms have become indispensable tools for feminist scholars and activists in India, offering unparalleled opportunities for advocacy, community building, and education. However, these platforms also expose them to significant risks, primarily in the form of online bullying and harassment. These challenges create substantial hurdles, affecting the mental health of activists, leading to self-censorship, and undermining the efficacy of feminist movements. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including stronger legal protections, better platform policies, and robust support networks to ensure that digital spaces remain safe and empowering for those fighting for gender equality.

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Revisiting the Unique Monumental Heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shradhdhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri (With special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D.)

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Abstract

Indian state of Uttarakhand is famous for its Unique Monumental Heritage. The aim of this paper is to revisit the unique monumental heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shradhdhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D. Gurukul Kangri, established in 1902 by Swami Shradhdhananda in Haridwar, is a significant institution that played a crucial role in the revival of ancient Indian education and values during the Indian freedom struggle. Blend of both primary and secondary data, it has been shown that Swami Shradhdhananda's Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar stands out as a pioneering institution in the revival of India's ancient education system. Its unique features during 1908-09 A.D. highlight its contribution to the socio-educational reform movement.

Keywords

Monumental heritage, Gurukul Kangri, Swami Shradhdhananda, Ancient Indian education, Vedic education, Indian culture.

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1. Introduction

Uttarakhand, known as the "Land of gods" (Devbhoomi), boasts a rich monumental heritage reflecting its historical, cultural, and religious significance. The state is renowned for its ancient temples, forts, and architectural marvels that blend spirituality with tradition. The main temples include Kedarnath Temple (Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this 8th-century stone structure is a prime example of North Indian temple architecture), Badrinath Temple (a significant part of the Char Dham pilgrimage, this temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu) and Jageshwar Temples (a cluster of over 100 ancient stone temples located in Almora, showcasing Nagara-style architecture).

The state is also famous for Forts like the Pithoragarh Fort (built by the Chand rulers, it offers a glimpse into the strategic military architecture of the region) and the Chandpur Garhi (an important historical fort of the Katyuri dynasty). Historical and Cultural Sites in Uttarakhand are Katarmal Sun Temple (an ancient temple dedicated to the Sun God, renowned for its intricate carvings) and Gurudwara Hemkund Sahib (a Sikh pilgrimage site surrounded by snow-capped peaks, showcasing spiritual and natural heritage). It is also famous for Colonial Heritage. Raj Bhawan, Nainital, the Governor's residence, reflects Gothic-style British architecture, while St. John in the Wilderness Church is a historical church in Nainital, symbolizing colonial-era craftsmanship. These monuments not only embody Uttarakhand's architectural brilliance but also its deep spiritual and historical legacy, attracting tourists, pilgrims, and history enthusiasts alike.

Thus, the region is home to ancient temples like Kedarnath, Badrinath, and Jageshwar, which are architectural marvels reflecting intricate craftsmanship and spiritual significance. The rock

inscriptions, forts, and colonial-era structures such as the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun add to its historical legacy. Unique features like the prehistoric rock paintings in Lakhu Udyar and the intricately carved wooden houses in the Kumaon and Garhwal regions exemplify the region's cultural diversity. These monuments not only attract pilgrims and tourists but also stand as a testament to Uttarakhand's vibrant historical and cultural narrative.

2. Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri : An Introduction

Gurukul Kangri, established in 1902 by Swami Shraddhananda in Haridwar, is a significant institution that played a crucial role in the revival of ancient Indian education and values during the Indian freedom struggle. Situated on the banks of the Ganges in Haridwar, the serene environment reflected the ideal setting for spiritual and academic pursuits. Gurukul Kangri has grown into a university today (Gurukula Kangri Vishwavidyalaya), recognized for preserving and promoting Indian heritage.

Inspired by the Gurukul system of Vedic education, it aimed to provide a blend of traditional knowledge and modern disciplines while promoting Indian culture and spirituality. It was founded as part of the Arya Samaj movement, emphasizing Vedic teachings, character building, and self-reliance. The institution sought to revive the ancient Indian way of education, where students (shishyas) lived and learned under the guidance of their teacher (guru). The curriculum focused on the Vedas, Sanskrit, and Indian philosophy, alongside subjects like mathematics, science, and physical education. Special emphasis was placed on moral and ethical development.

As a reformer, Swami Shraddhananda envisioned education as a tool for empowering Indians and fostering a sense of pride in their cultural identity. His efforts at Gurukul Kangri inspired many nationalist leaders and reformers during the freedom struggle. Gurukul Kangri remains a testament to Swami Shraddhananda's commitment to reviving India's ancient wisdom and integrating it with the needs of modern society. It continues to attract students and scholars interested in Indian traditions and values.

The stone inscriptions at Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri hold significant historical and cultural value. They are etched with Sanskrit verses and teachings from ancient Vedic scriptures,

reflecting the Gurukul's commitment to preserving India's spiritual and educational heritage. These inscriptions often highlight the principles of Arya Samaj, emphasizing truth, discipline, and knowledge. Located on the banks of the Ganges near Haridwar, they serve as a timeless reminder of the institution's role in reviving traditional education during India's independence movement under Swami Shraddhananda's visionary leadership.

3. Objective of Study

The objective of this paper is to revisit the unique monumental heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D.

4. Methodology

As this paper is limited to only the unique monumental heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D., naturally the data used is primary in nature. Secondary data are used only to know details about Swami Shraddhananda's old Gurukul Kangri and the educational system advocated by it.

5. Presentation of Data

Data in the form of various photographs of unique monumental heritage of Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to 1908-09 A.D. are presented as under:



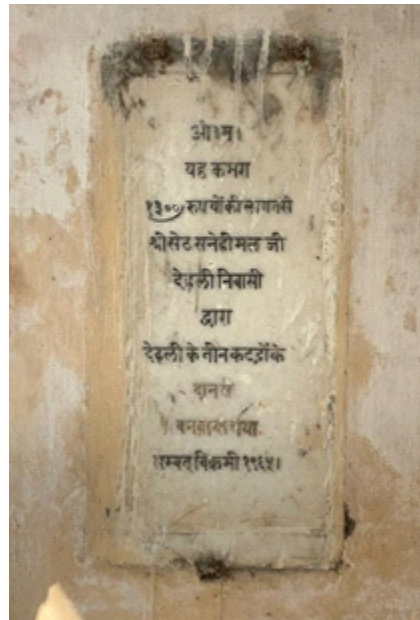
AUM

The Riyasatdars of Nahtor District Bijnor Chaudhary Hari Singh Ji and Chaudhary Chunni Singh Ji built this Gate and Gateway named 'Dyodhi' at a cost of rupees 800/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 [corresponding to Christian era 1908-09 A.D.]



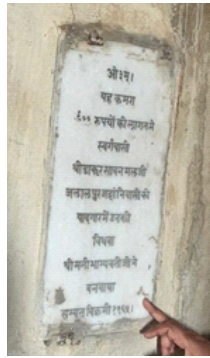
AUM

Mahashay Diwan Chandra Ji Ziledar resident of Balsadha District Jalandhar built this room along with staircase at a cost of Rs. 600/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



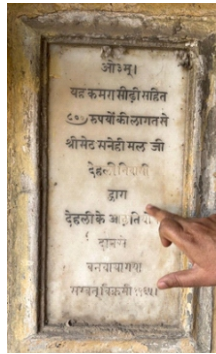
AUM

This room was built at a cost of Rupees 1300/ received in donation from three Katras of Dehliby Shri Sanehi Mal Ji resident of Dehli in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.)



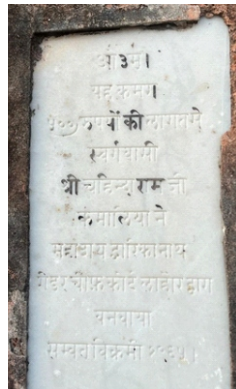
AUM

In memory of Late Shri Doctor Savan Mal Ji resident of Jalalpur Jahan, his widow Shrimati Bhagyawati Ji built this room at a cost of Rs. 900/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

This room along with staircase was built by Shri Seth Sanehi Mal Ji resident of Dehli at a cost of Rs. 800/ out of the donation from the arhatiyas [grain merchants] of Dehli in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

At a cost of Rs. 500/ late Shri Chahindaram Ji built this room through Mahashay Dwarikanath Reader Chief Court Lahor in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



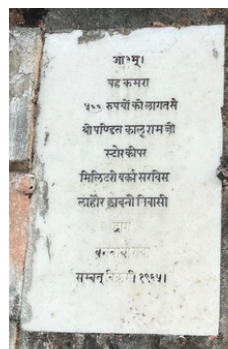
AUM

Shri Pandit Gandaram Ji Retired Dy. Inspector Police (uncle of Pt. Lekharam) built this room at a cost of Rs. 500/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



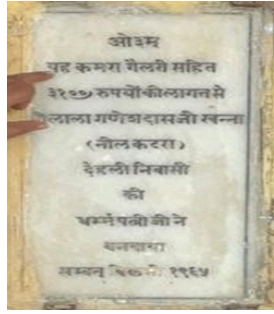
AUM

Shri Baba Bhagwan Das Ji Verowal District Amritsar built this room at a cost of Rs. 500/.



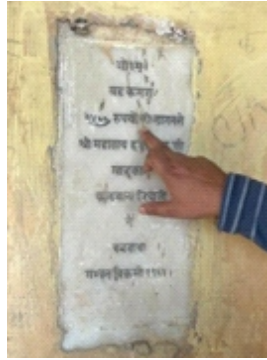
AUM

This room has been built by Shri Pandit Kaluram Ji Store Keeper Military Works Service Resident of Lahore Cantonment at a cost of Rs. 500 in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

The beloved wife of Lala Ganesh Das Ji Khanna resident of Neel Katra of Dehli built this room along with the gallery at a cost of Rs. 3100/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

Shri Mahashay Chhajju Ram Ji Sahukar [Banker] resident of Calcutta built this Hall at a cost of Rs. 2500/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

As per her Will in the holy memory of ideal wife and ideal mother Late Shrimati Janki Bai Ji, Shri Krishna and Sons Watch Merchants Multan Cantonment donated an amount of Rs. 600/ to meet out the cost of this room in Samvat Vikrami 1970 (1913-14 A.D.).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that Swami Shraddhananda's Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar stands out as a pioneering institution in the revival of India's ancient education system. Its unique features during 1908-09 A.D. highlight its contribution to the socio-educational reform movement through the Revival of the Vedic Gurukul System, Gurukul Kangri was modeled on the traditional Vedic system, where students lived in close proximity to their teachers (gurus), fostering a holistic educational environment. The focus was on spiritual growth, self-discipline, and the inculcation of moral values alongside academic learning.

Its contribution may also be seen in the promotion of swadeshi ideals. During 1908-09, the Gurukul became a stronghold of Swadeshi ideology, aligning with the larger Indian freedom struggle. Swami Shraddhananda emphasized the rejection of British-influenced education and sought to instill pride in Indian traditions. The institution promoted Vedic studies, including Sanskrit, Indian philosophy, and ancient sciences, at a time when Western education dominated Indian schools.

As regards the nationalist awakening and student participation, Gurukul Kangri became a hub for nationalist thought. Students were encouraged to actively participate in the freedom struggle by adhering to principles of self-reliance and service to the nation. Many of its students and teachers became torchbearers of socio-political change. Major event of 1908-09 was the visit of Mahatma Gandhi (1909). Gurukul Kangri gained national recognition when Mahatma Gandhi visited the institution in 1909. He appreciated its dedication to reviving Indian heritage and promoting self-reliance, which resonated with his own ideals of Swaraj. Gandhi's visit underscored the Gurukul's importance as a symbol of resistance against colonial influence. Alongside intellectual training, physical fitness and ethical living were integral parts of the curriculum, reflecting the holistic nature of ancient Indian education.

Thus, Swami Shraddhananda's Gurukul Kangri during 1908-09 was not just an educational institution but a beacon of India's cultural resurgence and a powerful statement against the dominance of colonial education. In conclusion, Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri (1908-09 A.D.) stood as a unique institution that seamlessly blended the essence of ancient Indian education with the

emerging spirit of nationalism. It was more than just an educational center; it became a cradle for moral, spiritual, and patriotic awakening. With its emphasis on Vedic traditions, self-reliance, and Swadeshi ideals, the Gurukul not only revived India's rich cultural heritage but also contributed to the broader freedom struggle. The visit of Mahatma Gandhi in 1909 further cemented its place as a symbol of resistance against colonial influence and as a pioneer of holistic education, inspiring generations to uphold Indian values while striving for progress and independence. ★

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