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R.K. Verma

Indian Institute of Public Administration
Bihar Regional Branch, Patna

Indian Institute of Public Administration
Bihar Regional Branch, Patna

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Bihar Regional Branch
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From the Desk of the Chief Editor

I have immense pleasure to present the Vol. XXII No. 2, July-December 2025 of Bihar Journal of Public Administration before the readers. The present Issue of the Journal contains such important subjects that are useful for policy masters and academics. It is a matter of pride for Bihar Regional Branch of Indian Institute of Public Administration which renders a commendable service to the discipline of Public Administration and Policy Science by publishing a nationally reputed journal regularly for over last two decades. It will be evident from the fact that it has been continuously maintained quality and has earned Impact Factor 6.129 by Cosmos indexing. I must admit here that the Issue has been delayed due to technical problems. However, members of IIPA and the editorial team always put their hundred percent efforts for which I must appreciate their vigor and rigor in getting the contributions edited and reviewed to maintain standard. The editorial board intends to accommodate the new ideas and issues of our focus area of research. We also encourage those young scholars who contribute research papers of high order.

Finally, as a student of Political Science and Public Administration, I express my thanks to the learned contributors, the entire Editorial Team and the anonymous referees for carrying the venture of publication of Bihar Journal of Public Administration in regular frequency and that too by maintaining quality. I would like to appeal the Principals of the Colleges to support the publication of the Journal.

Prof. S.P. Shahi
Vice Chancellor, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya
Chief Editor

Editorial

It is high time to take the stock of the quality researches in the areas of public administration, public policy and good governance. Besides, issues of gendered police administration, citizen-centric public management, impact of education reforms and implementation of schemes and agricultural policies, socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers, political economy, people's participation in water conservation and management, human capabilities and artificial intelligence etc. acquire significance especially in terms of the Mission 'Viksit Bharat@2047. The present Vol. XXII, No. 2, July-December, 2025 covers these issues.

It is worth mentioning that the delay in publication of the present number was caused by technical problem i.e. the entire folder of edited version was crashed. As such it took time to recover the research papers. Nevertheless, it is a matter of immense pleasure that Bihar Journal of Public Administration has entered into the twenty third year of its regular publication. The IIPA Bihar Regional Branch and the Editorial team express thankfulness to external support from expert reviewers and the contributors. At last, though utmost care has been taken to maintain the quality, yet we shall feel obliged to have suggestions from readership for improvements in the Journal.

– Editor

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TAX REFORM, CONSUMER FINANCING, AND HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL STABILITY IN INDIA: A STUDY OF GST 2.0

Rashmi Akhoury* and Krishnamurthy Prabhakar**

Abstract

India's implementation of GST 2.0 on September 22, 2025, coinciding with the Diwali festive season, created a natural experiment for examining the relationship between tax policy, consumption boost, consumer financing, and household financial health. Data from government statistics, financial institutions, and industry surveys demonstrates that Diwali 2025 sales recoded an increase of 25 per cent year-over-year growth. Approximately 19-21 per cent of total sales can be directly attributed to GST 2.0 reforms, while bank and NBFC financing enabled an additional 19.2 per cent through consumer loans. However, this consumption boom coincides with concerning household balance sheet vulnerabilities: net financial savings at a 47-year low (5.3% of GDP), household debt growing faster than income (20-27 per cent as compared to 8-10 per cent during 2021-24), and over-concentration in illiquid physical assets amounting to over 71 per cent. The situation impels us to analyse the first month of GST 2.0 impact using multi-source data. Analysis reveals moderate sustainability with significant fiscal risks for state governments. The study identifies early warning signals also. It recommends policy to restoring state compensation mechanisms, publishing official Debt Service Ratio data, tightening small-ticket loan underwriting, and diversifying household assets from physical to financial instruments.

Keywords: GST 2.0, Consumption-led Growth, Household Financial Stability, Consumer Financing, Tax Reform Sustainability, Economic Policy.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime underwent its most significant transformation since inception through the September 22, 2025, implementation

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of "GST 2.0," simplifying the indirect tax structure from four slabs (5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) to primarily two rates: 5% for essentials and 18% for standard goods (Press Information Bureau Memo Dated-04-09-25). This reform aimed to stimulate consumption-led economic growth by reducing consumer prices, enhancing business competitiveness, and rationalizing the tax system (Bajaj Finserv, 2025). The timing – coinciding with India's Navratri-Dussehra-Diwali festive shopping season – created an unprecedented opportunity to assess tax policy's immediate impact on consumer behavior and macroeconomic outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses these interconnected research questions: How does the rapid growth of personal loans and unsecured credit impact household financial vulnerability in India? What is the distributional effect of household debt across different income quintiles? How effective are regulatory interventions, such as RBI risk weight adjustments, in limiting systemic risk? To what extent do GST reductions pass through to consumer prices, particularly during festive seasons? Which sectors or products show lagging GST transmission, and what are the implications for consumption patterns? How concentrated are household assets, and what are the risks of reliance on physical assets? How can policies promote financial diversification, literacy, and long-term fiscal stability? And so on.

SIGNIFICANCE

Understanding the interplay between tax policy, consumer credit, and household financial stability holds critical implications for India's growth trajectory. With GDP growth targeted at 6.5-7% for FY 2026 (Reserve Bank of India [RBI], 2025), consumption represents approximately 60% of GDP. The sustainability of consumption-led growth depends fundamentally on household balance sheet health – a dimension inadequately monitored due to data gaps in official Debt Service Ratio (DSR) and Financial Obligations Ratio (FOR) metrics. This study fills critical knowledge gaps by integrating disparate data sources to construct a comprehensive assessment framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This analysis employs a multi-dimensional framework combining:

- Fiscal policy theory: Examining GST rate rationalization as a demand-side stimulus (Laffer curve dynamics where lower rates generate higher absolute revenues through volume growth)
- Consumer credit theory: Analyzing the role of credit availability in consumption smoothing and demand creation

- Household balance sheet analysis: Applying stock-flow consistent accounting to measure financial stability
- Political economy: Assessing federal fiscal tensions between central and state governments

DATA SOURCES

This study adopts a **mixed-methods approach**, combining quantitative and qualitative data from multiple authoritative sources. **Government statistics** include CPI and household savings from MoSPI, financial stability and credit data from RBI, monthly GST collections from GSTN, and fiscal projections from the Ministry of Finance. **Industry surveys** cover Diwali 2025 sales from CAIT, credit quality and delinquency rates from TransUnion CIBIL, and sectoral lending data from IBA. **Financial institution reports** provide GST and H-1B impact assessments (CRISIL, SBI Research, ICRA). **Market intelligence** sources such as Mordor Intelligence and IMARC Group offer auto and two-wheeler loan market sizing and analysis, 2020–2025.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Consumption Attribution Analysis

GST 2.0's impact was isolated using multi-factor decomposition: incremental Diwali 2025 sales of ₹1.8 lakh crore were adjusted by a 72% trader attribution rate (CAIT) and conservatively corrected for deferred purchases, festive season effects, low inflation (1.54% CPI), consumer confidence, and counterfactual baseline growth.

Household Balance Sheet Framework

A comprehensive framework following Federal Reserve and RBI methods was used, covering stock measures (debt, assets, net wealth ratios), flow measures (savings rates, DSR, debt vs income growth), asset quality (physical vs financial assets, CIBIL scores, vintage delinquency), and leverage metrics (liabilities-to-income and total assets ratios).

Default Rate Analysis

Five-year trend analysis (2020-2025) of Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) across loan categories: credit cards, personal loans, auto loans, two-wheeler loans, consumer durable loans, and overall retail lending.

Sustainability Scoring

A 10-point sustainability assessment framework was developed to evaluate multiple dimensions of economic and fiscal stability. It covers consumption sustainability across short-term (0–6 months), medium-term (6–18 months), and long-term (18+ months) horizons, fiscal revenue sustainability for both the centre and states, tax compliance and formalization, business investment incentives, export competitiveness, and political sustainability, particularly in terms of federal relations. This multi-dimensional scoring allows policymakers to assess the durability of reforms, identify potential stress points, and prioritize interventions to ensure balanced economic growth and financial stability across sectors and regions.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

This study faces several constraints: household balance sheet data lag 18–24 months, FY2025 figures are estimated; GST 2.0 impact isolation requires counterfactual assumptions; no official DSR/FOR data exist; Chinese import contributions are estimated from surveys; and regional heterogeneity in GST effects is not fully captured.

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

GST 2.0 Consumption Impact: First Month Assessment

Diwali 2025 Sales and GST Collections

Diwali 2025 sales reached ₹6.05 lakh crore ($68.77 billion), a 25% year over year increase from ₹4.25 lakh crore in 2024, comprising goods sales of ₹5.40 lakh crore and services sales of ₹65,000 crore during September 29–October 20 (Business Standard, 2025a; IBEF, 2025; Money control, 2025a). September 2025 GST collections rose to ₹1.89 lakh crore, up 9.1% YoY, with domestic transactions +6.8%, imports +15.6%, and GST refunds at ₹28,657 crore (+40.1%), reflecting strong consumption-led growth despite rate cuts (New Indian Express, 2025a).

Bank Credit and GST 2.0 Attribution

Credit Growth: Bank credit rose 11.38% YoY in the fortnight ending October 3, 2025 – the fastest in eight months; fortnight-on-fortnight growth was 1.92%, driven by retail demand and GST reforms (Indian Express, 2025a; Financial Express, 2025a).

Trader Attribution

CAIT surveys found 72% of traders credited higher sales to GST cuts across 60 centres (Money control, 2025a; Business Standard, 2025b).

Direct GST 2.0 Impact

Approximately ₹1.16–1.30 lakh crore (19–21% of Diwali sales) attributed to reforms (The Federal, 2025; Economic Times, 2025a), based on incremental growth and survey adjustment.

Conservative Estimate

Adjusting for inflation (CPI 1.54%, food -2.3%), deferred purchases, festive seasonality, and confidence effects, GST 2.0 contributed 40–50% of incremental growth (₹72,000–90,000 crore) (Fortune India, 2025; Times of India, 2025a, b; IBEF, 2025).

CHINESE MANUFACTURING COMPONENT/CONSUMER PREFERENCE VS STRUCTURAL DEPENDENCY

CAIT reported 87% of consumers preferred Indian-made goods, boosting domestic product sales by 25% (Business Today, 2025a), reflecting progress toward Aatmanirbhar Bharat. However, structural Chinese dependencies persist: 70–80% of LED lights/decorations, $1 billion in computer chip imports (July 2025), two-wheeler parts, and electronics components remain sourced from China (India Today, 2025; Economic Times, 2025b). Overall, 40–50% of Diwali items still contain Chinese inputs despite "Vocal for Local" campaigns and enforcement efforts (Sikkim Express, 2025; Times of India, 2025c). India's $99 billion bilateral trade deficit highlights entrenched reliance on China, concentrated in 300 products (Times of India, 2025d; GTAIC, 2025).

GST 2.0 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

Overall Sustainability and Revenue Impact

The overall sustainability score of GST 2.0 is 6.0/10 (moderately sustainable). High-scoring dimensions include short-term consumption boost (8.5/10), structural compliance (7.0/10), business investment incentives (7.5/10), export competitiveness (7.0/10), and supply chain efficiency (7.5/10). Moderate sustainability applies to medium-term consumption (6.0/10), long-term consumption patterns (5.5/10), and central fiscal position (6.0/10). Low sustainability concerns state fiscal health

(3.5/10) and federal political harmony (4.0/10). Revenue loss estimates vary widely: government ₹48,000 crore, former FM Subhash Garg ₹2,00,000 crore, SBI Research ₹1,11,000 crore gross/₹26,000 crore net. Despite this, September 2025 GST collections grew 9.1% year over year post-rate cuts, highlighting resilience and validating consumption-led growth (New Indian Express, 2025b; Economic Times Government, 2025; BFSI Economic Times, 2025)

However, central GST growth in April-August 2025 was only 5.2% against budgeted 11.3% – a significant shortfall suggesting pre-reform revenue trajectory was already weak (Business Today, 2025c; Financial Express, 2025b).

State Fiscal Crisis

Eight opposition states estimate combined annual revenue losses of Rs 80,000 crore to ₹1.5 lakh crore (Business Today, 2025d; NDTV, 2025; Taxo Online, 2025). The abolition of the GST compensation mechanism (which guaranteed 14% annual revenue growth) leaves states directly exposed to consumption volatility without federal insurance (India Briefing, 2025; Clear Tax, 2025a). Karnataka's Finance Minister warned the state's GST revenue was only ₹32,000 crore compared to pre-GST sales tax of ₹51,000 crore – a structural depression never recovered.

BANK & NBFC FINANCING: THE HIDDEN ENGINE

Aggregate Financing Contribution

Bank and NBFC financing contributed an estimated ₹1.16 lakh crore (~$13.2 billion, or 19.2% of total Diwali sales) through loans for automobiles, consumer durables, and electronics (Business Today, 2025e; Calley, 2025; The Hindu Business Line, 2025a).

Financing Penetration by Product

Product Category	Financing Penetration	Estimated Amount Financed
Cars	80%	₹50,000-56,000 crore
Two-wheelers	50-65%	₹13,000-19,500 crore
Consumer Durables & Electronics	50-65%	₹48,600 crore
iPhones (specifically)	70%	Included in electronics

Market Structure

NBFCs hold 55–60% market share (₹66,758 crore), offering instant approvals, high LTV ratios (95–100%), and strong Tier-2/3 city penetration (IDFC FIRST Bank,

2025). Banks account for 35–40% (₹43,538 crore), providing lower interest rates (7.4–9.99%), festive cashback offers up to ₹50,000, and trust for large purchases (Business Standard, 2025c; The Hindu Business Line, 2025a). Without easy financing, auto sales could drop 60–75% (₹54,000–67,500 crore), consumer durables 50–60% (₹40,500–48,600 crore), reducing festive turnover by ₹94,500–1,16,100 crore ($10.7–13.2 billion), 15.6–19.2% of total sales.

FIVE-YEAR FINANCING TRENDS (2020-2025)

Growth Trajectory

Loan Category	*2020 Outstanding*	*2025 Outstanding*	*5-Year CAGR*	*Peak Growth Year*
Vehicle Loans	₹3.4 lakh crore	₹8.1 lakh crore	18.96%	2024 (27.7% YoY)
Car Loans	₹2.92 lakh crore.	₹3.90 lakh crore.	5.98%	Steady 7-10%
Two-Wheeler Loans	₹64,700 crore.	₹78,190 crore.	3.86%	2021 (9.03% YoY)
Consumer Durable Loans	₹19,500 crore	₹24,800 crore	4.93%	Contracted 2023-24
Personal Loans	₹5.8 lakh crore	₹11 lakh crore	13.66%	2021-23 (24-27% YoY)

Default Rate Trends (GNPA %)

Loan Category	*2020*	*2023 (Low)*	*2025 (Current)*	*Trend Assessment*
Credit Cards	1.95%	1.70%	2.30%	Deteriorating (+46 bps YoY)
Personal Loans	1.20%	0.95%	1.18%	Rising (+15 bps YoY)
Auto Loans	0.85%	0.75%	0.75%	Stable (best quality)
Two-Wheeler Loans	2.75%	1.97%	2.50%	Rising (rural stress)
Consumer Durable Loans	1.68%	1.68%	2.00%	Rising while volume contracts
Overall Retail	2.00%	1.40%	1.20%	Stable aggregate

SUBPRIME CRISIS RISK ASSESSMENT

India's recent credit expansion shows some similarities to the **2007–08 U.S. subprime crisis**, particularly rapid growth in unsecured lending. Personal loans grew at a **20.4% CAGR between 2021 and 2025**, while small-ticket loans show higher delinquency rates and widespread multi-loan borrowing (Sansad, 2025a; Times of India, 2025e; TransUnion CIBIL, 2025). Household debt has also risen faster than income (Sansad, 2025b). However, systemic risk remains limited because

household leverage is relatively low and most major loans are collateralized, supported by **RBI regulatory intervention** (Indian Express, 2025b). Although stress is emerging in credit cards and small loans, overall retail GNPA levels remain low at around **1.2%** (Reserve Bank of India; Economic Times, 2024).

HOUSEHOLD BALANCE SHEET HEALTH

Stock Measures (Balance Sheet Position)

Metric	*India Status (2024-25)*	*Healthy Range*	*Assessment*
Debt-to-GDP Ratio	41.9% → 42%	<40-45% (EM)	Moderate Concern
Financial Assets/GDP	106.2%	>80-100%	Strong
Net Financial Wealth	66% of GDP	>50%	Healthy
Liabilities/Financial Assets	37.8%	<40-50%	Healthy
Wealth-to-Income Ratio	6-7x (estimated)	3-5x	Top-heavy distribution

Flow Measures (Income and Savings)

Metric	*Current Status*	*Healthy Range*	*Assessment*
Household Savings Rate	18.4% of GDP (FY23)	>18-20%	Six-year low
Net Financial Savings	5.3% of GDP (FY24)	>7-8%	47-year low
Debt Service Ratio	25-30% (estimated)	<36-40%	Rising for leveraged segments
Debt Growth vs Income	>1.0 (2021-24)	≤1.0	Unsustainable divergence

Asset Composition and Credit Risk

Indian households hold 71.5% physical and 28.5% financial assets (FY23), reflecting post-pandemic preference for illiquid real estate (360 ONE, 2025). This creates liquidity risks, lower returns, and wealth inequality, as the top 10% hold 65% of wealth while the bottom 50% own 6% (Sabrang India, 2025; World Inequality Lab, 2024). Credit quality remains mostly prime (CIBIL>750), but small-ticket, multi-loan borrowers show rising delinquencies, with 51% having 4+ active loans (LinkedIn RBI Flags, 2025; TransUnion CIBIL, 2025). Aggregate metrics are healthy – 66% net wealth/GDP, 27–32% leverage, 42% debt-to-GDP—yet bottom 50% face severe stress, with net financial savings at a 47-year low (5.3% GDP) and debt outpacing income growth (2021–24), signalling unsustainable dynamics.

DISCUSSION

GST 2.0 Impact: Separating Signal from Noise

The September 2025 rollout of GST 2.0 coincided with highly favourable macroeconomic conditions, complicating precise causal attribution. Although 72% of traders credited GST cuts for higher sales (Money control, 2025a), this likely overstates the direct policy impact relative to confounding factors. Multi-factor decomposition suggests GST 2.0 contributed 40–50% of the ₹1.8 lakh crore incremental Diwali growth (₹72,000–90,000 crore), with the remainder driven by record-low inflation (1.54% CPI; food inflation –2.28%), deferred purchases between the August 15 announcement and September 22 implementation, natural festive seasonality, and psychological confidence effects influenced by Finance Minister announcements (Fortune India, 2025; Times of India, 2025a, b; IBEF, 2025; Economic Times, 2025a). The ultimate test will be November–December 2025 GST collections: sustained collections above ₹1.7 lakh crore would indicate structural policy impact, whereas a reversion to ₹1.6–1.65 lakh crore would suggest the October surge was a temporary distortion rather than a durable increase in consumption.

CHINESE MANUFACTURING PARADOX

The data reveal a contradiction between consumer preference and structural dependency: while 87% of consumers favour Indian goods, 40–50% of components remain Chinese. Visible imports like smartphones and toys have declined, but embedded inputs dominate supply chains – 70–80% of LED lights and decorative items, $1 billion monthly computer chip imports, two-wheeler parts, electronics, and textiles (India Today, 2025; Economic Times, 2025b). India's $99 billion trade deficit with China persists due to China's scale economies, concentrated supply chain dependencies across 300 products (77% of imports), and their ability to deliver "good enough" quality at low cost, which Indian manufacturing cannot yet match (Times of India, 2025d; GTAIC, 2025).

Policy Implications

Reducing Chinese dependency requires:

- **Supply chain indigenization:** 10–15-year horizon to develop competitive alternatives in critical inputs
- **ASEAN diversification:** Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia can substitute for some categories but lack China's integrated infrastructure

- **Technology absorption:** India must move beyond assembly to component manufacturing, requiring massive R&D and capital investment

The 87% consumer preference for Indian goods represents aspirational patriotism constrained by structural economic realities. True indigenization requires industrial policy far beyond consumer sentiment.

SUSTAINABILITY: THE STATE FISCAL CRISIS

GST 2.0's most severe sustainability risk lies not in aggregate revenue (which grew 9.1% in September despite rate cuts) but in distributional fiscal stress across India's federal structure.

Central Government Position (Manageable)

- ₹45,000 crore compensation cess funds available to absorb temporary shortfalls (Business Today, 2025d)
- Expenditure reprioritization capacity through discretionary spending cuts
- Access to sovereign borrowing markets at favourable rates
- Ability to adjust indirect taxes (customs, excise) if GST proves insufficient

State Government Position (Critical)

Eight opposition states face ₹80,000 crore to ₹1.5 lakh crore combined annual losses without compensation mechanism (Business Today, 2025d; NDTV, 2025). Karnataka's stark warning – GST revenue of ₹32,000 crore versus pre-GST sales tax of ₹51,000 crore – illustrates structural revenue depression never recovered since 2017 GST implementation.

The abolition of GST compensation (guaranteed 14% annual revenue growth for five years post-2017) eliminates the federal safety net that made original GST politically viable (India Briefing, 2025; Clear Tax, 2025a). States now face:

- **Direct consumption volatility exposure:** Recessions reduce GST revenue without federal insurance
- **Asymmetric reform burden:** Central government reaps consumption-led GDP growth benefits while states absorb revenue shortfalls
- **Developmental expenditure cuts:** Infrastructure, education, healthcare budgets squeezed to maintain fiscal discipline

Political Sustainability (4.0/10)

The GST Council's September 2025 meeting did not discuss state compensation, leaving this explosive issue unresolved (Taxon Online, 2025). Non-BJP states view GST 2.0 as an unfunded mandate benefiting central government's political

narrative while offloading fiscal pain onto states. This scores only 4.0/10 for political sustainability, creating medium-term risk of:

- **Federal litigation:** Constitutional challenges to GST rate structures
- **Unilateral state actions:** Additional state-level cesses or surcharges undermining GST uniformity
- **Political backlash:** State elections becoming referendums on GST 2.0 economic impact

RESOLUTION PATHWAYS

1. Restore compensation mechanism (politically difficult given fiscal constraints)
2. Increase vertical devolution from central to state governments (42nd Finance Commission recommendation: raise states' share of central taxes from 41% to 45%)
3. Revenue-sharing formula revision to reflect consumption patterns rather than production location
4. Sunset clause: Guarantee state compensation for 3 years during GST 2.0 transition, then phase out

Without addressing state fiscal stress, GST 2.0's sustainability remains conditional and politically fragile.

CONSUMER FINANCING: ENABLER OR VULNERABILITY?

Bank and NBFC Financing: Consumption and Risk

₹1.16 lakh crore (19.2% of Diwali sales) shows credit enables consumption but poses systemic risks. High car financing penetration (80%) democratizes ownership, smooths consumption via EMIs, and stabilizes spending during shocks show positive demand effects. (Business Today, 2025e).

Emerging Vulnerabilities

1. **DSR Risk:** Urban household DSR 25–30% nearing 36–40% distress threshold; debt growing 20–27% vs income 8–10% (Sansad, 2025a, b).
2. **Credit Quality:** Rising NPAs – credit cards 5 × increase to ₹6,742 crore, personal loans GNPA 0.95→1.18%, small-ticket loans 5.4% delinquency; 51% carry 4+ loans (Scroll, 2025; Times of India, 2025e; TransUnion CIBIL, 2025).
3. **Consumer Durable Loans:** –3.9% year over year contraction, GNPA 2% – credit tightening amid rising demand (The Secretariat, 2025).

Subprime Crisis Probability

Low (15–20%) due to positive wealth, low leverage, collateralized loans, and RBI intervention; 60–70% probability of continued stress in unsecured segments, requiring delinquency monitoring, risk weight adjustments, and NBFC stress testing.

HOUSEHOLD BALANCE SHEET: FLOW CRISIS MASKING STOCK STRENGTH

India's Household Balance Sheet Presents a Paradox of Strength and Vulnerability

Stock Measures (Strong)

Net financial wealth is 66% of GDP, with low leverage at 27–32%, keeping households net creditors.

Flow Measures (Weak)

Net financial savings at 5.3% of GDP (47-year low) and household savings at 18.4% of GDP (six-year low). Debt growth (20–27%) outpaces income growth (8–10%, 2021–24), signalling emerging financial stress (Sansad, 2025a; Sansad, 2025b).

Flow and Asset Risks

India's net financial savings fell from 11.5% (FY21) to 5.3% of GDP (FY24), below the 7–8% healthy threshold, limiting households' ability to absorb shocks like unemployment, medical emergencies, education, or asset corrections. Asset composition is skewed, with 71.5% in physical assets (real estate ₹34.8 lakh crore, gold ₹63,397 crore) versus 28.5% financial, and bank deposit share declining from 58% (FY12) to 37% (FY23), creating liquidity vulnerability (360 ONE, 2025).

Implications

If real estate prices correct 15-20% (plausible given affordability constraints and interest rate risk), 70% of household savings face devaluation, creating:

- Negative wealth effect: Consumption declines as household net worth falls
- Liquidity crunch: Unable to liquidate physical assets rapidly during stress
- Collateral damage: Home equity loans and mortgage refinancing become unavailable Distributional Inequality:

The top 1% own 40.1% of wealth, bottom 50% own 6% (World Inequality Lab, 2024; Sabrang India, 2025). This extreme concentration means:

- **Aggregate statistics mask vulnerability:** Bottom 50% face far higher debt service burdens relative to income
- **Consumption multipliers differ:** Top 1% has low marginal propensity to consume; bottom 50% spends all incremental income
- **Policy transmission asymmetry:** GST cuts benefit bottom 50% proportionally more, but debt service stress concentrates in this segment

POLICY IMPERATIVES

Addressing the emerging fiscal and financial vulnerabilities requires coordinated reforms across fiscal policy, financial regulation, and household balance sheet management. First, federal fiscal stability must be strengthened by addressing the revenue pressures faced by states after the end of GST compensation. The central government could restore the earlier 14% guaranteed revenue growth compensation for a three-year transition period under GST 2.0, increase the states' share in central tax devolution from 41% to 45%, or establish a GST Stabilization Fund that allocates around 10% of central GST collections for emergency transfers to states.

Second, the absence of official indicators such as the Debt Service Ratio (DSR) and Financial Obligations Ratio (FOR) limits early detection of household financial stress. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should publish quarterly household DSR data, similar to the methodology used by the U.S. Federal Reserve, with disaggregation by income quintiles and inclusion of financial obligations such as rent, insurance, and property taxes to measure the full burden on households.

Third, tighter regulation of small-ticket personal loans is necessary given rising delinquency rates and high levels of multi-loan borrowing (Times of India, 2025e; Trans Union CIBIL, 2025). Regulatory measures could include capping borrowers at three active personal loans, increasing risk weights on unsecured loans below ₹50,000, introducing cooling periods between loan applications, and requiring formal income verification.

Fourth, policymakers should ensure GST pass-through to consumers by tracking sector-specific price indices and investigating industries where price reductions lag tax cuts. Fifth, policies should promote household asset diversification through tax neutrality between real estate and equities, financial literacy campaigns, and pension reforms encouraging equity-linked investments. Finally, addressing wealth concentration, where the top 1% holds a large share of national wealth, may require progressive taxation measures and targeted income support programs to strengthen inclusive consumption-led growth.

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined India's GST 2.0 tax reform through the lens of its first-month implementation coinciding with Diwali 2025, integrating consumption data, household financial metrics, and credit market dynamics. Key findings:

1. Consumption Impact (Moderate Attribution)

Diwali 2025 sales reached ₹6.05 lakh crore ($68.77 billion), exceeding projections with 25% year-over-year growth. Approximately 19-21% of total sales (₹1.16-1.30 lakh crore) can be directly attributed to GST 2.0 reforms, though conservative estimates adjusting for confounding factors suggest 40-50% of incremental growth (₹72,000-90,000 crore) represents true policy impact. The remainder derives from record-low inflation (1.54% CPI), deferred purchases, natural festive seasonality, and psychological confidence effects.

2. Chinese Manufacturing Dependency (40-50% Content)

Despite 87% consumer preference for Indian goods, structural dependencies persist with 40-50% of Diwali sales estimated to contain Chinese-manufactured components, down from historical 70% but far from indigenization targets. Critical categories – LED lights (70-80%), electronics components ($1 billion monthly chip imports), two-wheeler parts – remain Chinese-dominated. India's $99 billion bilateral trade deficit with China reflects deep supply chain lock-in requiring decades of industrial policy to overcome.

3. Sustainability Assessment (6.0/10 - Moderate with Caveats)

GST 2.0 achieves moderate overall sustainability (6.0/10) with strong performance in short-term consumption boost (8.5/10), structural compliance improvements (7.0/10), and business investment incentives (7.5/10). However, critical vulnerabilities exist:

- State fiscal crisis (3.5/10): Eight states face ₹80,000 crore to ₹1.5 lakh crore annual losses without compensation mechanism
- Federal political tensions (4.0/10): GST Council avoiding state compensation discussions signals unresolved conflict
- Revenue uncertainty: Wide variance in loss estimates (₹48,000 crore to ₹2 lakh crore annually) creates fiscal planning challenges

4. Consumer Financing Role (19.2% of Sales, Rising Risks)

Bank and NBFC financing contributed ₹1.16 lakh crore (19.2% of total Diwali sales), enabling:

- 80% of car purchases (₹50,000-56,000 crore financed)
- 50-65% of two-wheeler purchases (₹13,000-19,500 crore)
- 50-65% of consumer durables (₹48,600 crore)

However, deteriorating credit quality signals emerging stress: Credit card NPAs increased 5X over five years, personal loan GNPA rose from 0.95% to 1.18%, consumer durable loans contracted 3.9% YoY, and 51% of small-ticket borrowers carry 4+ active loans. While systemic crisis probability remains low (15-20%) due to positive net household wealth and regulatory intervention, localized stress probability is high (60-70%) in unsecured segments.

5. Household Balance Sheet (Stock Strength, Flow Crisis)

Indian households exhibit paradoxical financial health:

- **Stock measures (healthy):** Net financial wealth 66% of GDP, low leverage 27-32%, debt-to-GDP 42% below emerging market average
- **Flow measures (critical):** Net financial savings at 47-year low (5.3% of GDP), debt growing 20-27% versus income growth 8-10%, household savings rate at six-year low (18.4% of GDP)
- **Asset composition risk:** 71.5% concentration in illiquid physical assets creates vulnerability to real estate price corrections
- **Distributional stress:** Top 1% own 40% of wealth, bottom 50% own 6%, concentrating debt service burdens on most vulnerable

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Consumption Attribution Framework: Multi-factor decomposition isolates tax policy effects from inflation, seasonality, deferred purchases, and confidence, combining trader surveys, incremental growth, and counterfactual modeling for emerging market policy evaluation.

Household Balance Sheet Matrix: Integrates stock (wealth), flow (savings/DSR), asset quality (credit scores, delinquency), and leverage to capture aggregate stability and distributional vulnerabilities beyond simple debt-to-GDP metrics.

Federal Fiscal Sustainability: Shows that central fiscal health (6.0/10) can mask state-level stress (3.5/10), emphasizing the need for compensation mechanisms in federal tax reforms like GST 2.0.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings, we recommend:

Immediate (0-6 months)

1. Restore state GST compensation for 3-year transition period guaranteeing 10% minimum growth
2. Publish November-December 2025 GST collections with sector-specific breakdowns to validate sustainability
3. Increase risk weights on small-ticket personal loans (<₹50,000) from 125% to 150%
4. Launch DSR monitoring system publishing quarterly household debt service ratios by income quintile

Medium-term (6-18 months)

5. Monitor GST pass-through through sector-specific price indices; investigate industries with lagging transmission
6. Tighten multi-loan borrowing by capping active personal loans at 3 per borrower
7. Diversify household assets through tax equalization between real estate and equities capital gains treatment
8. Establish GST Stabilization Fund pooling 10% of central collections for state emergency transfers

Long-term (18+ months)

9. Implement progressive wealth tax (1-2% on net worth >₹50 crore) to address top 1% owning 40% of wealth
10. Supply chain indigenization roadmap targeting 30% reduction in Chinese manufacturing dependency over 10 years through targeted industrial policy
11. Financial literacy campaigns explaining debt service risks and diversification benefits
12. Pension auto-enrollment in equity-linked schemes for formal sector workers to shift from 71.5% physical assets

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This analysis is subject to several data and methodological constraints. Household balance sheet data in India are typically released with a lag of 18–24 months, meaning FY2025 actual figures are not yet available, and the study relies partly on projections and estimates. In addition, the Reserve Bank of India does not publish official Debt Service Ratio (DSR) or Fixed Obligation to Income Ratio (FOR)

statistics, requiring researchers to use indirect calculations based on available macro and survey data. Data limitations are also evident in assessing the Chinese manufacturing component of imports, where comprehensive official statistics are lacking and estimates are derived primarily from industry reports and surveys. Furthermore, the analysis does not fully capture regional heterogeneity, and a more precise assessment would require state-level GST impact studies using detailed GST collection and sectoral data.

Methodologically, the study faces challenges in establishing causal relationships, particularly in isolating the effects of GST 2.0 from other macroeconomic factors, which necessitates the use of counterfactual assumptions. Trader perception surveys used in the analysis may also introduce recency bias, potentially exaggerating the immediate impact of policy changes. Finally, the subprime crisis risk assessment relies partly on comparisons with the 2007–08 U.S. financial crisis, which may not fully capture the institutional and structural differences in India's financial system.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research should focus on several areas to strengthen the understanding of credit expansion and consumption dynamics. First, longitudinal tracking of GST collections and consumption patterns from November 2025 to March 2026 would help determine whether recent growth trends are sustainable beyond festive season distortions. Second, state-level analysis is needed to disaggregate fiscal impacts across states and identify regions that may be more vulnerable, particularly in relation to federal transfer mechanisms. Third, future studies should develop income-quintile–specific debt service ratios (DSR) to better measure financial vulnerability among the bottom 50% of households. Fourth, more detailed supply chain mapping is required to quantify dependence on Chinese manufacturing inputs by product category, which can inform targeted indigenization strategies. Finally, credit stress testing of household balance sheets under adverse macroeconomic scenarios – such as GDP growth falling below 5%, unemployment rising by 2%, or real estate prices declining by 20% – would provide deeper insights into potential financial stability risks.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

India stands at an economic inflection point. GST 2.0 and consumption financing have successfully driven record festive sales, validating the government's consumption-led growth strategy in the short term. However, this consumption boom occurs against a backdrop of household balance sheet vulnerabilities – 47-year low net financial savings (5.3% of GDP), debt growing faster than income, 71.5% over-concentration in illiquid physical assets, and extreme wealth inequality (top 1%: 40%, bottom 50%: 6%) – that constitute pre-conditions for consumption collapse, not yet crisis indicators.

The critical period is November 2025-March 2026. If GST collections sustain above ₹1.7 lakh crore monthly, consumption holds beyond festive distortions, and employment/wage growth matches debt accumulation, GST 2.0 validates as visionary policy engineering sustainable consumption-led growth. If collections revert to pre-reform levels (~₹1.6 lakh crore), household debt service stress escalates without income growth, and unsecured loan defaults accelerate, India faces a dual crisis of revenue shortfalls and consumption contraction.

Our sustainability score of 6.0/10 (moderately sustainable with significant caveats) reflects this balanced risk assessment: strong short-term performance, structural improvements in compliance and business incentives, but unresolved state fiscal crisis (3.5/10), federal political tensions (4.0/10), and household flow vulnerabilities requiring urgent policy attention.

The data unequivocally demonstrate that GST 2.0 and consumption financing can power 7%+ GDP growth if household balance sheets remain healthy, but the same mechanisms create systemic vulnerability if debt service stress escalates without income growth matching borrowing. The next 6-12 months will determine which path prevails – sustainable consumption-led prosperity or temporary fiscal stimulus masking structural fragilities. Policymakers must act decisively on state compensation, household debt monitoring, and wealth inequality to ensure the former outcome materializes.

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CORRUPTION, GENDER AND THE PARADOX OF FREEDOM IN INDIA: WHY GENDER MATTERS IN ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY AND STRATEGY?

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Abstract

This paper examines the practice of democracy in contemporary India through the interrelated lenses of corruption, gender and freedom. It argues that democratic governance in India has largely been shaped by a liberal-rational understanding of freedom that prioritises institutional procedures and formal equality, while paying comparatively limited attention to the everyday social conditions through which freedom is experienced by citizens. In this context, forms of democratic engagement beyond electoral participation – such as critique, mobilisation, and collective action – have played a constructive role in expanding the meaning of the political and strengthening participatory democracy. Situating these dynamics within debates on corruption, the paper highlights the limitations of prevailing anti-corruption approaches that treat corruption primarily as a legal or administrative concern, without adequately recognising its close relationship with social discrimination. Drawing on empirical studies, the paper demonstrates that corruption disproportionately affects socially marginalised groups, particularly women, thereby constraining their access to public institutions and mechanisms of accountability. The paper argues that integrating a gender perspective into anti-corruption policy and research is essential for developing inclusive and responsive governance frameworks. With an approach to linking corruption, gender and freedom, the paper strengthens democratic governance and contributes to aligning constitutional ideals with lived social realities, thereby advancing the broader developmental vision of Viksit Bharat.

Keywords: Corruption, Gender, Democracy, Freedom, Political, Participation, Viksit Bharat.

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INTRODUCTION

Indian politics has evolved through continuous engagement with democratic contestation and civic participation. Historically, the trajectory of politics and democracy in India has been shaped by the state's ongoing efforts to realise the constitutional promises of equality, freedom, rights, and justice for all citizens. Experiences of Indian democracy suggest that state responsiveness to discrimination, exploitation, and human rights violations often emerges through sustained public engagement and the collective articulation of demands. While electoral participation remains central to democratic functioning, it is complemented by other democratic practices, such as protest, critique, and social movements, which play a crucial role in strengthening accountability and responsiveness. These forms of participation contribute to the vitality of democracy by enabling citizens to express concerns beyond formal institutional channels. At the same time, it is necessary to recognise that when such practices exceed democratic norms or institutional frameworks, they may generate governance challenges. Therefore, democratic contestation serves as both a resource for deepening democracy and a domain that requires careful regulation to preserve constitutional order and democratic stability.

This article examines the practice of democracy in contemporary India through the lens of freedom, governance, and public accountability, with a particular focus on corruption and the gendered experiences of democratic participation. It argues that democratic governance in India has often relied on a narrowly defined, liberal-rational understanding of freedom, rooted in institutional procedures and formal equality, while overlooking the everyday social conditions through which freedom is experienced by ordinary citizens. As a result, forms of democratic participation that emerge outside electoral politics – such as critique, mobilisation, and collective action – have played a significant role in expanding the meaning of the political and deepening participatory democracy. Rather than viewing these engagements as a sign of democratic weakness, the paper understands them as creative and change-oriented forces that have historically contributed to accountability and reform in postcolonial India. Within this broader democratic context, the paper emphasises the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into anti-corruption policy. Existing approaches to corruption in India largely treat it as an administrative or legal problem, without sufficiently recognising its close relationship with social discrimination. Drawing on empirical insights, including Transparency International's *Defying Exclusion* report (2021), the article underscores that corruption disproportionately affects those already marginalised by gender and other forms of inequality, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and less able to resist corrupt practices. The paper therefore argues that addressing corruption requires an inclusive governance framework that recognises the interconnectedness of freedom, equality, and administrative justice, and that integrates gender-sensitive

data and analysis into policy design. Such an approach not only strengthens democratic governance but also resolves the paradox of freedom by aligning formal democratic ideals with lived social realities, thus paving the way for the realisation of *Vikisit Bharat* not just in theory but also in practice.

INTERROGATING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE 'POLITICAL' IN A DEMOCRACY: A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

In India, democratic participation unfolds within a complex social context shaped not only by the distribution of resources but also by long-standing power relations. Indian democracy is firmly anchored in a constitutional framework that guarantees free and fair elections, representative institutions, and the rule of law – features that establish its strong procedural foundations. At the same time, a more comprehensive understanding of Indian democracy benefits from moving beyond a purely institutional perspective to engage with questions of freedom and substantive participation. Such an approach highlights the extent to which citizens can participate meaningfully in political life, exercise an equal voice, and hold their representatives accountable. Freedom, as a foundational democratic principle, occupies a central place in the Indian Constitution, reflecting a commitment to both individual and collective rights. While access to justice and the effective exercise of rights vary across social groups, ongoing debates and institutional reforms continue to highlight the importance of improving inclusiveness and accessibility within democratic governance. Although civil liberties and personal freedoms are formally recognised and widely valued, their realisation in everyday life remains an evolving process that calls for sustained administrative responsiveness and accountability. Regular and largely free elections have enabled voters to reward or replace governments, demonstrating the vitality of electoral democracy, even as efforts continue to strengthen transparency, citizen access to governance structures, and mechanisms of public accountability.

Thus, in the Indian context, any analysis of democracy must acknowledge the fact that procedural democracy is necessary but not sufficient for making democracy meaningful. "The project of democracy is not accomplished by merely securing legal and political equality; it may be severely compromised by inequalities of wealth, power, and social status, which deny many from having a truly equal opportunity to influence governmental decisions." (Jayal, 2001) Therefore, it may be argued that democracy should not be confined to the sphere of state and government. It should also be seen as the principle governing collective life in society. Every society, whether rich or poor, has some kind of injustice, and in a democracy, it is important that the issues of inequalities and injustices of any kind are addressed politically. Hence, there is a close connection between democracy and politics and how the idea of 'political' is conceived. Democratic politics is part

of a broader understanding of the idea of politics, where 'political' is not merely conceptualised in terms of state or state institutions but also in terms of how society or people respond to the actions of the state. The question, therefore, should not be about whether these responses are democratic or not, but about setting their limits. Past experiences have demonstrated that responses from the people in the form of social movements and protests have led to positive transformations in the nature and meaning of Indian democracy. Hence, it may be argued that strengthening democracy and ensuring freedom is not about withdrawing from politics, but rather about engaging with existing politics in a dialectical manner to strengthen democratic practice. The experiences of politics in India reveal that individuals who engage in anti-politics methods are not those who dislike politics per se, but rather those who seek to add more value to their voice. In this sense, it may be argued that such engagements with politics are actually an extension of participatory democracy.

Democracy, when understood substantively, incorporates a critical conception of rationality (Bohman, 1999). It allows people to take control of their lives, providing them freedom from those practices that enslave them. (Bohman, 1999) Without critical rationality, democracy is empty, and freedom could be destructive. Modern societies, according to Hegel, are unbalanced in the way they conceptualise rationality, despite being formed on the principle of universal freedom, because they are based on a principle of rationality founded on individual self-interest and institutions built on the uncontrolled freedom of individuals. (Bohman, 1999) Critical rationality is, therefore, also a response to such modern societies where there is no space to exercise reason and where politics takes the form of coercion and struggle. (Bohman, 1999) Karl Marx, for example, questioned the rationality of modern society and rejected modern political institutions, believing they promoted a social life and politics based on domination and exploitation, and were unable to uphold the principles of freedom and justice, which he considered essential for their legitimacy. Marx's criticisms were thus not directed at the ideals of equality and democracy, but at the institutions and spaces created by them, which did not allow for critical voices. (Bohman, 1999)

Habermas advocated for constructing a normative space for the constructive use of reason. (Habermas 1989) He argued that such social spaces should be created that were free from the influence of wealth and power, allowing free dialogue and interactions among equals. He idealised these social spaces in the form of salons, coffeehouses, clubs, and literary societies, where there is usually a limited influence of wealth and power. (Habermas, 1989) Such public spheres create spaces where free and open communication takes place, which helps improve the quality of the public sphere and also makes it a space free from coercion and power. Hence, according to Habermas, the solution to the abuse of power is in the public sphere

itself. (Habermas, 1989) Therefore, democracy is not just about creating institutional spaces for debate in the form of parliament and elections, but it is also about the interactions between these institutions and the public sphere.

Corruption and Democracy in India: Institutional Challenges, Democratic Participation and Reforms

Dr Ambedkar, on the occasion of the adoption of the Constitution, emphasised that we should not be satisfied with only ensuring political democracy. Political democracy, he pointed out, could only last when social democracy was ensured, and according to him, Indian society lacked the principles of equality and fraternity. He believed that the aspirations of the downtrodden must be accommodated and the monopoly of power in the hands of a few must end, which could not happen, as corruption became a common phenomenon of Indian politics, depriving people of their basic rights and liberties.

Corruption is one of the serious impediments to the realisation of democratic values, such as equality, freedom, rights, and justice, and is a major cause of growing inequality, persistent poverty, and the exclusion of the vulnerable (Transparency International). Countries have, from time to time, attempted to eliminate this menace through various institutional measures; yet, it has become an integral part of the practice of politics in almost all political systems. The Global Corruption Barometer in its Asia Pacific report of 2017 came up with the finding that corruption is making sustainable and equitable development of the region impossible in the sense that it has not only distorted the democratic process but also promoted private interest, as the whole process of public decision making is not focused on the common good, thus depriving people of their basic freedoms. Indeed, the United Nations has emphasised reducing corruption and bribery in all its forms as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. It recognised that reducing corruption is important for achieving other SDGs, such as ending poverty, improving healthcare facilities, ensuring education for all, addressing climate change, and achieving gender equality, as corruption diverts public funds and creates inefficiency in the public delivery system. These studies, by explaining corruption as one of the crucial reasons for the non-realisation of substantive interests of people, which are essential for the realisation of democratic values, uncover the connection between corruption and democracy.

Studies on corruption have revealed that it has both direct and indirect effects. One of the harmful effects of corruption is that it exacts a cost in non-achievement. Corruption in appointments, for example, produces inefficiency and waste. Corruption hinders a country from utilising its scarce resources effectively. Corruption also increases the cost of administration, as for a single purpose or work, a person has to pay several times through bribing, despite being a taxpayer.

Corruption erodes respect for authority and undermines popular faith in government. Corruption is antithetical to democracy as it subverts creative ideas, basic human values, economic efficiency, community-focused ideology, social struggles for rights, justice, equality, and freedom. (Pandey, 2001) In this way, corruption legitimises those political, administrative, and civic behaviours that are contrary to the formal and legal codes, which distort the normative system.

The initial period following India's independence from colonial rule was marked by the development strategies adopted by Nehru. This was the period which was also called 'licence-permit-raj' (i.e., rule through the control, distribution, and sale of industrial and commercial licenses), which was aimed at making efficient use of resources, but actually led to the creation of rent-seekers and consequently developed into a 'grace and favour state'. (Wade, 1985) But despite these developments, corruption under Nehru was controlled. However, as Congress began to disintegrate, corruption became an integral part of the national political culture. It was expected that the imposition of democracy would automatically end all oppression and give rise to a common identity among Indian citizens, who would be equal before the law, and that people's participation would be ensured. However, political participation in the post-independence period was largely restricted to elections, and the state was ignoring people's aspirations. This led to the gradual development of other forms of mobilisation, including language-based movements, religion-based movements, region-based movements, identity-based movements, and various other types of movements. Some scholars even argued that India's democracy has given rise to unprincipled mobilisation and over-politicisation, which has weakened state institutions and has led to a 'crisis of governability'. (Kohli, 1990) In the wake of such a crisis, greater concentration and centralisation of political authority began to take place. An extreme form of such a development was witnessed during the emergency imposed by Mrs Gandhi in 1975, which largely overlooked the common people and led to a decline in the legitimacy of democratic institutions. During Mrs Gandhi's period, the control on business increased, which led to the creation of 'black money' through tax evasion, black-marketing, and so on, which marked the emergence of the era of 'briefcase politics' (a phrase used to describe a vast amount of black money transferred for getting licenses).

The Shah Commission of Enquiry, constituted to investigate the excesses committed during the Emergency period (1975-77), exposed the role of the political leadership in aiding and abetting the spread of corruption in India. Commenting on the role of Sanjay Gandhi, son of Indira Gandhi, in subverting the rule of law in the country, Justice Shah noted:

> The manner in which Shri Sanjay Gandhi functioned in the public affairs of Delhi, in particular, is the single greatest act of excess committed

> during the period of Emergency, for which there is no parallel nor any justification for such assumption of authority or power in the history of independent India. While the other acts and excesses may have been in the nature of acts committed by functionaries who have some shadow of authority acting in excess of their powers. Here was a case of an individual wielding unlimited dictatorial power without even the slightest right to it. If this country is to be rendered safe for future generations, the people owe it to themselves to ensure that an irresponsible and unconstitutional centre of power, like the one that revolved around Shri Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency, is not allowed to come up again in any form or shape or under any guise. (Shah Commission, 1978)

During this period, corruption is evident in both the abuse of power and the violation of legal principles.

The emergence of the coalition era marked the end of the Congress rule or one-party rule. This phase also saw the emergence of scandals and scams and the extent of corruption was evident by scams like the Animal Husbandry (fodder) scam in Bihar (in which the former Chief Minister, some of his ministers, legislators of the ruling and opposition parties and several senior bureaucrats were charge sheeted by the C.B.I.), Coal scam in Tamil Nadu (involving the then C.M. Ms. Jayalalitha), Urea scam (involving the son and a relative of the former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao), Telecom scam (involving the Union Telecom minister Sukh Ram) etc. In this era of rising corruption, politicians began using anti-corruption as a tactic against their opposition. This raised awareness among people about growing corruption and its integration into the state system, which encouraged citizen activism. Therefore, such anti-corruption strategies would not survive unless they move beyond their narrow approach of addressing the sources of corruption solely in the abuse of public office and also address the sources of corruption through political reforms that have wide support.

Despite its commitment to transparency and accountability, the Indian state has mostly struggled to meaningfully address systemic corruption through its anti-corruption institutions. Institutions like the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) have often been criticised for a lack of autonomy and independence. (Mitra & Vaishnav, 2019; Choudhry, 2014). The introduction of reforms, such as the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013, was largely ineffective due to weak implementation, bureaucratic resistance, and a lack of proper institutional safeguards (Bhushan, 2016; Roy, 2015). Such ineffectiveness eroded people's confidence in the state to ensure accountability and strengthened the perception that formal democratic institutions are incapable of ensuring freedom and delivering justice, leading to a crisis of legitimacy that resulted in

the growth of protest movements, non-party activism, and a retreat from electoral engagement. Mass mobilisations such as the 2011 India Against Corruption movement and earlier RTI campaigns reflect a broader anti-political turn, where citizens increasingly seek to reclaim political space through civil society, bypassing what is seen as a compromised and ineffective state apparatus (Sharma, 2012; Harriss, 2016; Chatterjee, 2004).

The 2011 anti-corruption movement in India marked a significant moment of political rupture, revealing deep-seated public disenchantment with institutional politics. Sparked by a series of high-profile corruption scandals – such as the 2G spectrum scam, the Commonwealth Games irregularities, and the coal allocation controversy – the movement coalesced around Anna Hazare, a Gandhian social activist whose fast-unto-death demanding a strong and independent Lokpal drew massive public attention (Jaffrelot, 2012; Teltumbde, 2012). The movement articulated a moral critique of the political class, framing corruption not just as administrative failure but as a systemic betrayal of democratic ideals. It found strong support among the urban middle class, students, and sections of civil society, who saw it as an opportunity to hold the state accountable and reclaim moral authority from corrupt institutions (Chatterjee, 2011; Shah, 2013).

While the movement succeeded in foregrounding the issue of corruption in national discourse and briefly revitalised democratic engagement, it also exposed the contradictions inherent in anti-political mobilisation. The emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) from the protest movement represented an attempt to institutionalise the movement's energy, but this transition from moral protest to party politics revealed deep tensions. The party's efforts to navigate formal political processes while retaining its anti-establishment ethos highlighted the difficulty of sustaining anti-political ideals within existing democratic frameworks (Sharma, 2014; Harriss, 2016). Over time, the fragmentation of the movement and the co-optation of its language by mainstream parties underscored the limitations of technocratic or moralistic activism in challenging entrenched structures of power.

In this sense, the anti-corruption movement reflects important dynamics of Indian democracy by functioning as a form of democratic engagement that both questioned existing governance practices and articulated public aspirations for greater accountability. Rather than relying solely on procedural mechanisms, the movement drew attention to the limitations of representative institutions in addressing concerns related to transparency and substantive justice. At the same time, its emphasis on moral reform highlighted the challenges of translating civic mobilisation into a sustained and inclusive vision of political participation. The trajectory of the movement highlights the ongoing importance of public trust and civic engagement in shaping democratic life, while also underscoring the need for institutional frameworks that can more effectively accommodate citizen

participation. Viewed in this light, the movement illustrates the ongoing negotiation between state-defined modes of participation and evolving democratic expectations, contributing to a broader discussion on how freedom and participation can be more meaningfully integrated within democratic governance. (Chatterjee, 2004; Roy, 2015).

INTEGRATING GENDER INTO ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY AND RESEARCH: ADVANCING THE VISION OF VIKSIT BHARAT

The United Nations has recognised that reducing corruption is a necessary means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, which include gender equality. It has been widely acknowledged that corruption is one of the reasons for persistent poverty and inequality (Gupta et al., 1998). At the institutional level, corruption distorts the policy-making process and destroys the legitimacy of the institutions (Bai & Wei, 2000). It disempowers people and disproportionately affects vulnerable sections of society, with women often falling into this category (Warren, 2004). Corruption hampers progress toward gender equality and creates barriers for women in accessing socio-political and legal rights (Transparency International). In Indian society, particularly, women function as the primary caretakers of the family and are dependent on services such as health, education, and other welfare schemes; hence, they are affected by the quality and nature of service delivery. Therefore, corruption in pubic service delivery has harsh impacts on women. Many times, corruption is itself gendered when a bribe takes the form of sexual favours, which not only affects women but also men and other genders. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate a gender perspective into policy-making, particularly when developing and implementing anti-corruption policies.

Efforts to address corruption in India have increasingly focused on strengthening institutional mechanisms, legal frameworks, and administrative accountability. While these initiatives have contributed to improving transparency and governance, they have largely approached corruption as a gender-neutral phenomenon. This section argues that integrating a gender perspective into anti-corruption policy and research is essential for advancing inclusive and effective governance, which lies at the heart of the Viksit Bharat vision. Corruption does not affect all citizens uniformly; rather, its impacts are shaped by social hierarchies, access to resources, and everyday interactions with public institutions. By incorporating gender-sensitive analysis, data collection, and policy design, anti-corruption strategies can better reflect lived realities, enhance administrative responsiveness, and ensure that governance reforms are both equitable and sustainable. Situating gender-responsive anti-corruption frameworks within the broader developmental goals of India allows for a more comprehensive understanding of accountability, inclusion, and democratic freedom in practice.

Corruption is a serious problem in India, as evident from the data released by Transparency International, which shows that India's rank in the 2024 Corruption Perception Index is 96 out of 180 countries worldwide. India's democratic experience demonstrates that the mere existence of institutions is insufficient to prevent corruption and does not guarantee a fair democratic system. The major scandals that have surfaced since India gained its independence demonstrate the deep-seated nature of corruption in the country's political system and the failure of institutional measures implemented thus far to bring the corrupt to justice. There can be no dispute about the reality that corruption undermines democracy in a given state. The most common understanding of corruption defines it as abuse of public office for private gain (Nye, 1967; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Transparency International). An offshoot of this public office-centred definition, corruption is also understood in terms of violation of public interest for private gain. It is argued that corruption occurs when "a power holder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or office holder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests." (Heidenheimer, 1970, p. 6) It is also important here to understand that corruption is not just about bribes. In this sense, corruption is understood as "intentional misperformance or neglect of a recognized duty, or the unwarranted exercise of power, with the motive of gaining some advantage more or less directly personal." (Meyer, 1975, p. 62) Corruption also disturbs the ideological foundation of any system, as it creates a new ideology that perpetuates the quest for power for private benefit, distorting the rationality of public officials, whereby they no longer remain accountable to the people, and they do not take people seriously, which undermines the constitutional spirit and democratic norms.

Abuse of power, hence, becomes the defining feature of corruption. It is important to understand that the link between gender and corruption can be traced to the issue of power because historically, women have been the victims of the use and misuse of power. Some studies have established that women's representation and corruption are inversely correlated. This means that if there are more women representatives in a system, it is likely to be less corrupt. Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti (2001) found, after examining data from more than 100 countries, that the greater the presence of women in representative bodies, the lower the perceived level of corruption in a country. The findings of Swamy et al. (2001) were similar, concluding that countries with a higher proportion of women in the public sphere tend to have a lower degree of corruption. Some studies have associated this causality with the behavioural differences between men and women, arguing that women are inherently averse to corruption and are likely to have higher moral and ethical standards than men (Glover et al., 1997; Eckel & Grossman, 1998; Rivas,

2008). It is argued that being corrupt or not also depends on the level and types of exposure one has had while performing their role in the public sphere. In other words, if women and men play different social roles, it is most likely that they will also have different approaches to addressing corruption. If someone has witnessed corruption on a regular basis, they may develop a tolerance towards it and accept it as a normal way to behave in the public sphere. Those who have been victimised or discriminated against by corruption may be less tolerant towards it (Alatas et al., 2009). Another explanation was given by Swamy et al. (2001), who pointed out that this causality might be because very few women reach important positions, and they are mostly the "better" lot. Taking this argument further, Goetz (2007) and Branisa and Ziegler (2011) explain that women are less corrupt than men due to the gendered nature of opportunities to access power, which results in their systematic exclusion from positions of power. Women are also intentionally kept outside the corrupt system so that smooth, corrupt transactions are not disrupted (Sundström & Wängnerud, 2016). Goetz argues that because of the patriarchal nature of the power networks, women lack the opportunities to engage in corrupt behaviour. Being new to the 'game', women are often unfamiliar with the ways to engage in corrupt transactions to benefit themselves; hence, they choose to be honest to secure their positions. However, over time, it is likely that they will engage in corrupt acts (Goetz, 2007).

There are other studies that draw a connection between accountability and the relationship between women's representation and corruption. It is argued that in a system where accountability is high, the risk associated with corruption is also high, and a system with a low level of accountability would automatically make corruption a less risky affair (Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2018). Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer argue, based on the findings of their study, that women are less likely to take risks than men. Consequently, in a high-accountability system, they would likely avoid getting involved in corrupt transactions due to the high risk of exposure. Another factor that explains the connection between accountability and the relationship between women's representation and corruption is that voters consider women officials to be less corrupt than men (Ibid). Therefore, in systems that provide voters with the opportunity to vote out corrupt leaders, the connection between women's representation and perceptions of corruption will be very strong. Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer, on the basis of their empirical research, point out that there can be at least four conditions when this connection can be strong: "(1) where corruption is not an institutional norm, (2) where freedom of the press is respected, (3) in parliamentary rather than presidential systems and (4) under personalistic rather than party-centered electoral rules" (Ibid., 661). The common feature of all these conditions is that they all show high electoral accountability. Significant research has been conducted on the connection between gender and corruption,

showing that women are more risk-averse than men (Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Eckel & Grossman, 2008; Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999). Some experimental research suggests that women are more likely to avoid taking bribes when they are aware that they are being monitored and the risk of exposure is high (Armantier & Boly, 2011; Schulze & Frank, 2003). Gender stereotypes also play a significant role in shaping perceptions of the relationship between gender and corruption (Dolan, 2010; Lawless, 2004; Paul & Smith, 2008).

Therefore, this paper aims to present the need to incorporate a gender perspective into India's anti-corruption policy. This would require collecting, analysing, and publishing gender-based data on how corruption has a different impact on different genders. It is argued that the primary issue with the current anti-corruption approaches in India is that they fail to establish a connection between corruption and discrimination, instead treating them as separate issues. Although it is recognised that both corruption and discrimination are hindrances to democracy, the relationship between them remains unacknowledged. We have seen that empirical evidence suggests a causal connection between corruption and discrimination, and in order to achieve the UN's proposed Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, which is based on its commitment to "leave no one behind", it is important that the greatest barriers to equality and promoters of inequality, corruption and discrimination, are tackled at every level. Therefore, any fight against corruption should also include a fight against discrimination.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Indian democratic experience highlights an enduring and productive tension between formal commitments to freedom, accountability, and popular sovereignty and the evolving demands of participatory inclusion in a diverse society. While democratic governance has been institutionally strengthened through constitutional guarantees and administrative reforms, citizens' engagement around issues such as corruption, inequality, and exclusion has underscored the need to broaden the meaning of participation beyond procedural frameworks. These civic interventions should be understood not as a withdrawal from politics, but as reflective and creative engagements that seek to deepen democracy by aligning institutional practices with lived social realities. From a policy and public administration perspective, this highlights the importance of transitioning to more inclusive, transparent, and responsive governance arrangements. Integrating gender-sensitive approaches into anti-corruption policy and research is central to this process, as it enables a more nuanced understanding of how corruption intersects with discrimination and unequal access to public institutions. By embedding accountability reforms within participatory, decentralised, and gender-responsive governance frameworks, India can advance the vision of *Viksit Bharat*—

one that values freedom not only as a constitutional principle but as an everyday democratic practice shaped by equity, dignity, and citizen agency.

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TRANSFORMING VILLAGE GOVERNANCE: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF LAMBARDARS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF CHARKHI DADRI DISTRICT, HARYANA

Rajkumar Siwach* and Garima**

Abstract

This study examines the transformation of the Lambardar system – a colonial-era village-level revenue functionary – in contemporary rural governance. Through empirical research in Charkhi Dadri district, Haryana, the present article investigates how digitisation, bureaucratic complexities, and socio-cultural changes have fundamentally altered the role, relevance, and effectiveness of Lambardars. Using stratified sampling and semi-structured interviews with 6 Lambardars and 60 farmers, the study reveals significant shifts in their administrative and social functions. Key findings indicate that while 95 percent of respondents acknowledge the impact of digitisation, mounting revenue arrears and gender exclusion challenge the institution's sustainability. The research contributes to public administration scholarship by documenting institutional adaptation at the grassroots level and highlights policy implications for rural governance reform in digitising economies.

Keywords: Lambardar, Rural Governance, Digitisation, Revenue Administration, Institutional change, Gender Equity, Haryana.

INTRODUCTION

District administration forms the foundational structure of governance in India, encompassing revenue collection, law and order maintenance, and social welfare management (Khera, 1964). At the apex of this system stands the District Collector, whose primary responsibility – reflected in the designation itself – is the collection of revenue. However, the actual collection mechanism relies on a hierarchical network of functionaries, at the bottom of which sits the Lambardar, a village-level intermediary whose role dates to colonial land settlement systems.

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The Lambardar occupies a unique position in India's administrative architecture, serving simultaneously as a government agent for revenue collection and a community representative for dispute resolution and social cohesion. Originally established under the Mahalwari system during British colonial rule, this institution was designed to facilitate the extraction of land revenue while maintaining social control at the village level (Husain, 2017). Despite India's independence in 1947 and subsequent administrative reforms, the Lambardar system has persisted, adapting to changing governance contexts.

However, contemporary developments – particularly the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in governance, declining relevance of land revenue as a fiscal resource, and evolving social expectations – have placed this institution at a critical juncture. The question arises: How has the role of Lambardars evolved in response to technological, administrative, and socio-cultural transformations, and what implications do these changes have for the effectiveness of rural governance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Colonial Origins and Institutional Persistence

The Lambardar system emerged from the Mahalwari settlement introduced in British India during the 1820s. Holt Mackenzie, territorial secretary of the Board of Revenue, proposed this system in 1819, formalised through Regulation VII of 1822 (Husain, 2017). Unlike the Zamindari and Ryotwari systems, the Mahalwari approach designated village communities (mahals) as revenue collection units, with Lambardars serving as intermediaries for revenue collection and administration.

Khera (1964: 179-180) characterises the Lambardar as "the primary individual accountable for ensuring land revenue payment," noting that this position carries "specific prestige" and "entitlement to a modest share of the revenue collected." This dual character – administrative functionary and community representative – has defined the institution throughout its history.

The persistence of colonial-era institutions in postcolonial governance represents a broader phenomenon in administrative studies. While India achieved political independence, administrative structures largely continued, raising questions about institutional inertia versus adaptive evolution. The Lambardar system exemplifies this tension, having survived seven decades of independence despite fundamental changes in governance philosophy and technology.

Contemporary Research

Recent scholarship on Lambardars remains sparse but suggestive. Awais, Chaudhry, and Ali (2021) examined the malia (land revenue) collection process in Mandi Bahauddin, Pakistan, finding that Lambardars play a crucial role despite facing challenges such as inadequate support staff. Their research recommended providing Lambardars with assistants to streamline collection processes.

Husain (2017) analysed the institutional significance of Lambardars, Tehsildars, and Patwaris in operating the Mahalwari system, emphasising their interconnected functions in revenue administration. However, this work focuses primarily on historical operations rather than contemporary transformations.

The literature gap regarding Lambardar adaptation to digitisation, changing social expectations, and bureaucratic complexities necessitates empirical investigation – a gap this study addresses through primary field research.

Research Gap

Despite the Lambardar's centrality to village-level administration, scholarly attention to this institution remains limited. A comprehensive review of literature reveals minimal empirical research on the changing role of Lambardars. Even authoritative sources, such as the Sixth Report of the Administrative Reforms Commission (2007), fail to provide a detailed examination of Lambardar functions. Database searches on Google Scholar and Shodhganga yielded negligible research output on this topic, highlighting a significant knowledge gap in public administration scholarship.

This study addresses this lacuna by providing empirical evidence on institutional adaptation at the grassroots level. Understanding the Lambardar's evolving role offers insights into broader questions of rural governance modernisation, the persistence of colonial-era institutions, and the challenges of integrating traditional functionaries into digital governance frameworks. The research holds particular relevance for policymakers designing rural administration reforms and scholars studying institutional change in postcolonial contexts.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In view of the above queries and gap in literature, the present article intends to examine (a) historical evolution of institution of Lambardars, (b) related legal framework and administrative guidelines, (c) their roles in conflict resolution, social cohesion and community leadership, (d) challenges faced by them and (e) their own perceptions on their changing roles.

The present article is mainly based on empirical study which employs a stratified sampling technique considering Haryana as universe (having 18,785 Lambardars as per records of Directorate of Land Records, Panchkula). First, the District of Charkhi Dadri having 668 Lambardarss, second, Charkhi Dadri Tehsil with 175 Lambardars and third, Ranila Village with 6 Lambardars were selected. The selection of Charkhi Dadri was influenced by the fact that the district has long history of land revenue collection system under the Jind princely state. Again 60 farmers of the village (10 farmers served by each Lambardar), 6 Lambardars and the Sarpanch were sampled for interview with help of semi-structured Schedule. However, the secondary data sources were also used that included government reports, gazette notifications, settlement records, and administrative manuals, particularly the Haryana Land Administration Manual (Singla, 2022) and Bhiwani District Gazetteer (1982).

HYPOTHESES

Based on theoretical considerations and preliminary observations, this study tests five hypotheses:

H1: Direct correlations exist between the changing roles of Lambardars and catalytic changes fostered by historical contexts.

H2: Administrative guidelines accompanying the digital transformation of revenue administration have led to changes in the roles and responsibilities of Lambardars.

H3: The Lambardar position as mediator in dispute resolution has changed due to awareness and education, formal litigation mechanisms, and the emergence of new informal leadership.

H4: Lambardars face challenges, including bureaucratic complexities and conflicting demands between governmental duties and community expectations.

H5: Lambardar perceptions are shaped by personal background, socio-economic status, and dynamics of relationships with community members and government official

PROFILE OF STUDIED AREA

Charkhi Dadri, established as Haryana's 22nd district on December 1, 2016, was historically part of the Jind princely state and later became part of the Bhiwani district. During British rule, the Dadri tahsil was transferred to Jind State following the 1857 uprising as a reward for assistance to the British. The district's revenue administration history includes multiple settlements (1862-1871, 1883-1874, 1887-1902), establishing the Lambardar system's deep historical roots in the region.

The district is located at 28°35'31.42" North Latitude and 76°15'55.05" East Longitude, situated 112.6 km from New Delhi and 295 km from Chandigarh. This proximity to major administrative centres provides context for understanding the pressures of administrative modernisation.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, calculating percentages and frequencies for categorical responses. Qualitative insights from interviews were synthesised thematically to support quantitative findings. The relatively small sample size reflects the intensive, case-study approach, which focuses on depth rather than breadth of understanding.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The sample structure reflects the hierarchical nature of revenue administration, with Lambardars serving as key informants whose insights carry disproportionate weight relative to their numerical representation.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	*Age Group*	*Number*	*Education Level*	*Number*
Lambardar	30-50 years	2	Illiterate	1
	51-70 years	2	Up to 10+2	5
	Above 70 years	2		
Farmer	30-50 years	11	Illiterate	41
	51-70 years	44	Up to 10+2	17
	Above 70 years	5	Up to Graduation	2

The demographic data reveal several significant patterns:

1. **Age Distribution:** Lambardars exhibit balanced representation across age groups, whereas farmers are concentrated heavily (73.3%) in the 51-70 years category, indicating generational differences in land ownership and agricultural engagement.
2. **Educational Levels:** Lambardars demonstrate higher educational attainment (83.3% educated up to 10+2) compared to farmers (68.3% illiterate), reflecting the selection criteria that emphasise literacy for administrative functions. However, the presence of one illiterate Lambardar raises questions about appointment processes and functional literacy requirements.
3. **Gender Composition:** All six Lambardars are male, with a notable absence of female representation – a finding with significant implications, which are discussed subsequently.

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON ROLE CHANGE

Table 2: Perception of Historical Context Impact

Respondent Category	*Affirmative Responses*	*Percentage*
Lambardar	4	66.7%
Farmers	52	86.7%

High engagement levels (67% Lambardars, 87% farmers) indicate widespread recognition that historical contexts have catalysed role changes. Farmer responses suggest community awareness of institutional evolution, while Lambardar acknowledgement reflects experiential understanding of transformed functions. This supports **Hypothesis 1**, demonstrating a correlation between historical contexts and the changing roles of Lambardars.

DIGITISATION IMPACT

Table 3: Digitisation's Effect on the Lambardar Role

Respondent Category	*Affirmative Responses*	*Percentage*
Lambardar	6	100%
Farmers	57	95.0%

The near-universal recognition (100% Lambardars, 95% farmers) of the impact of digitisation represents the study's most conclusive finding. This unanimity indicates that digital transformation has fundamentally altered administrative practices, confirming **Hypothesis 2**.

Interview data reveal specific digitisation impacts:

- Introduction of online land record systems (e-Bhoomi initiatives)
- Digital payment platforms are reducing physical cash handling
- SMS-based revenue collection reminders
- Reduced face-to-face interactions between Lambardars and farmers
- Declining importance of Lambardars as information intermediaries

One Lambardar stated, "Earlier, farmers would come to me for all land-related information. Now they check everything on their mobile phones. My role has become limited to just collecting remaining payments."

SOCIAL ROLE TRANSFORMATION

Table 4: Factors Influencing Social Role Changes

Change Agent	*Farmers (n = 60)*	*Percentage*	*Lambardars (n = 6)*	*Percentage*
Awareness	52	86.7%	6	100%
Education	57	95.0%	5	83.3%
Formal dispute mechanisms	42	70.0%	4	66.7%
Emerging new leadership	46	76.7%	3	50.0%

Multiple factors contribute to social role transformation, supporting **Hypothesis 3**:

Awareness and Education: Near-universal recognition (95% farmers, 83.3% Lambardars) indicates that educational advancement has reduced dependency on traditional authority figures. Literate farmers are increasingly accessing legal and administrative information independently, thereby diminishing the Lambardars' informational monopoly.

Formal Dispute Mechanisms: Substantial majorities (70% of farmers, 66.7% of Lambardars) acknowledge that formal legal systems have reduced their reliance on traditional dispute resolution. The establishment of Lok Adalats, village courts, and accessible legal aid has provided alternative channels for dispute resolution.

Emerging Leadership: Recognition by 76.7% of farmers and 50% of Lambardars indicates that new forms of village leadership (educated youth, Panchayat representatives, NGO activists) are competing with traditional Lambardar authority. Notably, a lower Lambardar acknowledgement rate (50%) may reflect a reluctance to recognise threats to their positional authority.

BUREAUCRATIC COMPLEXITIES

Table 5: Impact of Bureaucratic Complexities

Category	*Yes*	*Percentage*	*No*	*Do not know*
Lambardar	4	66.7%	1	1
Farmers	43	71.7%	13	4

The majority recognition of bureaucratic complexity impacts (66.7% Lambardars, 71.7% farmers) confirms **Hypothesis 4**. Respondents cited specific complexities:

- Multiple reporting requirements to Tehsildar, Patwari, and Panchayat offices
- Contradictory instructions from the revenue and panchayat departments

- Increased documentation and record-keeping demands
- Liability for revenue collection without a corresponding authority

The "Do not Know" responses (particularly among farmers) suggest limited awareness of administrative processes, highlighting the continued relevance of intermediary roles even as they transform.

ROLE CONFLICTS

Table 6: Conflicts Between Official and Social Obligations

Category	*Yes*	*Percentage*	*No*	*Do not know*
Lambardar	6	100%	0	0
Farmers	51	85.0%	8	1

The unanimous Lambardar recognition of role conflicts represents the study's most striking finding. Every Lambardar experiences tension between governmental revenue collection mandates and community social obligations. This overwhelming consensus (100% Lambardars, 85% farmers) strongly supports **Hypothesis 4**.

Interview data illuminate specific conflicts:

- Pressure to collect revenue from financially distressed farmers with whom they share social bonds
- Expectations to attend social functions while managing official deadlines
- Community criticism for enforcing unpopular government policies
- Personal liability for uncollected revenue despite lacking coercive authority

One senior Lambardar expressed: "The government holds us responsible for collection, but we have no power to force anyone. If crops fail and farmers cannot pay, we face notices and potential dismissal. However, these are our neighbours, relatives, and fellow villagers. What should we do – break our social relationships for government targets?"

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

Table 7: Perception of Lambardar Effectiveness

Category	*Yes*	*Percentage*	*No*	*Do not know*
Lambardar	5	83.3%	1	0
Farmers	48	80.0%	10	2

Despite identified challenges, substantial majorities perceive Lambardars as effective (83.3% of Lambardars and 80% of farmers). This seeming paradox – acknowledging role transformation and conflicts while affirming effectiveness – suggests several interpretations:

1. **Residual Legitimacy:** Historical authority and social embeddedness provide continued legitimacy despite functional changes
2. **Adapted Roles:** Effectiveness now derives from different functions (social mediation, information brokerage) rather than traditional revenue collection
3. **Comparative Assessment:** Farmers may assess effectiveness relative to other governance interfaces, finding Lambardars more accessible than distant bureaucrats
4. **Social Capital:** Personal relationships and local knowledge enable Lambardars to remain effective facilitators despite reduced formal authority

The dissenting minority (16.7% Lambardars, 20% farmers) acknowledges limitations, suggesting emerging questions about institutional sustainability.

DISCUSSION

Gender Inequity: A Critical Finding

The complete absence of female Lambardars represents a significant finding contradicting India's constitutional commitment to gender equality. While women have ascended to the highest governance positions – President, Prime Minister, and Chief Ministers – and comprise mandated percentages of Sarpanchs and Panchs through reservation policies, the Lambardar position remains exclusively held by men.

This exclusion appears anomalous given that women successfully manage complex administrative and financial responsibilities in Panchayati Raj institutions. The question emerges: If women effectively serve as Sarpanchs overseeing village budgets, development programs, and administrative functions, why are they systematically excluded from Lambardar positions involving simpler revenue collection tasks?

Several factors may explain this gender gap:

1. **Hereditary Nature:** Lambardar positions traditionally pass through male lineage, creating path dependency
2. **Revenue Liability:** Personal liability for uncollected revenue may discourage women's participation or family consent
3. **Social Norms:** Conservative rural gender norms may restrict women's movement and interaction with male farmers
4. **Lack of Policy Intervention:** Unlike Panchayati Raj, no reservation policy mandates female Lambardar representation

These findings challenge policymakers to reconcile Lambardar appointments with constitutional equity principles and contemporary governance expectations. The exclusion represents not merely symbolic inequality but practical loss of potential governance capacity.

REVENUE ARREARS CRISIS: INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Field research uncovered a critical sustainability challenge: mounting revenue arrears. In Ranila village, six Lambardars collectively failed to collect approximately ₹12,00,000 in land revenue between 2010 and 2017. When summoned by the Deputy Commissioner, Lambardars attributed non-collection to agricultural distress – farmers lacked water for irrigation and consequently could not pay their dues.

This case illustrates fundamental tensions:

1. **Structural Liability Without Authority:** Lambardars bear personal liability for collection but lack coercive powers, caught between the demands of governmental accountability and the socio-economic realities of the community.
2. **Policy Disconnect:** Revenue policies appear disconnected from agricultural realities, expecting collection regardless of crop failures or farmer distress.
3. **Punitive Response:** Rather than addressing systemic issues, authorities dismissed all six Lambardars – a solution that eliminated functionaries without resolving underlying collection challenges.
4. **Digital Disruption:** Concurrent discussions of online revenue payment systems threaten to eliminate Lambardar relevance, raising questions about transition management and functional rehabilitation.

The Ranila case exemplifies broader patterns where institutional survival depends less on functional effectiveness than on policy decisions about governance modernisation pathways.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: DISPLACEMENT OR ADAPTATION?

The near-universal acknowledgement (95-100%) of digitisation's impact represents both threat and opportunity for Lambardars. Digital platforms enabling direct farmer-government interaction potentially to disintermediate Lambardars, threatening institutional obsolescence. Online land records, digital payments, and SMS communications reduce traditional functions to residual roles.

However, digital transformation creates new possibilities:

1. **Digital Facilitation:** Lambardars could assist digitally excluded farmers (particularly elderly, illiterate populations) in navigating online systems, transforming from collection agents to digital literacy facilitators.
2. **Data Verification:** Local knowledge positions Lambardars to verify the accuracy of digital records, addressing common database errors.
3. **Last-Mile Connectivity:** In areas with connectivity challenges, Lambardars can serve as community aggregators, collecting digital payments offline and uploading them in batches.
4. **Social Integration:** Digital systems, while efficient, lack social sensitivity. Lambardars' continued role in dispute resolution and community mediation suggests complementarity rather than substitution.

The trajectory – displacement versus adaptation – depends substantially on policy choices. Inclusive digital governance could redesign Lambardar roles to complement existing functions rather than eliminating historical institutions.

BUREAUCRATIC COMPLEXITIES AND ROLE CONFLICTS

The acknowledged bureaucratic complexities (66.7-71.7% recognition) and near-universal role conflicts (100% Lambardars, 85% farmers) illuminate implementation challenges in decentralised governance. Lambardars operate at the intersection of multiple systems – revenue administration (Tehsildar, Patwari hierarchy), Panchayati Raj (Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat), and community social structures – often receiving contradictory expectations.

This "interface position" creates unique vulnerabilities:

- **Accountability Without Authority:** Responsible for outcomes without commensurate powers
- **Multiple Masters:** Serving governmental, panchayat, and community expectations simultaneously
- **Residual Liability:** Personal financial risk for systemic failures (crop failures, policy disconnects)
- **Social Costs:** Community criticism for enforcing unpopular policies

These challenges suggest that Lambardar struggles reflect broader rural governance issues, including unclear jurisdictional boundaries, inadequate integration between departments, and implementation burdens that fall disproportionately on lower-level functionaries.

EVOLVING SOCIAL ROLES

The documented shift from dispute resolution prominence to diminished mediator roles reflects broader transformations in rural social structures. Factors driving this change include:

Educational Advancement: Rising literacy (though still limited) empowers farmers to access formal dispute mechanisms independently.

Legal Accessibility: Lok Adalats, legal aid clinics, and village courts provide accessible alternatives to traditional arbitration.

Alternative Leadership: Elected Panchayat representatives, educated youth, and civil society activists offer competing sources of authority.

Changed Expectations: Younger generations prefer formal, rights-based approaches over traditional, relationship-based dispute resolution.

However, Lambardars retain relevance in specific contexts:

- **Informal Quick Resolution:** For minor disputes where formal processes seem excessive
- **Social Pressure:** Community pressure mobilised through the Lambardar intervention
- **Cultural Legitimacy:** Traditional authority retains weight in certain disputes (family matters, caste-based issues)

The evolution suggests role specialisation rather than elimination—Lambardars handling culturally appropriate disputes while formal mechanisms address legal violations and rights-based claims.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H1 (Historical Context): SUPPORTED. Both Lambardars (66.7%) and farmers (86.7%) recognise historical influences on role changes, demonstrating a correlation between colonial origins, post-independence transitions, and contemporary adaptations.

H2 (Digitisation): STRONGLY SUPPORTED. Universal Lambardar acknowledgement (100%) and near-universal farmer recognition (95%) confirm that digital transformation fundamentally altered roles and responsibilities.

H3 (Social Role Transformation): SUPPORTED. Multiple factors (awareness, 86.7-100%; education, 83.3-95%; formal mechanisms, 66.7-70%; new leadership, 50-76.7%) collectively demonstrate changes in dispute resolution and social functions.

H4 (Challenges): STRONGLY SUPPORTED. Bureaucratic complexities acknowledged by majorities (66.7-71.7%) and role conflicts recognised universally

by Lambardars (100%) and overwhelmingly by farmers (85%) confirm significant implementation challenges.

H5 (Perceptions): PARTIALLY SUPPORTED. While demographic differences in responses suggest that personal background influences perceptions, the limited sample size and methodological constraints prevent a robust analysis of the determinants of perception. Further research with larger samples would better test this hypothesis.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Gender-Inclusive Reforms

Policy interventions should mandate gender inclusion in Lambardar appointments through:

- **Reservation Policies:** Minimum percentage (e.g., 33%) reserved for women, mirroring Panchayati Raj provisions
- **Joint Appointments:** Allowing married couples to serve jointly, facilitating a gradual transition
- **Capacity Building:** Training programs addressing women's specific needs and challenges
- **Liability Reforms:** Reducing personal financial liability to encourage female participation

Digital Integration Strategies

Rather than eliminating Lambardars through digitisation, policies should:

- **Redefined Roles:** Formally designate Lambardars as digital facilitators for excluded populations
- **Hybrid Systems:** Maintain parallel online and Lambardar-mediated channels during transition periods
- **Training Programs:** Equip Lambardars with digital literacy and facilitation skills
- **Incentive Restructuring:** Reward successful digital adoption facilitation rather than traditional collection metrics

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Address role conflicts through:

- **Liability Caps:** Maximum personal liability limits protecting Lambardars from systemic collection failures

- **Grievance Mechanisms:** Formal channels for Lambardars to report implementation challenges
- **Coordination Forums:** Regular meetings integrating revenue, panchayat, and development departments
- **Performance Metrics:** Evaluation criteria emphasising facilitation and community service over narrow collection targets

INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK

Develop a comprehensive framework recognising:

- **Transitional Nature:** Current period as institutional transition requiring managed change
- **Complementary Functions:** Digital and traditional systems serving different population segments
- **Social Capital:** Leveraging Lambardars' local knowledge and relationships for governance effectiveness
- **Evolutionary Approach:** Gradual adaptation rather than abrupt elimination

CONCLUSION

This empirical study documents the transformation of the Lambardar system within contemporary rural governance, revealing an institution at a critical crossroads. Initially established as colonial revenue extraction mechanisms, Lambardars have evolved into multifunctional intermediaries that balance governmental mandates with community obligations. However, digitisation, bureaucratic complexities, mounting revenue arrears, and gender exclusion challenge their continued relevance.

Key findings demonstrate that:

1. **Digital transformation** has fundamentally altered Lambardar roles, with near-universal recognition (95-100%) of technological impacts on administrative functions and farmer-government interactions.
2. **Role conflicts** are pervasive, with every Lambardar experiencing tension between official duties and social obligations, highlighting structural contradictions in the design of grassroots governance.
3. **Gender exclusion** represents a critical anomaly that contradicts fundamental principles of constitutional equity and contemporary governance standards, necessitating urgent policy intervention.
4. **Revenue collection challenges**, exemplified by the ₹12,00,000 arrears case in Ranila village, raise questions about institutional sustainability under current accountability frameworks.

5. **Perceived effectiveness** (80-83.3%) despite acknowledged challenges suggests residual legitimacy and potential for institutional adaptation rather than elimination.

These findings carry significant implications for rural governance reform. Rather than viewing digitisation as necessarily displacing traditional functionaries, policymakers should explore complementary models leveraging Lambardars' social capital and local knowledge while integrating digital efficiencies. Gender-inclusive appointments, liability reforms, and redefined roles emphasising facilitation over collection could revitalise this institution for 21st-century governance.

The Lambardar case illuminates broader questions about institutional persistence, colonial legacy management, and grassroots governance modernisation in postcolonial contexts. Future research should examine:

- Comparative studies across Indian states with different land tenure histories
- Quantitative analysis of digitisation's impact on revenue collection efficiency
- Longitudinal studies tracking institutional adaptation trajectories
- Gender-focused investigations of barriers to female Lambardar participation
- Cost-benefit analyses comparing digital versus traditional collection systems

As India pursues its Digital India ambitions while maintaining decentralised commitments to decentralised governance, the fate of the Lambardar system will signal broader approaches to managing historical institutions within modernising frameworks. The choice between elimination and adaptation reflects fundamental questions about governance philosophy: whether efficiency alone should drive reforms, or whether social embeddedness, local knowledge, and community relationships retain value in technology-mediated governance.

This study suggests that sustainable rural governance may require hybrid models that integrate technological efficiency with social legitimacy – not eliminating Lambardars, but reimagining their roles for contemporary contexts. Such approaches honour institutional histories while embracing necessary adaptations, potentially offering lessons for managing similar transitions in other postcolonial administrative systems.

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REVITALIZING PUBLIC HEALTH GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: A POST-COVID IMPERATIVE

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Abstract

The emulation of Western models and theoretical frameworks make analysing India's public health policies futile. The pandemic has exposed the fault lines of the public health system as well as the weaknesses of theoretical tools in understanding, explaining, and analysing the public health policies in India. The existing public policy models oversimplify the development and implementation of public health policy by overemphasising the process of decision-making. The experiences during the pandemic revealed the multidimensional nature of public health policies and alluded to the urge for interoperability between different levels and sectors of government. The disciplinary boundaries of public health policy analysis need to be broadened to understand and explain the systemic, administrative, societal, and political issues in healthcare service delivery, especially during crises like pandemics. The pandemic taught India twin lessons of reforming the public health governance system and the need to broaden the disciplinary boundaries of public policy.

Keywords: Health Governance, Public Analysis, Pandemic, Public Health, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fault lines of the public healthcare delivery system and the weaknesses of the development and analysis of public health policies in India. The pandemic provided an opportunity to understand the deficiencies of the healthcare system and to innovate a theoretical framework for the proper analysis of public health policies in India. It alludes to the urgent need for fundamental reforms in public health governance. The analytical issues of public health policies

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are interwoven into the country's systemic problems of healthcare service delivery. A proper agenda setting and policy development are prerequisites for the successful functioning of the healthcare delivery system. However, we hardly find guidance and methodological frameworks on how to do a proper health policy analysis. The existing theories and models on public policy fail to address the analytical concerns of public health policies extensively. The post-pandemic reforms in the healthcare system in India may spill over to new theoretical innovations in the development and analysis of public health policies.

PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS AND HEALTH GOVERNANCE

Public policy means what governments intend to do to achieve specific goals. It also refers to the government's resource allocation while responding to the perceived demands of a target population (Anyebe, 2018). It constitutes the course of action that is adopted in response to public issues. Public policies do not happen in a vacuum. A public policy on a particular issue is interwoven into related concerns, priorities, and issues. The political, social, cultural, economic, and administrative environment may influence public policy making. Political scientists and public policy experts have developed several approaches, models, and theories to understand, explain, and analyse governments' making and implementation of public policies.

The elite theory, group theory, system theory, policy output analysis, institutional approach, incremental theory, and rational choice theory are some of the prominent theories used for public policy analysis (Fischer, Miller, & Sidney, 2007). There are other alternative theories or models, such as the multiple streams framework, punctuated equilibrium theory, and stages heuristic model of public policy making. The stages heuristic model, which is one of the best-known public policy frameworks, divides the public policy process into different stages: agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Although this framework is helpful for analysing the process of policy making, the presumption of linearity keeps it away from the actual practice of policy making (Walt, et al., 2008). The logical and linear sequence hardly exists in the policy-making process (Campos & Reich, 2019). It is hard to find the separable boundaries between these broad stages in the actual policy-making process. Nevertheless, these stages may overlap with each other.

Kingdon's multiple streams theory focuses on the random character of public policy-making and is primarily concerned with agenda setting (Walt et al., 2008). This model considers elements like social pressure, political transitions and national mood. While focusing on the process of agenda setting, it explains the organisational, political, symbolic, and economic factors that may influence the

policy-making process. This theory is helpful in explaining that global public health policies stemmed out of international pressures during pandemics. Baumgartner and Jones developed a punctuated equilibrium theory, questioning the incremental model of public policy. Their theory argues that the public policy-making process is characterised by a period of stability with minimal change. Applying the theory in the health sector, the punctuated model proved that even global attention on epidemics hardly made a significant change in the policy-making process. Hence, it is not incrementalism or sudden changes that determine the trajectory of policy making, but rather the quest for stability and the tendency for minimal change even during a period of an extraordinary crisis like a pandemic.

Health policy is a kind of public policy that deals with specific goals in the sector of community health (Damari, Moghadam, & Rostamigooran, 2017). It consists of decisions, plans, and actions undertaken to achieve the goal of healthcare (Agrawal, Sharma, & Keshri, 2024). Health policy analysis is a multi-disciplinary approach that can explain interactions between various institutions, interests, and ideas in the process of policymaking (Walt et al., 2008).

The emulation of an analytical model of the developed societies by the developing countries is one of the significant challenges in health policy analysis in postcolonial countries like India. Information asymmetry is also a major obstacle in this regard (Walt, et al., 2008). This asymmetry stems from the critical and elusive roles played by actors like the pharmaceutical industry in the making of the health policies of a state. The role of the state as a key service provider in the public health sector of a developing society is hard to explain. The increasing role of the private sector in health policy in the era of globalization makes extensive analysis difficult. The information gap and difficulty in explaining the policy-making process are key challenges to developing an analytical model that is universally applicable. The new spaces of politics within the process of policy-making reiterate the concern further. Some scholars argue that the models and theories of public policy analysis should become more deliberative to address this concern (Walt, et al., 2008). The complex and opaque nature of the health policy-making process is also a challenge in policy analysis. The process of policy-making is not necessarily overt in the health sector. The key players and stakeholders in the decision-making process in the health sector are not always easily identifiable. The excess of information and access to documents make analysis further difficult.

The gap between the long-term nature of policy making and implementation and the short-term nature of funding for policy research poses another practical challenge in health policy analysis. It is called the 'curse of the temporal challenge' (Walt, et al., 2008). The dynamic nature of the policy environment in the health sector seems like tracking a moving target. The funding agencies continue to pressure for immediate results, undermining the difficulty in collecting data and

analysing policies on ongoing health crises. The measurability of values and beliefs associated with the health sector is a methodological hurdle in policy analysis at the conceptual and theoretical levels. At the conceptual level, the idea of power is highly contested in policy analysis. The difficulty in locating and defining power in the policy-making process may make the analysis 'intuitive'.

Walt and Gilson developed a policy triangle framework for the purpose of analysing public policies in the health sector (Walt, et al., 2008). Unlike existing models, this policy triangle framework considers how four elements – content of policy, actors, context and process – interact to shape a policy. Walt and Gilson were critical about the over emphasis on the content of policies in existing frameworks, which undermines the role of other elements such as actors, context and process. The policy triangle model, which is grounded on a political economy perspective, has influenced public policy research in the health sector across the world. Network analysis also focuses on systems of interaction and interconnectedness between various actors in the policy development and implementation process. A clear legal framework is a precondition for the success of the implementation of public policies (Chandran, 2016). Health policies are governed by a large number of laws and regulations.

In sum, most of the existing frameworks and models oversimplify the process of policy development and implementation in health governance. However, some new models like multiple streams theory, punctuated equilibrium model, and policy triangle framework go beyond the explanatory function and elucidate the politics and pressures exerted in agenda setting and policy development. These kinds of frameworks may partly help in comprehending the complex nature of health governance in India. There are critical challenges like the information gap, opaque nature of policy development, increasing role of private actors, emulation of Western models, measurability of values, and the curse of the temporal challenge that make policy analysis in the Indian health sector a herculean task.

FAULT LINES OF HEALTH GOVERNANCE

The emergence welfare state demanded a comprehensive health plan in India after independence. However, India adopted an official or formal Nation Health Policy only in 1983. Healthcare service delivery and policymaking in the sector are complex issues in countries like India, which have intricate socio-economic and cultural diversity. Understanding the challenges in the implementation is the pre-requisite for improving policy performance in the health sector. The disparity in economic and social development spills over to access to quality healthcare for a large section of the population in India. Social disparity is not confined to the area of healthcare service delivery in the country. National level committees on health

constituted since the pre-independence period lack diversity in representation. There are social, geographical, gender and other social disparities in the composition of these committees on various health issues. The key national committees are over represented by the men, government representatives and people located in Delhi (Agrawal, Sharma, & Keshri, 2024). This raises concerns regarding the lack of equity among the actors in the decision-making process of public health policies in India. The centralisation of the decision-making process continues to be a major concern in public health policy. Hence, equitable public health policies are imminent not only in service delivery but also in the process of policy development.

Although constitutionally, public health and sanitation primarily come under the aegis of state governments, the central government has a major influence on the public health functions of states even during normal times. The fiscal leverage, convening power, technical resources, and the power to disseminate lessons to states keep the arbitrary authority of union government over the state subject (Gupta, et al., 2010). Management of stakeholders is one of the critical areas in the politics of policy implementation (Campos & Reich, 2019). Locating responsibility for health implementation on multiple levels of government also jeopardizes the effective functioning of public health policy regimes. Other key challenges in the health sector of India are overburden of diseases and under investment (Downie & Garba, 2017). Indian healthcare system is also suffering from significant quality discrepancy between urban and rural areas (Kapoor, Kaur, Saeed, Shannawaz, & Chandra, 2023).

The gap in the development and implementation of policy is also a hurdle in the health sector. There exists an 'implementation deficit' (Campos & Reich, 2019). It refers to fractures in the process of implementation from the top level of decision making to implementation at the local level. It is otherwise called 'implementation gap.' Interest groups, bureaucratic politics, political leadership, external actors, and beneficiary interests are influencing the politics of policy development in the health sector. Understanding their elusive influence in agenda setting, policy development and implementation is a precondition for the successful analysis of a public health policy.

THE POST-PANDEMIC IMPERATIVE IN PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

The pandemic reminded the policymakers that the development and implementation of public health policy, especially during a crisis period like a pandemic, is a multidisciplinary affair in which policymakers have to bring together experts from various fields. A global health crisis is not merely a matter of health; rather, it has to cope with critical concerns in the areas of economy, technology, science, society, law and order, statistics, security, and life. The COVID-19 pandemic also

starkly revealed the fragility of public health infrastructure in India (Seshadri, 2022). The overcrowded hospitals, shortage of beds and facilities, and inequity in access to healthcare facilities alluded to the dire situation of service delivery in the public health sector of India. Insufficient public financing and high out-of-pocket expenditure are the twin symptoms of the malady suffered by the public health system in India. The increase in public spending in the health sector needs to be matched by the efficient skills of policymakers in managing health spending wisely (Berman & Ahuja, 2008). The out-of-pocket expenditure of individuals varies from 60 to 80 per cent of health expenditure across states in India (Duran et al., 2015). Inequality in access to public health services further aggravates the problem.

One of the serious systemic challenges in the governance structure of some of the countries during the COVID-19 pandemic was their inefficiency in collecting regular data. India also struggled to collect and publish data on mortality during the peak period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their weakness in recording and compiling data on deaths was exposed during the period. The lower quality of data on other health parameters also jeopardized the standardisation of universal health indicators and mitigation of the pandemic. The registration of data on birth and death was incomplete even during normal times in the pre-pandemic period (Unni & Balagopal, 2022). There is inter-state variation in the performance of agencies recording data on births and deaths in India. The function of registration of deaths and births is assigned to various departments and different levels of agencies in Indian states. This also affects the interoperability of state departments while compiling data at the state as well as national level, especially during a crisis period. The lack of clarity in following WHO guidelines in confirming the causes of death during the pandemic also caused errors in data collection. Health Management Information Systems did not report the Covid deaths separately in India (Unni & Balagopal, 2022). The pandemic helped to expose the inefficiency in combining and standardising data regarding the registration of births and deaths in India. The lack of integration of digital platforms collecting data also works as an obstacle to interoperability in the field of civil registration. Transparent and standardised data should be disseminated for the efficient management of public health crises.

The subject of healthcare comes under the purview of state governments in India. However, measures like nationwide lockdown during the first phase of COVID-19 were imposed by the union government. This gap in locating responsibility and decision-making at different levels of government jeopardized the coordination and interoperability between departments of state and between state and centre. Regulatory bodies at the national level, like the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), were reduced to an advisory role during the pandemic period (Seshadri, 2022). The withdrawal of the central government to the minimum functions like guidance, integration of data, and regulation led to the trust deficit between different

levels of government. India should bring an adaptive governance framework which emphasises shared accountability and reconciliation of varying levels of flexibility – operational processes, institutional linkages, and health system values (Rao, Prashanth, & Hebbar, 2021). The reform should also include an integrated national health data system. Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission is an important step in this regard. These fundamental reforms should allocate sufficient administrative and financial powers to state and local governments in proportion to their public health responsibilities. Overcentralisation may jeopardize the efficient functioning of primary and community healthcare systems at a local level.

National Health Mission in rural and urban areas helped India to introduce local-level mitigating measures like contact tracing and quarantining immediately after the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. However, there were regional variations in the effective functioning of primary-level healthcare service delivery. The states like Kerala, with an efficient primary healthcare system, were successful in localising responsibilities. The state could effectively mobilise primary healthcare workers like ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Auxiliary Midwife Nurses (ANMs) to reach out to the doorstep of people since the first phase of the pandemic-induced lockdown. However, most of the states in India had to suffer from the lack of skilled workforce at local healthcare institutions. The deficiency in social capital made the community-based localised measures futile in some states. The participatory and decentralised model of health governance in Kerala was an exception to this.

Resorting to arbitrary mitigating measures was a challenge in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily as a public health crisis. The initial response of the Union government to the pandemic was a declaration of nationwide lockdown, quarantine, and surveillance. The governments treated it primarily as a law-and-order issue and undermined individual rights. They used excessive force to discipline the population. The people who are at the margins of society, like interstate migrants, street vendors, and lower castes, were disproportionately affected by the use of force by the agencies of governments. The forced public bathing of people crossing state boundaries in the name of sanitation disregarded basic human dignity. The marginalised were the victims of the insecurity of the elite class during an uncertain crisis. The emergency situation legitimised violence against the vulnerable during the period. Even people gave consent to the excessive use of force on them for the sake of public health in the rudimentary stage of the pandemic response. Human rights and the dignified social life of people in the margins were compromised for the health security of the elite section of the population. Decision makers need to be sensitive to the social and political lives of individuals while developing health policies. The pandemic experiences revealed the multidimensional nature of health policy development and implementation.

The effectiveness of the emergency management system of governments in India was also questioned during the period of pandemic-induced lockdown. It exposed the underlying colonial legacy of health governance structure while mitigating a public health crisis. The legal framework of emergency health management was inherited from the colonial government. The central government invoked the provisions of colonial laws like the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 and penalties under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to mitigate a public health issue. The National Disaster Management Act of 2005 also followed the same colonial legacy. These legal frameworks alluded to the fact that governments following the legacy of colonial rulers do not address epidemics solely as public health issues. Regulatory mechanisms under these laws and rules continue to see populations as subjects and discipline them using excessive force.

The COVID-19 pandemic helped to increase public spending in the health sector. However, India's health expenditure in terms of GDP percentage is much lower than the global average. New schemes like Ayushman Bharat launched under the National Health Policy, 2017 have widened tertiary health coverage (Sinha & Jain, 2021). Sufficient financial resources should be allocated to state and local governments to strengthen primary-level healthcare. Private has emerged as a major player in healthcare service delivery in India in the last two decades. It provides nearly 80 per cent of outpatient care and nearly 60 per cent of inpatient care (Duran et al., 2015). Hence, the health policy and governance should be efficient enough to improve the purchasing and regulation of the private sector, thereby enhancing the capacity for intersectoral health service delivery across the states. The experiences of states like Kerala show that considerable growth in privatisation does not necessarily affect the quality of the public health system (Bhudari, 2020). Similarly, a common understanding of values may help interlocking institutional systems regulated by various levels of government and sectors. The unified values may increase the capacity for agenda-setting while properly responding to the diverse needs of the population across the country.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the systemic and physical weaknesses of the public health sector in India and alluded to the urgency of fundamental reforms in healthcare service delivery. The fundamental reforms should begin at the level of policy development and agenda setting. The expertise of union and state health ministries in policy planning needs to be strengthened by imparting appropriate skills and giving comprehensive real-time data inputs to decision-makers. A data-based comprehensive policymaking is needed to address the challenges of the post-pandemic public health governance system. The pandemic also revealed the nature of multidisciplinary public health policy development. There is a grave need

to conceptualise health sector reforms in a multidimensional way. The theoretical frameworks to analyse public health policies in countries like India need to address the new challenges that emerged after the COVID-19 pandemic. It needs to broaden its disciplinary boundaries to address the larger political and social issues along with administrative and systemic challenges. The new model should also address issues like the federal nature of regulatory mechanisms, colonial tinges in legal frameworks, regional disparities in governance structure, and variations in values and social capital across the states. The experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic urge governments and policymakers to reform the existing public health governance structures and broaden theoretical frameworks to address systemic issues underlying the public health delivery system in India.

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TRACING THE ROLE OF THE JUDICIARY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

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Abstract

The constitutional courts can interpret the laws and determine their constitutionality and legality. Through the progressive interpretation of the rights enshrined in Part III, the nature and dimensions of the right to life have substantially changed. The progressive interpretation of the constitutional provisions and creation of new rights, especially rights that directly affect life, are based on the broad understanding and dimensions of philosophies. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to trace the philosophical basis of the judicial decisions underlying the constitutional principles and provisions, whether expressed or implied in the constitutional provisions, based on which the constitutional courts have stretched the dimensions of rights and created some new rights, which are sometimes termed as 'fourth generation rights.' By revealing the philosophical basis and dimension of the construction of the right to clean water, this paper concludes that in the emerging context of water pollution and other variables, the judiciary has played very significant role in constructing the right to clean water and broadening the dimension and right of right to life enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Keywords: Role of judiciary, right to clean water, construction, judiciary, philosophical.

INTRODUCTION

The judiciary's role in environmental governance cannot be answered in a yes/no or a balancing-and-unbalancing framework. The role of the judiciary in

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environmental governance is to be located and analysed in the broad framework of egalitarian human rights framework and entire governance mechanism where the judiciary is not merely an institution playing its part as a governance body; instead, it is a part of public space where contested ideas of environmental governance are constructed/deconstructed or contested/de-contested by different stakeholders in term of litigating process and judicial decision making. The role of the judiciary in this context is philosophical. The role of the judiciary, significantly higher judiciary, is not merely limited to the 'facts in issues' in a particular litigation; rather, it is a place where several approaches of legal principles, development, rights, duties, and philosophy are proposed, argued and contested by litigants and the judges of the constitutional courts on the 'question of law.' Hence, the judiciary 'theorise and philosophise' the issues before it. The 'question of law' affords ample scope for litigants and judges of constitutional courts to interpret constitutional provisions within the broad framework of constitutional philosophy, which encompasses political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. The judicial space also gives immense scope to judges and litigants to use all possible legal loopholes and theoretical approaches to sustain a particular way of logic or philosophy or change the understanding or perception on a specific aspect of governance or ideology of governance, but within a broad framework of egalitarian principles and goals as envisaged in the Constitution and unwritten conventions.

In respect of environmental governance, the judiciary in general and judges of the constitutional courts have played significant roles while adjudicating the litigation, in conceptualising the broad ideology and understanding of environmental governance and construing the normative contents or constitutive elements of several rights, including the right to clean water implied from the constitutional provisions in the Constitution of India. The detailed questions of rights, justice, equity, accessibility, and affordability are framed, debated, contested, and agreed upon by the judges and litigants, subject to their respective understandings and contexts. Despite different understandings and perceptions of the law on a particular subject, the decision of a specific bench or majority becomes authoritative, is treated as precedent, and is taken as the law of the land. The ratio or reason of a judicial decision on the ambiguous issue (s) becomes part of legal, academic, philosophical, and policy discourse. Thus, judicial decisions are so embedded in the governance structure that their role must be recognised. The judiciary's role in developing and interpreting the constitutional provisions that recognise the right to clean water as an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 is historical and instrumental from the perspectives of human/fundamental rights and policymaking.

The role of the judiciary in environmental governance from philosophical perspectives – the arena of constitutional courts, where mainly 'questions of law' are contested by litigants before judges and benches – plays a crucial legal and political

role in examining and interpreting legal issues from various legal and philosophical viewpoints. This creates numerous opportunities for litigants and judges to address legal or socio-legal questions within the context of different ideas of rights and justice. New changes and challenges influence these subsequent contexts and perspectives through social, legal, technological, and political movements. The traditional philosophy of black-letter law (literal interpretation) of interpreting 'the law as it is' as stated in statutes is no longer a dominant or persuasive approach to construing legislation. The contents of law, or normative rights and justice, are now understood and adjudicated from diverse philosophical perspectives outside the Constitution and statutes, as the Constitution of India encompasses different ideologies and philosophies. Landmark cases (*Subhash Kumar* v. *State of Bihar*, 1991; *M.C. Mehta* v. *Union of India*, 1987; *Narmada Bachao Andolan* v. *Union of India*, 2000) decided by the apex court clearly demonstrate how constitutional courts have philosophically interpreted the 'right to clean water' as an essential part of the 'right to life' enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India (Constitution of India, 1950).

The judiciary assesses and interprets the contents of written or unwritten law, or creates new law based on the need to establish or invalidate laws according to philosophical notions of right and justice, as well as reasons aligned with a particular or mixed approach (Art. 14, 19, and 21, Constitution of India, 1950). It can be challenging to generalise about the philosophical approach of a specific judge or panel of judges because of the minority- or majority-rule dynamics involved in litigation decision-making. Judicial discretion plays a central role in deciding points of law during litigation. The exercise of discretion involves numerous philosophical ideas throughout the process. Judges have significant discretion in determining case outcomes, influenced by their education, upbringing, understanding, life experience, foresight, and knowledge. The way a legal question is approached and its outcomes are determined not only by the arguments presented by the litigants and the resulting decisions of the judges or benches, but also by the role of a neutral or impartial umpire, which is considered characteristic of the adversarial legal system. One consequence of a liberal interpretation of constitutional provisions concerning rights, justice, and obligations is that decisions or reasoning are shaped not only by litigants' arguments but also by the courts' understanding of the issues and their conception of justice in the litigation. A genealogical analysis of constitutional court cases on environmental governance reveals that the constitutional and philosophical reasons underpinning decisions, drawing from various disciplines, form the overarching framework and body of ecological governance (Smith J., 2022, pp. 221-240).

Then, the question is: how far do different philosophical approaches enhance or deepen the understanding and framing of knowledge in environmental governance,

particularly in construing the right to clean water in India? The judiciary's role in interpreting rights, justice, equity, accessibility, and affordability in relation to the right to clean water can be analysed from various philosophical perspectives.

When judges decide legal issues, they invoke philosophical principles, sometimes called the 'philosophy of law or jurisprudence.' Schools of law, influenced by the political and social philosophies of their time (like natural law, sociological, and Marxist schools), shape judicial outcomes. Interpreting the right to clean water involves questions of right, justice, equity, and accessibility, with judges adopting various philosophical approaches. For example, 'justice' can be viewed through utilitarian, libertarian, feminist, Marxist, and other perspectives. Thus, the meaning of 'justice' or 'what are the right things to do' in defining justice concerning the right to clean water depends on these philosophical interpretations (Sandel, 2009).

Following Benthamite utilitarianism, philosophies focus on the sovereign's pleasure and pain, emphasising pleasure over pain. Increasing the majority's pleasure while minimising the minority's pain is justified, shaping justice and norms to maximise the majority's welfare. Even if some minorities are deprived of pleasure, the overall framework remains justified. This approach quantifies 'pleasure and pain' through measurable mechanisms (Bentham, 1789). Laws aimed at maximising the majority's welfare are seen as 'justice' from this perspective. However, it conflicts with the Indian Constitution's guarantee of individual liberty and equality before the law. It tends to prioritise the majority's rights over individuals, making utilitarian justice incomplete and requiring consideration of alternative perspectives.

Nevertheless, how should this utilitarian conception handle the idea of justice rooted in individualism?

The libertarian view criticises utilitarian justice, emphasising individual freedom so long as it does not harm others. It supports a minimal state role, mainly protecting property, life, and liberty, and opposes state management of markets and interactions. Libertarian justice (Friedman, 1962; Nozick, 1974) grants individuals control over their bodies and labour, emphasising market supply and demand.

Furthermore, the libertarian emphasis on individual liberty has historically protected landlords' property and justified practices like slavery in America, the United Kingdom, and India. It also contributed to the development of the idea that natural resources become private property once some labour has been exerted upon them (Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762). Hence, if the judiciary applies the libertarian notion of justice, interpreting individual freedom and the exploitation of natural resources as private rights, then landowners and resource holders may dispose of their property as they wish, with no interference from the state. Similarly, the libertarian stance has historically justified serfdom, slavery, and bodily exploitation.

Any state intervention in the enjoyment of such rights, or in control over the body or property, is viewed as coercion and unjustified.

Accepting libertarian justice in interpreting the right to clean water could hinder social reforms, limit state intervention, and worsen water scarcity due to resource overuse. While libertarian ideas dominate some economies, they overlook environmental costs, natural resource depletion, and inequalities. Market-driven water as a commodity reflects personal choices, but neglects the state's role in regulation and the broader human and environmental impacts.

Thus, are utilitarian or libertarian notions of justice sufficient to create a fair and egalitarian system in which the right to clean water (and the contents of that right) is upheld by constitutional courts or judges? Before addressing this question, it is essential to consider how individuals are treated under utilitarian and libertarian conceptions of justice. The utilitarian response will be that if rights and justice promote the welfare of the greatest number or increase pleasure over pain, they will be regarded as valid and fair. This also implies that depriving some people or groups may be justified if it ensures the majority's happiness. Such reasoning underpins the state's welfare measures or its interference in individuals' rights and freedoms, provided these measures and interferences promote the happiness of the greatest number. Indeed, this way of conceptualising rights and justice has been sharply criticised by the libertarian view, which holds that individuals' interests or freedoms are subordinate to the will of the majority and to state interference in such freedoms. However, does the libertarian notion of justice aim to establish more egalitarian principles? The emphasis on absolute individual freedom within libertarian thought is often at odds with the constitutional objectives of many countries and societies. It can justify inhumane practices in the name of personal choice and the absence of state interference or coercion. Furthermore, the libertarian perspective is criticised for exploiting resources and infringing on fundamental human rights for the sake of profit. The inequality and exploitation resulting from this conception of justice are tangible and observable. Thus, utilitarian and libertarian ideas of justice perhaps treat human beings as 'a means to an end.' Utilitarians use human beings to achieve pleasure over pain, following the principle of hedonism (Bentham, 1789), even if this means subjecting the pain of a minority or some individuals, justified by the belief that the welfare of the majority increases. Similarly, the libertarian concept of justice treats human beings as a means to the goal of ensuring absolute freedom, free from state interference or coercion. This view regards human beings as means in the market, making choices based on demand and supply. The choices individuals make, even if detrimental to themselves, are justified and not subject to state interference.

The strong critique and alternative perspective on establishing a more egalitarian and fair justice system came from Immanuel Kant, a German rationalist

philosopher. The universalist principle of human rights stresses the formal equality of all individuals, regardless of arbitrary categories such as caste, class, creed, race, sex, and gender. This perspective is reflected in Kantian notions of right and justice, which are rooted in rationalism. Kantian philosophy highlights the inherent rationality and logic within human beings, leading to the view of the individual as an end in itself, unlike utilitarian and libertarian philosophies, which see the individual as a means to an end (Kant, 1785/2012).

The quality of human beings as rational creatures should be recognised and respected unconditionally, which is known as the 'categorical imperative' rather than the 'hypothetical imperative' (Kant, 1785/2012). How can we establish the right to clean water within environmental governance by the judiciary? While India's Constitution and judiciary emphasise formal equality, they do not explicitly recognise this right as fundamental. Kantian philosophy suggests every person has a basic right to clean water, regardless of categories. Although courts view it as a matter of governance, laws such as the Draft Framework Water Law (2016) and the Prevention of Water Act (1974) do not make this right enforceable. Since all humans are inherently equal and rational, they deserve equal treatment and dignity, and their rights should be enforced based on this rational nature rather than specific categories.

An alternative approach to the right to clean water as an environmental governance issue involves examining practical socio-legal aspects, where constitutional courts address substantive justice within a broad socio-economic and political framework. In this setting, various arbitrary factors significantly influence the enforcement of justice. These elements are often absent in existing literature. Within this complex socio-economic and political environment, constitutional courts may manoeuvre to extend their jurisdiction beyond traditional boundaries, either to redefine justice in more egalitarian terms or to preserve the status quo. While the emphasis on procedural fairness in justice by constitutional courts is important to note, it is equally crucial to scrutinise the extent to which substantive justice is upheld in socio-economic rights, such as the right to clean water.

The arbitrary categories of caste, class, race, region, sex, and gender influence access to and the delivery of justice. Justice cannot be fully understood or realised without considering the operational structures of social and political institutions where the law functions. The justice system itself is not free from the biases mentioned earlier. Whether it concerns the delivery of economic resources like air and water or other services, the justice system has a significant impact on people's lives. Before reaching the final recipients of these essential goods, the process is mediated by various structures and institutions (Rajagopal, 2003). The widely celebrated ideals of justice outlined in the Preamble and Parts III, IV, and IV (A) as egalitarian visions require more rigorous enforcement or implementation. As

a governance mechanism or space for ongoing negotiations and contests over development and governance ideologies, the judiciary is also subject to allegations of caste, class, and gender bias. The Constitution of India broadly envisions three forms of justice – social, economic, and political – as egalitarian ideals. However, assessing how effectively these lofty goals have been realised within a complex socio-economic and political context can be examined through various governance indicators, including an egalitarian environmental justice framework (Galanter, 1974, pp. 95-160). Frameworks such as Marxist, postcolonial, critical legal studies, subaltern, and feminist approaches offer critical perspectives on caste, class, race, sex, and gender in the context of egalitarian justice. These aspects will be explored in the following paragraphs, beginning with notions of justice proposed by Aristotle, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, and Michael Sandel, particularly in relation to the right to clean water, and also considering the judiciary's role in environmental governance.

Conceptualising right and justice from the Aristotelian perspective, 'telos' first relates to the moral question of 'end, purpose, and aim' of doing something regarding right and justice. Therefore, the appropriate course of action is chosen based on the end or purpose of the act. It can also be understood in terms of the common good for society. Thus, according to the common good of society, rights and justice are determined (Aristotle, 2009). Nevertheless, Michael Sandel asks who will decide the common good (Sandel, 2009, p. 261)? If the state determines it, what will happen to the libertarian notion of freedom, which, at least in the economic sphere, emphasises freedom of choice and lack of coercion by the state in making choices? According to the libertarian view, individuals are free to make choices and set their life's purpose. It means that an external authority cannot determine an individual's purpose or end of life, and a priori ends or the purpose of life cannot be fixed. The judiciary's role in environmental governance, especially regarding the right to clean water, varies depending on philosophical views on rights and justice. Judges may favour different perspectives: some focus on the law's purpose, emphasising societal interests and state laws, which can limit individual freedoms through coercion or intervention. Others adopt a libertarian view, rejecting restrictions that conflict with personal goals, potentially justifying environmental harm by individuals or corporations. This tension influences legal approaches, as courts attempt to balance rights and justice, integrating libertarian and communitarian ideas into a practical framework in which both are seen as complementary rather than opposing.

Along with this theoretical dilemma of balancing competing philosophical notions of justice, the challenge of reconciling conflicting conceptual categories of civil and political rights as fundamental enforceable rights as a liberal value, and social, economic, and cultural rights as non-enforceable directive principles of state policy,

remains prominent and widely visible in the construction and implementation of rights. However, it is perhaps true that the distinction between enforceable and non-enforceable rights has become blurred through judicial balancing exercises, as many socio-economic and cultural rights enshrined in Part IV of the Constitution of India have been interpreted as enforceable rights – including the right to clean water, which falls under the broad framework of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution of India (*Subhash Kumar* v. *State of Bihar*, 1991).

In terms of the Aristotelian conception of justice as telos (purpose or end), the combined reading of the Preamble, Part III, and Part IV of the Constitution of India offers an egalitarian vision of society overall, which can be invoked by the states and judiciary as an evaluative criterion for the subjugation of rights and making justice conditional. Therefore, if justice has a prior end, the individual's freedom becomes subject to society's will. Consequently, this contradicts the libertarian notion of justice because the prior end of justice, or qualified rights, entails some form of paternalism that restricts individuals' freedom of choice. Thus, perhaps, the Aristotelian sense of justice is consequentialist in that right and justice can be viewed in terms of 'end' and 'purpose,' which opposes the notions of right and justice in libertarian and utilitarian theories that emphasise the freedom to choose without regard for consequences or utility. The preamble and purposes of the Constitution of India, along with its principles of political, social, and economic justice, align with the Aristotelian concept of justice. These aims and aspirational principles serve as guiding principles for the constitutional courts, both in theory and in practice.

The expanding scope of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution – read alongside the Preamble and Directive Principles of State Policy, is interpreted dynamically and liberally by the constitutional courts through progressive Public Interest Litigation (PIL). This approach helps address emerging issues such as environmental pollution and governance within a new understanding of rights and justice. The concepts of rights and justice are not fixed; they evolve and expand in response to philosophical and theoretical challenges posed by utilitarianism, libertarianism, universalism, feminism, the critical legal movement, and Marxism, as well as new social and political movements that question traditional notions of rights, justice, and order. However, these evolving ideas do not always lead to significant legal or social change; sometimes, they involve reinterpreting or repackaging old or regressive notions of rights and justice. The material context is also essential, providing the real-world situations that influence whether constitutional provisions are interpreted dynamically or regressively. Issues such as the climate crisis, global warming, unpredictable weather patterns, pollution of air and water, natural disasters, and the privatisation and exploitation of natural resources for profit have

prompted the courts to broaden the understanding of fundamental and human rights enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution (Constitution of India, 1950). When adjudicating cases, the Supreme Court and High Courts have emphasised the critical nature of water availability and distribution, highlighting the ideological push towards privatisation and the resultant deprivation of access to water for many, thereby threatening their fundamental rights. The right to life under Article 21 is founded on the philosophy of human rights as an inalienable entitlement for every man and woman. Human life cannot be viewed merely through the lens of the physical sciences; instead, it must be recognised within social, political, cultural, and economic contexts. The water crisis caused by pollution, climate change, and global warming has significantly influenced courts to recognise the right to clean water as an essential part of the right to life. This recognition is philosophically justified based on egalitarian rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India. It is now firmly established law, as reflected in numerous Supreme Court decisions, that the right to clean water is an integral aspect of the rights and justice envisaged by the Constitution and interpreted by the courts, despite its not being explicitly recognised in any legislation related to water or environmental law (The Water Act, 1974).

CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that constitutional courts interpret laws by considering the specific facts and circumstances of each case. They draw upon the philosophical foundations of the Constitution of India and its constitutional provisions, particularly those in Parts III and IV concerning human rights. These principles are deeply rooted in diverse philosophical traditions. The constitutional courts and their judges justify their ideological perspectives in their rulings, which are grounded in the philosophical principles embedded within the constitutional text. The Constitution of India incorporates numerous philosophical influences, intricately woven throughout its provisions. Every judicial decision and observation is grounded in and justified by the fundamental philosophical principles of the Constitution. This framework fosters broad acceptance of various philosophical viewpoints. The extensive range of judicial decisions interpreting statutory provisions and addressing emerging issues within a constitutional context enables the judiciary to interpret laws in ways that mirror their philosophical orientations. Consequently, this process shapes and constructs rights, such as the right to clean water, as an integrated whole. Philosophical reasoning and the generalisation of court decisions are central to interpreting environmental governance in India. The philosophical strands embedded within the Constitution provide the judiciary with the interpretive tools necessary to exercise discretion in defining and adapting constitutional provisions to new contexts, thereby

maintaining a connection between the past, present, and future. In this manner, the philosophies embedded within the constitutional text support the philosophical development of rights, including the right to clean water.

The diverse philosophies embedded in the constitutional text, or added later by the judiciary while interpreting the substantial provisions on rights and justice in a changing context, ensure the adaptability, resilience, and dynamic nature of an evolutionary constitution. This includes the enshrinement of new environmental rights, such as the right to clean water, in particular, and to a pollution-free environment in general. The Supreme Court of India formally recognised the right to a pollution-free environment as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India in the context of protecting the Great Indian Bustard.Once again, the apex court demonstrates a changing, dynamic, and resilient philosophical orientation shaped by the new technology of renewable energy and the need for conservation. In this interpretative process, the new context and material conditions also constructively influence philosophical inclinations and orientations that are inconceivable in the era of technological network development, thereby impacting life and the environment. The contemporary framework of environmental governance and its philosophical foundations must be theorised and formulated in close relation and interaction with contemporary science and technology.

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ENDNOTE

The Draft National Framework Water Law, 2016, recognises the right to clean water, but it lacks legal enforceability.

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RESEARCH TRENDS IN PUBLIC POLICY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY

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Abstract

The paper presents a bibliometric study on public policy and good governance, aiming to map recent publication productivity, identify potential areas for improvement, and identify best practices. It analyzes data from the Web of Science (WOS) database and provides insights into the dynamics and trends of scientific knowledge in this field. The study reveals a consistent and notable growth in scholarly publications on public policy and good governance, with the most common document type being an article. The most productive institutions are based in the USA, and the paper also explores emerging research areas, top publishers, and popular subject categories in the field. The study's findings contribute to a better understanding of the scholarly landscape in public policy and good governance, which is essential for informed decision-making and further development in this domain.

Keywords: Good Governance, Public Policy, Bibliometrics, Scholarly Publication, Highly Cited Author, Productive Journals, Web of Science, Citation Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Political science is a specialized field within social sciences that centers its attention on examining politics, governmental structures, and the dynamics of political conduct. It examines the theory and practice of politics, the formation and implementation of public policies, the structure and functioning of political institutions, and the behavior of individuals and groups within political systems.

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Political science is a broad field that includes various subfields, such as comparative politics, international relations, political theory, and public administration.

Political science is the systematic and scientific study of politics, political systems, and public affairs. According to Easton (1975), political science "seeks to develop general principles and theories about how political systems work, how they grow and change, and how they can be analyzed and understood.

Sharma (2017), according to her study, during the tenure of 1998 to 2004, several programs and policies were implemented to uphold the principle of Good Governance in India.

Political science research has real-world implications and is closely linked to public policy and good governance. By studying political systems, policy processes, and institutions, political scientists contribute to understanding effective governance and policy outcomes. Their research informs policymakers and helps shape policies that promote public welfare, democracy, accountability, and the common good.

According to Cochran & Malone (2014), public policy is a "dynamic process of decision-making that involves the identification of problems and opportunities, the selection of objectives, and the determination of the courses of action to achieve those objectives."

Bibliometrics study is a quantitative approach to analyzing and measuring scientific research, focusing on various aspects such as publication output, citations, collaboration patterns, and the structure of scientific communities. Scientometrics can be defined as the "quantitative study of science, communication in science, and science policy" (Hess, 1997).

Bibliometrics studies help evaluate scientific publications by focusing on author citations. These studies reveal research contributions' influence, impact, and visibility through citation patterns. Citation network mapping helps researchers find related research clusters and influential authors in a discipline by identifying emerging trends, collaboration areas, and knowledge gaps (Leydesdorff, 2007). Lastly, by evaluating research impact, identifying influential authors, and mapping collaboration networks, scientometric studies contribute to science policy, providing valuable insights for resource allocation, funding priorities, and informed decision-making (Moed et al., 2012)

In this paper, the author conducts a bibliometrics study on public policy and good governance and aims to map the recent publication productivity, identify potential areas for improvement, and determine the best practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gupta (2012), in this article, the author observes that scholars have emphasized the importance of comparative analysis since the 1970s, involving comparing various policies, outputs, inputs, and outcomes across different institutional settings. The research note categorizes recent work in comparative public policy into three groups. Fauzan & Jahja (2021), Their study conducts a bibliometric analysis of good governance research publications from 1984 to 2020 using the Scopus database. The research aims to reveal the trends in literature related to good governance, as it holds a crucial role in organizations. The findings demonstrate an increasing growth rate of good governance literature, particularly since 2011. Another study on bibliometrics study also conducted by (Tamrin et al., 2024) between 1985 and 2022 observed significant advancements and innovations that played a vital role in changing policies and restructuring government operations. The study utilized data from Scopus databases to identify and analyze the progression of research intensity in the field.

Wisnumurti et al. (2022), Their research aimed to analyze literature on political culture issues and identify trends. This study revealed significant findings: the most influential political culture publications were in 2020 (265), the Police (Russian Federation) contributed the highest number of documents (17), and the Journal of Communication had the most citations (579). Hussain et al. (2023) provide a comprehensive overview of policy advisory systems (PAS) literature due to its importance, policy scholars' growing interest, and recent research surge. The importance of public policy and governance is increasing every day Massey (2022), in this paper, the author stresses the significance of having a sufficient number of well-trained, competent, and honest public administrators working at the local level to make the widespread achievement of the SDGs possible.

Howe et al. (2023), interconnected relationships and interactions that shape and influence public policy among different policy networks. The concept of policy network increases the importance of policy studies because it sheds light on policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation in complex political and social environments (Blanco et al., 2011; Zheng et al., 2010).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The present article intends to (a) explore the productivity of global scholarly publications and the growth of literature, (b) growth rate of output, (c) identify the WOS indexed publications and profile of authors (d) explore the core Journals with higher productivity. All in the context of public policy and good governance.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed bibliometric analysis to conduct a thorough and systematic investigation into the formal characteristics of their field of study. The analysis incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data extracted from previous publications. The approaches can be classified into performance and science mapping analysis. Hence, a bibliometric analysis was conducted, utilizing indicators such as author count, article count, citation count, institutional affiliations, and countries of origin to assess the data. Data for bibliometric studies is often collected from bibliographic databases that index scholarly publications. WOS, Scopus, and Google Scholar cover scientific literature across disciplines. These databases help researchers collect relevant data for analyses (Thelwall, 2008).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The relationships between disciplines, fields, specializations, and specific articles or authors are visually represented by science mapping (Oladinrin et al., 2021). Analysis has evolved into extensive bibliometric analysis to monitor and identify scientific topic relationships and define study areas to evaluate cognitive structure and evolution (Gomis et al., 2022). Before scientometric analysis, a literature review is done to determine the context of the research theme.

Data was utilized from the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection database, widely recognized as a highly reliable and publisher-neutral citation resource on a global scale. The extensive citation of references in WoS makes it a valuable tool for bibliometric research.

SAMPLE SIZE

The data were collected from the Web of Science, focusing on public policy and good governance. All literature published from 2013 to 2022 in this domain was included in the sample. More than 200 Web of Science categories were explored to ensure comprehensive coverage. The dataset includes a range of characteristics, including the publisher, publication year, countries of origin, linked organizations, document kinds, funding bodies, book series titles, open-access publications, research topics, individual authors, author collaborations, and other relevant factors.

DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected from the Web of Science Core using the keywords "Public policy," "good governance," and "Political Science" as the topic title, covering the time period from 2013 to 2022. A total of 6,085 records were extracted from the database during this specified timeframe. The database offers filtering options,

allowing researchers to refine the data according to the study's objectives and research questions. After applying appropriate filters, the data was collected from the database, ensuring it aligned with the specific research objectives and effectively addressed the research questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Various procedures and tools were employed to analyze the data. The data was exported and saved in an Excel-compatible format. Complete records relevant to the research topic "public policy and good governance" were extracted from the Web of Science. From the excel file, essential fields were extracted from the complete datasets. These fields were sorted and organized in alignment with the study's objectives and research questions. The data analysis process examined several factors, including publishing trends, publications classified by country and institute, document types, citation analysis, prolific writers, funding organizations, and institutions. Through the utilization of these methodologies and instruments, the scholars successfully extracted significant observations from the data within the realm of public policy and effective governance.

ACADEMIC PUBLICATION PRODUCTIVITY AND YEAR-WISE GROWTH

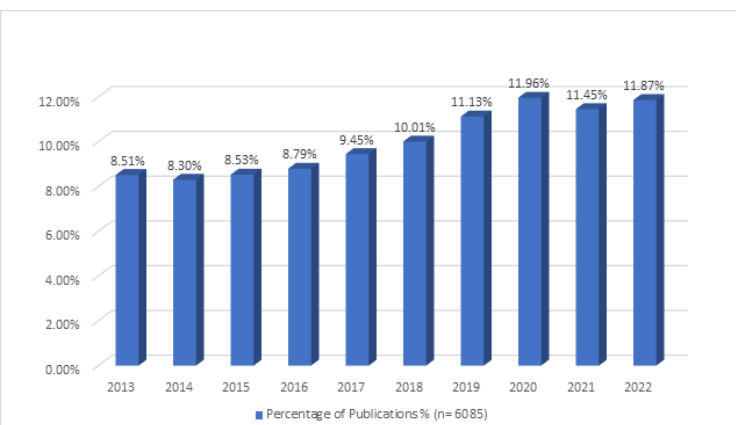

Figure 1: Scholarly Publication Productivity and Year-Wise Growth in the Field of

Public Policy and Good Governance

The data presented in the graph demonstrates a consistent and notable growth in scholarly publications related to the field of public policy and good governance. From the initial point in 2013, where approximately 8.51% of publications were focused on this domain, there has been a steady increase, reaching 11.87% in the year 2022.

Table 1: Academic Publication Productivity and Year-Wise Growth (2013-2022)

S. No.	*Publication Years*	*Publications (n = 6085)*	*Publications % (n = 6085)*	*GR*
1.	2013	518	8.51%	–
2.	2014	505	8.30%	–2.51%
3.	2015	519	8.53%	2.77%
4.	2016	535	8.79%	3.08%
5.	2017	575	9.45%	7.48%
6.	2018	609	10.01%	5.91%
7.	2019	677	11.13%	11.17%
8.	2020	728	11.96%	7.53%
9.	2021	697	11.45%	–4.26%
10.	2022	722	11.87%	3.59%

The table shows the frequency and percentage of public policy and good governance scholarly publications from 2013 to 2022. The year-by-year trend shows each year's percentage contribution to total publications over the study period.

COUNTRY WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLICATIONS (2013-2022)

Table 2: Top 10 Countries Producing Publications in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance

S. No.	*Country*	*Publications*	*Publications % (n = 6,085)*	*Rank*
1.	USA	2018	33.164%	1
2.	England	763	12.539%	2
3.	Canada	432	7.099%	3
4.	Australia	424	6.968%	4
5.	Brazil	381	6.261%	5
6.	Peoples R China	328	5.390%	6
7.	Germany	263	4.322%	7
8.	Spain	235	3.862%	8
9.	France	233	3.829%	9
10.	Italy	208	3.418%	10

The table displays the top 10 countries that have made the most contributions to scholarly publications in the domain of public policy and good governance from 2013 to 2022. Out of a total of 6085 publications, the United States (USA) emerges

as the foremost contributor, with 33.164% of the publications reflecting its position as a developed country in this field.

TOP 10 COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST RESEARCH OUTPUT

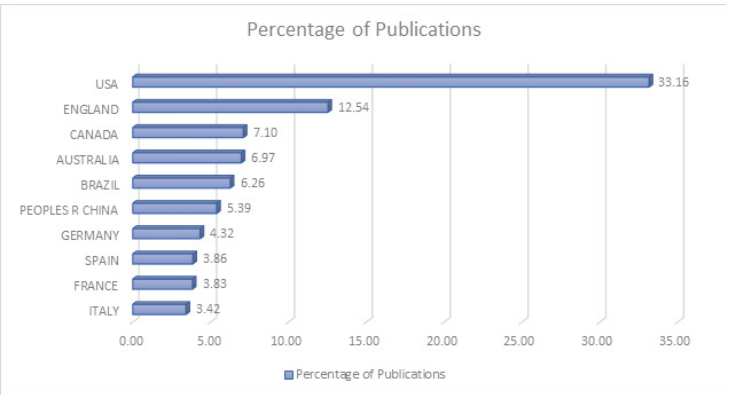

Figure 2: Top 10 Countries with Highest Research Output in Public Policy and Good Governance Domain during 2013–2022.

The figure presented above highlights the top 10 countries that have made significant research contributions to Public Policy and Good Governance. The United States (USA) ranks with the highest research output, contributing 33.16% of the total publications in this field.

INSTITUTION WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLICATIONS IN PUBLIC POLICY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE DOMAIN FROM (2013-2022)

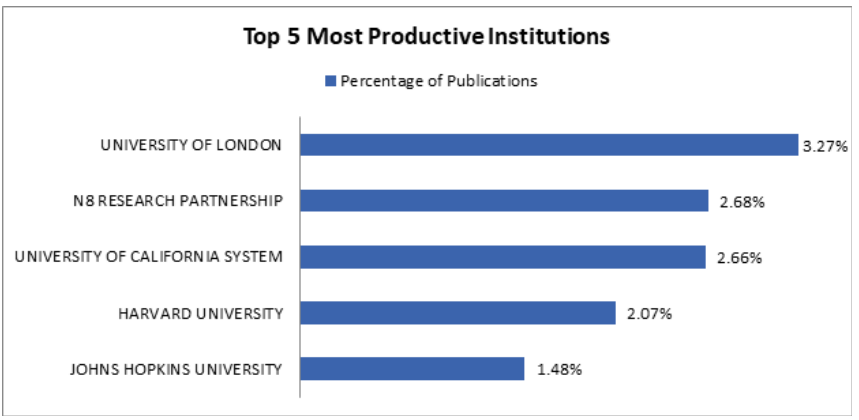

Figure 3: Top five highly productive institutions that publish intellectual works in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance

The figure above highlights the top five most productive institutions that publish scholarly communications in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance. The University of London System stood at the first rank with 3.27% of the publications. The N8 Research Partnership, with 2.68%, followed closely behind the University of California System with 2.66%.

Table 3: Institute Distribution of Publications in the Field of Public Policy and Good Governance during 2013-2022

S. No.	*University/Institute*	*Publications*	*Publications % (n = 6,085)*	*Rank*
1.	University of London	199	3.27%	1
2.	N8 Research Partnership	163	2.68%	2
3.	University of California System	162	2.66%	3
4.	Harvard University	126	2.07%	4
5.	Johns Hopkins University	90	1.48%	5
6.	Europe	83	1.36%	6
7.	University of Toronto	82	1.35%	7
8.	Udice French Research Universities	79	1.30%	8
9.	White Rose University Consortium	79	1.30%	8
10.	University of Sydney	75	1.23%	9

POPULAR JOURNALS AND THEIR IMPACT FACTOR AS OF 2022

Table 4: Top 10 journals in the field of public policy and good governance from 2013-2022

S. No.	*Journal Name*	*Publisher*	*Publications*	*Publications % (n=6,085)*	*Impact Factor of the Journal (2022) (Journal Citation Report)*
1.	Sustainability	MDPI	96	1.578%	0.68
2.	European Journal Of Public Health	Oxford University Press	89	1.463%	0.87
3.	International Journal Of Environmental Research And Public Health	MDPI	69	1.134%	0.93
4.	American Journal Of Public Health	American Public Health Association	61	1.002%	1.98
5.	Ciencia Saude Coletiva	Associacao Brasileira de Pos - Graduacao em Saude Coletiva	48	0.789%	0.38

6.	Frontiers In Public Health	Frontiers Media	46	0.756%	1.2
7.	BMC Public Health	BioMed Central	45	0.740%	1.11
8.	Policy Studies Journal	Wiley-Blackwell	43	0.707%	2.17
9.	Journal Of Public Policy Marketing	American Marketing Association	40	0.657%	1.06
10.	Land Use Policy	Elsevier	39	0.641%	1.46

COMPARISON BETWEEN TOTAL AND OPEN ACCESS (2013 - 2022)

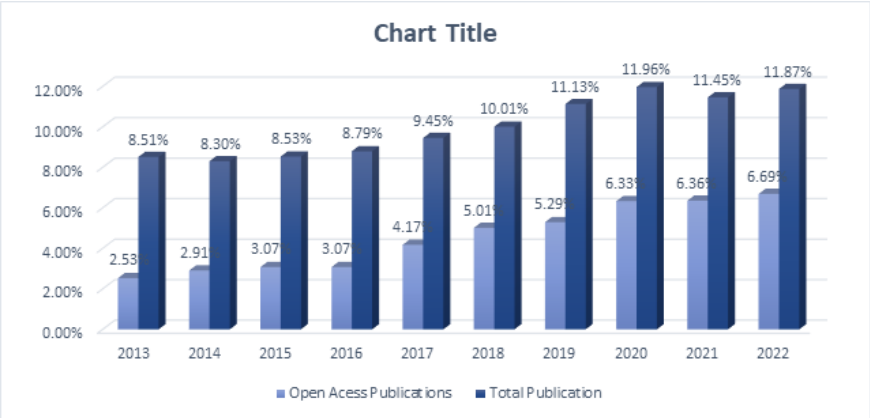

Figure 4: Comparison between Total and Open Access Publications in public policy and good governance Domain from 2013 to 2022

The figure above compares 2013–2022 total and open-access public policy and good governance publications. The data shows open access publication productivity is rising. In 2013, 2.53% of publications were open-access; in 2022, 6.69%. In 2013, 154 of 518 articles were open access. Open-access publication productivity varies by count. In 2021, 387 of 697 publications were open access. 2020 saw 722 publications and 407 open access.

Data shows that open-access public policy and good governance publications are rising. Open-access publications make research findings more accessible, encouraging collaboration and innovation in this vital field.

Table 5: Comparison between Total Publications and Open Access Publications in public policy and good governance Domain from 2013 to 2022

S. No.	*Publication Years*	*Publications*	*Publications % (n = 6085)*	*Open Access Publications*	*Open Access Publications % (n = 6085)*
1.	2013	518	8.51%	154	2.53%
2.	2014	505	8.30%	177	2.91%
3.	2015	519	8.53%	187	3.07%
4.	2016	535	8.79%	187	3.07%
5.	2017	575	9.45%	254	4.17%
6.	2018	609	10.01%	305	5.01%
7.	2019	677	11.13%	322	5.29%
8.	2020	728	11.96%	385	6.33%
9.	2021	697	11.45%	387	6.36%
10.	2022	722	11.87%	407	6.69%

The table above presents a year-wise comparison between the total number of publications and the corresponding open-access publications in the field of public policy and good governance.

WEB OF SCIENCE INDEX NUMBER OF LISTED PUBLICATIONS

Table 6: Number of publications listed in the Web of Science Index in the field of public policy and good governance from 2013 to 2022

S. No.	*Web of Science Index*	*Publications*	*Publications %(n=6,085)*
1.	Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)	5069	83.30%
2.	Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED)	2649	43.53%
3.	Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI)	289	4.75%
4.	Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science (CPCI-S)	102	1.68%
5.	Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH)	39	0.64%
6.	Book Citation Index – Social Sciences & Humanities (BKCI-SSH)	19	0.31%
7.	Book Citation Index – Science (BKCI-S)	13	0.21%

Academic researchers need these Web of Science indexes to measure the impact of scholarly publications. Public policy and good governance research is highly indexed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) with 5069 (83.30%) and the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), indicating its importance and visibility.

HIGHLY CITED ARTICLES FROM 2013 TO 2022

Table 7: Top 10 Highly Cited Publications during the period 2013–2022

S. No.	*Article Title*	*Journals*	*Total Citations*
1.	Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health	Lancet	965
2.	Slowing Amazon deforestation through public policy and interventions in beef and soy supply chains	Science	658
3.	Designing Difference in Difference Studies: Best Practices for Public Health Policy Research	Annual Review Of Public Health	622
4.	Wicked Problems: Implications for Public Policy and Management	Administration & Society	621
5.	Update on NHANES Dietary Data: Focus on Collection, Release, Analytical Considerations, and Uses to Inform Public Policy	Advances In Nutrition	407
6.	Assessing the age specificity of infection fatality rates for COVID-19: systematic review, meta-analysis, and public policy implications	European Journal Of Epidemiology	395
7.	Antibiotic Pollution in the Environment: From Microbial Ecology to Public Policy	Microorganisms	377
8.	Use (and abuse) of expert elicitation in support of decision-making for public policy	Proceedings Of The National Academy Of Sciences Of The United States Of America	363
9.	Public health and international drug policy	Lancet	324
10.	Trust and compliance with public health policies in times of COVID-19	Journal Of Public Economics	310

The above table presents a list of the top cited papers in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance during the period from 2013 to 2022. Year Wise Citation Analysis from 2021 to 2022.

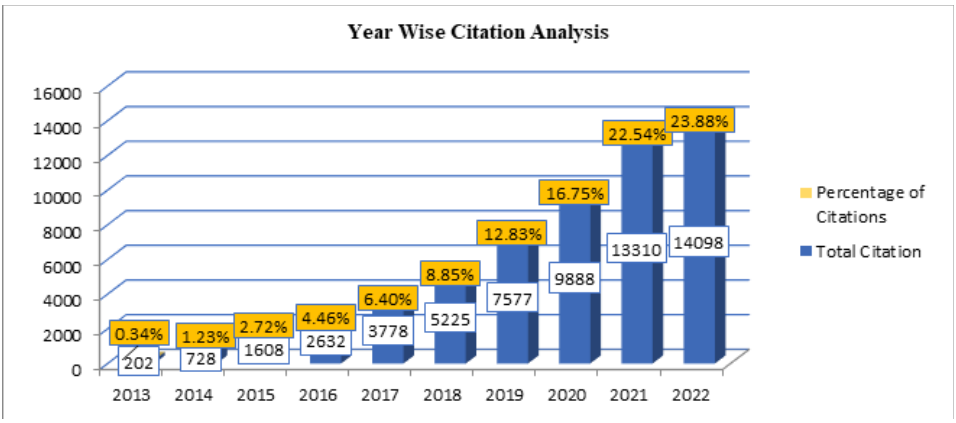

Figure 5: Year Wise Citation Analysis

Table 8: Year Wise Citation Analysis in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance from 2013 to 2022

S. No.	*Publication Years*	*Publications*	*Total Citation*	*Citations (n=59046) %*
1.	2013	518	202	0.34%
2.	2014	505	728	1.23%
3.	2015	519	1608	2.72%
4.	2016	535	2632	4.46%
5.	2017	575	3778	6.40%
6.	2018	609	5225	8.85%
7.	2019	677	7577	12.83%
8.	2020	728	9888	16.75%
9.	2021	697	13310	22.54%
10.	2022	722	14098	23.88%

The table above represents a citation analysis based on the year for the Public Policy and Good Governance field. It presents the number of publications, the corresponding received citations, and the percentage of citations received for each year. In the year 2013, there were a total of 518 publications, and these publications received a total of 202 citations.

TOP 10 AUTHORS' PUBLICATIONS AND THEIR CITATIONS FROM 2013-2022

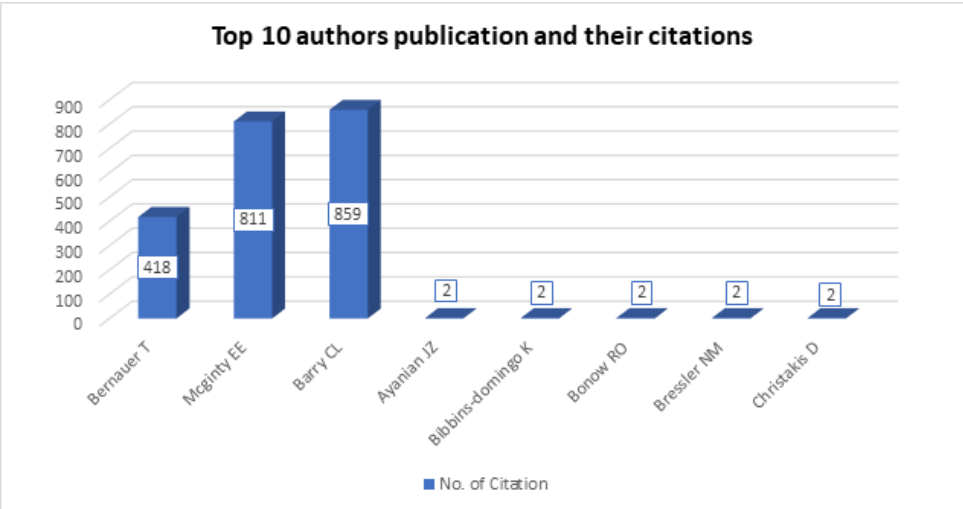

Figure 6: Top 10 Author's publication and their citations.

The column graph provided above illustrates the number of contributions made by authors in the field of public policy and good governance. Barry CL is the most highly cited author, having received an impressive 859 citations for 14 publications.

AUTHORSHIP PATTERNS FROM 2013-2022

Table 9: Top 10 Most Prolific Authors in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance from 2013-2022

S. No.	*Authors*	*Publications*	*Publications % (n = 6,085)*
1.	Bernauer T	18	0.296
2.	Mcginty EE	16	0.263
3.	Barry CL	14	0.23
4.	Ayanian JZ	12	0.197
5.	Bibbins-domingo K	12	0.197
6.	Bonow RO	12	0.197
7.	Bressler NM	12	0.197
8.	Christakis D	12	0.197
9.	Disis ML	12	0.197
10.	Easley TJ	12	0.197

The indicated table would provide a comprehensive list of writers on the subject of public policy and good governance, together with their respective publications. It would include the total number of publications and the corresponding percentage of publications out of the total number of publications. The study would encompass the timeframe from 2013 to 2022, offering valuable insights regarding the author's publishing productivity as a percentage of the overall number of publications.

DISCUSSION

Scholarly Publication Productivity and Year Wise Growth from 2013-2022.

The data in Table No. 5 clearly shows a gradual increase in the growth rate of publications in public policy and good governance from 2013 to 2022. In the initial year, 2013, 8.51% of publications were produced, and this rate steadily increased over the years. By 2022, the publication rate had risen to 11.87%, indicating a significant expansion of research output in this domain.

The period from 2013 to 2022 appears to be the most productive phase for the field, with the proportion of publications ranging from 8.51% in 2013 to a peak of 11.96% in 2020.

Institution Wise Distribution of Publications (2013-2022)

The data presented in the study shows that the University of London is the leading institution in terms of scholarly publication productivity in the field of Public Policy and Good Governance, with 3.27% of the total publications. Following closely, the N8 Research Partnership ranks second with 2.68% of the publications, while the University of California System is in the third position with 2.66% of the total.

These productive institutions are pivotal in advancing knowledge and driving research in Public Policy and Good Governance, influencing policy-making and governance processes worldwide. Their contributions exemplify the significance of research and academic collaborations in addressing complex societal challenges and promoting effective governance strategies.

POPULAR JOURNALS FROM 2013-2022

The data presented in Table No. 10 reveals the top journals in the Public Policy and Good Governance field based on their scholarly publications. The journal "Sustainability, published by MDPI," stands out as the most prominent, with an impact factor of 0.68 and a remarkable 96 publications. Close behind is the "European Journal of Public Health, published by Oxford University Press with an impact factor of 0.87 and 89 publications.

COMPARISON BETWEEN TOTAL AND OPEN ACCESS FROM 2013 TO 2022

The data clearly illustrates the increasing trend of open-access publications in the domain of public policy and good governance. From 2013 to 2022, there has been a gradual rise in the percentage of open-access publications, indicating a growing interest among researchers and publishers in making their work more accessible to the public. In 2013, open-access publications accounted for 2.53% of the total publications, and this percentage has steadily climbed to 6.69% in 2022.

WEB OF SCIENCE INDEX NUMBER OF LISTED PUBLICATIONS

The data shows that public policy and good governance indexes are popular and used. The Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) has 5069 publications, 83.30% of the total. The index is widely used and valued by researchers in this field.

With 2649 publications, SCI-EXPANDED is the second most used index, accounting for 43.53. With 289 publications, the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) accounts for 4.75. Additionally, the Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science (CPCI-S) and Book Citation Index – Social Sciences & Humanities (BKCI-SSH) demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of this research. These indexes emphasize the importance and visibility of public policy and good governance research. These indexes show how scholars from different fields work together to address governance and policy-making issues.

CITATION ANALYSIS OF HIGHLY CITED ARTICLES

The data reveals the top ten most highly cited articles in the field of public policy and good governance from 2013 to 2022. Among these, the article titled "Health and Climate Change: Policy Responses to Protect Public Health," published in the Lancet Journal, has received the highest number of citations, with a total of 965 citations. This article's significant impact on the field is evident from its high citation count. The article "Slowing Amazon Deforestation through Public Policy and Interventions in Beef and soy supply chains" is followed closely and published in the Science Journal, with 658 citations. This article's prominence is evident from its high citation count and its contribution to the discourse on environmental policy and deforestation.

YEAR-WISE CITATION ANALYSIS FROM 2013 TO 2022

Public policy and good governance publications received more citations yearly from 2013 to 2022. 2022 had the most citations of the ten years, with 14,098. Since 2013, the citation count has grown from 202 to 14,098 in 2022. This rise in citations shows the growing importance of public policy and good governance research. Out

of 59,046 citations, the overall citation rate rose from 0.34% in 2013 to 23.88% in 2022. The high citation rate of field scholarship shows the relevance and influence of research findings. The data shows that public policy and good governance research increasingly influence academic and policy discussions.

HIGHLY CITED AUTHORS FROM 2013-2022

The data highlights the most highly cited authors in the field of public policy and good governance from 2013 to 2022. Barry CL is the most cited author, receiving an impressive 859 citations for his 14 publications.

The contributions of these authors play a crucial role in advancing research, shaping policy debates, and informing decision-making processes in the domain of public policy and good governance. Their influential work inspires and drives further research and advancements in this critical study area.

CONCLUSION

The 2013–2022 bibliometrics study on public policy and good governance revealed vital trends and developments. Data analysis showed steady growth in research productivity and impact, indicating that this domain is becoming more important in global issues and policy-making.

The study showed that the US is the most productive and leads in research output and publications.

This field was multidisciplinary due to the various subject categories and emerging research areas intersecting with public policy and good governance. Researchers must collaborate and share knowledge to solve complex social issues.

Over time, open-access publications increased research accessibility and dissemination. This move towards open access promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration, advancing the field.

Leading authors, publications, and journals were identified through citation analysis, demonstrating their impact on the field. These high-impact publications shape research and guide future studies.

The study reinforces public policy and good governance as important and evolving research areas. The data and insights can help policymakers, researchers, and institutions make informed decisions, collaborate, and share knowledge.

Monitoring and analyzing research trends and developments is crucial as public policy and good governance continue to shape societies and address global issues. Following the recommendations and encouraging international collaboration can help the field thrive and improve governance, well-being, and sustainability.

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PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TO ENHANCE ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN INDIA

Pragya Rai*

Abstract

In recent years, the need for enhanced ethics and accountability within the public management system in India has garnered significant attention. This research paper explores the crucial role of citizen participation as a catalyst for improving ethical standards and accountability in public governance. With a focus on the interplay between public administration and civic engagement, the study examines various frameworks and models that promote participatory governance, highlighting successful case studies from different regions across India. The paper delves into the historical context of public management in India, identifying systemic challenges such as corruption, lack of transparency, and bureaucratic inefficiency that undermine public trust. Drawing on theories of participatory democracy and public value creation, this research advocates for institutional reforms aimed at fostering a culture of engagement among citizens. It also proposes actionable recommendations for policymakers to enhance the framework for citizen participation, ensuring that ethical considerations and accountability measures are integral to public management practices. Ultimately, the paper underscores the importance of a collaborative approach between government institutions and citizens in building a more transparent, accountable, and ethically sound public management system in India.

Keywords: Citizen Participation, Public Management, Ethics, Accountability, Governance, India, Transparency, Corruption, Participatory Democracy.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the landscape of public administration in India has witnessed significant transformations driven by globalization, technological advancements, and an increasing demand for transparency and accountability from the

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government. As a vibrant democracy with a diverse population exceeding 1.4 billion, India faces unique challenges in its public management system, particularly concerning ethics and accountability. The complexities of governance in such a vast nation necessitate a re-examination of traditional public management paradigms and the incorporation of innovative strategies to foster citizen engagement and participation.

Citizen participation is fundamental to the democratic ethos of India, envisioned in the Constitution and reflected in various legislative frameworks and policies. However, the gap between policy formulation and implementation often results in disenfranchisement among citizens, leading to a pervasive sense of distrust in public institutions. This detachment is exacerbated by issues such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of responsiveness to citizen needs. Therefore, promoting citizen's participation emerges not just as a strategy to enhance accountability but as a means to cultivate a culture of ethics within the public management system.

Citizen engagement can take various forms, including public consultations, participatory budgeting, community monitoring, and the use of digital platforms for feedback and dialogue. Each of these mechanisms provides opportunities for ordinary citizens to voice their concerns, contribute to policy discussions, and hold public officials accountable for their actions.

This research paper aims to explore the potential of citizen's participation in enhancing ethics and accountability within India's public management system. It will examine the existing frameworks for peoples' participation, the barriers that inhibit meaningful engagement, and the best practices that have emerged both within India and globally. By analysing case studies of successful participatory initiatives, this paper seeks to identify key strategies that can be implemented to strengthen citizen involvement in governance and promote a culture of ethical conduct among public officials.

Enhancing ethics and accountability in the public management system in India is not solely the responsibility of government institutions; it is a collective endeavour that requires the active participation of citizens. By fostering an environment where citizens are empowered to engage with their government, India can build a more resilient, transparent, and accountable public management system that upholds the principles of democracy and serves the needs of its diverse populace. This research paper will contribute to the discourse on citizen participation, highlighting its significance in the pursuit of ethical governance and accountability, ultimately aiming to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners,

and civil society organizations committed to the cause of democratic governance in India

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The interplay between citizen participation, ethics, and accountability in public management has garnered increasing attention within the sphere of governance studies. In the context of India, a nation characterized by its complex socio-political landscape, the need for enhanced ethical standards and accountability mechanisms within public management systems is critical. This literature review seeks to synthesize existing research on the role of citizen's participation in fostering ethics and accountability, with a specific focus on the Indian context.

Citizen participation has been recognized as a critical factor in enhancing governance, particularly in developing countries like India. Research indicates that when citizens are actively involved in governance processes, they can hold public officials accountable, thereby improving service delivery and ethical standards (Cornwall, 2008; Fung, 2006). In India, mechanisms such as the Right to Information Act (2005) have been pivotal in promoting transparency and enabling citizen participation in governance (Jain, 2010). The ethical dimension of public management is also vital for fostering trust between citizens and the government. Ethical behavior among public officials is essential to avoid corruption and promote fairness in service delivery (Dahl & Lindblom, 1953). In the Indian context, where corruption is a significant challenge, the promotion of ethical standards is crucial. Scholars argue that citizen engagement can lead to higher ethical standards by creating an environment where unethical behavior is more likely to be reported and addressed (Bovens et al., 2008).

Accountability in public management refers to the obligation of public officials to report on their actions and be answerable to the public. The literature identifies two primary forms of accountability: vertical and horizontal. Vertical accountability involves citizens holding public officials accountable through mechanisms such as elections and public consultations, while horizontal accountability refers to checks and balances among different branches of government (O'Donnell, 1998).

In India, various accountability mechanisms have been established, including the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act (2013), which aim to address corruption and enhance transparency. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms often hinges on active citizen participation. Research has shown that citizen involvement in oversight processes can significantly enhance accountability outcomes (Sampat, 2015). Despite the potential benefits of citizen participation, several barriers hinder effective engagement in the Indian public management system. These include socio-economic disparities, lack of awareness about rights and responsibilities,

bureaucratic resistance, and cultural factors that discourage public dissent (Bhatnagar, 2017). Addressing these barriers is essential for fostering an inclusive participatory framework that enhances ethics and accountability.

Numerous case studies demonstrate the positive impact of citizen participation on public management outcomes. For instance, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has showcased how community involvement in project planning and implementation can improve accountability and reduce corruption (NCEUS, 2009). Similarly, participatory budgeting initiatives in various Indian states have illustrated the potential of citizen engagement to enhance transparency and accountability in financial management (Bhatia & Soni, 2018). Besides this the advent of digital technology has transformed the landscape of citizen participation in India. E-governance initiatives have facilitated easier access to information and avenues for public engagement (Kumar, 2019). Online platforms and social media have empowered citizens to voice their concerns and demand accountability from public officials. However, the digital divide remains a significant challenge, as marginalized communities may lack access to these technologies (Singh, 2021).

Thus, the literature underscores the importance of promoting citizen participation as a means to enhance ethics and accountability in the public management system in India. While various frameworks and mechanisms exist, the effectiveness of these initiatives is contingent on overcoming barriers to participation and fostering an inclusive environment. Future research should explore innovative strategies for enhancing citizen engagement, particularly through the use of technology, and assess the long-term impacts of participatory governance on public management outcomes. This literature review highlights the multifaceted relationship between citizen participation, ethics, and accountability in the Indian public management system. It provides a framework for future research and policy initiatives aimed at enhancing governance through increased civic engagement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The public management system in India faces multifaceted challenges related to ethics and accountability. Corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lack of transparency undermine public trust and hinder effective governance. This theoretical framework aims to explore how citizen participation can enhance ethics and accountability in the public management system, drawing upon relevant theories and models. The foundational theories that underpin the discourse on citizen participation include the Democratic Theory and the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm. The Democratic Theory emphasizes the

role of citizen engagement in democratic processes, positing that active citizen participation is vital for ensuring government accountability (Pateman, 1970). In contrast, NPM advocates for efficiency and effectiveness in public sector management, often emphasizing results-oriented governance (Hood, 1991). Both frameworks underscore the importance of integrating citizen input into the decision-making processes to enhance accountability

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The social contract theory posits that the legitimacy of government derives from the consent of the governed. In the Indian context, this theory suggests that citizens have a right to participate in governance processes, which can enhance accountability and ethical standards among public officials. By actively engaging in decision-making, citizens can hold public servants accountable, fostering a sense of responsibility and ethical behavior whereas the Public choice theory examines the behavior of public officials as self-interested actors. According to this perspective, citizen participation can serve as a mechanism to align the interests of public officials with those of the citizens they serve. When citizens are involved in the policymaking process, they can exert influence and pressure on public officials to act ethically and transparently, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption and misconduct.

Participatory governance theory emphasizes the importance of involving citizens in the government process. This approach advocates for mechanisms that facilitate citizen engagement, such as public consultations, participatory budgeting, and community-driven development. In the Indian context, promoting participatory governance can enhance accountability by ensuring that public policies reflect the needs and priorities of the citizens, leading to more ethical decision-making. Similarly, theories of accountability, including horizontal and vertical accountability, provide a framework for understanding how citizen participation can enhance accountability in public management. Horizontal accountability refers to the checks and balances among various branches of government, while vertical accountability emphasizes the relationship between citizens and their representatives. By fostering vertical accountability through increased citizen participation, the public management system can ensure that public officials are held accountable for their actions.

MECHANISMS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

To effectively enhance ethics and accountability in the public management system, various mechanisms for citizen participation must be integrated into governance structures. These mechanisms include: E-governance initiatives, such as online

grievance redressal systems and digital platforms for public feedback, can facilitate greater citizen participation. These tools can enhance transparency, allowing citizens to monitor government actions and hold officials accountable. Community engagement initiatives, such as participatory planning and public forums, enable citizens to actively contribute to decision-making processes. By fostering dialogue between citizens and public officials, these initiatives can promote ethical considerations in policy formulation and implementation. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for citizen rights and promoting ethical governance. By mobilizing citizens and raising awareness about issues of accountability and ethics, these organizations can create a conducive environment for citizen participation within the public management system.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The integration of citizen participation into the public management system is anticipated to yield several outcomes, including: Increased citizen engagement which can lead to higher levels of accountability among public officials. When citizens are actively involved in monitoring government actions, it creates a deterrent against unethical behavior and corruption. As citizens participate in governance, they can influence the ethical standards upheld by public officials. This participatory approach encourages transparency and fosters a culture of integrity within public institutions. Similarly, citizen participation can bridge the gap between the government and the populace, fostering trust in public institutions. When citizens see their voices reflected in policy decisions, it enhances their confidence in the system and its commitment to ethical governance.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While promoting citizen participation has the potential to enhance ethics and accountability, several challenges must be addressed such as ensuring that all segments of society, including marginalized groups, have a voice in the governance process is crucial. Mechanisms must be designed to facilitate inclusive participation, preventing the dominance of specific interest groups. Citizen participation requires informed and empowered citizens. Therefore, initiatives aimed at educating and building the capacity of citizens to engage in governance is essential. Resistance from established institutions and public officials may hinder efforts to promote citizen participation. Change management strategies must be employed to foster a culture of openness and responsiveness within the public management system.

The theoretical framework outlined in this paper emphasizes the critical role of citizen participation in enhancing ethics and accountability within the public management system in India. By integrating theories of governance, accountability,

and social engagement, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how citizen involvement can transform public management practices and restore public trust in government institutions. Future empirical research should explore the practical implications of these theories, examining case studies and best practices to inform policy recommendations for effective citizen participation in India.

CASE STUDIES

Citizen participation plays a crucial role in enhancing ethics and accountability in public management systems. In India, various initiatives have been taken to involve citizens in governance processes, which have led to increased transparency, reduced corruption, and improved public services. This research paper presents several case studies that illustrate the impact of citizen participation on ethics and accountability in the public management system in India.

Here are several case studies that illustrate the promotion of citizen participation in enhancing ethics and accountability within the public management system in India:

CASE STUDY 1: THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT (RTI) MOVEMENT

The Right to Information Act, enacted in 2005, empowers citizens to request information from public authorities, thereby promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Enacted in 2005, the Right to Information Act empowers citizens to request information from public authorities, promoting transparency and accountability in governance.

The RTI Act has led to a significant increase in the flow of information from the government to citizens. By enabling citizens to request information, it has made public officials more accountable for their actions and decisions. Citizens have used the RTI as a tool to expose corruption and inefficiencies in government departments. For instance, numerous cases have emerged where citizens have successfully used RTI to uncover discrepancies in welfare schemes or public spending. Despite its successes, the RTI Act has faced challenges, including bureaucratic resistance, misuse of the act to harass officials, and threats to RTI activists. The effectiveness of RTI is often undermined by a lack of awareness among citizens and reluctance on the part of officials to disclose information.

Citizens actively utilized RTI to obtain information on various governmental processes, decisions, and spending. Activist groups and civil society organizations encouraged the public to file RTI applications. The RTI movement led to significant revelations about corruption and mismanagement in public offices. For example,

a notable case involved the exposure of large-scale diversion of funds in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) scheme. Citizens who filed RTI applications demanded accountability from local officials, resulting in investigations and corrective measures. The RTI Act has empowered citizens to hold public officials accountable and has fostered a culture of transparency in the public management system.

CASE STUDY 2: THE CITIZENS' FEEDBACK SYSTEM IN BENGALURU

The Bengaluru city government implemented a citizens' feedback system to gather real-time feedback on public services. Through mobile applications and online platforms, residents can report issues related to waste management, road maintenance, and public health services. The feedback is integrated into the city's management system. The initiative resulted in faster resolution of public grievances and improved service delivery. For instance, the city saw a significant reduction in complaints related to garbage collection and street lighting within the first six months of implementation. Engaging citizens in providing feedback has improved accountability among public service providers and enhanced overall service quality in Bengaluru.

CASE STUDY 3: THE MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA) SOCIAL AUDITS

MGNREGA aims to provide at least 100 days of unskilled wage employment in a financial year to every rural household. MGNREGA, launched in 2005, provides a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of unskilled work in a financial year to every rural household. Social audits have been introduced to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of the scheme.

Social audits involve local communities in the scrutiny of MGNREGA works. Citizens are trained to evaluate the quality of work, the attendance of labourers, and the proper utilization of funds. Case studies from states like Andhra Pradesh and Odisha show that social audits have led to a reduction in corruption and leakages. For instance, discrepancies in wage payments and work completion were identified and rectified through community participation. The process has institutionalized accountability by making officials answerable to the community. This has fostered a culture of transparency, where public funds are monitored by the very beneficiaries they are meant to serve.

Social audits are conducted by local communities to assess the implementation of MGNREGA projects. Citizens participate in reviewing the records, interviewing beneficiaries, and identifying discrepancies. Social audits have exposed irregularities, such as ghost beneficiaries and underpayment of wages. In one instance, a social

audit in a village in Rajasthan uncovered discrepancies amounting to millions of rupees, leading to investigations and recovery of funds. Social audits have strengthened community participation in governance and increased accountability of local authorities, thereby enhancing the ethical standards in public management.

CASE STUDY 4: THE DELHI GOVERNMENT'S MOHALLA SABHAS

The Delhi government initiated the Mohalla Sabha system, a neighbourhood-level participatory governance structure aimed at involving citizens in decision-making. Residents of each locality convene to discuss local issues, prioritize development projects, and allocate budgets. The process encourages direct involvement of citizens in local governance. The initiative has led to more responsive governance, with citizens actively participating in the planning and execution of community projects. For example, residents successfully advocated for better street lighting and public parks, leading to tangible improvements in their neighbourhoods. The Mohalla Sabha system has demonstrated how localized citizen participation can enhance accountability and ethical governance by ensuring that public funds are spent according to community needs.

CASE STUDY 5: THE JANATA DARBAR INITIATIVE IN DELHI

The Janata Darbar (People's Court) is an initiative by the Delhi government where citizens can directly interact with government officials, including ministers, to voice their grievances. By providing a platform for citizens to meet government officials directly, the Janata Darbar has enhanced citizen engagement in the governance process. This approach has fostered a sense of ownership among citizens regarding public programs. The initiative has led to prompt action on individual complaints, thereby improving public service delivery. Reports indicate that many grievances have been resolved on the spot, enhancing public trust in the government. While the Janata Darbar has been effective in addressing grievances, it has been criticized for being a temporary solution rather than a systemic change. The initiative's sustainability and the need for continued engagement beyond these sessions remain concerns.**Case Study 6: The Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission)**

Launched in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission aims to improve sanitation and cleanliness across India. Community involvement is a central theme of the mission, with citizens encouraged to participate in cleanliness drives, awareness campaigns, and monitoring progress. Local NGOs and resident welfare associations have played a crucial role in mobilizing citizens. The mission has seen significant improvements in sanitation infrastructure and public awareness about hygiene. In many areas, community-led initiatives have resulted in the construction of public toilets and cleanliness drives, leading to cleaner environments. The Swachh Bharat

Mission exemplifies how citizen participation can enhance ethical standards and accountability in public management, leading to significant improvements in public health and sanitation.

CASE STUDY 7: LOCAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS IN KERALA

Kerala's local self-governance model, particularly the People's Planning Campaign initiated in the 1990s, emphasizes decentralized governance and citizen participation in development planning. The model encourages citizens to participate in the preparation of local development plans. This has resulted in more relevant and effective public services that reflect the actual needs of communities. Local bodies are held accountable to citizens through regular public meetings and the requirement to report on project implementation. This has led to a mark improvement in service delivery and resource management. Kerala's model demonstrates how citizen participation can lead to sustainable development. However, scaling this model to other regions in India poses challenges due to varying local contexts and levels of civic engagement.

The case studies illustrate that citizen participation is a powerful tool to enhance ethics and accountability in the public management system in India. While there have been significant successes, challenges remain in terms of implementation, resistance from officials, and the need for continuous civic engagement. Policymakers should focus on strengthening these participatory mechanisms, ensuring they are inclusive and accessible to all citizens, thereby fostering a culture of transparency and accountability in governance. These case studies illustrate various approaches to promoting citizen participation in India and how such initiatives can enhance ethics and accountability in public management systems. Each case highlights the importance of active citizen engagement in fostering a transparent and accountable governance framework.

CONCLUSION

Promoting citizen participation is not merely an ancillary element of public management in India rather, it is an essential cornerstone for fostering ethics and accountability within the system. The intricate relationship between citizen engagement and governance cannot be overstated, as it directly influences policy formulation, implementation, and the overall trust in governmental institutions. The findings of this research underscore the necessity for a paradigm shift in how public management is conceptualized and executed in India, moving from a top-down approach to one that recognizes and actively integrates the voices and concerns of citizens.

Hitherto, governance in India had often been characterized by a disconnect between citizens and the state, leading to a plethora of challenges, including corruption, inefficiency, and a general lack of accountability. However, the advent of technology and social media has created unprecedented opportunities for citizens to engage with their government, making it imperative for public managers to harness these tools to facilitate transparent communication and participatory governance. Initiatives such as e-governance, citizen feedback mechanisms, and participatory budgeting are just a few examples of how technology can bridge this gap, empower citizens, and enhance the ethical framework within which public institutions operate.

Moreover, fostering a culture of citizen participation requires comprehensive institutional reforms and a commitment to capacity building among both citizens and public servants. Training programs that emphasize ethical conduct, transparency, and the importance of accountability can help in still a shared understanding of these principles across all levels of government. Furthermore, the establishment of independent oversight bodies that include citizen representatives can play a crucial role in monitoring public management practices and ensuring that ethical standards are upheld.

It is also essential to recognize that citizen participation should not be viewed as a one-time event or a checkbox activity; rather, it must be an ongoing process that nurtures dialogue and collaboration. Continuous engagement can cultivate a sense of ownership among citizens regarding public policies and programs, thereby enhancing their commitment to ethical practices within their communities. As citizens become more aware of their rights and responsibilities, they are more likely to hold public officials accountable and demand transparency, leading to a virtuous cycle of improved governance.

In light of these considerations, it is clear that the path toward enhancing ethics and accountability in India's public management system is fraught with challenges but also rich with potential. By actively promoting citizen participation, we can create a more inclusive and responsive governance framework that not only elevates the standards of public service but also strengthens the democratic fabric of the nation. It is a call to action for policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens alike to embrace this collaborative approach, recognizing that the pursuit of ethical governance is a shared responsibility that ultimately benefits all.

Ultimately, the successful implementation of these strategies will hinge on a collective commitment to fostering an ethical culture within public management in India. The responsibility lies not solely with the government but also with citizens, civil society, and the broader community to advocate for change and uphold the values of integrity and accountability. Together, we can pave the way for a more

ethical, accountable, and participatory public management system that not only meets the needs of today but also lays the groundwork for a just and equitable future for generations to come.

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LOHIYA SWACHH BIHAR ABHIYAN: ASSESSING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RURAL SANITATION GOALS DURING 2014–2024

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Abstract

Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA), launched in 2014 with an objective to make rural Bihar 'Open Defecation Free' (ODF), by promoting community-led total sanitation, supporting toilet construction, and encouraging sustained behavioural change, was merged with Swachh Bharat Mission–Grameen (SBM-G). After passage of a decade, it becomes an imperative to assess the success of the Abhiyan. As such, the present paper attempts to evaluate its performance in the implementation of the programme on the basis of the secondary sources of data like NFHS, NARSS, NSSO, SBM-G IMIS dashboards, JEEViKA annual reports, and government documents. The findings demonstrate a significant rise in rural household toilet coverage from 26 per cent in 2014 to over 95 per cent by 2024. Our analysis highlights the roles of women's collective efforts, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and local mobilizers in sustaining sanitation practices. While LSBA has substantially improved sanitation access and awareness, challenges persist regarding equitable distribution of resources, infrastructure maintenance, and long-term behavioural change. Strengthening local-level monitoring and community ownership remains essential to maintain sanitation gains in Bihar.

Keywords: Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan, Rural Sanitation, Open Defecation Free, Behaviour Change, Decentralized Governance, Bihar.

INTRODUCTION

Access to safe and adequate sanitation is fundamental to public health, human dignity, and sustainable socio-economic development. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2 specifically targets universal sanitation access and the elimination of open defecation by 2030. Despite global improvements, large disparities persist.

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According to the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2024), safely managed sanitation coverage increased from 48 per cent in 2015 to 58 per cent in 2024, yet approximately 3.5 billion people still lack such facilities. The World Bank estimates that poor sanitation results in economic losses equivalent to 1.5 percent of global GDP annually. When Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) began in 2014, rural sanitation coverage was only 39 per cent, and India accounted for more than half of the world's open defecation. SBM introduced a shift from infrastructure-driven toilet construction to community-based behavioural transformation. By 2024, more than 11 crore household toilets had been built, substantially increasing sanitation coverage and enabling the nationwide Open Defecation Free (ODF) declaration in 2019. UNICEF and the World Bank attribute reductions in diarrheal deaths and significant economic benefits to SBM's implementation. Phase II (2020–2025) now focuses on sustaining ODF status through waste management and sanitation system strengthening. As per Census 2011 data only 24.6 per cent of rural households in Bihar had access to toilets. To address this, the Government of Bihar launched the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA) in 2014 as a state-specific convergence approach under SBM-G. The programme emphasized community mobilization, behaviour change communication, and financial incentives for household toilet construction, with the goal of achieving ODF status across the state. Thus, the major objective of the present paper is to examine the success of the Abhiyan and its impact on socio-economic life of the people of rural Bihar.

LOHIYA SWACHH BIHAR ABHIYAN

The initiative was designed to complement and converge with the national Swachh Bharat Mission–Grameen (SBM-G), while also integrating the existing state-level Lohiya Swachhta Yojana. The overarching objective of LSBA was to ensure universal access to household toilets, strengthen sanitation awareness, and establish community ownership over cleanliness and hygiene practices across rural regions. To broaden sanitation coverage, the state announced two complementary schemes under the umbrella of *Shauchalaya Nirmaan Ghar ka Samman* – Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (rural households) and *Shauchalaya Nirmaan Yojana* (urban areas)

Under LSBA, every household without toilet in rural Bihar became eligible to receive an incentive of ₹12,000 for constructing individual household toilets. The responsibility of implementing LSBA was transferred from the Public Health and Engineering Department to the Rural Development Department in June 2016. Since then, the programme has adopted a community-driven model led by JEEViKA (Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society), utilizing its extensive network of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to promote sanitation awareness and behaviour change. The funding pattern for SBM(G) and LSBA follows a 60 : 40 cost-sharing ratio

between the Central and State governments, reflecting joint financial responsibility toward rural sanitation.

The guidelines for implementation of the scheme were issued in two phases. Initially, it concentrated on "achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF)" status through a combination of community participation and demand-driven sanitation uptake. It involved the role of PRIs, SHGs, VOs and community mobilisation for construction of toilets, change in sanitation and hygienic behaviour, utilisation of local resources, ODF verification and monitoring at village, block, and district levels and incorporating hygiene education, menstrual health awareness, and inclusion of culturally and socially marginalized groups. After passage of five years, the focus of the scheme shifted towards sustaining ODF by promoting regular toilet use, upkeep, and repair, establishing and expanding solid and liquid waste management systems at the Gram Panchayat level, constructing and maintaining Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) for shared sanitation needs, introducing soak pits, greywater management, bio-toilets, and environmentally safe waste disposal methods, integrating sanitation activities with PRIs, *Swachhagrahis*, and community workers for implementation and monitoring, linking sanitation-related work with livelihood initiatives, and continuous evaluation and feedback systems to monitor progress and identify gaps.

IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

The administrative structure for LSBA follows a multi-tier hierarchy to ensure oversight, planning, and coordination at different governance levels:

Table 1: Implementation Hierarchy of LSBA

Administrative Level	*Lead Official / Supervising Authority*	*Key Oversight Role*
State Level	Secretary, Rural Development Department	Responsible for policy direction, inter-departmental coordination, and resource allocation.
District Level	District Magistrate (DM)	Oversees programme implementation, monitoring, and inter-block coordination.
Block Level	Block Development Officer (BDO)	Manages operational execution, progress reporting, and facilitation of community mobilization efforts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anoop et al. (2020) examine community perceptions regarding open defecation and toilet use in rural Bihar within the framework of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA). Their qualitative inquiry reveals that although residents are aware of the adverse health impacts of open defecation, economic constraints and inefficient subsidy mechanisms hinder toilet construction. Moreover, a widespread mistrust of state-led initiatives, shaped by perceived rural marginalization, further limits sanitation adoption. The study highlights the need to address structural and institutional barriers rather than relying solely on behavioural messaging.

Kumar and Ghosh (2023) analyse sanitation patterns in six districts of Bihar, finding that although programmes like the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan have increased toilet access, consistent usage remains uneven, particularly among women who face heightened vulnerability due to privacy and safety concerns. Their study observes that socio-economic characteristics have limited influence on latrine ownership, indicating that behaviour change communication and routine monitoring are more critical for sustained sanitation adoption.

Muthukumaran et al. (2024) in rural Patna indicates that 64.2% of individuals with household toilets still practiced open defecation, predominantly among men, individuals from marginalized castes, those with lower incomes, and individuals who adopted toilet use later in life. Many households lacked reliable water access and had self-financed toilets. The authors suggest that behavioural reinforcement and improved infrastructure access are essential to reduce open defecation.

Kathlene et al. (2019) investigate the psychological impact of sanitation access on women in rural Bihar, emphasizing how safe sanitation alleviates stress associated with privacy, fear, and social anxiety. Their findings show improvements in women perceived dignity when sanitation facilities are available; however, physiological markers such as cortisol did not correlate strongly with reported reductions in stress. The study underscores the importance of community-driven sanitation interventions that address gendered well-being.

Kumar and Ranjan (2018) analyse NFHS-4 data and highlight persistent intra-state disparities in sanitation access across Bihar. They argue for a demand-driven sanitation approach that integrates socio-economic and spatial inequality considerations to broaden the reach and effectiveness of sanitation services.

RESEARCH GAP

Although significant progress has been reported under LSBA and the Swachh Bharat Mission, comprehensive research assessing the long-term sustainability of sanitation outcomes in Bihar remains limited. Existing evaluations primarily focus on increases in toilet coverage rather than the durability of behaviour

change, functionality of sanitation infrastructure, and ODF-Plus outcomes such as waste management. There is limited investigation into differential impacts across gender, caste, and regional contexts, as well as the role of community ownership in maintaining sanitation gains after the initial campaign phase.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims to evaluate how LSBA contributed to achieving ODF status, sustaining sanitation practices, and enhancing hygiene awareness. Additionally, the study identifies socio-cultural and economic determinants influencing sanitation behaviour and proposes strategies to strengthen long-term sanitation sustainability.

Methodologically, the research adopts a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach, relying on secondary sources of data. The analysis draws on official documents and statistical reports published by the Government of India and the Government of Bihar, including annual progress reports of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA), JEEViKA (BRLPS) monitoring records, Census of India, National Sample Survey (NSS), and National Family Health Survey (NFHS) datasets. Additional references are taken from UNICEF, World Bank, and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) global assessments, along with relevant books, policy briefs, and peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on rural sanitation and behavioural change. The study follows a desk-based research method, wherein data from these multiple secondary sources are synthesized, compared, and critically analysed to trace trends in sanitation coverage, open defecation prevalence, and community-level participation over the 2014–2024 period. Through this integrated approach, the study not only evaluates LSBA's infrastructural outcomes but also explores its behavioural and institutional impacts, offering insights for strengthening Bihar's post-ODF sustainability and sanitation governance.

UNDERSTANDING THE DEMOGRAPHY AND SANITATION CHALLENGES OF BIHAR

This study assesses the decadal impact of the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (2014–2024) on rural sanitation behaviour, infrastructure development, and institutional participation in Bihar. It aims to evaluate how LSBA contributed to achieving ODF status, sustaining sanitation practices, and enhancing hygiene awareness. Additionally, the study identifies socio-cultural and economic determinants influencing sanitation behaviour and proposes strategies to strengthen long-term sanitation sustainability.

POPULATION PROFILE AND SANITATION IMPLICATIONS

According to Census 2011, Bihar's total population was 104.09 million, comprising 5.43 crore males and 4.98 crore females, accounting for 8.6% of India's population. The state recorded a decadal population growth rate of 25.4% (2001–2011), considerably higher than the national average of 17.7%. The high population density, rapid growth, and predominantly rural settlement pattern (88.7% rural population) have posed challenges to expanding sanitation infrastructure. Limited land availability, large household sizes, and historically low toilet access contributed to widespread open defecation and environmental contamination. These demographic conditions underscored the urgency of LSBA's interventions, which focused on universal toilet coverage and behaviour change.

POPULATION DENSITY, OPEN DEFECATION AND SPATIAL CONSTRAINTS

Bihar, according to the Census 2011, is India's most densely populated state, with a population density of 1,106 persons per square kilometer, significantly higher than the national average of 382. The majority of Bihar's population (about 88.7%) resides in rural areas, where high population density intensifies pressure on land and sanitation infrastructure. This spatial constraint poses significant challenges for constructing and maintaining individual household toilets and affording adequate space for proper waste disposal.

Open defecation has been a longstanding challenge in Bihar, particularly in rural settings where sanitation infrastructure was historically limited. Cultural practices, lack of toilet access owing to land scarcity and affordability issues, and low awareness contributed to high open defecation rates. These conditions compromise public health, contaminate water sources, and disproportionately affect women and children, increasing risks related to privacy and safety.

The Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan, implemented from 2014 to 2024, aimed to mitigate these sanitation challenges by accelerating toilet construction, promoting behaviour change, and fostering community ownership despite spatial limitations. Understanding population density and spatial constraints in the context of Bihar's rural sanitation landscape is critical for evaluating the program's impact and sustainability in advancing rural sanitation goals.**Literacy**

WASH (WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE) AWARENESS

As per Census 2011, Bihar recorded a literacy rate of 61.8%, significantly below the national average of 74%. The gender gap was notable, with male literacy at 71.2% and female literacy at 51.5%, reflecting persistent disparities in educational attainment and awareness levels across rural areas. Limited literacy especially among women

has been linked to weaker awareness of hygiene, safe sanitation practices, and health outcomes, constraining the behavioural transformation targeted under the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA).

Studies by the, NFHS-4, and the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey indicate a strong correlation between education levels and the adoption and consistent use of toilets. Households with higher literacy rates demonstrated greater awareness of WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) benefits, including the health risks of open defecation, especially for children and women. Conversely, low literacy often perpetuated sanitation-related misconceptions and reduced participation in community-led initiatives.

The LSBA's behaviour change campaigns through interpersonal communication, school sanitation drives, and women-led community mobilization thus sought to bridge educational and informational gaps by integrating WASH awareness into broader social and institutional outreach. Enhancing literacy-linked sanitation awareness remains a key determinant for sustaining the gains of rural sanitation programmes in Bihar.

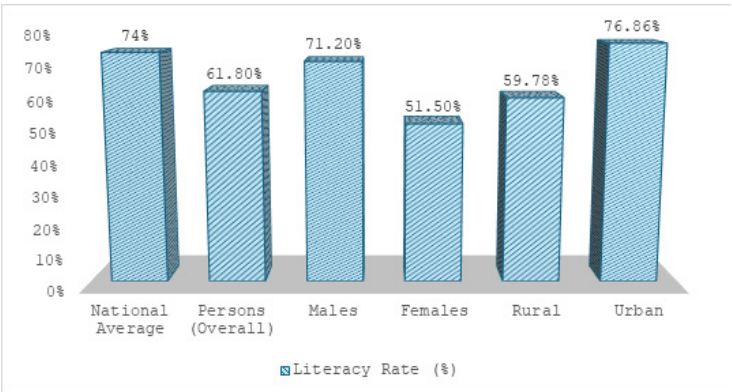

Figure 1: National and State Literacy Rates

Source: Census 2011

FISCAL TRENDS AND CAPITAL OUTLAY IN BIHAR'S WASH SECTOR

The expenditure trends depicted in the graph highlight Bihar's progressive financial commitment to the Water Supply and Sanitation (WASH) sector between 2015–16 and 2023–24. Total expenditure rose sharply from ₹1,384 crore in 2015–16 to ₹8,694 crore in 2023–24, marking a sixfold increase over the LSBA decade. The revenue expenditure, which covers operational costs, IEC activities, and sanitation service delivery, exhibited steady growth from ₹610 crore in 2015–16 to ₹7,692 crore in 2023–24 indicating sustained administrative and programmatic investment.

In contrast, capital outlay, reflecting infrastructure creation such as toilet construction, waste management systems, and water facilities, showed fluctuating yet significant patterns, peaking at ₹4,645 crore in 2020–21 before stabilizing around ₹1,000 crore in 2023–24. This variation corresponds to the completion of the ODF construction phase and the transition toward ODF-Plus activities emphasizing maintenance and behavioural change. Overall, the fiscal data reveal a decisive policy shift from capital-intensive infrastructure building to operational sustainability, underscoring Bihar's evolving sanitation governance model under the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA).

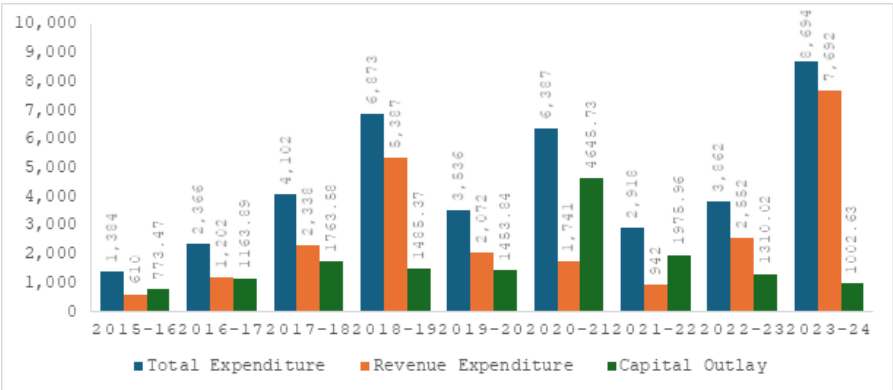

Figure 2: Status of Total and Revenue Expenditure and Capital Outlay in Water Supply and Sanitation

Source: Public Health and Engineering Department, GoB

INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (IEC) ACTIVITIES UNDER LSBA

As per JEEViKA annual reports comprehensive 360-degree IEC strategy was implemented across Bihar to promote awareness, behaviour change, and sustained sanitation practices under the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA). Special campaigns were organized in targeted villages to motivate communities toward achieving ODF Plus status, improving solid and liquid waste management, and adopting utility payment mechanisms for sanitation services. Activities included monitoring open defecation hotspots, conducting school-led sanitation drives, and organizing Swachhata Samwad (community dialogues) and Jan Samwad (public meetings by District Magistrates) to encourage participatory governance.

The Jeevika Didis played a crucial role in the sanitation movement, with over 1.24 lakh women mobilized for village cleaning, water source maintenance, and household hygiene awareness. Educational outreach included "Swachhata ki Kaksha" (cleanliness classes) and the "Break the Silence" campaign in schools

and madrasas to promote waste segregation and composting. Cleanliness drives were conducted in 266 Gram Panchayats across 12 Ganga-belt districts, while a retrofitting campaign (Feb–Mar, 2024) resulted in over 49,000 toilets upgraded to improved models.

Mass awareness campaigns such as "Swachh Vyavhar, Sundar Bihar" (2019) and "Swachhata se Seva" addressed issues like ODF sustainability, waste segregation, and reduction of single-use plastics through Nukkad Natak, Swachhata Rath, wall paintings, and community rallies. Notably, on World Toilet Day 2019, nine Swachhata Sankalp Raths were launched to disseminate sanitation messages across nine divisions using audio-visual media and interactive outreach. Further, in March 2020, intensive IEC drives on solid and liquid waste management were conducted in 52 Gram Panchayats across 14 districts using Jagrukta Raths, street plays, and mobile publicity units to enhance community-level WASH awareness and behavioural transformation.

SANITATION STATUS BEFORE SBM AND LOHIYA SWACHH BIHAR ABHIYAN

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) was launched nationally on October 2, 2014, with the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA) operationalized concurrently in Bihar as its state-level counterpart under SBM-Grameen. Prior to this, Bihar's sanitation landscape was among India's most dire, characterized by abysmal toilet coverage, rampant open defecation (OD), and severe public health implications in a state with 88.7% rural population as per Census 2011. Data from the 2011 Census, National Family Health Survey-3 and District Level Household Survey-3 painted a picture of systemic neglect, with rural areas home to over 92 million people bearing the brunt. This baseline underscores the transformative intent of SBM/LSBA, which targeted Bihar's high OD rates (contributing 20% to India's total) amid flood-prone geography and poverty.

SANITATION STATUS POST SBM AND LOHIYA SWACHH BIHAR ABHIYAN

The launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on October 2, 2014, and its Bihar-specific adaptation, the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA), catalysed a seismic shift in the state's rural sanitation ecosystem. Prior to 2014, Bihar's rural toilet coverage languished at 17-20%, with open defecation (OD) prevalent among 80% of rural households, worsening health crises like high infant mortality (58/1,000 live births) and economic losses of ₹2,000-3,000 crore annually. Post-launch, LSBA integrating SBM-Grameen with local incentives (₹12,000 per household toilet) and community mobilization via pramukh-mukhiya structures increases coverage up to 95% by 2024, constructing over 5.5 crore individual household latrines (IHHLs)

and declaring 100% of villages ODF by 2018. This decade-long trajectory, evaluated through government reports and JEEVIKA's community-led interventions, reveals not just infrastructural gains but persistent challenges in usage, sustainability, and equity amid floods and poverty. Drawing from the Bihar Economic Survey 2024-25, SBM-G dashboards, UNICEF's National Economic Impact Evaluation and JEEVIKA's Annual Report 2023-24, this section delineates progress, impacts, and gaps.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN SANITATION COVERAGE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

LSBA's hybrid model combining CLTS triggering, SHG-led awareness (via JEEVIKA), and convergence with MGNREGA/Jal Jeevan Mission yielded exponential growth. By March 2024, Bihar accounted for 10% of national SBM achievements, with 1.22 crore IHHLs and 8,434 community sanitary complexes (CSCs) constructed under LSBA, per the Low Carbon Action Plan for Bihar's Waste Sector. The SBM-G Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) dashboard reports Bihar's cumulative IHHL construction at 5.59 crore, alongside 2.65 lakh community toilets and 4,260 plastic waste management units.

JEEVIKA, Bihar's flagship rural livelihoods program, amplified these efforts through its Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation (HNS) layering on 10.59 lakh SHGs (covering 1.31 crore women by FY23-24). In FY23-24 alone, JEEVIKA facilitated 9.41 lakh IHHLs and 43 CSCs, boosting coverage in underserved blocks via "Jeevika didis" who conducted door-to-door campaigns, per JEEVIKA Annual Report 2023-24. This community ownership model increased rural toilet access from 20% (2014) to 98.8% (2019), sustaining at 95%+ in Phase II (2020-2025), as per Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation's Annual Report 2023-24. Nationally, SBM averted 3 lakh diarrheal deaths (2014-2023), with Bihar's share estimated at 1.2 million child infections prevented annually, yielding ₹2,500 crore in health savings as per Bihar Economic Survey 2024-25.

The analysis of year-wise Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) construction under the Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA) reveals a dramatic acceleration in construction activities over the five-year period, demonstrating the campaign's shift into a mission mode. Construction saw a slow initial pace, starting with 1.65 lakh units in 2014-15 and reaching only 8.72 lakh by 2016-17. However, the program scaled up exponentially in the subsequent two years leading up to the national Open Defecation Free (ODF) deadline of October 2019. IHHL coverage jumped from 8.72 lakh in 2016-17 to 34.33 lakh in 2017-18, followed by an unprecedented peak of 61.33 lakh constructed in 2018-19 alone. This surge resulted in a compound growth rate of over 600% in construction between 2016-17 and 2018-19, enabling the state to achieve 100% sanitation coverage on the Integrated Management

Information System (IMIS). The data clearly indicates a supply-driven, target-based mobilization push in the final phase of the campaign to meet the mandated timeline.

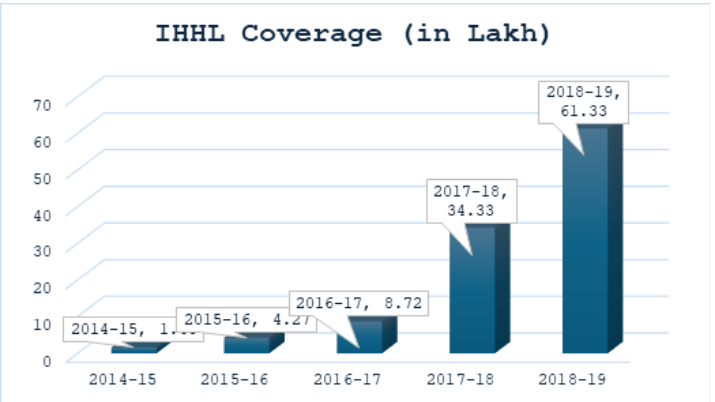

Figure 3: Individual Household Latrine

Source: JEEVIKA Annual Report- 2018-19

POST 2019 PROGRESS UNDER LSBA PHASE II

The second phase of Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA), aligned with Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) Phase II, spans 2020-2025 and shifts focus from initial toilet construction to sustainability and ODF-Plus status in rural Bihar. Launched under the Rural Development Department, Government of Bihar, it emphasizes solid and liquid waste management (SLWM), retrofitting dysfunctional toilets, and behavioural change to prevent reversion to open defecation, targeting "Visibly Clean" villages amid Bihar's flood-prone geography.

Key objectives include achieving 100% ODF-Sustainability (ODF-S) with functional toilets in all households, schools, and public spaces; 80%+ SLWM coverage (e.g., compost pits for biodegradable waste, soak pits for greywater, faecal sludge treatment); and visual cleanliness (no litter or stagnant water). Components encompass individual household latrines (IHHLs) at ₹12,000/unit (with retrofitting incentives), community sanitary complexes (CSCs), GOBAR Dhan biogas projects, and IEC campaigns via SHGs like JEEVIKA.

Implementation involves bottom-up planning through Gram Panchayats, convergence with MGNREGA and Jal Jeevan Mission, and monitoring via IMIS and third-party verifications. Funding totals ₹1.41 lakh crore nationally (60:40 Centre-State share), with Bihar's allocation supporting 39,022 IHHLs and ₹7,104.75 crore for SLWM by 2024-25. As of 2024-25, progress includes 43.73% SLWM coverage and over 7,000 IHHLs constructed in initial years, with 100% ODF-Plus targeted

by March 2025 per state dashboards. This phase fosters resilient WASH systems, yielding health savings and equity gains in Bihar's 8,400+ Gram Panchayats.

The below mentioned table indicates the achievement status of key social mobilization and inclusion initiatives for JEEVIKA as of March 2024. Cumulatively, the project has facilitated the formation of 10,58,618 Self Help Groups (SHGs), 70,812 Village Organizations (VOs), and 1,669 Cluster Level Federations (CLFs). In the Financial Year 2023-24 alone, 12,616 new SHGs, 2,167 new VOs, and 216 new CLFs were established, demonstrating the project's continued expansion and grassroots outreach.

Table 2: Progress under Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) activities

S. No.	*Parameter*	*Progress Under Financial Year 2023-2024*
1.	Fund Transfer to GPs	1336
2.	Number of Wards where door to door waste collection are started	15590
3.	Village ODF Plus Declared	27168

Source: JEEVIKA annual report 2018-2019

USAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

The below mentioned graph demonstrates that Bihar faces the lowest performance among the listed states for both toilet access and usage of improved sanitation facilities as per 2019-20 survey data. While 74%of households in Bihar reported having latrine access according to the NARSS Round-3 survey, significantly fewer, only 46% of the rural population, were reported to be living in households that use an improved sanitation facility based on the NFHS-5 data. This large gap of 28 percentage points between access and usage highlights a major challenge in Bihar concerning not just providing physical access to toilets, but also in ensuring their consistent use, quality, and sustained behavioural change within rural communities.

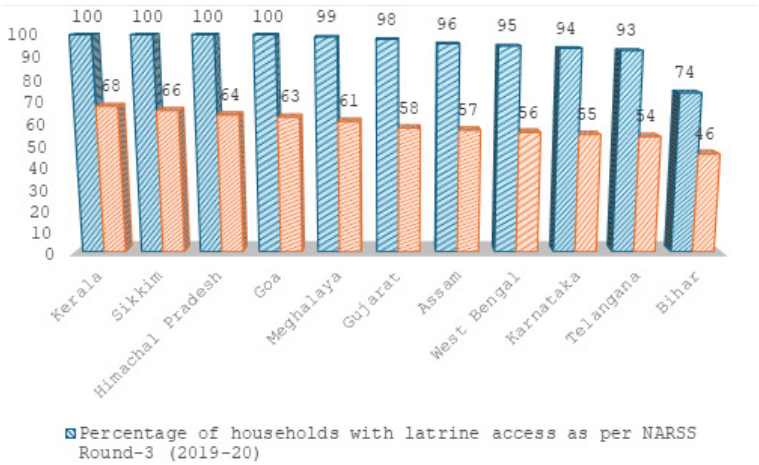

Figure 7: Coverage of Latrine and Sanitation Facility across various states

Source: (1) NARSS Round 3 (2019-20) National Report. (2) National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-20) Preliminary Report.

CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF LSBA

As per official documents of state government, the implementation of SBM-G and LSBA in Bihar encountered multiple administrative, technical, behavioural, and operational constraints.

1. **Administrative Challenges:** Coordination gaps between state, district, and Panchayat-level teams affected timely decision-making and information flow. Delays in fund disbursement and weak engagement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) hindered toilet construction and monitoring. Inaccuracies in baseline data, including duplicate and ghost beneficiaries, complicated beneficiary identification. Additionally, pressure to meet Open Defecation Free (ODF) targets often resulted in rushed implementation.
2. **Technical Challenges:** Low acceptance of twin-pit models and a strong preference for septic tanks led to inappropriate and unsustainable toilet designs. The absence of a structured supply chain for construction materials, delays in MIS-based geo-tagging, and a lack of context-specific toilet technologies for flood-prone and high-water-table areas further constrained progress. Provisions for elderly and disabled-friendly sanitation infrastructure remained inadequate.
3. **Behavioural Challenges:** Limited awareness of WASH practices, coupled with poverty and low literacy, impeded sustained toilet use. Behaviour change approaches such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) proved difficult

in socially diverse communities. Delays in incentive payments discouraged households, resulting in partial construction, non-usage, and weak upkeep of toilets.

4. **Other Challenges:** A shortage of trained human resources, insufficient capacity-building at all administrative levels, and under-resourced Key Resource Centres affected program support. In some settlements, lack of land constrained toilet construction. Maintaining the motivation of Swachhagrahis and Nigrani Samitis was difficult in the absence of incentives. Availability and maintenance of public and community toilets, particularly for migrant populations, also remained limited.

EVIDENCE FROM NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY-5

The NFHS-5 (2019-20) data for Bihar shows significant progress in sanitation, but also highlights persistent challenges, particularly in rural areas.

Substantial Improvement - The percentage of the total population living in households that use an improved sanitation facility nearly doubled, rising from 26.5% in NFHS-4 (2015-16) to 49.4% in NFHS-5 (2019-20). This indicates a major increase in household coverage between the two surveys.

Rural-Urban Disparity - Despite the overall improvement, nearly half of the population still lacks access to an improved sanitation facility, and a considerable rural-urban gap remains. In urban areas, 69.2%of the population uses an improved sanitation facility. Whereas in rural areas, this figure drops significantly to 45.7%.

Clean Fuel Usage - The use of clean fuel for cooking, which is closely related to household health and clean indoor air environments, saw a corresponding sharp increase, rising from 17.8% in NFHS-4 to 37.8% in NFHS-5 for the total population. This improvement is also primarily driven by urban areas (78.6%) compared to rural areas (30.3%).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of central government initiatives reveals substantial progress in Bihar's sanitation coverage under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Gramin) and Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan . As per Government of India reports, Since 2014, the state has achieved a major milestone, with more than 1.39 crore Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs) constructed by July 2025. Furthermore, the creation of 9,364 Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) indicates a strategic focus on public and community sanitation needs in rural areas. This scale of construction is a critical step in eliminating open defecation and forms a cornerstone of the broader agenda to improve the quality of life and basic facilities at the grassroots level. These concrete infrastructural achievements underscore the measurable success of

national flagship programs in delivering tangible benefits and strengthening rural Bihar's socio-economic landscape.

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WOMEN POLICING IN BIHAR: IMPACT, LIMITATIONS AND REFORMS

Renu Choudhary*

Abstract

Bihar which confronts deeply engrossed patriarchal attitudes and structural barriers makes gender policing a complex issue. In Bihar, besides other services thirty five percent seats are reserved for women in Bihar Police. This has resulted in substantial increase in number of female police constables in the last two decades. Since there is no such reservation at higher level of police officials, the number of women police officers at top levels is thin. It is true that police force is a male-dominated environment. As such, female police constables might face potential gender-based barriers in the workforce. But at higher level still we can see glass ceiling. None of the women police personnel has reached at the post of DGP and still they have to face difficulties. Work nature exposes them to criminals, deviants and anti-social elements. The nature of duties in policing makes them work at odd hours like late night or early hours in the morning with no regular holidays and work schedule. This made it very difficult to maintain family responsibility along with the police work. Thus, it makes an imperative to examine - whether women police are accepted by their male counterparts? How do they face the problems of tackling anti-social elements, coping-up with family responsibilities, as well as reproductive responsibilities and so on? The present study finds that poor infrastructure for women police personnel, prevalent culture of masculinity and stereotypes hinders their way of progression. The study suggests to go for reforms focusing on gender sensitive training, creating supporting work environments and inclusive policies to achieve true gender equality in policing.

Keywords: Women in Police Force, Challenges, Ladli-Cops, Women-Helpline, Media, Bihar.

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WHY WOMEN

With changing socio-economic and political conditions, policing in the country has undergone various changes. With increased participation of women in demonstration and agitation; and increased crime against woman and children, the need for women police with ability and efficiency of handling delicacy of the problem while enforcing the law and order has increased. This has led to the increase in number of women police. However, the gender wise representation is not satisfactory. So, in order to achieve gender equality, empowerment of women was one of the agenda of *saat nischay* of Nitish Kumar. It was done by providing reservation of women at various level.

- In 2006, Bihar became the first State to reserve 50% seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions. [The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, which came into force in 1993, mandated only one-third seats for them.]
- In 2013, the Bihar government made a provision for 50% reservation for women in cooperative societies.
- A minimum of 33 per cent seats have been reserved for girl students in the enrollment under Medical and Engineering Universities. Bihar is the first state in the country to do so.
- It also reserved 35% seats for them in police recruitment.
- In 2016, the government extended the 35% reservation for women to all government jobs in Bihar for which direct recruitment is made.

Due to these initiatives, according to a report published by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), as on January 1, 2020, women accounted for 25.3 per cent of the police strength in Bihar, of the total 91,862 police personnel in the state, 23,245 are women, the highest among all states. This is double the national average of 10.3 per cent (up from 8.9 per cent in 2019) and a significant improvement from 2015, when women accounted for just 3.3 per cent of the force in Bihar. Now, one in every four cops in the state is a woman. The state has even surpassed Himachal Pradesh (19.15 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (18.5 per cent) in this regard. Percentage has definitely increased at lower level but at higher level still we can see glass ceiling. None of the women police personnel has reached at the post of DGP.

LADLI COPS

An initiative in Community Policing for the safety of Women. The CID Branch of Bihar Police under the Leadership of Alok Raj (IPS) ADG in association with Mr. Roushan Kumar and Dr. Suman Lal founders Ladli Foundation came up with the concept of having Women Community Police to provide a safe and secure atmosphere to the inhabitants. Also to make women become familiar with Police

and deeply understand the police system to invoke their taboo to interact with police station/policemen. For this initiative, volunteer from girls studying in different colleges of Patna were identified and trained. Each of these girls were provided with ID Cards authorised by Bihar Police and are called Ladli Cops.

181 Women Helpline is established to provide immediate and emergency 24 × 7 service to women affected by violence through referral (linking with appropriate authority such as Women Helpline, Police, One Stop Centre, hospitals, etc.) and information about women related government schemes, programs running currently in Bihar through a single uniform number, i.e. 181. With all these initiatives, women participation has increased in the police force and they are definitely adding accolades to the department.

Nowadays we can see various cases of women police doing fantastic jobs. In one case study we found that, two women police constables guarding a bank in Bihar's Hajipur to decide they would have none of it when three armed robbers tried to force their way into a bank. Juhi Kumari and Shanti Kumari were sitting at the entrance of the Uttar Bihar Gramin Bank in Senduari Chowk of Sadar police station area when three men tried to enter, security camera footage of the incident showed. On being asked to show their documents, one of the men drew a pistol, but both Juhi and Shanti leapt to their feet and challenged them.

In a struggle that followed, Juhi was injured but the robbers, spooked by then, decided they did not want to rob the bank after all. "They tried to snatch our rifles, but we decided no matter what happens, we won't let them rob the bank or take our weapon. Juhi cocked her gun at them and was about to shoot when they ran away," Shanti said. This case not only show their courage but also their confidence of doing their assigned task which was earlier considered as male domain

On January 5, 2023, the Union Home Ministry has selected Arwal Women Police Station of Bihar among the top three police stations in the country for the year 2022.

- Arwal Women Police Station has been selected on the basis of best performance in research and execution of cases, prevention of crime initiatives, fast pace of filing of charge sheets in cases etc.
- The top three police stations in the country include Aska police station in Odisha's Ganjam district and Banbasa police station in Champawat district of Uttarakhand .
- Arwal Mahila Police Station has all kinds of facilities for women to sit and play with women. This police station also has a ramp for the disabled and the elderly and there are separate women and men lock-ups.
- It is noteworthy that the Union Home Ministry defines the top police stations of the country on parameters such as crime control and treatment of common citizens.

These are few examples. We can see them performing outstandingly at traffic signals, at police stations carrying rifles. They are outrightly performing whatever duties they are allotted. While speaking to India today, Bihar DGP, S.K. Singhal, proudly stated that the increased presence of women in the state's police force has not only empowered the women but also made the constabulary more efficient and effective. "Apart from in-house tasks like maintaining registers and filing FIRs, the women police personnel are involved in law-and-order duties. We also have one all-women police station in each of the state's 38 districts which makes it easier for women in general to file a complaint or share their problems freely with the police. The women police officers often add a new perspective to investigations," he says. "If women are poorly represented, it makes it difficult to deal with crimes against women and women criminals. With women police personnel visible at all levels, from upholding law and order to guarding arsenals in Bihar, we have the advantage."

Almost half the women constables, who joined the force with intermediate qualifications, have continued their studies while in service to complete their graduation to acquire the eligibility to compete for senior-grade jobs in the state police. Currently, the number of women in officer-grade posts is low—just 32 among 1,220 police inspectors, 920 of 10,039 sub-inspectors and 185 of 6,675 assistant sub inspectors are women. (2022)"But these are early days," says a woman constable, who wished to not be named, posted at BMP-14. "You will see more and more women manning senior posts in Bihar police."

IMPACT ON SOCIETY

The impact of Nitish's reservation policy can be seen across Bihar. There are multiple case studies that demonstrate how the creation of opportunities in the police for women has empowered women in rural Bihar.For instance, for Khushbu Kumari, 27, of Bhadaur village in Nawada, joining the force was the best thing to have happened to her. An aspiring handball player, Khushbu wanted to pursue a career in sports, but was forced to give up on her dream by the men in her family who insisted that she be married off. Khushbu, however, joined Bihar police in 2016, which gave her the confidence to resist her family's pressure. Now she is not only an advocate for joining the police force, inspiring other girls to follow in her footsteps, she pursued her dreams of being a handball player simultaneously and is now the captain of the Bihar Women Handball Team.

Neha Bharti, 24, currently posted at BMP-14, qualified as a police constable in 2018, three years after getting married to her husband who runs a small stationery shop. Neha, with her take-home salary of a little over Rs 33,000 per month, is the primary bread-earner in her family of four.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In a state with a per capita income of Rs 43,000 (2019-20), where female literacy, according to the 2011 census, is just above 51 per cent and where 1,127 dowry deaths were reported in 2019, as per a National Crime Records Bureau Report, these financially empowered young women are the markers of change in society.

"Every day I see a huge number of girls running and practising at the college ground to qualify for the physical test that is part of the police examination," says Raghunandan Sharma, professor of sociology at Patna University. "The opportunities in the police force have helped young girls look beyond the traditional unspoken rules, which mandated social standards, norms and expectations about what a good woman/mother/wife should or should not do in order to be likable, worthy and desirable. Now the girls have gone beyond. Their families have started backing them too because it not only ensures social and economic empowerment of the girls but also creates financial stability for the family," he says.

Indeed, almost all women constables interviewed by India today said they are supporting their parents financially. "Most of these women are from poor backgrounds with their fathers earning less than Rs 10,000 a month. So, a large number of these women constables spend half their salaries in sponsoring the education and marriages of their siblings," says a female officer in BMP-5.

There have also been numerous examples of one woman inspiring other women in her family to give the police force a go. For instance, constable Meena Kumari of BMP-5, and her sister Madhu Kumari, posted at Sasaram, are both with the state police.

Dr. Sharma also underlines an important social change in Bihar's otherwise patriarchal society. "As the girls have the benefit of reservation, they stand a better chance to qualify for the police force, which further explains why they have started feeling like the "beta" (son) of their family and getting all the respect and adulation otherwise reserved only for the male

LIMITATIONS

Women in police. A recent phenomenon in a centuries-old organisation with a colonial history and a strongly masculine work culture. It continues to be known as the police force. Ask a child, how a police officer is. You are likely to hear some or all of these phrases: a prominent moustache, serious and grim expression, loud and coarse voice, tall and muscular, aggressive body language, one who doesn't listen, but orders. A stereotypical image reinforced by popular media.

Women have the biological and sociological responsibility of bearing children. They also disproportionately shoulder the burden of the care economy,

particularly in a traditional and patriarchal society like India. Their view of work, family and work-family balance is different from that of men. Policing is seen as a male bastion. The general sentiment is that women are not 'man' enough to be a part of the force. One in two people in India believe that women are not fit for policing due to a lack of physical strength and aggressive behaviour, and inflexible working hours, according to a survey in Status of Policing in India Report SPIR 2018. Many respondents also believed that women cannot deal with high intensity crimes and cases and should focus on their household. Some findings of SPIR 2019 tell us that female police personnel are usually limited to in-house tasks such as maintaining registers/data, filing FIRs and other complaints, whereas male police officers are engaged in more field-based tasks such as investigation, patrolling, law and order duties, etc.

Furthermore, the report found that the work environment was not at all conducive for female police officers. Around half of the women officers reported not getting a weekly off. One in five of them said they had to work beyond duty hours a lot of the time. This proves a very stressful situation for women, as they undergo the dual burden of providing care work and working a job as well. Feeling unsafe at the workplace is also an overarching issue among the women police officers. This may occur in two forms, one, facing sexual abuse and assault during working hours from senior officers who have the power to get away with it. Two, performing duty in a public place where 'anti-social elements' threaten a woman's safety. There is provision of Internal complaint committee (ruling of supreme court) which should be actively functional .Women police personnel deputed to other locations, the one thing they lack is a proper bathing space in police stations. Generally they don't have toilets, but, unlike men, women constables cannot take baths in the open. This is something the government should look into.

Media plays a major role in forming perception of peoples roles in the society. Media through its regular portrayal justifies the roles prescribed and people also starts believing in that. However media particularly films are more or less supposed to be part of culture and its shows what happens in the society to a large extent. Nowadays there are several OTT platforms, social media which gives message through their channels. To be able to look at things from the perspective of women in police, their stories need to be told. I will illustrate it with two examples. Netflix film Soni (2018) takes us through the worldview of two women. Soni, a police sub-inspector and Kalpana, an officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS). While we see them at work and get an opportunity to contrast their working style with that of their male counterparts, we also get a peek into their personal lives. How do they strive to achieve the professional-personal life balance, the responsibility of which is also thrust upon them being women? In Soni, like in real life, the women in police respond to sexual harassment typically by means

of certain conditioned responses. By remaining silent, ignoring it, smiling, laughing it off or normalising it. It appears that her long working hours and the passion for her profession makes her partner insecure about their relationship. In this movie it is shown that a woman sub-inspector on duty at a Dial 100 Call Center is responsible for receiving phone calls from complainants, recording the complaint and transferring it to the officer concerned for action. When faced with unwarranted and undesirable personal questions from a caller, she simply laughs it off. Scoffing, she says, every day one or two such people call. This is normalisation of sexual harassment

From reel to real life, challenges are multifarious. Once they remove our uniform, they are just another woman. As likely to face sexual harassment on the streets and in public transport. As likely as any other woman to be asked for dowry, subjected to domestic violence, to be the primary care givers and the lesser partners in marriage. To be expected to sacrifice career opportunities to make way for our partner's career progression. And yet, highly likely to be harassed and judged professionally 'non- serious' or 'non-ambitious' for seeking maternity and childcare leave. When in uniform, they are more likely to be discussed for their manner of walking, talking, laughing, dressing and marital status, rather than professional competence.

Likewise, the series 'Delhi Crime', which is a dramatization of the December 2012 gang rape case in Delhi. The head of this investigation is the DCP of South District (Delhi), Vartika Chaturvedi, played by the very talented Shefali Shah. Throughout the show the investigation is helmed by her; with ferocity, passion, empathy, and persistence. A little overjoyed and relieved at women superiors finally being qualitatively represented on screen, there was still one thing that continued to nag me. Throughout the series, her character is shown as being referred to as 'Madam-Sir' by her subordinate officers.

SUGGESTED REFORMS FOR WOMEN POLICE IN BIHAR

- Internal Complaint Mechanisms should be strengthened. Anonymous reporting channels and strong protection against retaliation should be provided.
- Infrastructure and facilities should be improved by building gender-friendly facilities in every station and training centre – separate toilets, bathing spaces, and changing rooms and secure accommodation for women on out-station duty and safe transport during night shifts should be provided.
- Flexible & family-friendly work policies should be introduced. Predictable duty rosters, weekly offs and rotational night shifts.
- Regular gender-sensitisation workshops for all ranks to challenge stereotypes of policing as a "male" job.

These reforms would help move beyond mere reservation quotas, creating a work environment where women in the Bihar police can thrive as equals and perform their duties effectively.

CONCLUSION

So, we may conclude that with changing socio-economic scenario increased participation of women in police force has become a necessity for various reasons like addressing crime against women, handling sensitive cases like domestic violence, sexual assault, building trust with community, etc. By implementing reservation for women in police Bihar govt. has rightly taken the necessary step which has shown better percentage of female police personnel in Bihar. Government reservation policy has empowered women in Bihar by creating police jobs that bring financial independence and social respect. Women like Khushbu Kumari and Neha Bharti defied patriarchal pressures, became primary earners, and inspired other girls. Their success is shifting family attitudes, with daughters now valued like sons. Yet policing remains male-dominated. Women face stereotypes of lacking strength, are often restricted to desk duties, work long hours without adequate facilities, and shoulder a double burden of job and domestic care. Harassment – both from seniors and in public – along with weak complaint mechanisms and judgments about appearance or maternity leave, add to the challenges. Media reflects and shapes these realities: films such as *Soni* show women normalising harassment while juggling work–life balance, and *Delhi Crime* portrays a female DCP leading a major case but still addressed as "Madam-Sir," exposing lingering gender biases. For women in police to perform to their full potential, it would take sustained increase in their strength, meaningful networking within themselves and an institutionalized support system in the current social realities. Then, they will be the women that they are, the police officer that they are. It will allow them to be their authentic selves, agents of transformation which will help them to lead, to achieve and to serve people.

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RETHINKING CONTEMPORARY UNEQUAL AGRARIAN STRUCTURE OF THE STATE OF PUNJAB: MYTH AND REALITY

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Abstract

A central question in the literature on Punjab's inherited unequal agrarian structure in the post-independence period has often been obscured by narratives attributing inequality primarily to Partition and the Mahalwari system. India's agrarian inequality, rooted in colonial land settlement systems, persists largely due to the enduring grip of feudal and varna structures on productive forces, leaving the relationship between the agrarian base and superstructure largely unchanged.

Punjab inherited a highly unequal agrarian structure that persisted well into the early 21st century. The stark inequalities in land ownership were effectively masked by the celebrated narrative of the Green Revolution; denying this reality in Punjab's context amounts to academic deceit.

Despite numerous land reform acts and policies aimed at removing structural bottlenecks in land ownership, Punjab's agrarian structure remains highly skewed. This study is neither mere narrative history, antiquarianism, nor cliometry; rather, it uses history as a method to understand the present.

The most contentious issue in this literature concerns the explanation and conceptualization of landholding patterns, as NSSO and Agricultural Census data suffer from inherent limitations in capturing the real situation.

Keywords: Agrarian Structure, Operational Holding, Ownership Holding, Land Reforms, Varna System.

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SETTING CONTEXT

The question of the agrarian social structure has been a central to any discussion of economic and social development in India. It is a study of groups connected with land. An outdated and in-egalitarian agrarian structure serves not only as a major barrier to rapid rural progress but also as the primary factor distorting development outcomes. Furthermore, rural development unaccompanied by essential institutional reforms renders subsequent structural changes far more challenging.

The origins of India's iniquitous land distribution lie in the three major land settlement systems: Permanent Settlement (1793), Ryotwari system (1820), and Mahalwari system (1822). Colonial land settlements entrenched a decadent semi-feudal agrarian structure in British India, characterized by deep inequalities and varied exploitation of cultivators. Land ownership was highly concentrated at the top in these land settlement region. Most actual tillers either possessed no proprietary rights or held only limited tenancy rights. Feudalistic landlordism dominated the property structure nationwide. Feudal and semi-feudal landowners invested minimally yet uniformly exploited tenants through rent-based surplus extraction, despite differences in economic, social, caste, and cultural contexts.

Land concentration was a defining feature of India's agrarian structure on the eve of Independence and continued during 1950s. NSS data for 1954–55 reveal that 47.26 per cent of rural households owned only 1.37 per cent of the total land area, while the top 18.45 per cent of households controlled 73.72 per cent (Raj, 1970). He reported that meanwhile, just 5 per cent of zamindars- those owning 20 acres or more- possessed 43 per cent of the land during 1954-55. In given situation, the First Five Year Plan recognised the critical importance of land reforms, asserting that measures- including the abolition of intermediaries, protection of tenants-at-will, and the imposition of ceilings on land holdings- were essential to boost agricultural production and productivity while promoting social justice (Government of India, 1951). In practice, however, the implementation of these enacted laws has been half-hearted, halting, and largely unsatisfactory across much of the country, rendering legal protections for tenants frequently ineffective.

The incomplete implementation of land reforms across much of India has allowed an unequal agrarian structure to persist. This has sustained the concentration of economic wealth, social status, political power, educational attainment, judicial influence, cultural capital, and physical assets among those with historical land control (Vikas, in press). In essence, land ownership remains the foundational asset for accumulating various forms of wealth and power, with later advantages frequently building upon it (Powel, 1892). Property rights, as social institutions, allocate a bundle of entitlements- such as usufruct, exclusivity, and alienability-

to individuals regarding specific resources or property attributes. Moreover, the right to property extends beyond the private sphere, permeating political and social domains alike (Carruthers & Ariovich, 2004).

India's post-independence agrarian landscape is marked by deep-rooted historical inequalities that continue to resist meaningful reforms. The country's agrarian structure, heavily shaped by feudal relations, was profoundly influenced by colonial land tenure systems such as the zamindari system and the persistence of the caste-based *varna* system, which dictated land distribution (Chauhan & Singh, 2004). Despite ambitious land reforms implemented after independence, a large proportion of the rural population continues to grapple with landlessness, caste-based discrimination, and unequal land distribution (Patnaik, 1988).

The Indian state undertook a series of land reforms- abolishing the *zamindari* system, imposing land ceilings, and redistributing surplus land- yet the success of these measures has been limited (Vikas 2018). Despite significant transformations in India's agrarian structure since independence- driven by colonial legacies, land reforms, technological changes, and state policies- the country still grapples with profound rural inequalities. These inequalities are particularly evident in land ownership, which remains a crucial determinant of power, social status, and economic opportunity in rural areas (Dhanagare, 1988). The persistence of feudal landholding patterns and caste-based land distribution continues to shape rural societies decades after the formal abolition of *zamindari* and the implementation of land reforms (Dhanagare, 1988).

MYTH OF PEASANT PROPRIETORSHIP IN PUNJAB

One of the most enduring myths about Punjab was the claim that it was "mainly a country of peasant proprietors." This narrative conveniently overlooked the significant variations in tenurial structures, the presence of large landlords controlling hundreds of acres in western Punjab, and the widespread existence of tenancy even in the central districts, where peasant proprietors were supposedly predominant (Mukherjee, 1980).

Following the annexation of Punjab in 1849 by the British Empire, colonial authorities initiated large-scale canalisation projects and established canal colonies to settle thousands of hardworking peasants, mitigate peasant discontent, and pacify the region's warlike communities. Over time, these canal colonies became a primary driver of Punjab's prosperity (Rai, 1963). In the formative years of British rule in the province, control was established throughout Punjab by co-opting the ruling elite. Punjabi elites demonstrated their loyalty to the colonial rulers by providing the soldiers necessary to help regain British control over India during the 1857 Rebellion (Ali, 1988; Condos, 2017). In return, landlords were granted

proprietary rights, and protective laws were enacted to safeguard these rights. This ensured their continued cooperation with the British throughout imperial rule, enabling the state to maximise revenue, consolidate power, and maintain authority.

It was the landed class who gain the political power and formed the government in an independent India, after Punjab's officialdom, the Unionist Party was the most vocal proponent of this cliché- and for understandable reasons. Composed almost entirely of big zamindars, the party promoted what were fundamentally pro-landlord policies while cloaking them in the rhetoric of defending the peasant proprietor. A common tactic for deflecting accusations of pro-landlord bias was to cite the relatively small number of large zamindars, while entirely disregarding the substantial extent of land they actually controlled.

In contrast, S. Partap Singh Kairon (often associated with urban backgrounds but from a rural Jat Sikh family) played a pivotal role in advancing post-independence land reforms and agricultural modernization in Punjab as Chief Minister (1956-1964), including land consolidation and the establishment of institutions like Punjab Agricultural University. (Note: Claims of his opposition to Unionist Party land reform bills appear inconsistent with historical records, which portray him as a reformer). (Gill, 1989), drawing on National Sample Survey (NSS) data for 1950-51, reported that on the eve of Independence approximately 51.81 per cent of rural households owned just 0.65 per cent of the total land area in Punjab and 50.54 rural household to 0.39 per cent in PEPSU, whereas the top 16.08 per cent of households controlled as much as 71.61 per cent in Punjab and 22.77 per cent rural household to 78.16 per cent land area in PEPSU. Meanwhile, just 6.34 per cent of zamindars- those owning 20 acres or more- possessed 46.6 per cent of the land during 1950-51. Land revenue records of Punjab indicate that land under tenant cultivation was 48.6 per cent in 1947 and 48.2 per cent in 1952 (Gill, 1989). It is noteworthy that approximately 2,448,830 acres of evacuee property (land) were equitably distributed among 617,401 refugee households following Partition. There was a missed opportunity for the complete abolition of landlordism and feudalism, which the government did not fully pursue (Rai, 1963). Unfortunate partition of India in 1947, had an impact on agrarian structure of Punjab.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Indian agrarian economies are characterized by a high concentration of land ownership, reflecting both unequal wealth distribution and the preference for land as the primary source of wealth. Low depreciation, capital value retention, security, and rental returns make land an attractive asset, particularly in risk-prone societies with limited insurance, even when monetary returns are modest (Raj, 1970). Historically, among the States of India, Punjab shows unique agrarian structure predominant by large farms and other classes.

Within eight years of annexation, the administrative system in Punjab was institutionalized: a modern bureaucracy was established, and a revenue system was set up to record land rights, assess the land, and collect land revenue. Ownership rights began to be allocated to occupancy tenants- in most cases the cultivators themselves- rather than to intermediaries. The owners were now made individually responsible for paying the revenue, which was collected by lambardars.[4] The colonial administration conferred ownership rights on the agricultural castes that had traditionally held certain hereditary rights in relation to land. However, occasionally ownership rights were given to the aristocracy when no claims were made by the occupancy tenants (Javid, 2012), which had an impact on the agrarian structure in Punjab. Hameed (2019) analyzed British administration in agrarian Punjab (1849–1906) and concluded that the modernizing mission of the British in Punjab favoured the cultivating classes, whereas, due to concerns for political stability, the British supported landlordism in Punjab.

The works of Stokes (1978), Metcalf (1997), Ali (1988), Zafar (2016), Talbot (2007), Major (1991), Javid (2012), Hambly (1964), Barrier (1967), Swamy and Roy (2016), Condos (2017), and Bhattacharya (2012) provide insights into the economic, social, political, and ideological factors underpinning both change and continuity in the agrarian structure of the state of Punjab. More specifically, these scholars examine the processes of introducing private property, the commercialization of agriculture, and the development of canal colonies, along with their profound impact on Punjab's agrarian structures. Aiming to maximise revenue returns, colonial officials sought to modernize agrarian spaces (Bhattacharya, 2012). Similarly, Swamy and Roy (2016) explore the limitations of the British free-market ideal in Punjab, particularly in the context of land transfers and credit.

It was Richard Temple, a former secretary of John Lawrence in the Punjab, a chief commissioner of the Central Provinces and Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (1874-7) and Governor of Bombay (I877-80), who felt the force of aristocratic land institution on masses.

Agriculture in Punjab in the post-Green Revolution period was marked by the emergence of large farms, which, because of economies of scale, were able to function as profitable enterprises (Sidhu H.S., 2005). There is also a strong correlation between caste and land ownership in rural Punjab. Households from the Jat Sikh caste are predominant in the upper rungs of land ownership and cultivation (Sidhu H.S., 2005; Jodhka, 2006).

It is well established that land serves as an intergenerational source of livelihood and a key means of production, which has traditionally determined socio-economic, political, educational, and judicial power in India (Vikas, 2025). At the same time, it can also function as an important tool or source of social change. Sociologists and

economists have studied the question of land and property in depth (Blackstone, 1766; Alchian & Demsetz, 1973; Libecap & Barzel, 1989; Carruthers & Ariovich, 2004). In the earliest conceptions, ownership was understood as the right to control, govern, and exploit property (Carruthers & Ariovich, 2004). Property rights are social institutions that assign a bundle of rights-including rights of usufruct, exclusivity, and alienability-to individuals in relation to a specific resource or other key aspects of property. The right to property is not limited to the private domain; it also permeates political and social domains.

CASTE AND LAND IN PUNJAB

(Judge, 2015) reported that there is a four-tier caste hierarchy based on landownership, numerical presence, and political influence in Punjab: Peasant castes (top tier): Jats, Rajputs, Sainis, Mahatons, Lobanas, Kambohs (Kambohs and Lobanas classified as OBCs). Upper castes: Brahmins, Khatris, Aroras, Baniyas, Ahluwalias, and Ramgarhias (formerly upper caste until late 20th century). Artisan/service castes: carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, Suniars, Lohars, Chhimbas, Jheers, Kumhars, etc. (most now detached from traditional occupations, with only limited continuation in villages). Untouchable castes (bottom): Meghs, Chamars, Sansis, Bazigars, Mazhabis/Balmikis, and others (predominantly landless). This clear hierarchical caste structure in Punjab is deeply rooted in agrarian relations, which have historically shaped the accumulation of educational, political, judicial, and other forms of power.

Scholarly literature has paid particular attention to the Jat community in Punjab. Marenco (1976) argues that Jat Sikhs were the chief beneficiaries of the colonial political economy, benefiting from extensive recruitment into the British Army and resettlement in canal colony areas. McLeod (1976) provides a vivid account of the pervasive dominance of Jat Sikhs, extending beyond rural Punjab to the province as a whole. In a more recent study, Judge (2015) analysed data from 2,130 rural households on "Occupations of Persons vis-à-vis Agriculture in Select Villages" and found that the majority of Dalit castes work as labourers.

The present work is an attempt at writing contemporary situation of Panjab's agrarian structure and attempt has been to understand the past in the light of what is happening today. It may be apprehended that GR was propagated to a greater extent to hide the unequal land distribution under the hierarchical cast order in Punjab. This paper also critically examines the failure of land reforms in Punjab, focusing on how unfinished reforms, entrenched social hierarchies, and political and economic interests have shaped landholding patterns, thereby perpetuating an unequal agrarian structure. The persistence of these inequalities remains a central feature of India's agrarian landscape, characterized by stark regional variations

in land ownership, historical legacies, state interventions, and technological advancements. Punjab present contrasting cases that underscore divergent paths of agricultural development. While Punjab is often celebrated as India's breadbasket due to its high agricultural productivity and success during the Green Revolution.

UNFINISHED LAND REFORMS IN PUNJAB

By the early 21st century, the question of land reforms remained unresolved: despite extensive efforts, unequal agrarian structures persisted in Punjab and across India, resulting in land concentration in a few hands. Post-independence land reforms in Punjab aimed to restructure agrarian relations and are typically classified into four categories: abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms, imposition of ceilings on landholdings, and consolidation of holdings.

Major steps to abolish intermediaries included the Punjab Abolition of Ala Malikiyat and Talukdari Act, 1951; the abolition of Zaildari (October 1952); the abolition of Jagirdari (1953 legislative bill); the PEPSU Abolition of Biswedari Ordinance, 1950; and the Punjab Land Reforms Act, 1972 (with ceiling limits varying between 17.5 and 54.5 acres according to land type and quality). Occupancy tenancy laws vested proprietary rights in occupancy tenants in both regions, while the tenancy framework was consolidated through the Punjab Security of Land Tenures Act, 1953 (amended 1955) and the PEPSU Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1955.

According to Gill (1989), these legislative measures were deeply flawed, allowing many landowners to evict tenants – both formally and in practice – soon after independence, when land reform became a pressing issue. Ultimately, the reforms disproportionately benefited large landowners. The Green Revolution, which took off in the 1960s, had an even greater impact on the state's agricultural structure. While it brought about significant productivity gains, it also deepened existing inequalities, especially in terms of land ownership and socio-economic status (Ohno, Vatta, & Fujita, 2021).

Gill (1989) stated that, at the time of the passing of the Punjab Land Reforms Act 1972, 5 lakh acres of land were found to be surplus under the ceiling laws, but due to procedural difficulties, pressure from the landlords' lobby, government unwillingness, and court interventions, only 1957 hectares had been declared surplus, and physical possession was taken of only 394 hectares. However, while some land redistribution did take place, the concentration of land in the hands of a few wealthy families remained a prominent feature of Punjab's agrarian landscape, and thousands of ryots were evicted (Sidhu, 2002).

It seems that in Punjab, the historical legacies of feudal land relations and unequal land distribution have persisted, albeit in different forms.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS: CHANGES IN LANDHOLDING PATTERNS IN PUNJAB

The table 1 presents an empirical analysis of shifts in landholding patterns in Punjab, drawing on data from the Agriculture Census. In Punjab, there has been a growing concentration of land in the hands of a small group of large landowners. Small farm size holdings (marginal & small, < 5 acres) lost area (from 15.03% to 9.69%) and saw a sharp decline in the number of operators (from 56.54% to 33.11%). Semi-medium holdings (5–10 acres) recorded an increase in both area (from 20.01% to 24.88%) and number of operators (from 20.44% to 33.67%). Medium holdings (10–25 acres) also showed increases in both area (from 38.10% to 43.75%) and number of operators (from 18.01% to 27.93%). Large farm size holdings (25 acres and above) experienced a decrease in area operated (from 26.86% to 21.68%), while the number of operators in this category increased only marginally (from 5.01% to 5.28%). It is important to note that, in general, the average size of operational holdings has increased over time, with this increase being particularly pronounced in the upper size groups (15 acres and above). It is apparent that the new agricultural technology has favoured an increase in the average size of operational holdings.

Table 1: Land Holding Pattern in Punjab (1970-71 to 2015-16)

Size-Classes/Years	*1970-71*		*1980-81*		*1990-91*		*20000-01*		*2010-11*		*2015-16*	
	OH	*OA*	*OH*	*OA*	*OH*	*OA*	*OH*	*OA*	*OH*	*OA*	*OH*	*OA*
M	37.63	5.67	19.41	3.03	26.50	4.07	12.31	1.93	15.62	2.55	14.13	2.36
S	18.91	9.36	19.51	7.22	18.26	8.13	17.35	6.02	18.57	6.78	18.98	7.33
SME	20.44	20.01	28.24	20.32	25.87	20.88	32.91	21.79	30.83	21.56	33.67	24.88
M	18.01	38.10	25.59	40.21	23.37	40.22	30.17	43.03	28.35	43.18	27.93	43.75
L	5.01	26.86	7.25	29.21	6.00	26.70	7.25	27.24	6.62	25.93	5.28	21.68
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Avg. Size Holding (acre)	7.14		9.42		8.92		9.95		9.31		8.94	

Note: OH- Operational Holding, OA- Operated Area; M- Marginal (0-2.5 acre), S- Small (2.5-5.0 acre), SME- Semi-medium (5-10 acre), ME- Medium, (10-25 acre) L- Large (25 acres & above)

Source: All India Report on Agricultural Census for different years, Government of India

Table 2: Average Size of Holding in Punjab (1970-71 to 2015-16)

(%)

Size-Classes/Years	*1970-71*	*1980-81*	*1990-91*	*2000-01*	*2010-11*	*2015-16*
Marginal	1.07	1.47	1.36	1.56	1.52	1.49
Small	3.53	3.48	3.97	3.45	3.40	3.45
Semi medium	6.98	6.78	7.19	6.59	6.51	6.60
Medium	15.09	14.81	15.35	14.20	14.18	14.00

Large	38.27	37.95	39.70	37.40	36.44	36.69
All	7.13	9.42	8.92	9.96	9.31	8.94

Note: OH- Operational Holding, OA- Operated Area; M- Marginal (0-2.5 acre), S- Small (2.5-5.0 acre), SME- Semi-medium (5-10 acre), ME- Medium, (10-25 acre) L- Large (25 acres & above)

Source: All India Report on Agricultural Census for different years, Government of India

The average size for all operational holdings in Punjab shows fluctuation rather than a steady decline (unlike the strong national trend of continuous fragmentation) (Table 2). Punjab's overall average remained relatively stable and significantly higher than the all-India average (which fell from 5.63 ha in 1970-71 to 2.66 acres in 2015-16). Punjab's figure hovered around 8.94-9.96 acres in recent decades, reflecting less severe fragmentation. Within-class averages are quite resilient, indicating that when holdings enter a size-class, they tend to stay near the typical size for that class. The slight declines in medium and large classes may reflect some sub-division or leasing adjustments. Punjab stands out in India for maintaining a much larger average holding size (8.94 acres in 2015-16) compared to the national average of 2.66 acres. This is largely due to: Green Revolution effects (1960s-1980s): Mechanization, irrigation, and high-value crops favoured viable (larger) operational units. Active land leasing markets (reverse tenancy): Small/marginal owners often lease out land to larger operators. Fewer extreme fragmentation cases due to prosperity, fewer family partitions, and some consolidation. The overall average size peaked in the early 2000s and has since declined modestly, but remains robust compared to India as a whole. This pattern confirms Punjab's unique agrarian structure: resilient to extreme fragmentation, driven by technology, markets, and economic factors favouring scale – even as subtle downward pressure emerges in recent decades.

Table 1 explains the operational holdings in the state of Punjab, It is clear evident that land holding pattern is highly skewed in Punjab. In Punjab, the data reveals a shifting pattern in the distribution of landholdings between different categories of farmers from 1971-72 to 2012-13. However, by 2012-13, average 47% of operational area comes under 9% of operational holding. The distribution of land remains highly unequal, with a few households controlling the majority of operational holdings.

CASTE AND LAND IN PUNJAB

Table 3 reveals that the agrarian structure in Punjab is highly skewed. The "Others" category maintains a near monopoly over large-scale farming, while Scheduled Castes, despite constituting nearly one-third of the population, are largely landless or confined to the smallest landholdings. The literature and empirical evidence indicate that the basic features of landholding patterns in Punjab do not differ significantly from those in other parts of India.

Table 3: Distribution of cultivator households by categories of extent of operational landholding and caste groups, Punjab, 2012–13

(%)						
Size Classes	***ST***	***SC***	***OBC***	***Minority***	***Others***	***Total***
Marginal	0.1	23.6	19.7	1.1	55.5	100.00
Small	0.1	6.1	8.3	0.6	84.9	100.00
Semi medium	0.0	2.9	5.5	0.0	91.6	100.00
Medium	0.0	1.3	21.4	0.0	77.3	100.00
Large	0.0	0.0	7.0	0.0	93.0	100.00
All classes	0.1	13.3	14.5	0.6	71.5	100.00
Share % of Population	0.1	32.0	31.0	3.9	33.0	100.00

Source: (Bhattacharya S. , 2019)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Punjab's agrarian structure remains deeply unequal despite the celebrated success of the Green Revolution, which masked persistent land concentration, caste-based hierarchies (e.g., Jat dominance and Dalit landlessness), and the failure of land reforms. Historical legacies from colonial systems (Mahalwari in Punjab), incomplete post-independence reforms (e.g., ceiling laws yielding minimal surplus land redistribution), and tenancy issues have perpetuated skews in ownership and operation. Empirical data from Agricultural Censuses (1970–71 to 2015–16) show consolidation in semi-medium and medium holdings, a decline in very small and very large shares, and a relatively stable/high average operational holding size (8.94 - 9.96 acres), contrasting sharply with national fragmentation trends. However, the paper views this as evidence of ongoing inequality, with Scheduled Castes (32% population) holding only 5.77–9.23% of operational area/holding, and high Gini coefficients indicating skewed distribution. The latest comprehensive data remains from the 10th Census (2015–16), where Punjab's average operational holding size was 3.62 ha (8.94 acres), far above the national ~1.08 ha, due to reverse tenancy, mechanization, and leasing markets (e.g., 25% of Punjab's land is leased out per recent reports).

The state of Punjab should start Comprehensive Land Redistribution - Revive and strengthen ceiling enforcement and surplus land allocation, prioritizing landless Dalits/Scheduled Castes (who remain disproportionately land-poor). Improved Access to Resources - Enhance credit, technology, and inputs for small/marginal farmers to counter Green Revolution biases toward larger operators. Inclusive and Strengthened Policies - Revisit land reform laws with better implementation, tackle caste/class elite capture, and promote equitable policies (e.g., formalizing tenancy for security). Multi-Faceted Reforms - Combine redistribution with diversification, skill-building, and non-farm opportunities to reduce migration/distress.

Only sustained, politically committed reforms can dismantle historical barriers and achieve balanced growth. In Punjab's context, leveraging its strengths (high productivity, leasing markets) while addressing social inequities could serve as a model - but without tackling caste-land ties and reform gaps, inequalities will endure.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest

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END NOTES

1. Under the Permanent Settlement (1793), zamindars (landlords) were granted hereditary proprietary rights over their estates in perpetuity, with a fixed revenue demand payable to the state (typically around 10/11ths of the assessed rental value, leaving zamindars with the remainder as profit). This made land a valuable commodity and encouraged zamindars to treat it as an asset for extraction rather than improvement. The Ryotwari system, instituted in parts of British India (notably Madras and Bombay Presidencies) by 1820 under Sir Thomas Munro, eliminated intermediaries by collecting revenue directly from individual cultivators (ryots), who were recognised as landowners. The theoretical demand was set at approximately half (50%) of the gross produce, though in practice it often reached one-third to one-half as recommended by Munro,

with assessments combining undifferentiated land taxes and rents (Dutt, 1950). The Mahalwari system, introduced in 1822 (revised in 1833 under William Bentinck), treated the village or estate (*mahal*) as the unit of settlement, with proprietary rights vested in the village community or body of co-sharers. The community was collectively responsible for paying revenue- typically around half (50%) of the gross produce- though individual liability was not entirely eliminated.

2. In 1947, following India's independence and the Partition, the princely states of East Punjab began consolidating, leading to the creation of the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) in 1948. Comprising eight states- Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Faridkot, Kapurthala, Malerkotla, Kalsia, and Nalagarh-with Patiala as the capital and the Maharaja of Patiala as Rajpramukh, PEPSU was instrumental in integrating these princely territories into independent India. The union lasted until 1956, when it was merged with Punjab under the States Reorganisation Act.
3. Evacuee property denotes immovable assets (land, houses, businesses, etc.) abandoned by those who migrated across the border during the 1947 Partition of India (from India to Pakistan or vice versa). Administered under laws such as India's Administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950, these properties were placed under the control of a government Custodian to prevent neglect and enable their allocation for the resettlement of displaced persons. The category included everything from urban residential buildings to rural agricultural lands.

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DETERMINANTS OF ENROLMENT IN RESEARCH COURSES IN INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Research education occupies a central position in India's drive toward innovation, technological progress, and global competitiveness. Although various national initiatives – including NEP 2020, RUSA, IMPRINT, UGC-JRF, CSIR fellowships, and the establishment of research-intensive institutions – aim to strengthen India's research landscape, enrollment in research courses such as M.Phil. and Ph.D. programs remains inconsistent. This empirical study explores the determinants shaping postgraduate students' decisions to pursue research courses across Indian universities. Employing a mixed-method approach, data were collected from 420 postgraduate students across 12 universities and supported by qualitative insights from 45 interviews. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and regression models, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The results highlight that academic motivation, institutional infrastructure, faculty guidance, availability of financial support, and perceived career prospects significantly influence research enrollment intentions. Infrastructure and academic motivation emerged as the strongest predictors. Qualitative insights reveal persistent issues such as limited research exposure at earlier academic levels, inadequate faculty mentoring, administrative hurdles, and uncertain career prospects. The study concludes with strategic recommendations for higher education institutions, regulators, and government bodies to strengthen the research ecosystem in India. Findings contribute to educational planning, policy formulation, and the broader discourse on research capacity building.

INTRODUCTION

Research plays a vital role in advancing societal development, economic growth, and global knowledge creation. For India, a country with one of the world's largest

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higher education systems, strengthening research capacity has become crucial. Initiatives such as the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), the establishment of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), and the expansion of research funding through UGC, CSIR, DST, and DBT demonstrate India's growing emphasis on fostering a research-driven education framework.

Despite such efforts, research output in India remains unevenly distributed. A significant portion of research publications and doctoral enrollments originate from a limited number of elite institutions, while many state and private universities struggle due to inadequate funding, scarce infrastructure, and lower academic motivation among students. Moreover, students often perceive research careers as uncertain compared to industry-driven career paths. Academic motivation also plays a vital role in shaping students' research intentions. Students who possess intrinsic interest in research, curiosity for knowledge creation, and a desire for intellectual challenge are significantly more likely to pursue research courses.

Given this backdrop, understanding the factors that influence students' decisions to enroll in research courses becomes essential. Such understanding can help policymakers strengthen India's research ecosystem, ensure equitable distribution of resources, and motivate more students to pursue research-driven careers. This study addresses this need by identifying the socio-economic, academic, institutional, and psychological determinants that influence research course enrollment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive review of literature reveals that the determinants of research course enrollment are multi-dimensional, spanning academic, institutional, socio-economic, and psychological aspects. This section presents an expanded synthesis of national and international studies relevant to research motivation and research course enrollment.

THE INDIAN RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

India's research landscape is characterized by diversity and disparity. While institutions like IISc, IITs, TIFR, and AIIMS lead national research production, many state and private universities have limited research output (Altbach, 2015). The expansion of higher education since the early 2000s has increased enrollment, but research capacity has not grown at the same pace. Tilak (2017) highlights that India invests less than 1% of its GDP in research and development, far below global averages.

NEP 2020 aims to integrate research at all levels by offering undergraduate research opportunities, promoting interdisciplinary studies, and strengthening doctoral education. Yet, gaps remain between policy and implementation. Variations in faculty quality, research funding, and institutional autonomy influence the attractiveness and quality of research programs.

ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH INTENTIONS

Academic motivation is widely recognized as a critical determinant of research intentions. Literature conceptualized research motivation as a blend of intrinsic interest, desire for intellectual challenge, and engagement in knowledge creation. Students with strong intrinsic motivation often prefer inquiry-based learning and are more likely to pursue research degrees.

Empirical studies indicate that exposure to research methodology courses, seminars, and project-based learning significantly boosts motivation (Singh & Kumar, 2019). Students who participate in academic conferences, present papers, or receive feedback from faculty develop a better understanding of research careers, thus improving their motivation to enroll in research programs.

INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Adequate infrastructure is essential for high-quality research. Sharma (2018) found that well-equipped laboratories, updated digital libraries, and high-speed internet facilities significantly influence research productivity and student satisfaction. Students require access to journals, research databases, and analytical software, which are unevenly available across Indian universities.

Institutional support mechanisms – such as funding for pilot studies, research cell activities, and collaborative networks – enhance research culture (Kapur & Mehta, 2017). Universities that foster supportive environments, provide seed grants, and encourage interdisciplinary research have higher research enrollment.

FACULTY MENTORSHIP AND SUPERVISORY SUPPORT

Faculty guidance is often the most decisive factor in shaping research interests. Rao (2020) emphasizes the importance of mentorship in developing research skills, confidence, and academic identity. Mentors provide crucial guidance on methodology, literature review, writing, and publication.

However, several challenges persist. Faculty members often face heavy teaching workloads, administrative responsibilities, and limited incentives for research. Lack of proper supervisor training and inconsistent mentoring practices discourage

students from pursuing research. The mentor-mentee relationship in Indian universities varies widely, contributing to inconsistencies in research engagement.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS

Financial constraints significantly influence research enrollment, especially among students from economically weaker sections. Gupta & Bhattacharya (2016) report that fellowships like JRF, SRF, MANF, and institutional scholarships play a major role in students' decisions to pursue research.

Despite increased funding opportunities, delays in fellowship disbursals have been widely reported. Financial uncertainty impacts not only enrollment but also retention in research programs. Additionally, many private institutions offer limited or no financial support for research scholars, discouraging applicants.

PERCEIVED CAREER PROSPECTS AND EMPLOYABILITY

Career prospects are among the most important extrinsic determinants influencing research enrollment. Rao (2020) notes that many students view industry-oriented careers as more lucrative and secure than academic or research careers. The limited number of faculty positions, slow recruitment processes, and unclear career pathways reduce the attractiveness of research programs.

However, the rise of new opportunities in think tanks, R&D labs, policy institutions, pharmaceutical research, and data science has expanded the scope for research careers. Studies suggest that awareness of emerging research career opportunities can positively influence enrollment decisions (Joseph & Abraham, 2020).

GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

The review reveals two major gaps:

1. Few empirical studies examine the combined impact of academic, infrastructural, and psychological determinants on research enrollment.
2. Limited research has been conducted across diverse institutional categories in India.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a comprehensive empirical assessment.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify determinants influencing postgraduate students' intention to enroll in research courses.
2. To assess the role of academic motivation, institutional infrastructure, and faculty guidance.
3. To examine the impact of financial support and perceived career prospects.
4. To develop a regression model predicting likelihood of research enrollment.
5. To propose recommendations for enhancing research enrollment in India.

HYPOTHESES

H1: Academic motivation positively influences research enrolment.

H2: Institutional infrastructure significantly determines research enrolment.

H3: Faculty guidance positively affects research intentions.

H4: Financial support significantly impacts research enrolment decisions.

H5: Career prospects positively influence students' intentions to pursue research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A mixed-method approach like quantitative and qualitative both approached has been applied in this study to find the real determinants concerning to research questions in this study.

Sample and Sampling Method

420 postgraduate students from 12 universities participated through stratified random sampling. Both government and private universities have been included in this study based on relative importance concerning to this study. It has been tried to capture the data from all parts of country to justify the sample and methods of sampling to know the study area properly.

Tools

- Structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale has been applied to capture the data according to the objectives of the study.

- Semi-structured interviews with 45 participants have been taken to analyse the qualitative data concerning to objectives and variables of study. Actually, it is relevant in the case of qualitative data analysis. This study has tried to apply both data primary as well as secondary but more focus has been given on primary data.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Cronbach's Alpha = **0.88**, confirming reliability. This indicates that the data is valid and reliable for conducting this study. It tests the quality of data for study.

Analytical Techniques

- Descriptive statistics
- Pearson correlation
- Regression Models

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Descriptive Statistics

The findings indicate that the decision to pursue research is shaped by a combination of academic, institutional, socio-economic, and career-related factors. Among these, institutional infrastructure emerges as the most influential determinant, underscoring the need for universities to provide robust research facilities, well-equipped laboratories, updated digital libraries, reliable internet access, and a supportive administrative environment.

Academic motivation also plays a vital role in shaping students' research intentions. Students who possess intrinsic interest in research, curiosity for knowledge creation, and a desire for intellectual challenge are significantly more likely to pursue research courses. This highlights the importance of incorporating research components, such as project-based learning, research internships, and undergraduate thesis work, into earlier stages of education so that students can develop motivation and competence for research careers. Faculty guidance emerged as a significant determinant in both quantitative and qualitative findings. Effective mentoring fosters confidence, improves methodological skills, and enhances students' academic identity, thereby increasing the likelihood of research enrollment. Indian universities must therefore strengthen mentorship frameworks, reduce faculty workload, and provide training in research supervision.

Table 1: Demographic Profile (N = 420)

Variable	*Category*	*Percentage*
Gender	Male	48%
	Female	52%
Income	< ₹3 lakh	37%
	₹3–10 lakh	45%
	> ₹10 lakh	18%
Discipline	Science	41%
	Humanities	27%
	Commerce	22%
	Engineering	10%

The demographic profile of 420 sample in table 1 reflects balanced demographic representation. The dominance of middle-income students and science discipline students suggests greater exposure to research among these groups. Engineering students' lower representation aligns with literature indicating preference for industry over research careers.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variables	*AM*	*INF*	*FG*	*FS*	*CP*	*RE*
AM	1	0.52	0.48	0.33	0.41	0.46
INF	0.52	1	0.55	0.37	0.44	0.51
FG	0.48	0.55	1	0.39	0.42	0.49
FS	0.33	0.37	0.39	1	0.28	0.36
CP	0.41	0.44	0.42	0.28	1	0.47
RE	0.46	0.51	0.49	0.36	0.47	1

The correlations Matrix in Table 2 confirm strong interrelationships:

- Infrastructure has the highest correlation with research intention (0.51).
- Faculty guidance (0.49) and academic motivation (0.46) also strongly correlate with research intention.
- Financial support shows moderate correlation (0.36), indicating its importance but lower weight compared to academic and institutional determinants.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 3: Regression Results

Predictor	*β*	*t-value*	*Sig*
Academic Motivation	0.28	6.42	$p < 0.01$
Institutional Infrastructure	0.31	7.11	$p < 0.01$
Faculty Guidance	0.22	5.48	$p < 0.01$
Financial Support	0.17	4.02	$p < 0.01$
Career Prospects	0.26	6.01	$p < 0.01$

Model Fit: $R = 0.78$; $R^2 = 0.61$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$

The regression model in Table 3 reveals:

- Infrastructure is the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.31$).
- Academic motivation and career prospects follow closely.
- Faculty guidance significantly influences research engagement.
- Financial support, though significant, has relatively lower influence.

The model explains **61% of the variance**, indicating high predictive value.

The overall findings reveal that research enrolment is influenced by a complex interplay of academic, institutional, and psychological factors. Infrastructure and academic motivation emerge as the strongest determinants, aligning with global trends. While financial support matters, it is secondary to motivation and institutional quality. Qualitative insights reveal gaps in early research exposure and mentorship, which must be addressed to improve research culture.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides a comprehensive empirical examination of the determinants influencing postgraduate students' intentions to enroll in research courses in India. The findings indicate that the decision to pursue research is shaped by a combination of academic, institutional, socio-economic, and career-related factors. Among these, institutional infrastructure emerges as the most influential determinant, underscoring the need for universities to provide robust research facilities, well-equipped laboratories, updated digital libraries, reliable internet access, and a supportive administrative environment. A strong infrastructure not only enhances research experiences but also signals institutional commitment to high-quality academic inquiry.

Academic motivation also plays a vital role in shaping students' research intentions. Students who possess intrinsic interest in research, curiosity for knowledge creation, and a desire for intellectual challenge are significantly more likely to pursue research courses. This highlights the importance of incorporating

research components, such as project-based learning, research internships, and undergraduate thesis work, into earlier stages of education so that students can develop motivation and competence for research careers. Faculty guidance emerged as a significant determinant in both quantitative and qualitative findings. Effective mentoring fosters confidence, improves methodological skills, and enhances students' academic identity, thereby increasing the likelihood of research enrollment. Indian universities must therefore strengthen mentorship frameworks, reduce faculty workload, and provide training in research supervision.

Financial support remains a crucial determinant for many students, especially those from economically weaker backgrounds. Accessible and timely fellowships such as UGC-JRF, CSIR-JRF, MANF, and institutional scholarships significantly reduce financial barriers and contribute to research continuity. Streamlined disbursal processes and increased funding opportunities can further motivate students to pursue research. Finally, perceived career prospects strongly influence research intentions. Many students view research careers as uncertain, with limited job opportunities outside academia. To address this, there is a need for greater industry–academia collaboration, clearer research career pathways, and awareness of emerging opportunities in think tanks, R&D organizations, data science, pharmaceuticals, and policy research.

Overall, this study demonstrates that strengthening research infrastructure, improving mentorship, enhancing financial support, and expanding career pathways can significantly increase research course enrollment. The findings carry important implications for policymakers, higher education regulators, and universities striving to transform India into a global knowledge and innovation hub. Addressing the identified determinants is essential for nurturing the next generation of researchers capable of contributing meaningfully to national development and global scientific advancement.

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IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION IN PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT: A CASE OF TRANSPORT SECTOR, BIHAR

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Abstract

The transport sector plays a pivotal role in the economic development of any region, serving as the backbone of mobility, trade, and logistics. In India, the transport sector contributes significantly to GDP and employment, and in recent years, India has witnessed revolutionary growth. On the other hand, it has been claimed that digitalsation in public finance management enhances not only the efficiency in delivery of public services but also making the governance citizen-centric and cost effective. In other words, digital Public Finance Management (PFM) redefines good governance by integrating technology into financial processes and improving transparency, efficiency, and citizen satisfaction. This makes an imperative to examine the modes, methods and performance of digitalization of public finance management in achieving citizen-centric effective and sustainable delivery of public services. With this objective in mind, the present study examines the case of transport sector of Bihar Government in terms of exploring the digital initiatives and evaluates their impact on revenue generation, expenditure management, and service delivery. The author has privilege to observe closely the entire process of digitalization in Transport Department of Bihar. On the basis of experiences of the author and secondary sources of data collection, the present study finds that a traditionally underperforming sector can be transformed by adopting targeted PFM reforms, including automation of tax collection, vehicle registration, permit issuance, and audit mechanisms. By aligning financial and operational goals through digital platforms, the Transport Department of Bihar has set a replicable model for other Indian states to follow. It will be evident from a sharp rise in the number of registered vehicles, extensive improvements in road infrastructure, and renewed policy focus on sustainable and technology-driven mobility. It further attempts to trace the challenges in the process and suggest policy measures.

Keywords: PFM, Digitalization, Public Service Delivery, Enforcement of Rules, Transport Sector, o-Gras, Bihar

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INTRODUCTION

Public service delivery has been the prime responsibility of state, especially for achieving the goal of citizen-centric good governance. On the other hand, it has witnessed a paradigmatic shift in 21st century. There has been a departure in pattern of public service delivery from the concept of welfare state to public choice governance. Efficiency, techno-economic changes, managerial inputs in governance and citizen's satisfaction have come to influence the delivery of public services. At present 'governance-environment' is characterised by complex techno-economic changes. The changes pose new challenges for public service management (Shekhar:2019). Important among many vital external changes are corporate globalism, cyber technology, changing values and management philosophies that have greatly affected the delivery of the public services (Bowman et al: 2010 & Hood: 1991). Now the delivery of public services has a different set of characteristics more suitable to a postindustrial, service-based economy. Though, the values of earlier era, (which include efficiency, economy, fairness, and performance) still continue to be important, yet the renewed values associated with citizenship, public interest, ethics, transparency and broad democratic values of accountability, equity, and responsiveness have become more significant. As such, the increasing emphasis on result orientation through rigorous performance-oriented mechanisms which are accessible, transparent and accountable to citizens have become significant in public service delivery. It is in the throes of change and the public service personnel are expected to discharge new types of functions demanding new managerial, especially management of finances. Thus, it makes an urgent imperative to assess the public service delivery in the context of public finance management (PFM)

Public Finance Management (PFM) refers to how governments collect, allocate, spend, and audit public resources. The role of digital tools in enhancing these functions has been emphasized globally, especially in developing economies facing resource constraints (World Bank: 2021). In India, where state-level departments manage large parts of service delivery, the digitization of PFM systems is essential for ensuring efficient governance. The Transport Department, being a major revenue generator for Bihar was historically plagued by inefficiencies in tax collection, manual documentation, and corruption-prone practices. Over the past decade, a significant overhaul has taken place through digital reforms, enabling real-time financial monitoring, improved service delivery, and reduced revenue leakage. There has been transformation in transport sector from modernizing vehicle registration and licensing to revamping road safety measures and improving public transport systems and road safety. Bihar's transport ecosystem has undergone a substantial transformation. These developments reflect increased fiscal priority and underscore the importance of effective Public Finance Management (PFM) in

ensuring that these gains are sustainable, transparent, and citizen-centric. Let us see how?

CONTEXT: BIHAR TRANSPORT SECTOR AND PFM NEEDS

Bihar's Transport Department underwent fiscal and structural transformations beginning in the late 2010s. The department's revenue grew by over 300% in a decade, primarily due to changes in taxation policy, streamlined revenue collection systems, and the strategic use of digital infrastructure (Govt. of Bihar). This transformation occurred within a broader policy framework aligned with the state development goals. PFM interventions have become necessary given the rising demand for public transport, growing vehicle population, road safety issues, environmental challenges, and citizen expectations. The shift toward outcome-oriented budgeting and performance audits necessitated accurate data, real-time reporting, and transparency – outcomes that only digital systems can enable.

KEY DIGITAL INITIATIVES IN PFM (GOVT. OF BIHAR)

- **Vahan and Sarathi Portals:** These centralized systems allow real-time vehicle registration, license issuance, and integration with state treasuries, improving fee collection and reducing dependency on intermediaries.
- **e-Challan System:** Enabled cashless penalty collection, enhanced traffic enforcement accountability, and contributed to non-tax revenues.
- **Dealer Point Registration:** Linked private dealers to the government's portal, ensuring transparency in new vehicle registrations and road tax payments.
- **Online Permit and Tax Payment:** Allowed commercial operators to pay taxes and renew permits digitally, reducing downtime and improving compliance;
- **Digital MIS Dashboards:** Developed by the NIC and IT teams, these tools provide policymakers access to daily revenue trends, pending cases, and field-level performance data.
- **o-GRAS Treasury Integration:** Ensured real-time reconciliation of fees and taxes into the state exchequer, streamlining budgeting and accounting practices.

DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS AND AUTOMATION INITIATIVES

Over the past decade, Bihar's Transport Department has made significant strides in adopting digital tools to enhance governance, service delivery, and public finance. A major leap has been taken through the introduction of a fully automated online vehicle registration and driving license issuance system integrated with the national Vahan and Sarathi platforms. This shift not only improved efficiency and transparency but also curtailed corruption and delays that were prevalent in the manual systems. The e-payment gateway integration ensured the real-

time collection and reconciliation of revenues, drastically reducing leakages and enhancing trust in the system. These reforms have helped streamline the registration process, minimize human interface, and optimize resource use. The digitization of permit issuance, fitness certification, and tax collection for commercial vehicles has made it easier for transport operators to comply with regulations and has boosted departmental revenues (Govt. of Bihar). Digital public finance systems have also strengthened the department's ability to monitor environmentally linked revenues such as green taxes, electric vehicle registrations, and pollution-related penalties. This improved visibility supports the use of fiscal measures as tools for advancing environmental priorities and encourages a gradual shift toward cleaner and more sustainable transport practices.

STRENGTHENING PFM TOOLS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The Transport Department of Bihar has adopted a range of digital Public Finance Management (PFM) tools to strengthen budget execution, expenditure control, and financial transparency. The deployment of integrated dashboards, business intelligence applications, and performancemonitoring systems enables realtime assessment of financial and operational data across districts, thereby facilitating evidencebased decisionmaking and closer alignment between financial planning and servicedelivery outcomes. Key expenditure components such as fuel consumption, vehicle maintenance and repair costs, toll receipts, transport subsidies, and traffic fine collections are now digitally tracked, allowing timely managerial and policy interventions. Integration with the state treasury system, including eGRAS, has ensured faster, accurate, and transparent fund reconciliation and disbursement to entities such as the Bihar State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC) and Regional Transport Offices (RTOs). Simultaneously, the digitization of traffic enforcement and fine collection – through integration with VAHAN, SARATHI, and epayment platforms – has enabled cashless payments via UPI, net banking, and cards, significantly reducing manual handling and leakages. The use of handheld POS devices by enforcement personnel allows for onthespot issuance of echallans with digital receipts, while the systematic collection of mobile numbers during vehicle registration and enforcement processes facilitates automated SMS alerts, payment reminders, and compliance tracking. Collectively, these reforms have enhanced expenditure efficiency, strengthened audit readiness, reduced delays in fund utilization, and improved transparency and accountability, demonstrating how digital PFM practices can effectively modernize traditional government department.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT AND AI-POWERED FINE COLLECTION

Transformative interventions have been observed in the areas of traffic policing and fine collection through AI-based technologies. The deployment of AI-enabled Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras across key urban centers and highways has revolutionized traffic enforcement. These systems automatically capture violations, such as speeding, red-light jumping, and lane indiscipline, generating e-challans in real time. Offenders are identified using the Vahan database, and SMS alerts are sent to their registered mobile numbers, linking fines to Aadhaar-seeded vehicle ownership details. This integration has significantly enhanced compliance, reduced manual intervention by traffic police, and created a culture of deterrence in the state. The revenue from traffic fines has shown a substantial increase, contributing meaningfully to non-tax revenue. The Bihar Transport Department and traffic police issued more than 16,700 e-challans amounting to Rs 9.49 crore over a single week between August 7 and 15 2024. Additionally, enforcement is now data-backed, enabling targeted campaigns based on violation hotspots and accident-prone areas (NITI Aayog: 2020). These developments demonstrate the convergence of AI and digital governance in improving road safety and public revenue systems.

IMPACT OF DIGITIZATION ON PFM OUTCOMES

The digitization drive in Bihar's Transport Department has had a transformative impact on both financial outcomes and service delivery mechanisms. One of the most visible outcomes has been the substantial growth in revenue from motor vehicle taxes, which increased from approximately Rs. 1,200 crores in 2017 to around Rs. 3,684 crores in 2024-25 (Govt. of Bihar: n.d.). This impressive growth has been achieved not only through the expansion of the vehicle base but also due to improved compliance and streamlined processes enabled by automation. Previously time-consuming services, such as driving license issuance and permit renewals, which took weeks due to procedural bottlenecks, are now completed within hours through online platforms. The introduction of automated audit trails has brought a new level of transparency to revenue collections, drastically reducing the scope for leakages and malpractice. Furthermore, the availability of real-time financial and operational data has empowered officials with better tools for planning, forecasting, and making timely decisions. The citizen experience has also improved significantly, with a reduction in physical visits to offices, long queues, and dependency on intermediaries. Therefore, complementing the revenue gains, vehicle registrations grew by approx. 5% in FY 2024-25, expanding the taxable base while digital processes ensured higher compliance rates among new owners (Govt of Bihar: 2022). Collectively, these digital systems have enabled a more accountable

and citizen-focused transport administration, while also strengthening institutional processes, improving audit preparedness, and building greater public confidence, which are the key foundations of sound governance.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the considerable progress achieved, the journey towards full-scale digital transformation has not been without challenges. A key hurdle has been the limited digital literacy among ground-level transport officials and vehicle operators, which has led to initial resistance and slow adoption. Furthermore, entrenched interests that previously benefitted from manual loopholes often resisted moves toward greater transparency and automation (IIPA: 2022 and Kartik & Krishnan: 2020). Technical challenges also emerged, especially in ensuring smooth interoperability between state-level platforms and central systems, such as VAHAN and SARATHI. The integration process is often marred by data mismatches, server downtimes, and policy misalignments. In addition, the department had to contend with serious cybersecurity concerns, given the sensitive nature of the financial and identity-related data processed daily. Another persistent issue is the infrastructural gap in remote or underserved districts, where Internet connectivity, power supply, and access to digital hardware remain patchy. Nevertheless, many of these barriers have been addressed through regular training sessions, targeted IT support, and strong administrative leadership. Policy-level guidance from the state government and sustained advocacy for reform helped ensure that digital transformation remained on track, despite systemic inertia.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Several policy-level interventions are imperative to ensure the long-term sustainability and deepening of digital PFM reforms. First, a structured and ongoing capacity-building program needs to be institutionalized across the department to equip all staff – from clerks to senior officials – with digital skills and an understanding of digital finance workflows. Second, a robust cyber hygiene protocol must be implemented, including endpoint security, periodic audits, secure login infrastructure, and incident response mechanisms to address potential breaches. Third, the adoption of AI-powered predictive analytics can play a vital role in tax compliance forecasting and fraud detection, especially when linked to behavioral and spatial transport data. Fourth, it is recommended that the Transport Department's digital finance systems be fully integrated with the state's broader budgeting and treasury platforms to enable better financial control and reporting processes. Finally, a feedback mechanism using mobile-based applications, SMS surveys, or web-based dashboards can be employed to continuously monitor

service delivery performance and bridge citizen expectation gaps. These measures would not only consolidate existing reforms but also prepare the department to respond to emerging challenges with greater agility in the future.

CONCLUSION

The Transport Department of Bihar is a compelling example of how digital transformation, when aligned with strategic public finance objectives, can significantly improve governance outcomes. The journey from a largely manual time consuming inefficient system to a digital-first, accountable, and revenue-productive department reflects vision and the transformative power of technology. The integration of automation, real-time data systems, AI-driven enforcement, and transparent auditing practices has improved revenue mobilization, enhanced road safety, reduced service delivery times, and elevated citizen satisfaction. For other Indian states and governments in developing countries, this case offers a practical roadmap for implementing digital PFM in core service sectors. These reforms position the Transport Department to align with emerging state priorities such as enhanced public transport corridors and sustainable mobility goals, ensuring digital PFM supports inclusive growth. The ongoing challenge is to sustain and scale these reforms while embedding them into institutional culture and public expectations. With continued investment in digital infrastructure, training, and policy innovation, Bihar's transport sector can continue leading the way in smart public finance governance.

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INDIA'S APPROACH TO ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POLICIES ADOPTED DURING CONGRESS AND BJP REGIMES

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Abstract

The British intervention and the creation of Israel in 1948 exacerbated tensions, posing ongoing challenges to the indigenous population and Middle Eastern stability. India, as a champion of anti-colonial struggle and the Non-Aligned Movement, initially supported Palestine and criticized Israel. However, global power shifts prompted India to reassess its stance towards both parties. India has been steadfastly building up its military and economic ties with other countries of the world. India's foreign policy choices have seen major shifts owing to the emergence of new centres of power in the international system, the constraints posed by globalization as well as the change of government in New Delhi. The research draws on various theoretical works to understand foreign policy decision-making. It considers both unit-level analysis, focusing on leaders and individual actors, and systemic-level analysis, which examines the structure of the international system. The purpose of this research is to trace the transition in India's foreign policy approach with reference to Israel-Palestine conflict by undertaking a comparative analysis of the foreign policy choices during the regime of Congress and BJP from 1948 till 2024 by employing two models; Rational Actor Model which examines state as an independent actor considering ideology as a key variable and Political Process Model which focusses on systemic constraints including relative powers of states and non-state actors. Such an analysis becomes significant to find whether India is moving to a more hard-line foreign policy approach with change in power in New Delhi?

Keywords: India, Isreal, Palestine, Conflict, Rational-actor model, Systemic model.

INTRODUCTION

Palestine is at the crossroads of three continents and is a land of shifting boundaries: a political entity that vanished, only to re-emerge like a phoenix. The attack on Gaza strip on 7th of October 2023 was not the first time the land of Palestine

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was being attacked but the seeds of Palestinian rebellion were planted with the country's conquest in 1830s. The home of great monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it has been the object of countless bitter wars and struggles through nearly four millennia. The Arab-Israeli conflict is rooted in the claim of Holy land by both the parties. While the Zionists claim the land to be theirs as mentioned in the Holy Bible, the Arabs claim their ancestry to the land since ancient years and thus are reluctant to part with their homeland. The intervention of British and creation of the state of Israel in 1948 further aggravated the issue and the tussle continues to pose a serious challenge to the indigenous population as well as the Middle East.

Any country's foreign policy is guided by two factors; the personality or behaviour of the leader and the processes which operate at the domestic and international level. The former belongs to the Rational Actor model theory and the latter to the System theory. As far as India's approach to Isreal and Palestine conflict is concerned one finds that in the initial phase India gave full support to the cause of Palestinian people recognising people's right of self-determination as laid down by the non-aligned movement. India's faith in socialist planning to eradicate poverty and inequality coupled with the rise of communist Russia as a super power shaped its policy vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine. However, the disintegration of Russia in 1990's, the rise of USA as a world hegemon, the growth of China as a world power and India's coarse relations with China and Pakistan put severe restraint on India's policy towards Isreal and Palestine. The present-day India's relation with Israel and Palestine is a reflection of complex interplay of all the above factors and yet a common reference made in present context is that India's foreign policy is moving to a hard-line approach under the present BJP government.

This research paper therefore aims to find out whether India's policy towards Israel and Palestine has been guided by Rational actor model or system theory by taking a comparative analysis of the parties who were in power from 1947 till 2024. Such a study will provide new insights into India's evolving foreign policy choices regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict by comparing the Congress and the BJP foreign policy approaches (since power in India have oscillated between these two parties mainly) seeking to delineate the similarities and differences in their foreign policy strategies. The study is significant as it seeks to enhance our understanding of India's evolving stance in the Middle East through the prism of ideological constraints (unit level analysis) and systemic constraints (system level analysis) which would help us decode the role played by the ideology of the party and the personality of the leader of the party in shaping foreign policy and also illuminate the impact of domestic and global dynamics on its diplomatic choices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing literature on India's foreign policy towards Israel and Palestine reveals diverse perspectives. Some scholars have focused on India's historical alignment with Palestine, while others have analyzed India's shift towards Israel in the context of global political dynamics. Gordon (1975), Mekkawi (2006), Samuel and Rajiv (2016) have taken a historical perspective highlighting India's anti-colonial stance and support for Palestine; Pant (2009), Hafeez (2009) have analyzed India's shift towards Israel in competitive international system by looking at the role played by global dynamic variables while Blarel (2014), and Prashad (2014), have looked at the complexities posed by Middle East politics, South Asia, and role of US and Hamas in shaping India's approach towards Israel and Palestine.

Works by Paige (1968) and Allison (1971) has used personality and ideology of the leaders as crucial units of analysis in foreign policy making while the work of Hilsman (1987) considers the impact of multiple actors' ideologies in foreign policy-making. Paige studied the impact the personality and ideology of Harry S Truman had on his decision of involving USA in Korean war. Allison used Cuban missile crisis as a case study to understand the impact the Cuban crisis had on government decision making. While the former used Rational actor model the latter was using organizational process model and both were path-breaking works which opened new perspectives of understanding foreign policy making. This research paper combines the two approaches (Rational Actor model and Organizational Process model) and add to it the levels of analysis propounded by Watlz (1979) to analyze India's foreign policy approach towards Isreal and Palestine during the tenure of Congress (1947-2013), and BJP (2014-2024) with the objective of finding whether India's policy towards Israel-Palestine is a continuation of the policies pursued in the past or there has been a shift in its approach with the change in power at the center (Congress government followed by BJP government) and also to find the factors which determined India's policy towards Israel and Palestine.

1. **Influencing factors**: To find out what factors influence India's foreign policy towards the Isreal Palestine conflict?
2. **Ideological impact**: To find out how do Congress and BJP ideologies shape India's policy choices?
3. **Systemic influences**: To find out what role do domestic politics and international power dynamics and globalization play in India's approach?

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

India's approach to Israel-Palestine conflict during the Congress regime

The climax of Israel-Palestine relation came in 1947 when the UN passed the Resolution 181 determining that two states would be established in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews accepted the decision whereas the Arabs rejected it. Jews claimed that they were the original inhabitants of the land, which was promised to them in the Bible and Arabs were the ones who invaded it in the 7th century. Arabs claimed that the Bible is a religious document and therefore does not accept it as part of their Holy Scriptures.

Mahatma Gandhi's stance on the Israel-Palestine issue was clear and consistent. He viewed Palestine as an Arab country and believed that no decision regarding its future should be made without the consent of the Arab population. Gandhi's position was rooted in his broader principles of anti-imperialism and support for self-determination. He opposed the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, as he felt it would be unjust to impose such a state on the land of the Arabs without their agreement. His perspective was in line with the Indian National Congress's broader support for the Palestinian cause during India's freedom struggle and continued to influence India's foreign policy after independence too.

Indian nationalists (i.e., the Congress leaders) generally supported Palestine and criticized Israel because they saw parallels between Palestinian struggles and India's own fight against colonialism (Gordon 1975). They believed in fairness and wanted Palestinians to have their own state. Influenced by Gandhi's ideas of non-violence and fairness, and India's own experience of oppression and exploitation under British rule, Nehru stood in solidarity with the oppressed and sought justice for Palestinians in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Gordon's analysis of India's pro-Palestine approach immediately after India's independence is corroborated by the views expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru on Palestine Israel conflict way back in 1936 (when he was not even the Prime Minister) even before India got independence. To quote Nehru;

> "The problem of Palestine is thus essentially a nationalist one – a people struggling for independence against imperialist control and exploitation. It is not a racial or religious one. Perhaps some of our Muslim fellow countrymen extend their sympathy to the Arabs because of the religious bond…But the Arabs are wiser and they lay stress only on nationalism and independence, and it is well to remember that all Arabs, Christian as well as Muslim, stand together in this struggle against British imperialism. Indeed, some of the most prominent leaders of the Arabs in this national struggle have been Christians…. If the Jews had been

> wise, they would have thrown in their lot with the Arab struggle for independence. Instead, they have chosen to side with British imperialism and to seek its protection against the people of the country.… The Arabs of Palestine will no doubt gain their independence, …the Jews, if they are wise, will accept the teaching of history, and make friends with the Arabs and throw their weight on the side of the independence of Palestine, and not seek a position of advantage and dominance with the help of the imperialist power."

However, it is quite interesting to note what Nehru wrote in reply to a letter written by Einstein pleading for India's acknowledgement of the right of Jews and their homeland (i.e., Israel). To quote Nehru (1947):

> "As you know, national policies are unfortunately essentially selfish. Each country thinks of its own interests first and then considers others. If an international policy aligns with the national policy, then the nation employs lofty language about international betterment. However, as soon as that international policy appears to clash with national interests or selfishness, a host of reasons are found to justify not adhering to that international policy… why have the Jews in Palestine failed to gain the goodwill of the Arabs? Why do they seek to compel the Arabs to submit against their will to certain demands? The approach taken has not led to a settlement but rather to the perpetuation of the conflict. I have no doubt that the fault is not confined to one party but that all have erred…."

Nehru's letter confirms that he resolutely denied accepting the creation of Israel fully supporting the Palestinian rights to their homeland but the letter also reflects the moral and political dilemma which Nehru faced at that time. Also, Nehru's personal relationship with Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt, both being the founding members of Non-Aligned Movement and Yassir Arafat's policy of keeping Palestine as an issue of national identity aspiring for greater Arab unity and not as a religious issue shaped India's sympathy for the Palestinians. Domestically the partition of India and the Indian Muslim support for Palestine and internationally the support which India needed from the Arab countries in its fight against Pakistan in 1948 war over Kashmir had crippled the hands of Nehru immediately after independence otherwise Nehru would not have recognised the state of Israel just two years after i.e., on 17th September, 1950 (Chakravarty 2017). India's recognition to the state of Israel under Nehru became possible only after two Arab states i.e., Turkey and Iran gave recognition to the state of Israel which in a way overcame the systemic pressures put on India by its own Muslim population and their affinity to the Pan-Islamic movement launched by Pakistan domestically as well as internationally. It is a different thing that an official communique gave two different reasons for India's

recognition of the state of Israel; first that the government was recognising what was 'an established fact' and secondly, non-recognition would have limited India's role as a possible peace-maker between the Arabs and Israelis (Tripathi 2013). Whatever might have been the reason for India's pro-Palestine approach during Nehru's era, one thing is very clear that it was less fashioned by Nehru's personal likings and more by the domestic politics within India and the power politics which was going on in Middle East in particular and the world in general.

Thus, the perception of India as a nation by the Arabs, particularly in West Asia after independence in 1947 was of a comrade battling against colonialism, thanks to Nehru's personal conviction that India is capable of pursuing an independent foreign policy being the creator of Non-aligned Movement. The Arabs viewed India as a secular and promising democracy, leader of the non-alignment and a strong supporter of the rights and freedom of Afro-Asian people, especially the Palestinian people which appeased the Arab Nationalists and fostered a strong friendship between them. India's commitment to the Palestinian cause remained a core feature of its foreign policy both during Nehru as well as Mrs. Gandhi's era when India became the first non-Arab nation to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1975 (when Mrs Indira Gandhi was the PM of India).

Even Mrs. Indira Gandhi during her tenure followed the policy of his father as far as Israel-Palestine conflict is concerned. Realising the significance of Muslim vote in her electoral victory and the need of Arab support in Indo-Pak conflict over Kashmir, Mrs. Gandhi like her father wholeheartedly supported the cause of Palestinians refusing to normalise India's relations with Israel despite the fact that Arabs were supporting Pakistan over Kashmir issue while Israel was providing both military and diplomatic assistance to India (Aishwarya 2023). In fact, it was during her tenure that India officially recognised PLO and even permitted it to have an office in New Delhi in 1975 (which became an Embassy in 1981); the first non-Arab state to do that. However, one needs to understand that when India recognised PLO, its chairman was Yasser Arafat who was the leader of Al Fatah (the largest Palestinian groups). PLO under the leadership of Arafat wanted to create a democratic state in Palestine which will not be based on race and religion. Arafat's movement was based on national identity and not religious identity and was a driving force behind India's recognition of PLO by Mrs Gandhi. In her speech delivered in the context of the turmoil in West Asia at the UN General Assembly on 28th September, 1983, she admitted that:

> "The occupation of the land of others will not guarantee Israel's security and that the Palestinians must be masters in their home. She supported the efforts of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to secure their legitimate rights and called for a peaceful settlement that ensures justice."

Her call was endorsed by the International Conference on the question of Palestine, held in Geneva in August and September, 1983". The policy laid down by Nehru and Mrs Gandhi was ardently followed even by Morarji Desai (during her brief tenure as leader of the Janta Party). It is interesting to note what PM Morarji Desai said to Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Defence Minister on his first unofficial visit to India to his request of establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel. To quote him (Desai 1977):

> "You must make peace with the Arabs. The Israelis have suffered from the Nazi's and from the prosecution in Europe, but the Palestinians should not be made to pay for it. …India has mistaken in not having done this at the very outset, when Nehru had come to power with India's independence. But this mistaken policy could now not be changed… the Indian people would rise against the government if there was an attempt at having diplomatic relations with Israel…".

The statement clearly reveals that though the ideology of Janata Party was different from that of the Congress, the domestic political compulsion forced PM Desai to continue the pro-Palestine foreign policy approach though he personally held that India should have established diplomatic relations with Israel during the tenure of PM Nehru itself.

When PM Rajiv Gandhi assumed power in 1985 after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi he too paid an official visit to Egypt and reaffirmed India's support to Arabs and Palestinians. But things started changing in Middle East from 1984. Factions developed within PLO questioning Arafat's leadership and there was an outbreak of Palestinian Intifada in Gaza and West Bank in 1987. Intifada resulted in PLO recognising the 1947 partition by proclaiming the state of Palestine with Arafat as the head of state. India immediately accepted the state of Palestine and even gave Arafat Jawaharlal Nehru award for international understanding in 1988. One thing which one needs to be reminded here is that from 1947 till the proclamation of Palestine (throughout the Congress regime of Nehru, Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi) with a brief stint of Janata Party rule) India never for once doubted the existence of the independent state of Israel and didn't even support the Arabs refusal to negotiate with Israel and considered Palestinians merely as refugees who needed to be accommodated by some Arab countries (Mudiam 1994).

After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, P V Narshimha Rao became the PM of India. He is best known for opening the Indian economy in 1991. However, it was his ideological belief and broader geo-political insights guided by emergence of United States as a superpower, disintegration of USSR and increasing terrorism in Kashmir which brought India closer to Israel to the extent that on December 16, 1991 India voted in favour of repealing UN General Assembly resolution from

1975 that characterised Zionism as racism. That marked a real shift in India's policy vis-à-vis Israel since just two days after the voting, Yasser Arafat sent a request to him for an official visit to Palestine which he kept delaying until 1992 when he finally visited Palestine and also established full diplomatic relations with Israel. It was a sign of India's changed cautious attitude towards Palestine and Arafat had understood the sign of India's choosing interest-driven pragmatism over moral idealism (Kumar 2018). Israel in Rao's tenure had become a critical supplier of advanced military technology which India badly needed in its combat against Pak-sponsored terrorism.

No doubt India's changed position was the result of changing international scenario but it was also guided by the ideals and beliefs of Mr. Rao else he was the same person who in 1980 as a Foreign Minister under Mrs Gandhi's reign had said in the Emergency Special session of the UN General Assembly on Palestine that "The world need to compel Israel to recognise the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to have their homeland and also to put an end to their aggression on Palestine" (The Indian Express 1980). Not only this in the same capacity on 23rd April, 1982 in the 17th General Assembly meeting held at New York he said that;

> "We have no doubt that the ultimate victory will belong to the Palestinian people led by the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Let this historic occasion inspire us all to rededicate ourselves to the Palestinian cause, which is undoubtedly our own cause" (Rao 1982).

PM Rao was succeeded by H D Dev Gowda (1996-97) and I K Gujral (1997-98) and during their tenure relations with Palestine and Israel were not the priority since they had domestic challenges to deal with and thus both the Govt. simply continued the policy heralded by Rao with no added efforts to accelerate the pace of closeness with Israel.

INDIA'S APPROACH TO ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT DURING THE BJP REGIME

It was under the tenure of PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004) that new impetus was given to building closer ties with Israel – the path for which was already laid down by the Congress Party under PM Rao. PM Vajpayee belonged to Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)and was one of the founding members of BJP in 1980. He assumed the office of prime ministership thrice. First in 1996 for merely 13 days, then from 1998 to 1999 and finally from 1999 to 2004 but it was in his last full tenure that the relationship reached its height with Israeli PM Ariel Sharon making a historic visit to India in 2003, the first by any Israeli head of the state. Also, Israel had become top supplier of military equipment and technology to India by 2004 and cooperation were extended in fields of counterterrorism, intelligence sharing

and homeland security too. But despite closeness with Israel, BJP under Vajpayee government continuously reiterated India's support to the cause of Palestinians and the importance of a peaceful resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. In fact, in an interview to Haaretz (an Israeli newspaper) in 2003, PM Vajpayee said, (GoI: 2003)

> "I believe India and Israel should focus on building bilateral relations on the basis of shared perspectives and commonalities between our two democracies…. India has a consistent and well known position on terrorism, wherever they occur. We have repeatedly said that no cause can justify violence and destruction, particularly aimed at civilians".

In fact, way back in 1998 itself (his second tenure as prime minister), he in his address of the UN Special Bulletin on the Commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People had said, "I wish the Committee every success in its endeavours to enable the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate rights in full and their hopes".

PM Vajpayee was succeeded by Dr Manmohan Singh who was heading the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government as a member of Indian National Congress. It was a coalition government. During his ten-year stint he took Indo-Israel relations to new horizons by extending the defence cooperation in the field of advanced weapons system, surveillance technology, drones and radar systems. The two countries for the first time did joint military exercises (Indra-I in 2003 and Indra-II in 2006). Not only this in July 2008, the Cabinet Committee on Security chaired by PM Singh approved a proposal to jointly develop a missile defence system with Israel.

PM Singh was succeeded by Narendra Modi (2014-2024) and his tenure reflects the continuation of the policies set forth by their predecessors. PM Modi visited Israel from 4-6 July 2017 marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations (full diplomatic relation with Israel was established for the first time in 1992 under Congress regime led by Manmohan Singh government) which was hailed by media as major shift in India's policy towards Israel. No doubt the visit was historic since a number of MoU was signed between the two; the most important being the MoU on 'strategic partnership in Water and Agriculture', India-Israel Industrial R & D and Innovation Fund, and ISRO-Israel Space Agency cooperation in Geo-LEO Optical link (Ministry of External Affairs 2017).

However, the two countries have been cooperating in these fields for the last 25 years. As far as Modi Government stand on Palestine is concerned the Government made it quite clear in the wake of present West Asian crisis when he met the President of Palestine, H E Mahmoud Abbas on 22nd September 2024 (on the sideline of the Summit of the Future in New York) whereby he expressed deep concern at the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the region reaffirming India's

unwavering support to the people of Palestine including continued humanitarian assistance. A week after he made public that he had spoken to his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu about recent developments in West Asia and highlighted the need for de-escalation. He reiterated India's time-tested principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue stressing that only two-state solution will deliver enduring peace and stability in the region (Ministry of External Affairs 2024). Recalling that India was one of the first countries to recognise Palestine, he conveyed India's continued support to Palestine membership of the UN. He even posted on twitter that "Terrorism has no place in our world. It is crucial to prevent regional escalation and ensure the safe release of all hostages" (Reuters 2024). The statement was made in the wake of killing of Hezbollah leader by Israeli military. A year after Modi's visit to Palestine in 2018 (via Jordan without stopping in Israel) also reveals the cautious and balanced approach of India vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine.

CONCLUSION

Political compulsions at home and abroad played a major role in determining India's approach towards Israel and Palestine rather than the ideology of the political parties or convictions of the political leaders. Thus, whether it was Congress or BJP rule the Indian Government's policies were formulated under the shadow of Indian Muslim population affiliation to the cause of Palestine, the rising tension with Pakistan, growing cross-border terrorism, cold war bipolarity, the disintegration of USSR, rise of unipolar world under US (systemic constraints) wherein Israel emerged as a major supplier of defence equipment to India urgently needed to counter the threat of Pakistan, China and cross-border terrorism. Consequently, India established full-fledged diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 using it as an opportunity to strengthen its ties with the United States and enhancing its position in world politics but the real propellent behind the scene were the systemic constraints (the changed international scenario post 1990 guided by which MP Rao started full diplomatic relations with Israel (1992), PM Vajpayee invited PM Ariel Sharon to historic visit (2003), and Modi made a visit to Israel (2017). The successive governments in India have focussed on various sectors of co-operation such as defence, internal and border security and high-technology.

The difference between the Congress and BJP regime has been on 'De-hyphenation' of India's policies with Israel vis-a-vis Palestine to use Samuel and Rajiv terminology meaning thereby that BJP has let India's relation with Israel and Palestine to grow independently without letting one decide the other. Even Jangid, an expert in Indo-Isreal who teaches at the Jindal Centre for Israeli Studies says that the creation of an Israeli state is firmly backed by both the Indian National Congress as well as Bhartiya Janta Party and the opposition to it from the left parties are not unusual since even during the regime of Congress Left parties had objected

to India's diplomatic relations with Israel. Jangid rightly says that the present-day deep defence and economic ties with Isreal is the result of thirty years confidence building undertaken by both the Congress and the BJP with the only difference that Congress always kept its close relation with the Israel under the closet and BJP making it public. Here the research findings of this paper want to add that since the Indo-Israel relation was shaped by the domestic politics within India and the changing power dynamics abroad, the personality of the political leaders or the ideology of the party in power failed to change the course of that relations.

It is no wonder that PM Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister to officially pay a visit to Israel in 2017 and also India's objection at the UN to the resolution for not including condemnation of terror attack by Hamas upon Isreal in 2023 since the present day politics at home and abroad is very different from the one operating during the first 25 years of India's independence. Here it is noteworthy to reiterate India's foreign minister Subramanyam Jaishankar statement that "on the fight against terrorism India is with Isreal and on the two-state solution it is with Palestine" speaks volume of the ideological factors shaping India's approach towards Palestine and Israel.

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MIGRANTS' STRUGGLE FOR LIVELIHOOD: A CASE OF REHABILITATION OF TIBETANS IN MCLEODGANJ (HP)

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Abstract

The phenomenon of migrants from across borders is a regular feature of states sharing international borders. Himachal Pradesh, especially Dharmshala has the demographic feature of Tibetan migrants (refugees) who generally earn their livelihood as the street venders, in MacLeodganj, the suburb of Dharmshala. They face problems in their daily life, such as the language barrier, the culture barrier, the pain of not being able to see their families in Tibet, etc. The Street Vendors of McLeodganj (suburb of Dharmshala, HP) do also struggle for space to earn their two-ends meal. As such, the present paper discusses the migration of Tibetans to India, with a particular focus on the problems and struggles of Tibetan Street Vendors in that area, telling up on their livelihood. It has been noticed that they face challenges in that area, besides other problems, like the constrained space due to the tourist destination and the resources of livelihood for the vendors. The present study is descriptive one and intends to find solutions for this problem to tackle the issue from the view point of the state administration and migrant street vendors.

Keywords: Tibetan, Rehabilitation, Street Vendors, Space, Livelihood, MacLeodganj, Refugees, Dharmshala.

INTRODUCTION

For almost 60 years, the Tibetan refugee population in India, under the leadership of the Dalai Lama and his exile government located in Dharamshala, has been a shining example of success for displaced people all over the world (Rigzin, 2024). Since 2007, the number of Tibetan refugees has decreased by about 17%, from over

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123,000 to slightly over 102,000, endangering the institutional sustainability of the community due to migration toward western countries from 1990 onwards. Since the 2000s, China has been cracking down on Tibetan escape routes and strengthening border controls, which has significantly decreased the number of new refugees arriving, and the birth rate in the Tibetan exile community is significantly low. As per the survey conducted by the Planning Commission of the Central Tibetan Administration, 2010, there are approximately 1,28,014 Tibetans worldwide, among them 94,203 were living in India (Central Tibetan Administration, 2018). McLeodganj, culture is a stunning blend of British and Tibetan elements. The Indian state of Himachal Pradesh's Kangra district is home to McLeodganj, a suburb of Dharamsala. Its high Tibetan population has earned it the nicknames "Little Lhasa" or "Dhasa used primarily by Tibetans. The Tibetan government-in-exile is at McLeod Ganj (Government of Himachal Pradesh).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TIBET

More than two-thirds the size of India and more than two-and-a-half times the combined size of Austria, Denmark, France, and Germany, Tibet is a vast country that is frequently referred to as the Roof of the World. In addition to its plant and animal diversity, the area is rich in minerals. With their own written and spoken language, culture, customs, cuisine, and attire, the Tibetan people constitute a unique race. Tibet's population was projected to be six million in 1959. As a direct result of the Chinese occupation, an estimated 1.2 million Tibetans have perished (Central Tibetan Administration, 2016). China invaded Tibet shortly after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) assumed power in 1949 and forced the Lhasa government to sign the 17-Point Agreement, which included Tibet in the People's Republic of China. The youthful Dalai Lama escaped into exile in 1959 following the invasion and the brutality of the occupation that followed, killing hundreds of thousands of Tibetans. Over 80,000 Tibetans followed him into India, which was a logical choice due to its proximity and spiritual connections. With the dual goals of aiding the refugees and reestablishing Tibet's independence, the Dalai Lama formed a Tibetan government-in-exile on April 29, 1959, named the Central Tibetan Administration, headquartered in Mussoorie, which later shifted to Dharamshala in 1960 (Central Tibetan Administration, 2024; Dorjee & Rigzin, 2024). Many obstacles had to be overcome by the first wave of refugees, such as adjusting to a new environment, overcoming the trauma of relocation, and overcoming linguistic and cultural disparities (Makley, 2005). Over time, the Tibetan community in McLeodganj has strived to rebuild their lives and preserve their unique cultural identity, contributing significantly to the region's socio-economic landscape, while simultaneously confronting various obstacles to their livelihoods (Makley, 2002). "The devolution periphery" refers to those regions that

have low productive capacity and have been left with low governance capability because of the devolution process (Newman & Hoole, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Balasubramaniam and Gupta (2021) examine in their study that the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) seeks to stabilize Tibetan arrangements and secure land to strengthen Tibetans' stateless identity. However, many Tibetans defy the state's attempts to exert control over them by migrating and applying for Indian citizenship. Internal discussions over the relative importance of citizenship and statelessness in their exile identities are reflected in this resistance. McConnell (2011) states that although Tibetans do not have legal recognition, they have their own government structure that operates within India. However, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile views them as "Tibetan citizens," while many in the international community view them as "refugees," and the Indian government views them as "foreign guests." This case demonstrates how ideas of legitimacy and sovereignty may be nuanced and dynamic when they transcend national boundaries. According to Houston and Wright (2003), a protracted refugee diaspora and great suffering have resulted from China's control of Tibet. Race, gender, class, and religion have all influenced this diaspora, which is complicated and always changing as a result of identity negotiation. Based on Anand's (2000) work, certain procedures and customs, such as applying history, language, and culture to become a Tibetan, make up the Tibetan identity. Factors shaping Tibetanness include refugee status, projections of the homeland, preservation of culture, Western perceptions, self-perception, the Dalai Lama, host governments, and the desire for continuity. The Tibetan authorities chose restricted acculturation over assimilation, and it is considered patriotic to maintain the refugee status. Giles and Dorjee (2005) examined Tibetan cultural identity by highlighting the timeless importance of Tibetan Buddhism, language, and historical accounts in influencing how Tibetans view themselves and preserve their culture in diasporic societies. Tibetans proactively strive to conserve their culture despite political obstacles and persecution. Phuntsog (1998) studied how Tibetan families preserve their cultural identity through overseas education by creating and participating in programs emphasising language preservation, religious education, and cultural activities. These include Sunday school sessions, community-focused after-school programs, and events that support Tibetan history, language, and religions like Buddhism, all of which operate as psychological buffers and sustain cultural continuity.

TIBETAN REHABILITATION AND STREET VENDING AS A MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

The bitter truth is that when a person loses everything, the Streets always open their arms for them. For many Tibetans, street hawking has emerged as a significant source of income, enabling them to support their families while living in exile (Uddin, 2021). Since Tibetan street vendors in McLeodganj are a vulnerable group of refugees whose lives are closely linked to the local tourism industry, their struggles deserve special attention. Due to their lack of official recognition and legal protection, they are more vulnerable to harassment, eviction, and the ongoing risk of losing their job.

Table 1: The Struggle for Space and Vending

Ward Number	*Ward Name*	*Number of street vendors*	*Permanent Space given for Vending*
3	McLeodganj	273	21

Source: Municipal Corporation of Dharamshala survey report, 2016 & 2024.

Finding of the Report: In October 2020, the Municipal Corporation of Dharamshala opened its first model and provided permanent shops to 21 Tibetan street vendors on Temple Road in McLeodganj. This model increases the collaboration in the third space, which can be a vending space. This collaboration encourages better accessibility, social security, and less vulnerability toward street vendors. Now the street vendors have a permanent space and nobody can evict them from their place. India follows the concept of "Vasudeva Kutumbkam": one earth, one family, and one future. India has welcomed the Tibetans with open arms and provided them space to live, and now India is providing them a source of livelihood through multiple initiatives, and providing them with vending space is one among them (Mariotti et al., 2023).

Table 2: The population of McLeodganj is 3269, based on the census of 2011. Tibetans are being rehabilitated in Dharamshala.

S. No.	*Category of Street Vending*	*Max. Vending Space*
1.	Fruits & Vegetable Seller	5 Feet × 7 Feet
2.	Fast Food & Food Items	5 Feet × 6 Feet
3.	Cloth & Handloom Items	5 Feet × 5 Feet
4.	Home Decor & Handicraft	5 Feet × 5 Feet
5.	Others	5 Feet × 5 Feet

Source: Bylaws for Street vending in Dharamshala, 2021

Regulation and manner of vending in different vending zones in Dharamshala, based on the Bylaws 2016:

TVC (Town Vending Committee) will define vending zones based on road type, width, traffic, and footfall. No area will be completely free for vending; the number of vendors depends on space capacity. Mobile vending is allowed if vendors keep moving and don't block roads or pedestrians. The number of mobile vendors will be limited to one-third of the area's capacity. Mobile vending is only allowed on approved streets by TVC Dharamshala. Vendors must not exceed 2.5% of a ward's population. At least 1 meter of space must be kept clear for pedestrian movement.

The scarcity of space in McLeodganj, exacerbated by its status as a popular tourist destination, poses a significant obstacle to the livelihoods of Tibetan street vendors. Coworking spaces (CWSs), which offer easily accessible workspaces that encourage social cohesion, innovation, and economic activity outside of large urban centers, aid in the reduction of regional disparities and the advancement of rural development (Fai et al., 2024). The majority of coworking spaces are located in metropolitan locations, particularly in knowledge-intensive city centers, according to location patterns; however, the pandemic has accelerated the number of coworking spaces in rural and peripheral places**.** This competition for space often leads to conflicts between vendors and local authorities, as well as among the vendors themselves.

THEORY OF SPACE

Lefebvre identifies three elements essential for the production of space:

Spatial practices: Physical flows and interactions that maintain social continuity. **Representations of space:** Conceptualized, scientist-driven ideas shaping how space is organized and controlled.

Spaces of representation: Lived, meaningful spaces created by inhabitants, embodying human freedom and potential for social transformation. Overall, Lefebvre's framework underscores that society cannot be understood without examining how space is produced, as spaces serve both as conditions and outcomes of social relations, intertwining physical, symbolic, and experiential dimensions of human life (Lefebvre; 1991).

SOLUTION FOR STREET VENDERS (REFUGEES)

The government, local administration, non-governmental organizations, and the Tibetan community itself must work together in a multifaceted strategy to address the issues that the Tibetan street vendors in McLeodganj face.

First thing to do is to acknowledge and validate the street vending as a respectable work by providing vendors with legal protection and access to essential services by issuing them a license and giving them the space to vend. The eviction and threat

should not be done based on a lack of appropriate infrastructure. Recently few street vendors have been given permanent structures by the Municipal Corporation of Dharamshala.

Second, providing vendors skill development training to enhance their skills and granting them access to government welfare schemes for them. This thing will help in boosting their business skills, and accessible microfinance programs like the PMSVANidhi scheme offers them help to generate income through their work.

Second, granting access to capital and training in business development can enable suppliers to enhance their operations and boost revenue. Establishing microfinance programs that give small loans to suppliers, offering instruction in fundamental business skills like accounting, marketing, and inventory control, and making markets and supply chains more accessible are some possible ways to do this.

Third, a more peaceful and encouraging atmosphere for sellers can be created by cultivating social inclusion and cultural understanding, which can aid in bridging the gap between the Tibetan community and the surrounding public. This could involve organizing cultural exchange programs, promoting multilingualism and raising awareness about the contributions of the Tibetan community to the local economy and culture. Non-governmental Organization like the Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution (TCCR) are extensively working in the domains of networking, skill building, developing a collaborative attitude, sensitizing and mitigating the conflicting situations that may arise due to various reasons.

Fourth, engaging vendors in participatory planning processes can guarantee that their issues are being heard and their felt needs are also taken into account in the design and implementation of policies and programs that affect their livelihoods. Annually, various stakeholder meetings are being organised by TCCR. Stakeholders such as police personals, Muncipal Corporation, NGOs representatives such as waste warriors, Youth Groups, environmental & waste management, local vendors, Peoples from Taxi Unions, representatives from Hotel unions, interestingly, various stakeholders comes together to discuss their local issues of spaces, waste management, sensitizing and advocating about various issues such as disaster and waste management also.

Fifth, the government should develop comprehensive relocation programs that take into account the economic and social implications for vendors (Bayatan & Palic, 2020). These programs should provide vendors with alternative locations that are accessible to customers and have the potential to generate income (Oktavia & Kusumadewi, 2021). Additionally, vendors should be provided with financial assistance to help them cover the costs of relocation and setting up their businesses in new locations (Nani, 2020). Moreover, offering training programs focused on

customer care, hygiene, and business development can substantially improve street-food vendors' operational standards and profitability (Mukhola, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Tibetan street vendors in McLeodganj can live in a more sustainable and equitable environment where they can prosper and support the local economy while maintaining their cultural heritage if these problems are approached comprehensively and cooperatively. The local government (commonly known as Panchayat in India) should provide assistance and alternative the needs of the street vendors and provide them with better state of affairs in their daily livelihood, as the grant of affordable capital and establishing an alternative environment (Bayatan & Palic, 2020). The distribution of CS is influenced by the city's semi-polycentric urban form, which favors inner cities over suburban or rural areas (Zhang et al., 2024). The migrated Tibetans in India have drastically improved their Spaces in the Education sector (82% literacy Tibetan Literacy Rate as compared to the Indian Literacy Rate of 72%. Similarly, in the health sector, the famous Cancer Treatment done by the Tibetan doctors in Dharamshala has remarkably shown exemplary achievements by giving service to humanity. Thus, by this amalgamation of Tibetans in the Indian space, showing the new horizon of this diverse culture can prove to be beneficial for all of mankind. Eventually, Street Vendors can flourish well in Dharamshala and may also become tourist attractions, if given more proper Space.

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EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND WAGE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS: A CASE OF MAKHDUMPUR BLOCK, JEHANABAD, BIHAR

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Abstract

Agriculture sector in Bihar has been labour-intensive till recent past. But it has also been facing labour scarcity from beginning of 21st century owing to introduction of technology in tillage and other activities and also to the employment opportunities in MNREGA. However, the non-farm opportunities in rural Bihar are also limited. So, it makes the workforce in rural Bihar to resort to other occupations than agriculture labour and to migrate to other places for livelihood. It makes an urgent imperative to examine the employment conditions and wage pattern of agricultural labourers in Bihar. As such, micro-level case study of villages of two Gram Panchayats Makarpur and Jaganpura of Makdumpur development Block of Jehanabad district was conducted with the help of survey method. The selection of the district and block is governed by the fact that the mainstay of economy of the area is agriculture which serves the livelihood of about 90 percent of the population. The survey results depict that most of the younger males migrate to other places for earning bread. But women of this region remain unemployed in the lean season of agriculture. Thus, it is suggestible that Government should create a special plan for women employment on the regional basis. SGSY may be helpful to provide employment to women.

Keywords: Employment, Labourer, Agriculture, Paddy Bowl, Makdumpur, Rural Bihar.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of poverty and unemployment encompass various socio-economic groups and strata in India. But it was well recognized since the very beginning of planned economic development of the country that agricultural labour is the poorest among the poor (Thorner and Thorner: 1968). The objective of raising

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the level of livings of agricultural labourers was assumed to be fulfilled by the advancement of modernization of agriculture in particular. With the start of the green revolution it was hoped that intensive and extensive farming along with rising productivity would take care of employment and wages, and thus of the level of living of agricultural labour (Som: 2005 and Jodhka: 1994)).

With the rising debate over such expectations and perceiving the emerging ground reality in the way otherwise, the plan of spreading the green revolution was supported by launching the programme of direct attack on poverty to improve the level of living of weaker sections in general and agricultural labour in particular. Various schemes were launched under the programme of direct attack on poverty (Narain: 2014). These were added and improved from time to time. But it was realized that the spread of the green revolution is not advancing at the same pace in all the regions of the country. Agricultural labourers from backward agricultural regions like Bihar, Orissa, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and others migrating to the developed agricultural regions of the country for wage work in agricultural operations (Shankar: 1993). In the wake of this phenomenon the problems of backward agricultural regions and of agricultural labour households therein were getting compounded (Bardhan:1986). But with the passage of time the spread of green revolution began to be realized even in these agriculturally backward regions up to a considerable extent and was well reflected by development of infrastructure, diffusion of technology and in turn the rise in agricultural productivity (Shankar: 1993).

PROFILE OF THE STUDIED AREA

Our research presents some contrast between conditions relating to employment of rural labourers in two small regions, lying at different levels of agriculture development in south Bihar. The results are based on a field survey carried out by the author. The areas were chosen to provide a contrast between relatively developed rural areas (irrigated by canal) and a relatively backward rural area (rain fed area). First of all, the district and development block were chosen purposely in view of cost saving. Then taking the level of growth of irrigation facilities as the main instrument to determine the technological level of agricultural development, the twenty two village *panchayats* of the *Makhdumpur* Development Block were divided into two parts – high and low level of agricultural development. ***Makarpur*** and **Jagpura** village ***panchayats*** were selected from each category by the lottery method. Makarpur has poor irrigation potential whereas Jagpura has sufficient irrigation potential. Akouna from Makarpur village panchayat and *Kharaka from Jagpura* village *panchayat* were selected by lottery method for this study. 120 households were sampled from each village on the basis of random sampling method. The sampled respondents were interviewed with the help of Interview

schedule. The period of field survey was in the agricultural year 2021-23. The district of Jehanabad is known as 'Paddy Bowl'. Apart from such indicators as cropping pattern, cropping intencity, irrigation facilities and HYV seeds, use of machines like harvester, tractors and other agricultural equipment etc. were taken into consideration.

BASIC FEATURES OF SELECTED AREAS

It is shown in table 1 that the total geographical area of Akouna is 1172 hectares, of which 1026 hectares are cultivating area and 1034 hectares i.e. 95.21 per cent is irrigated. Village Kharaka spreads over 207 hectares and its 192 hectares area is cultivable of which 192 hectares, i.e. 100 per cent is irrigated.

Table 1: Land and Demography of the villages

Facilities	*Akouna*	*Kharaka*
Total Geographical Area (ha)	1172	207
Cultivating Land	1086	192
(i) Irrigated	1034	192
(ii) Non-irrigated	52	0
Area not available for Cultivation (ha)	86	0
Population (2001)	3589*	1850
Sex Ratio (2001)	919	873
Household Size (2001)	6.0	6.9
Schedule Caste Population (2001)	1309	720
Literacy rate (2001)	41.4	57.8
Male Literacy rate	53.4	70.4
Female Literacy rate	27.2	44.0
Work Participation Rate (2011)	41.2	36.2

Source: Census of India, 2011

Total population of village Akouna (added to two non-revenue village Math Bhagwanpur and Harnitand) was 3599 in 2001 while total population of Kharaka was 1850. Moreover, the sex ratio of Akouna and Kharaka in 2001 was 919 and 873 respectively. The household size of Akouna was 6.0 while 6.9 in Kharaka village. The literacy rate of Kharaka was higher than the Akouna village. It was 41.4 per cent in Akouna and 57.8 per cent in Kharaka. Literacy rate of both the villages was lower from the district level. The work participation rate of Akouna and Kharaka was 41.2 and 36.2 per cent respectively.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Main Workers by Different Work Category

Category	*Bihar*	*Jehanabad*	*Makhdumpur*	*Akouna*	*Khara-ka*
Cultivators	32.2	40.9	21.5	21.3	17.8
Agricultural Labourers	42.8	29.9	20.3	64.0	49.1
Workers in household industries	3.6	3.5	4.9	1.2	3.2
Other workers	21.4	25.8	53.2	13.4	29.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 2 displays the percentage of main workers by workers category. Percentage of cultivators as a main worker in Bihar is 32.2. It is 40.9 per cent in district Jehanabad, 21.5 per cent in Makhdumpur block, 21.3 per cent in village Akouna and 17.8 percent in village Kharaka. Percentage of cultivators in both the villages is low from the state, district and block level. Percentages of agriculture labourers in both the villages is higher from the state, district and block level while the percentage of workers in household industries in both the villages is low from the state, district and block level. Percentage of other workers at the state level is 21.4 per cent while it is 53.2 per cent at the block level. It is 13.4 per cent in Akouna and 29.9 per cent in Kharaka.

In view of the social infrastructural development position of both the villages can be regarded as satisfactory. Facility of the railway station and bus station is 5 km from Akouna and 8 km from Kharaka Police station is 5 km from Akouna and 8km from Kharaka. Block headquarters and Nationalized Bank which is 5 km from the Akouna and 8 km from the Kharaka. Primary and middle school are available in both the villages

Table 3: Social Infrastructure Facilities: Distance from the village

Facilities	*Akouna*	*Kharaka*
Railway Station	5	12
Bus Station	5	4
Bus service	3	4
Police Station	7	10
Nationalized Bank	7	5
Rural Regional Bank	7	5
Co-operative Bank	7	10
Post Office	4	1
PHC/Sub-center	7	4

Facilities	*Akouna*	*Kharaka*
Primary School	0	0
Middle School	3	3
High School	7	2
Veterinary Dispensary Center	7	10
Block Headquarter	7	11
Link Road	0	0

LAND USE PATTERN

Akouna is a village of 170 households of almost two thirds to the Schedule Caste such as *Paswan* and *Pasi*. More than 90 per cent of this group of households is primarily dependent on earning from wage labour in the agricultural and non-agricultural sector as a casual labour. *Mostly they work as construction labourers or Raj Mistry.* They are predominantly landless owning few kathas of land and sharecropping is the main source of their livelihood. The total numbers of OBC households are15 in which *Baniya* and carpenter are higher than other EBC households.

Kharaka is a village of 225 households, of which about half of the scheduled castes *Paswan*, *Mushar, Dhobi*, *Pasi*, *Chamar* and others. More than 90 per cent of this group of households is primarily dependent on earning from wage labour agricultural and non-agriculture. *Rajput, Pandit* constitute the most numerous castes in the village, accounting for 26 households. These are predominantly landowning households with cultivation their main source of income. However, there is variation in the size of owned and operated holding. OBC such as *Yadav, Baniya, Nai* and carpenter households are similarly distributed to the poor and middle peasants of the village. Those belonging to traditional service castes such as *Prajapati, Nai, Nonia* and Carpenter accounted for another 19 households relying on a combination of jajmani occupations, agricultural and other manual labour and cultivation of very small holdings.

Table 4: Landholding wise Distribution of Village Households

Landholding Size	*Akouna*		*Kharaka*	
	No. of household	*% of total*	*No. of household*	*% of total*
Landless	152	39.69	83	28.42
Marginal	182	47.52	128	43.84
Small	25	6.01	43	14.73
Small-medium	12	3.13	26	8.90
Medium	9	2.35	9	3.08

Landholding Size	*Akouna*		*Kharaka*	
	No. of household	*% of total*	*No. of household*	*% of total*
Large	5	1.31	3	1.03
Total	170	100.00	225	100.00

The tables 4 and 5 show the agrarian structure of both the villages. Out of 383 households of village Akouna 39.69 per cent are landless; 47.52 per cent have marginal holdings, of an average size of 0.49 hectare and own 31.09 per cent of land of the village. Smallholders constitute 6.01 per cent of households with an average size of holding 1.66 hectares and own 13.14 per cent of total land. Share of households having semi-medium, medium and large households constitute 3.13, 2.35 and 1.31 per cent of total households.

Table 5: Distribution of Land among different holding Sizes

Landholding Size	*Akouna*			*Kharaka*		
	% of house-hold	*% of total area*	*Average holding (ha)*	*% of house-hold*	*% of total area*	*Average holding (ha)*
Marginal	78.89	31.09	0.49	61.24	11.51	0.27
Small	9.96	13.14	1.66	20.57	22.27	1.53
Small-me-dium	5.19	13.28	3.23	12.44	26.15	2.98
Medium	3.90	20.05	6.50	4.31	18.98	6.25
Large	2.16	22.45	13.10	1.44	21.09	20.83
Total	100.0	100.0	0.76	100.0	100.00	1.02

Per. - Per cent

There fall 13.28, 20.05 and 22.45 per cent of the total land under these three categories. The average land of these three categories is 3.23 hectares, 6.00 hectares and 13.10 hectares respectively. In the village Kharaka out of 292 households 28.92 per cent are landless, 43.84 per cent have marginal holdings who own 11.57 per cent of total land holding with an average size 0.27 hectares. Households have a small holding of 14.73 per cent and possess 26.15 per cent of land with an average size of 1.53 hectares. There are 8.90 per cent households with semi-medium holdings. They account for 26.15 per cent of the land with an average size of 2.98 hectares. The percentage of medium and large holdings size is 3.08 and 1.03 per cent who possess 18.98 and 21.09 per cent of total land with an average size of 6.25 and 20.83 hectares.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES

Table 6: Caste-wise Distribution of Households according to landholding Sizes

Landholding Size	*Akouna*			*Kharaka*		
	General	*OBC*	*SC*	*General*	*OBC*	*SC*
Landless	–	33.3 (40)	75.6 (112)	–	16.1 (14)	–
Marginal	–	63.3 (76)	21.6 (32)	1.6 (1)	62.06 (54)	50.0 (73)
Small	–	3.3 (4)	2.7 (4)	38.9 (23)	19.5 (17)	2.1 (3)
Small-medium	–	–	–	38.9 (23)	2.30 (2)	0.9 (1)
Medium	–	–	–	15.2 (9)	–	–
Large	–	–	–	5.1 (3)	–	–
Total	–	100 (120)	100 (148)	100 (59)	100 (87)	100 (146)

Note: Figure in parenthesis is numbers, Per. -- Percent

Table 6 reveals the distribution of households according to landholding and caste-wise. None of the households of the General caste is landless in both the villages. The percentage of landless of OBC is 33.33 per cent in Akouna and 16.09 per cent in Kharaka while the percentage of landless of SC is 75.68 per cent in Akouna and 47.26 per cent in Kharaka. Figure of landless SC in Akouna is about 1.5 times higher than Kharaka. In the village Kharaka 1.69 per cent of households of General caste have marginal holding while 62.06 per cent of OBC and 50.00 percent of SC. Percentage of small holding in Akouna is 3.33% of OBC and 2.70% of SC. The percentage of households which have small holding in Kharaka is 38.92 percent of General, 19.54 per cent of OBC and only 2.05 per cent of SC. None of the households of OBC and SC have more than a smallholding in village Akouna. In the village of Kharaka, 38.98 per cent of households of General Caste have small-medium holdings. It is 2.30 per cent for OBC and 0.68 percent for SC in Kharaka. Only General castes have medium and large holding size in Kharaka. The trend is in congruence with the study of Singh (2011).

Table 7: Caste-wise Distribution of Land

Caste Category	*Akouna*			*Kharaka*		
	Per. of household	*Ave. Holding (ha)*	*Std.*	*Per. of household*	*Ave. Holding (ha)*	*Std.*
General	–	–	–	20.2 (59)	3.72	4.48
OBC	29.4 (120)	0.29	0.35	29.8 (87)	0.60	0.69
SC	70.6 (148)	0.15	0.33	50.0 (146)	0.13	0.38
Total	100 (383)	0.76	1.80	100 (292)	1.01	2.49

Note: Figure in parenthesis is numbers, Per. – Percent, Ave—Average, Std.- Standard deviation

Table 7 presents the average landholding among different castes. Average landholding per household is 0.76 hectares in Akouna and 1.01 hectares in Kharaka

with the standard deviation of 1.80 and 2.49 respectively. Standard deviation is higher than the average of both the villages that means average is not significant.

Table 8: Percentage of sample household which member works as a casual wage labour

Category	*Akouna*	*Kharaka*	*Total*
Non-labour household	30.0 (36)	56.7 (68)	43.3 (104)
Labour household	70.0 (84)	43.3 (52)	57.7 (136)
Total	100 (120)	100(120)	100 (240)

Table 8 presents the percentage of labourer households in the total sample household. Percentage of sample households in the total sample household is 57.7. It is 70.0 per cent in Akouna and 43.3 per cent in Kharaka. In the village Kharaka, the percentage of labourer households in the sample is less than Akouna. A few households of Kharaka work as a pure tenant farmer that is not included in the labourer household. Most labourers of both the villages are casual labourers. They perform both agricultural and non-agricultural work that depends on the season of work. In the agricultural season, they work in agricultural work after that work in the non-agricultural sector. In Akouna, most of the residents work as Raj Mistry

EMPLOYMENT FEATURES

Table 9 presents the total employment of casual labour in both the villages. Casual labourers of Akouna get 216.90 mandays employment in a year while labourers of Kharaka get only 137.09 mandays. Casual labourer of Akouna village works 64.2 mandays in agriculture sector and 152.7 mandays in non-agriculture sector while these figures for Kharaka are 34.8 and 107.5 labour mandays respectively. A casual labourer of Akouna gets more employment than a casual labourer of Kharaka.

Table 9: Distribution of total Employment

[Per labour man days]

Village		*Agriculture Sector*	*Non- agriculture Sector*	*Total*
Akouna	Ave.	64.2	152.7	216.9
	Std. Dev	27.1	87.9	94.0
	Skew.	–0.2	–0.8	–0.8
Kharaka	Ave.	34.8	107.5	142.4
	Std. Dev	22.8	78.3	87.5
	Skew.	0.3	0.1	0.1
Total	Ave.	53.0	135.4	188.4
	Std. Dev	29.2	86.9	98.2
	Skew.	0.1	–0.4	–0.4

Ave. – Average, Std. Dev- Std. Deviation, Skew. – Skewness

Table 10: Percentage Distribution of Total Employment

[Per labour man days]

Village	*Agriculture Sector*		*Non- agriculture Sector*		*Total*	
	Average	*Percentage*	*Average*	*Percentage*	*Average*	*Percentage*
Akouna	64.2	29.6	152.7	70.4	216.9	100.0
Kharaka	34.8	24.5	107.5	75.5	142.4	100.0
Total	**53.0**	**28.1**	**135.4**	**71.9**	**188.4**	**100.0**

Percentage of employment in agriculture sector of both the villages is 28.1 while percentage of non-agriculture sector is 71.9. In the village Akouna, it is 29.6 percent for agriculture and 70.4 percent for the non-agriculture sector. Percentage share of agriculture sector in Kharaka in total employment is 24.5 while percentage share for non-agriculture sector is 75.5. Labourer of Akouna is more beneficial to get employment in agricultural and non-agricultural sector; While Kharaka is fully irrigated by canal and highly productive area.

Table 11: Distribution of Employment in Agriculture Sector

[Per labour man days]

Village		*Kharif Season*	*Rabi Season*	*Total*
Akouna	Ave.	54.4	9.8	64.2
	Std. Dev	23.4	7.2	27.1
	Skew.	–0.1	0.0	–0.2
Kharaka	Ave.	31.2	3.7	34.8
	Std. Dev	19.3	6.8	22.8
	Skew.	0.2	1.7	0.3
Total	Ave.	45.5	7.5	53.0
	Std. Dev	24.6	7.6	29.2
	Skew.	0.2	0.5	0.1

Ave.– Average, Std. Dev- Std. Deviation, Skew.– Skewness

There are two types of popular agricultural seasons: Kharif and Rabi season. Employment in the agricultural sector has been discussed according to agricultural season-wise. Agricultural labourers of both the villages work 45.5 man days in Kharif season and 7.5 man days in Rabi season. There is wider variation between both the villages to get employment in agriculture. Agricultural Labour of Akouna village works 54.4 man days in Kharif season and 9.8 days in Rabi season with standard deviation 23.4 and 7.2. These figures for Kharaka are 31.2 in Kharif and 3.7 mandays in Rabi season with standard deviation 19.3 and 6.8.

Table 12: Percentage Distribution of Employment in Agriculture Sector

[Per labour man days]

Village	*Kharif Season*		*Rabi Season*		*Total*	
	Average	*%*	*Average*	*%*	*Average*	*%*
Akouna	54.4	84.7	9.8	15.3	64.2	100.0
Kharaka	31.2	89.4	3.7	10.6	34.8	100.0
Total	**45.5**	**85.9**	**7.5**	**14.1**	**53.0**	**100.0**

Table 12 presents the percentage of employment of agricultural laborers in the agriculture sector. Percentage of employment in the Kharif season is 85.9 per cent of total where it is 84.7 per cent in Akouna and 89.4 per cent in Kharaka. Percentage of employment in the Rabi season of total agricultural employment is very low. It is 15.3 percent in Akouna and 10.6 per cent in Kharaka.

In paddy cultivation, men and women work together in different agricultural operations such as transplanting, weeding, harvesting and threshing. Moreover, irrigation, tilling and hoeing are done by only men in this region. Transplanting of paddy crops is done by the help of male and female. This operation is divided into two parts; one part is done by male and the second part is performed by a female person. Male workers get engaged in uprooting the seed-plants and carry it to field. Female workers only sow the seedlings called *Ropani* in local language.

Table 13: Agricultural Operation-wise Distribution of Employment in Kharif Season

[Per labour man-days]

Village		*Tilling*	*Sowing*	*Weeding*	*Reaping*	*Threshing*	*Irrigation*	*Total*
Akouna	Ave.	4.5	12.5	10.8	18.4	7.2	0.9	54.4
	Std. Dev	3.5	9.0	5.6	12.2	7.3	1.9	23.4
	Skew.	2.1	0.3	2.7	-0.2	0.9	3.1	-0.1
Kharaka	Ave.	2.8	7.8	8.2	8.6	3.6	0.3	31.2
	Std. Dev	5.0	5.7	6.3	8.8	4.7	1.0	19.3
	Skew.	1.5	0.1	0.9	0.6	1.2	4.1	0.2
Total	**Ave.**	**3.9**	**10.7**	**9.8**	**14.7**	**5.8**	**0.7**	**45.5**
	Std. Dev	**4.2**	**8.2**	**6.0**	**12.0**	**6.6**	**1.7**	**24.6**
	Skew.	**1.5**	**0.6**	**1.6**	**0.2**	**1.2**	**3.5**	**0.2**

Ave.– Average, Std. Dev– Std. Deviation, Skew. – Skewness

Tilling and hoeing is the beginning work of the paddy crop or Kharif season. This agricultural operation is done by only male people. A casual agricultural labour works 3.9 man days in this operation. It is 4.5 in Akouna and 2.8 in Kharaka. In the traditional system, tilling was worked by manual workers with the help of

oxen. Agricultural labour got more employment in this operation. Now, tilling is done with the help of tractors. A few households of Akouna village have a pair of oxen and they work only by themselves. Agricultural labour gets employment in hoeing operations.

Sowing and transplanting is the second stage process of paddy. It is done by the help of male and female together. It provides 21.58 per cent or about one-fifth employment of Kharif season. This operation provides 12.5 man days in the Akouna village and 7.8 man days in Kharaka. The labour of Akouna and Kharaka is affected by the migrant labour from other district. Presently a new trend has started in this village. Migrant labourers come especially for this operation. They are called *Ropana* in the local language. This is a male person who does all the operations of transplanting efficiently. Weeding, a part of agricultural operation, provides average 9.8 man days employment in Kharif season. It is 10.8 man days in Akouna and 8.2 man days in Kharaka. Farmer of both villages use herbicides to kill the weeds. Weeds grow faster in water scarcity areas/period, hence man-days required is greater in Akouna.

Table 15 depicts that average employment for both the villages is 135.4 man days in the non-agriculture sector. It is 152.7 man days for Akouna and 107.5 man days for Kharaka. Labourers of both the villages get more employment in the construction sector amounting to 108.9 man days for both the villages. Labourers of Akouna get more employment than Kharaka. It is 92.7 per cent for Akouna and 52.1 per cent in Kharaka.

Table 15: Distribution of Employment in Non-agriculture Sector

[Per labour man days]

Village		*Construction*	*Gov. sector*	*Other*	*Total*
Akouna	Ave.	141.6	3.2	7.9	152.7
	Std. Dev	80.6	7.2	27.7	87.9
	Skew.	–1.0	2.5	3.4	–0.8
Kharaka	Ave.	56.0	30.1	21.0	107.5
	Std. Dev	60.5	29.5	57.0	78.3
	Skew.	0.7	0.2	2.9	0.1
Total	Ave.	108.9	13.5	12.9	135.4
	Std. Dev	84.4	23.1	41.7	86.9
	Skew.	–0.2	1.6	3.7	–0.4

Ave. – Average, Std. Dev – Std. Deviation, Skew. – Skewness

PATTERN OF WAGE RATES IN AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS

The wage rates in agriculture have been rising with the price-rise and MNREGA, but much below the Minimum Wage limits. Apart from this, the difference of wage rates depend on crop and sex, meaning that labour intensive crops and male labourers get higher rates in both the villages. However, similarity was found in mode of payment of wages in agricultural operations in both the villages, which was in kind for food grains crops and generally in cash for other agricultural operations. It was also noticed that wages slightly increased at peak agricultural seasons and sometimes for farmers of far off villages. It was also reported that some large farmers of their own village paid lower wages than the market rates because of their capacity to offer more work even after the peak seasons. It was also observed that take-home wages mainly in form of cash and sometimes in shape of food. Male labour offered square meals as well as breakfast while female labour offered only breakfast.

Hoeing is one of the agricultural operations that are performed by only male labour in both the villages; wages of this operation is paid in cash at the rate of Rs. 500 per man/day along with square meal and breakfast. The same wage rate is paid in transplanting agricultural operation to the male labour whereas female labour gets only Rs. 400 per woman/day for transplanting. Mostly threshing and winnowing the crop is performed by male agricultural labour in both the villages. Wages of this operation are paid in cash or in kind. Harvesting the crop is one of the main agricultural operations that are performed male and female together in both the villages. Wages of this operation is paid in kind without any meal and breakfast which is one bundle in eight to ten bundles of harvested crops that was one bundle in sixteen bundles before 1995. Wages in agricultural operation weeding is low from all agricultural operations. The working time of weeding is only four hours. Wage variations match with the findings of the study by Krishnan (1991).

As it is mentioned that agricultural wages in both villages and almost in all operations except harvesting the crop, is paid in cash. Agricultural wages in both the villages are affected by the MNREGs wages. Before enacting the MNREGA, agricultural wages were paid in kind in both the villages.

WAGE RATES IN NON-AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS

Wages in non-agricultural occupations were usually higher than that of agriculture. There were no noticeable variations in wages in the same type of work in the region. But there were variations within the region depending upon the type of work, place of work – like rural or urban, level of skills-unskilled, semi skilled and skilled work. Similarly, wage differentials 'also exist on the basis of sex, nature of work organisation like legal or illegal, nature of labour contract, i.e. directly hired or

through middle man. Along with this, types of work available in the region is not the same because of the difference in natural endowments, location of the village and employment generating government programmes running in vicinity. Hence, labourers of this region performed different types of works in different proportions. Mostly non-agricultural work is performed by the male person. If labour works in a non-agricultural occupation, gets wages in money along with one time meal. Sometimes, it also depends on the contract of employer and labour. But labour also gets the prevailing wage of this occupation. Construction is the most important sector that is providing more employment to the casual labour. If a casual labourer worked in a village, got Rs. 500 per man day in cash while in the nearby town, got Rs. 600 per man day. Skilled casual labour of the construction sector got Rs. 600 per man day or more.

CONCLUSION

Over the years the land utilization and crop patterns, as well as the farming system in the villages have undergone significant changes. The labour requirement for agriculture has increased to some extent, but not much. Employment opportunities in the agriculture sector also are also affected by the use of machines and herbicides in this sector. The non-agricultural sector in the village provides only limited opportunities. The labour demand is not adequate to provide sufficient work to the existing rural labour force in the villages. There is thus shortage of employment opportunities and uncertainty of work. This situation has prompted some workers to shift occupations and some to shift places. It is mostly the younger males who go out of the village for work.

Casual labour of both the villages gets more employment in Kharif season than Rabi season in agriculture. Casual labour of Akouna gets more man days in the agricultural and non-agricultural sector in comparison. Casual labourers of Akouna take benefits of transportation and expand the sector of construction work at distant towns and district headquarters. Paddy and wheat crops are harvested by the combine harvester in Kharaka that directly affect the employment of casual labour in agricultural operations. The performance of MNREGs is better in Kharaka than in Akouna. The Number of MNREGs labourers are more in Kharaka than in Akouna and also get more employment in this scheme. After launching the MNREGs, wage rate in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors has increased.

Women of this region are unemployed in the lean season of agriculture. Government should create a special plan for women employment on region basis. SGSY may be helpful to provide employment to women.

MNREGs is the only government scheme in the rural region that provides direct employment to weaker sections. It is necessary to increase the awareness

towards detailed understanding of the rule and regulation of this scheme to find its said objectives. Sentient and socially effective persons, NGOs and even educational institutions may be helpful to spread awareness about this scheme.

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BHARTIYE PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

We know that nationalism is the state of mind of the masses of a given society. For last few decades the idea of cultural nationalism in Bharat attempted to influence the psyche of masses to counter the democratic-socialist ideology and civic nationalism in order to acquire power since 1990s which has been aggravated during the last ten years. We cannot deny that in India, the idea of 'nationalism' has been carrying changing paradigms over the periods. Prior to independence 'nationalism' depicted the fight against the colonial rulers and pleaded for indigenous political, social and economic systems to be adopted, viz. Patriotism, Bose's call for liberation war, Gandhi's Swadeshi movement and Buniyadi Siksha (basic education) scheme etc. Besides our nationalist leaders fought for 'home rule' through our cultural ethos (Tilak). With passage of time, the socialist ideology mixed with liberal democracy became the nationalist cause. In the mid1990s the idea of cultural nationalism was advocated by ruling BJP in which swadeshi, cultural identity, traditional wisdom, preservation of heritage etc. were emphasised. This was facilitated by Mandal-Kamandal politics. Since the second decade of 21st century, the aggressive advocacy of recognising Indian traditions, culture and Hinduism has acquired significance in Indian politics. Generally cultural nationalism reflects national identity defined by shared sense of cultural traditions and symbols of national pride. This situation makes an urgent imperative to understand the 'cultural nationalism' in the context of Indian social change and political agenda.

Keywords: Nationalism, Imagined Community, Religious Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism, Hindu Nationalism, Aggressive Approach, Bharat.

UNDERSTANDING NATIONALISM AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Nationalism is a concept that is difficult to reach at any definite connotation because any definition will legitimate some claims and de-legitimate others. A school of

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scholars argues that the terms nation, nation state and nationalism are shrouded in ambiguity. Another school emphasise different aspects of nationalism: ethnicity, language, religion, culture, citizenship, etc. Nationalism can be understood as an idea, a sentiment, or an action or a doctrine or an ideological movement or a political principle. Every nation has its specific conception of nationalism, some believe in proximity of religion, some in ethnicity, some in geographical, some in cultural proximity for its nationalism.

Very interesting to note that some scholars call it as a psyche of imagined communities. Benedict Anderson (1983) advocated that nationalism is nothing but a socially-constructed imagined community. Anderson focuses on the way media creates imagined communities in shaping an individual's social psyche. Anderson analyses the written word, a tool used by churches, authors, and media companies (notably books, newspapers, and magazines), as well as governmental tools such as the map, the census, and the museum. These tools were all built to target and define a mass audience in the public sphere through dominant images, ideologies, and language. Anderson explores the racist and colonial origins of these practices before explaining a general theory that demonstrates how contemporary governments utilize these same practices. Anderson argues that nationalist claims were not rooted in ancient history rather the nation is the product of consolidation of modern political interests and regimes. This trend gradually spread from western politics to rest of the world. It all happened because of decline of great religious communities and local elites used to communicate with them for organising people in political units.

The history of cultural nationalism begins in 18th-century Europe. A variety of developments in the realms of ideas, culture and politics converge. The rise of a historicist belief in the possibility of progress was a crucial ingredient in the emergence of cultural nationalism. Smith (1990) while discussing nationalism, advocates that the capacity for cultural patterns to endure in the face of social change forms nationalism, he further acknowledges that they can undergo rapid change. Here Smith attempts to deviate from an innate collective to a wholly modern ideology conjured up by enterprising elites and imposed upon the masses. National cultures take shape through a process of reinterpretation and rediscovery rather than mere invention – a process that is aimed at the regeneration of communities and as a regressive force. Smith while discussing geo-cultural trends of nationalism, mentions about ethnic autonomy in which asserting the rights of specific cultural-historical populations against other such population are incorporated. Secondly, he argues that re-traditionalisation as the quest for a politically effective cultural identity can be understood. The third category of cultural nationalism, to Smith, is territorial nations among culturally heterogenous populations with composite political unity.

Thus, cultural nationalism slightly differs from political nationalism. The significance of cultural nationalism is in the construction and dissemination of the ideas, myths and symbols of national communities that helps in construct a sense of shared subjectivity but with symbolic contents. Whereas political nationalism rests on objectivity and draw upon in their struggle for political and territorial autonomy. Cultural nationalism enters people's collective consciousness to become a part of everyday ideas and practices. It relates to cultural struggle and transformed into a societal contest.

BHARATIYE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

If we look back in ancient period, Vedic system relied upon idea of *Varnashram* and *Purusharth* as the guiding principles of the social, cultural, economic and political organisation of life. Vedic literature provides two-pronged cultural unity through – love and respect to motherland like land, mountain, rivers and water, air etc. and *characher jagat* i.e. movable or unmovable living things like human beings, animal world, trees and plants etc. In religious epics like Ramayan mentions the superiority of mother and mother land; better than any other place of wealth and luxury *जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरियसी* (the mother land is better than the heaven). Religious literature portrays the homeland not just as a geographical location, but as a sacred entity, a nurturing mother, and a place where one's duty (*dharma*) is fulfilled. In Hindu religious literature, love for the motherland acts as a unifying, transformative force, encouraging citizens to move beyond self-interest and act with the highest duty to protect and advance their country, seeing it as a divine trust. Kautilya, though, did not portray motherland as a sentimental emotion, yet places profound commitment of the ruler to protect the people and the state (*Janpad*) and ensure its prosperity and unity. The king is considered to have duty-bound devotion to welfare of the peopleBut the historical experience derived from centuries show that it subjugated social, cultural, economic and political life of Indian people bring forth the fact that culture, as a key factor in promoting unity and solidarity among different social groups, has become only a wishful thinking. Thus, it is imperative to throw light on the understanding the ideas of thinkers of modern time.

In 19th century, the Indian thinkers perceived cultural nationalism in the context of love to motherland and Indian spiritual ethos. Two names are worth mentioning in this context – namely, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and Swami Vivekanand. Bankim's patriotic literature, especially Anand Math acquired significance in last quarter 19th century. His song, Vande Mataram which became the Rashtriye Gan explains the nature of cultural nationalism. The stanzas of the song praises the mother land and its features.

वंदे मातरम्!! सुजलाम्, सुफलाम्, मलयज शीतलाम् सस्य श्यामलाम् मातरम्
शुभ्र ज्योतसना, पुलकित यामिनि, फुल्ल कुशुमित द्रुमदल शोभनीम!!
सुहासिनिम, सुमधुरभाशीनीम् सुखदाम् वरदाम् मातरम्!! वन्दे मातरम्

(Mother, I bow to thee! Rich with thy hurrying streams, Bright with thy orchard gleams, Cool with thy winds of delight, Green fields waving, Mother of might, Mother thee.

Glory of moonlight dreams, Over thy branches and lordly streams, Clad in thy blossoming trees, Mother, giver of ease,Laughing low and sweet! Mother, I kiss thy feet,Speaker sweet and low! Mother, to thee I bow.)

These two stanzas of the song explain the qualities of motherland as the symbol of our culture.

Swami Vivekanand dwells up on nationalism as a spiritual, inclusive, and humanist philosophy centered on the regeneration of India through cultural pride, service to the masses, and strength of character. He believed India had a spiritual mission to teach the world, emphasizing self-reliance, uplifting the poor, and viewing the motherland as a deity.

BHARTIYE PERSPECTIVES: 20TH CENTURY ON WARDS

Before we discuss the present pleadings of Indian perspective of cultural nationalism, it is essential to draw distinction between nation and state as perceived by our nationalist leaders. Deen Dayal Upadhaya clearly said that nation is an organic entity which comes into existence of its own. It is not created, but a nation creates institutions. Nation consists of several institutions and state is one of them. It is important but not supreme. It is to be based on *Dharma. Dharma* is sovereign. *Dharma* is depository of nation's soul and should permeate all its institutions. Fundamental principles of dharma are eternal and universal. But they are not rigid and need to be adapted to changing times and place. To him Indian nationalism is the universalistic and unifying dharma-centric world view and life vision sustained by the *Sanatana dharma*.

Emphasising national identity and the necessity of national awakening Pt Deen Dayal Upadhaya was against western type of narrow nationalism. His idea of nationalism was cultural, based on the principle of dharma which is the sustaining principle of the entire cosmos. As nation is an organic whole, it is to function in harmony and cooperation with the entire cosmos. He rejected the idea of regional consciousness and advocated common national consciousness widening into cosmic consciousness. Pointing out the significance of national consciousness he maintained that there should of course be political independence, but it becomes meaningful only in the context of national identity and cultural independence.

Under alien subjugation, a nation, like individuals becomes a prey to numerous ills when its natural instincts get disregarded or mutilated and perverted. He argued that the diseased organs are to be amputated and healthy ones are to be nourished. He averred that it was essential that we think about our own national identity. Without this identity there is no meaning of independence, nor can independence become the instrument of progress and happiness. As long as we are unaware of our national identity, we cannot recognise and develop all our potentialities. Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya talks of *chiti* which comprehends individual consciousness, national consciousness and cosmic consciousness. *Chiti* provides self-identity and autonomy to all these. It is the animating principle. Upadhyaya particularly emphasised *Chiti* of a nation, calling it as the soul of a nation

The other stalwart of Indian cultural nationalism Veer Damodas Sawarkar was the prominent trailblazers of Hindutva and Hindu Rastra in India. V.D Savarkar formulated the idea of nation on the basis of kinship, communal identity and religious affinity. His perception of nation was an amalgamation of territoriality and cultural nationalism. The central argument of his version of nation was based on the identity of Hindu and Hindutva. He envisioned of a Hindu Rastra to be established in India. He considered Hindus not only a nation but also a race-jati. The word jati...means a brotherhood, a race determined by a common origin, possessing a common. V.D. Savarkar, the architect of Hindu nationalism argues that the relational concepts of glory and humiliation were at the heart of actualizing 'Hindu-ness' or Hindutva as a sovereign political category. He believed in daring and valour', even helping him to smuggle letters out of the prison. Savarkar was staunch believer in Hindu Rashtra and considered Hinduism as a political entity Bharat.

Both Deen Dayal Upadhaya and Savarkar are kept in strong rightist thinkers and believers in Hinduism and Sanatan dharm as political entity. Savarkar does not allow other religion in Bharatiye political system than Hindu as a nation. Pt D D Upadhayay considered the diversity of culture as national agenda whereas Savarkar did not advocate to allow other religions to share political power.

BHARTIYE PERSPECTIVE: MODERATE APPROACH

In post independent India, Atal Bihari Vajpai was the first proponent of cultural nationalism based on Hinduism. He recognised that India is a country whose traditions are timeless, whose cultures are borderless, and whose values are ageless. He made fervent appeals to Indians and Pakistanis to leave the murky past behind and embrace a future of cooperation and amity. It was this 'Indianness' that helped Vajpayee conquer the hearts of people across the border too. Vajpayee's brand of Hindutva, however, was a different one. It is well-known that Vajpayee

condemned the Godhra (2002) incident and advised to follow 'Raj Dharma' stating that the meaning of the term should be 'self-evident'. He believed that Bharat is full of diversities including cultural diversity like variety of languages, of faiths, of communities, of modes of living, and schools and styles of literature and art. This diversity reflects the abundance of our national life, and needs to be preserved and promoted. He blended the three principles in cultural nationalism such as, culture (one nation one culture), positive secularism and swadeshi economy. Vajpaiji interlinked these principles in the rubric of Hindutva ideology and RSS. In the election manifesto of BJP in 1984 under his leadership reflects the noble ideology like fair elections, justice, human rights, freedom of expression, health and education but Hinduism appeared only once.

With passage of time situation demanded special emphasis on Hindu culturism, especially after Babri Masjid incident. Vajpayee balanced his political beliefs with the considerations of realpolitik is a true lesson in governance. He represents the real possibility of a right-wing party promoting a completely non-communal and liberal agenda that is based on prosperity and development. When Vajpai acquired power in late 1990s, he attempted to induce Indian culture, heritage and Hinduism in politics. This was reflected in a document named National Curriculum Frame Work for Secondary Education 2000 in which it was strongly pleaded that education of religions, respect to nationalist leaders and cultural heritage should be ingrained in syllabus of secondary education. This curriculum framework was criticised nationwide and BJP was dislodged from power.

BHARTIYE PERSPECTIVE: AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

After demolition of Babri Masjid, the so called '*Kamandal* politics' gradually spread, however, the introduction of Mandal Commission recommendations by V. P. Singh government shadowed the 'Kamandal' move. The arrest of Adwani in Bihar slowed down Hindu-politics and OBC politics captured the entire Hindi heartland. In the meantime, in Gujarat Godhra riots aggravated the Hindu sentiments in the country. Congress led UPA Government in coalition with socialist regional parties was targeted by "India Against Corruption' by civil society activist Anna Hajare paved way for BJP. Narendra Modi, though not exclusively on Hinduism card, led the 2014 LS elections and won. Soon after coming in power, he aggressively resorted to Hinduism in the name of cultural nationalism. Gradually, Hindu Rashtra movement gained momentum.

Modi led BJP called for Hindu-politics in the country and in states CM Yogi of UP took lead in the fray. In its manifesto BJP committed to the concept of "One Nation, One People and One Culture". It reads, "Our nationalist vision is not merely bound by the geographical or political identity of Bharat but it is referred by our

timeless cultural heritage. This cultural heritage which is central to all regions, religions and languages, is a civilizational identity and constitutes the cultural nationalism of India which is the core of Hindutva. This we believe is the identity of our ancient nation "Bharatvarsha". It further advocated that Hindutva has immense potentiality to re-energize this nation and strengthen and discipline it to undertake the arduous task of nation-building. This can and does trigger a higher level of patriotism that can transform the country to greater levels of efficiency and performance. It is with such integrative ideas in mind, the BJP joined the Ram Janmabhoomi movement for the construction of Shri Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. This greatest mass movement in post-Independence history reoriented the disoriented polity in India and strengthened the foundation of cultural nationalism.

To BJP, it is a social reality that majority of Indian people have historically been outside the dominant stream of Indian culture. The creative character of the Vedic culture was lost post Vedic period onwards, especially since the eclipse of Ātmajñāna *mārga* fostered and sustained by the ancient Guru and *Rishi Paramparās* and the advent of the present form of Hinduism and the caste system. It alleged that the universalistic and unifying life vision of *Sanatana Dharma* was misinterpreted and wrongly explained in conformity with the rising requirements of the caste system based social, cultural, economic and political organisation of Indian society. If the culture is to be the agent of social unity and solidarity the religious practices, traditions and customs that are contrary to the universalistic and sublime vision of the Indian culture and have segregated and divided people, they are to be identified and demystified grounding on the basic premises of the wisdom tradition of India.

After 2014 the cultural nationalism has been aggressively propounded and ruling party overtly took action like renovation of temples at Varanasi & Bindhyachal and construction at Ayodhya, revival of Gyanwapi, Citizenship Amendment Act, Shahinbagh incident, boycotting Muslims, changing names of places, imposing necessity of displaying name by street hawkers, etc. Above all a slogan of making India a Hindu Rashtra has been floated.

CONCLUSION

No doubt preservation of culture and its heritage makes a society strong and incredible, but in the name of culture, fanning religious fanaticism cannot be in favour of people's wellbeing. Now it is important to examine the Indian cultural nationalism in the context of constitutional provisions, social order, economic prospects, people's wellbeing etc.

India, i.e Bharat is country, full of diversities – cultural, religious, social texture and geographical, – demands the unity, integrity and coexistence. This was perceived by our founding fathers and made a constitution accordingly. The

idea of civic nationalism was to adopt values like secular, inclusive, universalist conception of citizenship. The recently propounded cultural nationalism by political parties and other social outfits is a deviation from its western conception. Rather goes away from the Indian culture. N.G. Jayal calls it 'religious nationalism', 'exclusionary nationalism' and 'majoritarianism' which is not in congruence with liberal democracy or India's composite culture. She argues that it undermines the constitutional design of civic universalism. She writes, "If India's organically consensual social fabric concern comes to be damaged beyond repair or retrieval, this would certainly be a blow to one of the world's most unique experiments in multicultural democracy". This kind of exclusionary nationalism has also been associated with the emergence of radical right-wing populism and its rejection of cultural diversity.

So far social and cultural fabric is concerned, ours is a multi-religious country with Hindu majority. But the concentration of population of different religions is not evenly distributed. Some where the so called minority becomes majority, there arises the problem. In Bihar, UP, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh etc. some districts have Muslim majority. The fanning of religious fanaticism by political forces aggravate communal hatred and riots for partisan electoral gains. This damages the Bhratiye democratic fabric. If we go back to Indian culture reflected in Vedas and religious literature are considered as pristine foundation of Indian culture. These exhort for establishment of a virtuous society (vratī samāja). They inculcate a healthy and robust attitude towards life. They have provided ideas and ideals, moral and spiritual values, beliefs and practices, and patterns of behaviour – individual and social – on the basis of deep insight into the nature of Reality, which have universal appeal and inherent vitality to survive in spite of all odds and vagaries of history and which still continues to provide life sap to its adherents and votaries. In words of Deen Dayal Upadhaya 'integrated humanism' which was also advocated by Gandhi.

Thus it can be concluded that Indian cultural and civic heritage should be preserved not for political purposes but for sound social order and people's wellbeing. Therefore, adherence to constitutional values and provisions is the demand of the hour.

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NEP 2020 AND HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN BIHAR

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Abstract

For the holistic development of any nation, it is imperative to periodically refine and define its education policy and implement necessary reforms in line with evolving times. When we attempt to understand the legacy of India's National Education Policy (NEP), we find that inclusion, scientific temper, and rationality have been its foundational pillars from the very beginning. The new National Education Policy, passed by India's Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, marks the third major education policy for the country and comes after a long gap of 34 years having inclusive character. Despite having robust education policy and deeper philosophy behind formation of education policy India seems lacking on various grounds especially in its implementation. Thus, the present research paper aims to analyze and review the idea of university and significance of quality public education by acknowledging the public importance of the education system, from the Kothari Commission to the present day. It draws lessons from the policy's legacy, understands future challenges, and focuses on shaping a better future for India in general and Bihar in particular. The paper presents an in-depth study and analysis of the potentials and challenges of the current education policy with special reference to Bihar.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Higher Education, Equity and Inclusion, Holistic Education, Multidisciplinary, Skill Development, Digitalisation, Flexibility, Cultural Preservation, Bihar.

INTRODUCTION

The document of NEP 2020 depicts the principal agreement and commitment of the Indian government on equitable education for all. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Indian government after 34 years, marks a significant overhaul of the education system. This policy emphasizes holistic,

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inclusive, and multidisciplinary learning to prepare students for a rapidly evolving global environment. This research paper examines the major provisions, potential impacts, and challenges associated with NEP 2020 while drawing on contemporary educational theories and practices. The National Education Policy 2020 was adopted with the vision of transforming the Indian education system to align with 21st-century needs and global standards. With an emphasis on holistic and flexible curricula, it seeks to integrate vocational training, digital learning, and skill development while fostering constitutional values such as equality and inclusion (Government of India, 2020). This policy is expected to address long-standing issues in access, quality, and employability. This paper evaluates the idea of university and NEP 2020's objectives, highlights its transformative provisions, and critically analyzes its implications for India's educational landscape.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, UNIVERSITY AND LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC FUNDED EDUCATION

Historically various philosophers have shed light on the institution and attached immense importance to it in terms of its tasks and value. Chad Wellmon argues "medieval universities we're not simply extension of church or state, but they were supported both politically and financially by one or the other, or both in a few cases." (Wellmon, 2015, p. 117). Even the directions and regulations on Oxford in the 13th century put by these authorities were never to be realized in collaboration with any secular authorities. The allegiance of medieval universities was to local religious bodies, and to fellow members of the university guild.

Wellmon characterizes the university as having roots in a religious mission. Dissemination and production of knowledge and culture are central to the site of university. The primary task of the university is rooted in institutionalizing creativity and free intellect. The writings of karl Jasper, Paul Henry Newman and Immnuel Kant deal in great length on the subject. Kant's idea of the university is rooted in the enlightenment principles of reason and autonomy. He viewed university as a place where the pursuit of truth and the cultivation of critical thinking are paramount. Kant emphasized the importance of academic freedom, where scholars should be free to explore ideas without external interference, particularly from the state or church. He believed that the university should serve the public by advancing knowledge, especially in the fields of science, philosophy, and ethics. Karl Jaspers, a 20th-century philosopher, expanded on Kant's ideas, emphasizing the university as a community of scholars and students engaged in the search for truth. For Jaspers, the university is not just an institution for transmitting knowledge but a space for existential exploration and the development of the whole person. He highlighted the importance of university as a place where individuals are encouraged to confront fundamental questions about existence, freedom, and responsibility. Jaspers also

stressed the importance of the unity of research and teaching similar to Kant, where the process of learning is deeply intertwined with the pursuit of research. He believed that universities should foster a spirit of open dialogue and critical thinking, this will help inculcate a sense of culture in society.

It is argued that modern universities are primarily spaces to conduct autonomous research and the state, or any other funding agency, must not attempt to control the universities political, culturally and in terms of research outcome. However, the advent of neoliberalism has gradually necessitated a shift in overall institutional framework of universities as academic spaces. Neoliberalism is not only an economic discourse that affirms the supremacy of market but also a political discourse that forges a sharper control over all kinds of public institutions. It is for this reason that the very idea of university has undergone a shift worldwide as well as in India post 1980s.

In his seminal work '*The Idea of the University*', (Jaspers, 1959) he argues that cultural education helps individuals live harmoniously and internalize values such as aesthetics, ethics, rationality, and decision-making university education essential for all. Karl Jaspers conceptualized the university as a space fundamentally devoted to the pursuit of truth through reason, communication, and intellectual freedom. In his view, the university is not merely a place of vocational training or technical instruction, but a community of scholars and students engaged in the ongoing process of critical inquiry. He emphasized the unity of teaching and research, arguing that both are essential to the cultivation of independent thought and the formation of individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society. For Jaspers, the true mission of the university lies in fostering an environment where knowledge is pursued for its own sake, guided by philosophical reflection and a commitment to ethical responsibility. In this sense, the university serves as a guardian of cultural and intellectual continuity, while also encouraging innovation through the freedom to question established truths.

> '*Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education while indeed an essential goal in its own right is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation.' (NEP, 2020, p. 24)*

While the aforementioned statement by NEP appears to encourage hope for education that promotes equitable education for all with its emphasis on multilingual, affordable education. However, in the absence of its commitment to public funding to the institution and its emphasis on HEFA loans and neoliberal stance on education seems to make false claims without ground work.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF NEP 2020

NEP 2020 emphasizes universal access to quality preschool education for children aged 3-6 years, integrating it into the formal education framework (Government of India, 2020). The National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage aims to enhance foundational literacy and numeracy. The policy advocates for a shift from rote learning to competency-based education. It promotes critical thinking, creativity, and experiential learning through a multidisciplinary approach (Nandini, 2021). The policy supports regional language instruction until Grade 5, with flexibility to continue until Grade 8, to foster cultural awareness and cognitive development (Sharma & Kapoor, 2021). Dr Shivani Nag critically observes that although the National Education Policy (NEP) underscores inclusion as a central and declared objective, the persistent dominance of English within higher education creates structural impediments for students from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds. This linguistic hegemony not only limits their access to higher education but also hampers their active participation and equitable engagement within academic spaces. By perpetuating disparities rooted in language, the NEP risks undermining its stated commitment to fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities across socio-economic and linguistic divides. (National Institute of Education Planning and Administration, 2020.) In her research paper, Kumkum Roy undertakes an in-depth analysis of the draft of the National Education Policy (2019), highlighting that the changes proposed in the policy were made hastily and do not align with ground realities. She critically examines the language-related discourse within the policy, particularly the privileging of Sanskrit, while raising concerns about the neglect of languages spoken by linguistic minorities. Her analysis questions whether the policy adequately represents India's linguistic diversity and social fabric. NEP proposes a 4-year undergraduate degree with multiple exit options, integration of vocational training, and establishment of a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to regulate the sector. The policy underscores the importance of digital infrastructure for education and the inclusion of marginalized communities, including women, differently abled individuals, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups (Das, 2021). By emphasizing multidisciplinary education and research, NEP aligns India's education system with international standards (Singh, 2022).

NEP IMPLEMENTATION IN BIHAR: PROSPECTS AND LIMITATIONS

Bihar once had Nalanda and Vikramshila universities, but in the modern era, education indicators lag behind national average. Current literacy rate of Bihar is below the national average (61.8% which is lower than the national literacy rate of 74.04%). Bihar face High dropout rates, especially among girls and marginalized communities. Infrastructure gaps in schools and colleges and migration of students

to other states for higher education further depicts miserable state of education. Bihar's school sector has long faced gaps in foundational learning, retention, and infrastructure. National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021 offers district-level diagnostics that states can use for targeted remediation (NAS, 2021). UDISE+ based analyses for 2023–24 highlight mixed progress: while basic infrastructure and teacher training have improved, progression, retention, and technology readiness require sustained attention (Education for All in India, 2025). In higher education, Bihar's GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) historically trails the national average (AISHE, 2021–22), reflecting access and capacity constraints. Fiscal space has improved as Bihar allocated 21.4% of total expenditure to education in 2024-25 (PRS Legislative Research, 2024) and 21.7% in 2025–26 (PRS Legislative Research, 2025), well above the recent all-state average. However, spending quality, timely fund flow, and alignment with FLN priorities remain crucial to convert outlays into learning outcomes.

In higher education, Bihar universities have begun formal NEP adoption. Patliputra University (PPU) established a task force to implement NEP 2020, fast-tracking transition to FYUP and ABC/CBCS (Times of India, 2025). Patna University has signalled alignment with NEP, including 4-year UG and ABC registration for students (Education Dunia, 2025). However, successful NEP adoption depends on curriculum redesign, faculty load calibration, laboratories and studios for multidisciplinary learning, and robust academic advising areas. Further, the arrival of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has shifted the financial responsibility of higher educational institutions toward a loan-based model. (HEFA is a joint venture between the Ministry of Education, Government of India, holding a 90.91 % equity stake, and Canara Bank, holding 9.09 %). It provides loans to institutions to meet their budgetary requirements and support infrastructure development functions previously undertaken by the University Grants Commission (UGC). As institutions increasingly rely on loans for infrastructural development, the burden of loan repayment is indirectly transferred to students, primarily through increased tuition fee. Bihar primarily being BIMARU state with one of the lowest per capita incomes where according to the Bihar Caste-based Survey (2023) and the Economic Survey Report about 94.4 lakh families (i.e., 34.13% of households) in Bihar have a monthly income of ₹6,000 or less. This means these families survive on around ₹200 per day. In such condition Bihari students will face financial constraints in pursuing their higher education dreams. Because, with the advent of HEFA institutions are compelled to generate internal revenue to compete in the marketplace, and restructure their frameworks to align with market demands. Currently, no public **evidence** indicates that Bihar state-run or affiliated universities have availed HEFA loans. The funding has mainly flowed to centrally managed premier institutions.

According to the official website of HEFA, loans worth ₹6,773.58 crore have been sanctioned for 32 key universities, but there is no publicly available data regarding the disbursement of these funds. The University of Delhi which educates a large student community coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across the country, has become a laboratory for implementing the NEP in higher educational institutions (HEIs). The government sanctioned a HEFA loan of ₹930 crore to DU, after which a fee hike was observed at the university. A report by *The Indian Express* states that DU's internal revenue, generated through fees, increased from ₹100 crore in 2019-20 to ₹200 crore in 2023-24 (Indian Express, 2024).

Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ), Ranchi, provides education to a diverse socio-economic population. The university has taken a loan of ₹396.74 crore under HEFA, after which an increase in fees has been observed. During the 2021-23 session, the total fee for the M.A. Master's program across four semesters was ₹64,700. Now, for the 2025-27 session, it has risen to ₹88,366. In 2021-23, the M.A. Political Science fee was ₹21,700, which has now increased to ₹29,444 for 2025-27. The M.A. English fee, which was ₹29,700 in 2021-23, has now gone up to ₹40,720 in 2025-27. Not only academic fees but also hostel charges for Ph.D. and PG students have now become ₹9,100, while for UG and PG students it is ₹6,700. Earlier, before the implementation of NEP, this fee was only ₹1,500. According to a report by *Scroll*, "In Banaras Hindu University, the fees for master's courses increased by up to 500%. For example, for a student in the M.Sc. Agriculture program, the annual fee rose from ₹3,500 to ₹18,500, which is an increase of about 430%" (Deeksha, 2023).

In her article on the National Education Policy 2020, Professor Neerja Gopal Jayal draws our attention to the limited consultations and lack of transparency in the policy-making process. She argues that the policy appears to be deficient in terms of broad representation and inclusivity, as there was a lack of wide discussions and open debates during its formulation. Additionally, Jayal criticizes the document for displaying a disdain for the democratic rights of teachers and students. She believes that the policy fails to adequately honour the freedoms, rights, and participation of students and teachers. As a result, the policy appears weak in upholding democratic values, and it seems like a step backward in terms of promoting social justice and equality.

The effective implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) faces significant challenges due to limited resources and inadequate infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved regions. As highlighted by Prakash (2022), the lack of essential facilities such as well-equipped classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and digital connectivity severely undermines the policy's transformative potential. These resource constraints not only impede the delivery of quality education but also exacerbate existing disparities between urban and rural educational institutions.

Addressing these infrastructural deficiencies is critical to ensuring equitable access to the benefits of the NEP and achieving its overarching goals of inclusivity and quality education for all.

A significant gap persists in the systematic training and recruitment of teachers to effectively implement the pedagogical reforms proposed under the National Education Policy (NEP). As noted by Rao (2021), the success of these reforms relies heavily on a well-prepared and adequately supported teaching workforce. However, existing deficiencies in teacher education programs, professional development opportunities, and recruitment strategies hinder the ability of educators to align with the policy's envisioned goals. This gap raises critical concerns about the feasibility of achieving the NEP's transformative objectives, particularly in terms of fostering innovative and student-centric teaching practices.

The emphasis on digital learning may exacerbate disparities among students from different socio-economic backgrounds (Singh & Gupta, 2020). According to Soumen Chattopadhyay, while the new education policy appears to provide significant advantages in terms of expanding the rights of students and offering them greater options for selecting their educational paths, it also introduces potential challenges, particularly with the increased promotion of online learning and the enhanced autonomy granted to educational institutions. Chattopadhyay raises concerns about the implications of these changes on the traditional Gurukul system of education, which has been an integral part of India's educational heritage. In the Gurukul system, the relationship between the guru (teacher) and shishya (student) is deeply personal and rooted in face-to-face interaction, with both engaging in a continuous and immersive learning process. Chattopadhyay fears that transferring this intimate and holistic model of education to a virtual environment could result in a disconnection from the essential teacher-student bond. This, in turn, may lead to the emergence of a generation that is poorly equipped with incomplete or fragmented knowledge, and more importantly, one that lacks the social and interpersonal skills traditionally nurtured in physical, collaborative learning environments. Such a shift, he suggests, may foster a society of individuals who are not only intellectually underdeveloped but also socially isolated, thus undermining the broader goals of education in shaping well-rounded, responsible citizens.

CONCLUSION

NEP 2020 offers a transformative roadmap for India's education system, with its emphasis on holistic development, inclusivity, and skill-based learning. However, its success hinges on effective implementation, addressing infrastructure gaps, and ensuring equity in access to resources. Continued monitoring and adaptive strategies will be crucial to overcoming challenges and realizing the policy's full potential. In

the era of neoliberalism, quality and excellence have become the watchwords to describe educational institutions. Principles of New Public Management (NPM) have become increasingly prominent in institutional governance, prioritizing outcomes-based education and research alongside intensified accountability, performance measurement, and managerial oversight. The notion of "quality" is frequently invoked across all dimensions of university life, yet often without adequate justification or clear conceptual grounding. This indiscriminate application of quality standards has resulted in arbitrary and unrealistic evaluation criteria, thereby compromising the very idea of university as an academic institution engaged in the task of producing thinking beings. Thus, in a nutshell this article concludes by emphasizing upon the need to create the framework for building a common school system and public funded educational institutions in order to forge a sense of common citizenship for a larger democratisation of society and roadmap to vibrant Bihar with its core objective of building an egalitarian society.

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GENDER GAP IN THE AI-POWERED WORKPLACE AND FUTURE CAREER TRAJECTORIES FOR WOMEN

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Abstract

The globalisation era in the 1990s paved the way for Information and communication technology, which led to a service sector boom in countries like India. Now, the world, especially India, stands at a crucial junction where the AI revolution will be experienced. AI has led to rapid automation and shows promise in solving the country's complex issues, ranging from climate change to conflict resolution. Where the world is rushing toward AI adoption and understanding its capabilities, there have been concerns wherein AI can replace repetitive-natured jobs. These professions, which are highly paid and have lucrative job prospects, have belonged mainly to men, whereas women employees are far behind, thus leading to a massive gender gap witnessed in this job sector. Leading companies such as Google and Apple have only 10-15 percent women researchers in AI field. Besides, the LinkedIn data also shows the similar trend, in regard to AI-skilled individuals in the European Union and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, India is one of those countries which has an opportunity to harness the potential of the female population, as India has the highest AI skills among women (OECD. AI, 2021), even IBM Global AI Adoption Index 2023 finds India with most extensive AI adoption. Therefore, the present paper attempts to examine AI's positive contributions to women's empowerment, analyse the extent of inequalities women encounter, and the feasibility of AI remaining gender neutral. Further, goes to pin out challenges and possible strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into various industries has sparked discussions about its potential impacts on society, including its effects on women in the workforce. As we navigate the complexities of the modern workplace, it is essential to understand how AI influences workplace dynamics and shapes future job prospects for women.

Historically, women have faced numerous challenges in the workplace, ranging from gender bias to unequal opportunities for career advancement. However, AI presents a unique opportunity to challenge these barriers and create a more inclusive and equitable work environment. In tracing the trajectory of AI's evolution, it becomes evident that women have played significant roles, particularly in the formative years of computer programming. However, as technology burgeoned and lucrative opportunities emerged, a stark gender disparity emerged, relegating women to the periphery of the burgeoning field.

Despite strides towards gender equality, transitioning from clerical roles to high-paying positions within the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector has largely favoured men. This disparity underscores the enduring challenges faced by women in breaking through the glass ceiling and accessing equitable opportunities for professional growth. With the proliferation of AI, questions arise regarding the extent to which women are afforded equal opportunities commensurate with their talents and capabilities. Does the advent of AI herald a new era of inclusivity, or are women confronted with persisting gender biases and discriminatory practices?

To address these inquiries, this study delves into the nuanced experiences of women navigating the landscape of AI employment. By examining the barriers, stereotypes, and opportunities women encounter in the age of AI, this study aims to shed light on the complexities of gender dynamics within the evolving technological landscape. Through this exploration, this paper seeks to advocate for inclusivity, equity, and empowerment for women in artificial intelligence.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionised industries and societies worldwide. However, amidst this technological evolution, it is essential to critically assess whether the adoption of AI is inclusive and equitable. Particularly concerning is the extent to which women can engage with AI technologies and pursue careers in AI-related fields. This paper explores the implications of AI adoption on women's careers and the broader societal implications of exclusionary practices. By synthesising insights from various publications, it aims to contribute to the discourse on gender inclusivity in the age of AI. Recent research reports

from various organisations shed light on the intersection of women's roles in the workforce and the advent of artificial intelligence (AI). These reports delve into the challenges women face in AI-driven workplaces, the implications of automation on their employment prospects, and the initiatives to foster gender inclusivity in the age of AI.

The research report jointly by UNESCO, OECD, and IDB (2022), sheds light on the multifaceted impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on women's lives, particularly in the realm of employment. The report underscores the stark disparities that persist in STEM education, resulting in unequal job opportunities favouring men over women. Moreover, it delves into the pervasive stereotype discrimination faced by women, which manifest in various aspects of their professional life. While explicit solutions are not outlined, the report underscores the pivotal role of algorithmic reform as a fundamental catalyst for addressing these challenges.

Deloitte AI Institute and Amazon web services (2020, September 30) has acknowledged the ongoing discrimination that women have to face amidst growing AI lead jobs. This study is based on an online double-blinded survey wherein 200 experts on their histories in the Artificial intelligence and machine learning field shared personal experiences.

In recent research publications, the intersection of women's workforce participation and artificial intelligence (AI) influence is extensively explored. Lambin, S (n.d.), in a report underscores the necessity of creating more women-friendly workplaces within the sphere of AI. This non-profit organisation initiative aims to address workplace issues faced by women and proposes the establishment of a network of female leaders in AI. Such initiatives are regarded as crucial steps towards mitigating gender disparities in the workplace.

Magdavkar et al (2019) delves into various sectors of the economy and examines the anticipated impact of AI. The report reveals that both men and women will experience a comparable loss of employment due to automation, but women may face more significant challenges in acquiring the necessary skills for adaptation. The transition process for women is expected to be notably more arduous compared to men.

Furthermore, the European Institute of Gender Equality (2022), in its report highlights the ongoing challenges confronted by women in the context of AI, noting a higher risk of unemployment for women in developed nations compared to their counterparts in developing countries like India. Interestingly, India stands out for its higher enrollment of women in STEM courses, which could significantly influence the future job market dynamics for women.

These research reports offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics between women, AI, and the evolving workforce landscape. By addressing the challenges women encounter in AI-driven workplaces and leveraging initiatives to foster gender inclusivity, stakeholders can work towards creating more equitable and empowering environments for women in the age of automation. But there is dearth of literature in the context participation of women in AI work place in India.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The major objective of the present paper is to explore artificial intelligence's positive contributions to women's empowerment, economic growth, and career opportunities. In light of this major objective, it inquires a) the extent of inequalities and hurdles women encounter in various aspects of daily life, including education, employment, and healthcare b) the feasibility of AI remaining gender-neutral and the potential implications of gender biases in AI systems, c) the challenges and barriers and d) explores possible strategies and interventions to address gender disparities exacerbated by AI.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the multifaceted relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and gender equality. The present study is mainly qualitative. It is based on secondary sources of data collection. The present research has focused on utilising the analytical method along with historical and descriptive analysis.

EMPOWERING WOMEN: HARNESSING THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities and challenges for women's participation in the workforce. While historically, new technologies have been led by men, women have played crucial roles in reforming and reshaping these fields. The nascent stage of AI offers a unique opportunity for women to bring about positive changes and contribute to its development. Despite historical gender disparities in technology fields, women have the potential to reshape AI and make it more inclusive and impactful. Examples such as Mary Parker Follett's contributions to public administration demonstrate the transformative power of women in male-dominated disciplines.

AI is entering sectors where collaboration between technology and human intervention is vital, making it conducive for women's participation. Women's communication skills and ability to navigate complex situations can be assets in AI-related roles. Sectors like finance, retail, and healthcare, which are poised to benefit from increased AI usage, have significant women-led workforces. Training women to adopt AI-based technologies in these sectors can lead to substantial

economic growth and empowerment. Some AI-based recruiting tools may perpetuate biases and exacerbate job insecurity for women. However, AI algorithms can also mitigate bias in recruitment processes and promote gender diversity in the workplace. Hindustan Unilever has witnessed an increase in gender diversity among its employees.

In India's economic scenario, it has been observed that sectors like finance, retail, and medical industry are touted to add $500 billion to the economy by 2025 due to increased AI usage. This will be highly beneficial for women as clinics, lab technicians, and the retail sector consist of a significant women-led workforce. If women are adequately trained to adopt AI-based technologies in their professions' this can give a major boost to the growth of women

In sectors like agriculture, where a majority of women are engaged, AI applications can enhance productivity and income levels, contributing to women's economic empowerment. In India, nearly 80% of women are still engaged in agriculture for livelihood. This may seem to be a grim situation, but India is known for its ability to turn such situations into an opportunity, which is usually quoted as *AAPADA MEIN AVSAR*. With AI applications, Indian agriculture will transform into the most productive sector using low-cost, cutting-edge technologies like drones, weather sensors, etc. These will help double the farmers' income, which is one of the major policy initiatives of the Indian government. When 80% of women are engaged in agriculture, it is an opportunity for women to increase their incomes and attain a dignified life. There can be other initiatives like introducing AI-based skills at the graduation level so that when women are eligible to enter the job market after formal education, they will also possess the desired skills to improve their job prospects.

AI adoption presents a unique opportunity for women to empower themselves and contribute to economic growth and gender equality. By addressing challenges such as biased AI recruitment tools and leveraging opportunities in traditionally female-dominated sectors, AI has the potential to unleash the full potential of women in the workforce. With concerted efforts and policy support, AI can become a powerful tool for advancing women's empowerment and fostering inclusive economic growth.

NAVIGATING THE GENDER GAP: INEQUALITIES AND HURDLES FOR WOMEN

As the world rapidly embraces artificial intelligence (AI) technologies across various sectors, a critical need arises to examine the extent of inequalities and hurdles women face in this evolving landscape. Historically, women have encountered barriers to accessing and participating in emerging technological domains, and the

introduction of AI is no exception. While AI promises transformative advancements, its implementation often perpetuates existing gender disparities, presenting unique challenges for women. Automation through artificial intelligence has led to glaring implications for gender equality in the workplace. There is a threat of considerable job losses.

Job loss due to Automation: The rapid integration of automation through artificial intelligence (AI) into various industries has significant implications for gender equality in the workplace. As AI technologies continue to advance, there is a growing concern about the potential for substantial job losses, particularly among traditionally female-dominated occupations. This looming threat underscores the urgent need to examine the gendered impacts of automation and AI adoption, as well as to develop strategies to mitigate adverse effects on gender equality. As AI-driven automation reshapes job roles and tasks, there is a risk of exacerbating existing gender disparities in employment opportunities, wages, and career advancement. Moreover, the unequal distribution of job losses and gains resulting from automation may further widen the gender gap in the workforce.

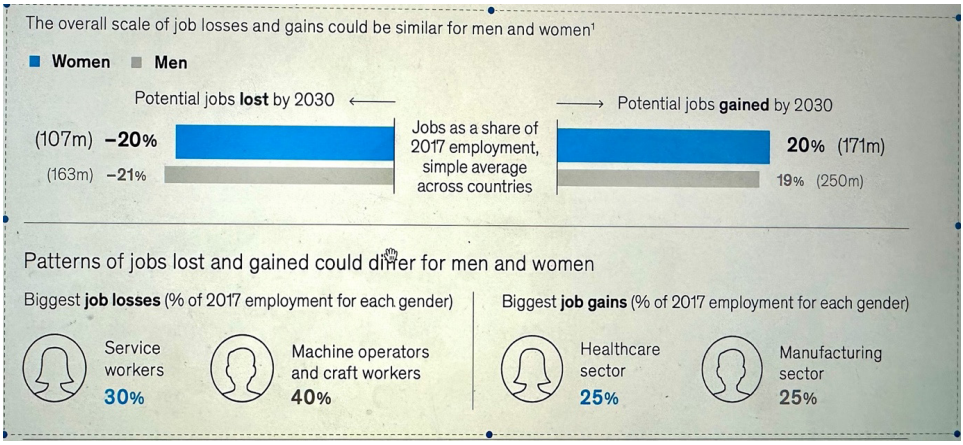


Figure 1: Job loss due to automation through artificial intelligence

Source: Mckinsey Global Institute (2019, June). Future of women at work: transition in the age of automation. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-future-of-women-at-work-transitions-in-the-age-of-automation.

The above figure shows that both men and women are vulnerable to job loss, but the sectors threatening both genders differ. It can be said that the potential job loss by 2030 for women will be around 107 million and 163 million for men, whereas the gain of employment will be around 171 million for women and 250 million for men. This shows that women are more likely to lose jobs and gain fewer jobs. This can be attributed to various problems, the first being fewer women in STEM

education. This further becomes a glaring disability where women are limited to repetitive jobs.

AI-based Publication by Female Authors: With the rapid advancement of AI technologies shaping various aspects of modern society, understanding the extent of women's involvement in AI research is crucial for promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive innovation ecosystems. The figure below shows the gender disparity in women's participation in artificial intelligence (AI)--led research.

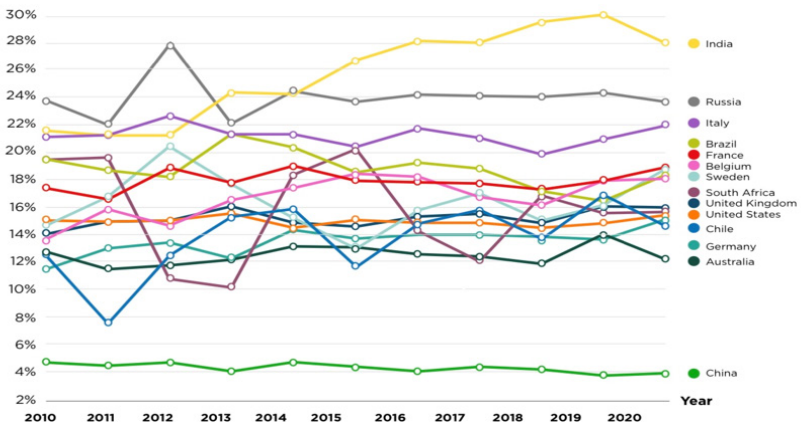


Figure 2: Status of AI-based Publication by Female Authors Country-wise

Source: UNESCO, OECD, IDB (2022). *Effects of AI on working women*

The above graph shows the percentage of artificial intelligence-based publications with female authors. This shows a glaring disparity in women's participation in AI-led research. Developed nations have underperformed compared to developing countries like India, which is the torchbearer of women's involvement in AI-led research. It can be inferred that when there is a low percentage of women involved in AI-based research.

Status of STEM-based Education: STEM-based education refers to an interdisciplinary approach to learning that integrates concepts and principles from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. STEM education and women are interconnected in significant ways, yet women remain underrepresented in STEM fields globally. Despite progress in recent years, gender disparities persist in STEM-related education, careers, and opportunities. The major issue women have faced since the beginning is the gender stereotypes where women are considered unfit for STEM-based education. Based on UNESCO 2019 report data, recruiters for tech companies in Silicon Valley estimate that the applicant pool for technical jobs in AI and data science is constituted by less than 1% of women. Apart from that, a survey conducted by the AI Index annual report 2021 suggests that there are 16% of women in computer science faculty worldwide.

AI Skills among Women: AI skills among women have become increasingly important in today's technology-driven world, yet women remain underrepresented in AI-related fields. Encouraging women to develop AI skills is crucial for promoting gender diversity, innovation, and economic growth.

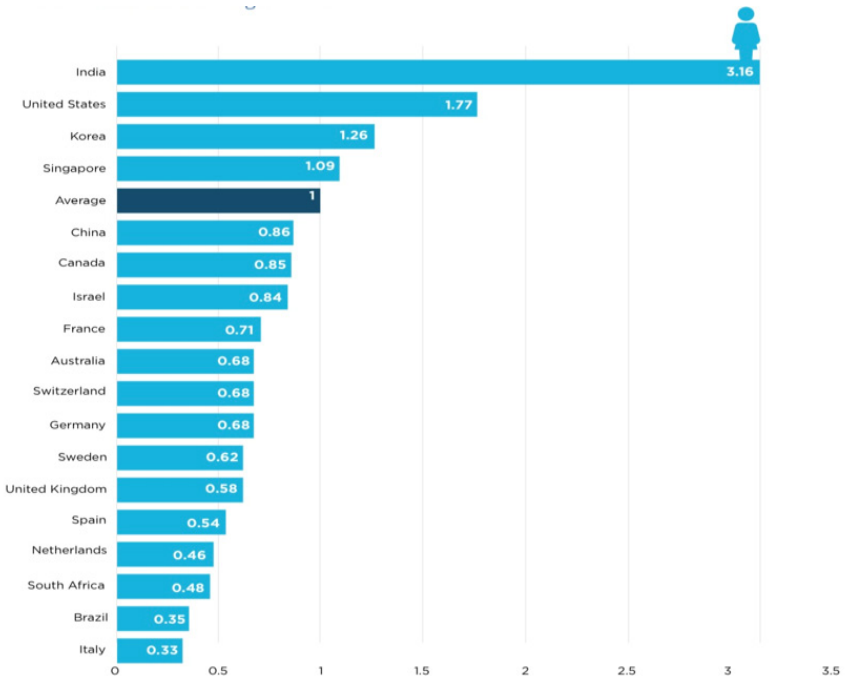


Figure 3: AI Skills among Women

Source: UNESCO, OECD, IDB (2022). Effects of AI on working women

The figure above underscores India's remarkable achievement in bridging the AI-related skill gap, outperforming other countries significantly. According to the AI Index Report 2023 from Stanford University, India boasts an impressive AI skill penetration rate of 3.2, which is three times the global average across the same set of occupations. This exceptional performance can be attributed to India's proactive approach to understanding the importance of STEM education. India's burgeoning service sector industry, characterised by its early adoption of STEM principles, has played a pivotal role in cultivating a workforce with the necessary AI skills.

Despite these issues, women face the major problem of algorithm-based biases. AI technologies, notably machine learning, operate through complex algorithms that analyse vast amounts of data in a manner often described as a "black box." This opacity poses a significant obstacle, as it conceals the inherent biases encoded within the data and algorithms. As humans strive to decipher this black box, they unearth

unsettling revelations: AI systems are not immune to societal biases but amplify and perpetuate them. In the realm of AI-based recruiting, these biases manifest in discriminatory outcomes that disadvantage women and persons of colour, perpetuating historical inequalities and eroding opportunities for inclusiveness in the workforce. This study delves into women's multifaceted challenges in AI-based recruiting, highlighting the prevalence of algorithmic biases and their detrimental impact on gender diversity and inclusion.

Hence, solutions in this regard are needed to promote inclusive growth in society and eradicate gender stereotypes and biases for sections of society that are already struggling to keep up with the pace of the rapidly moving world.

STRIVING FOR GENDER NEUTRALITY

Over the years, AI has entered human lives and impacted them. Due to technological interruptions, there have been discussions about what AI can do to ease humans' lives. There was excitement and simultaneous surprise in understanding how capable artificial intelligence can be, which was here to reduce human effort. Then, slowly, the discussions shifted to its negative consequences, further intensified as there were questions about whether humans could control the technology. So, the primary question that arises is whether AI can remain gender-neutral or not. In September 2023, a summit called HeForShe at UN Women was organised. Apart from the discussions that pertained to how AI discriminated, there was a time when solutions had to be brought to the table. Ultimately, a realistic consensus was observed that AI is a machine and appears to be neutral, but the technology is made by humans who are not neutral and carry biases. There is a need to work on preventing the gendering of AI or going completely gender-blind. There is a need for AI to be respectfully disruptive. Instead of weaponising the existing biases, there is a need to make efforts to prevent the biases consciously. It can be achieved by a collaborative approach of all stakeholders in the world, ranging from academics to industry.

UNVEILING THE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN

In the realm of burgeoning technological advancements, the presence of women in fields like Artificial Intelligence (AI) remains significantly low. Stemming from societal biases and early education choices, women face formidable challenges in acquiring STEM-related skills, particularly in AI. This gender disparity is evident in statistics, with only a tiny fraction of AI professionals being women globally. This leads to the initial emergence of disability, where women are less qualified to pursue STEM-related professions, which are primarily required for Artificial Intelligence-related jobs.

Gender Disparity in AI Professions: According to *LinkedIn reports (2019)*, women represent a mere fraction of AI-skilled individuals, with percentages as low as 16% in the European Union and the United Kingdom. The global gender gap report produced by the *World Economic Report (2018)* mentioned that among the AI professionals globally, only 22% are women and 78% are men. Such patterns were also found in multi-national companies like Google and Facebook where only 15% to 10% of AI researchers were women. Even tech giants like Google and Facebook exhibit a skewed gender ratio among AI researchers. This underrepresentation limits the talent pool and hampers diversity and innovation in AI-driven solutions.

Glass Ceiling and Career Progression: The journey is fraught with obstacles like the glass ceiling for the few women who manage to break into AI professions. Despite acquiring requisite skills, women encounter barriers to advancement and are often overlooked for high-profile roles. This perpetuates the gender gap and stifles the potential of female talent in AI. Apart from this, companies make minimal efforts to address these challenges.

Ethical Implications of Gender Bias in AI: AI is the new technological pioneer in today's world, and there is an immense expectation that AI can solve all major complex issues that have remained unsolved. These have ranged from many fields such as agriculture, industry, and service sector. Beyond providing solutions, AI has come to rule our basic precepts of society. There is reliance on AI for most basic needs, knowingly and unknowingly. The algorithms study the pattern of search history on the internet, the likes and dislikes, or individuals' mental orientation, and somehow, those opinions are further intensified. Based on these aspects, it can be said that AI was brought to be a companion in increasing human smartness and supporting or complementing it further. Still, it has also learned what the society didn't want it to learn: the existing prejudices and biases.

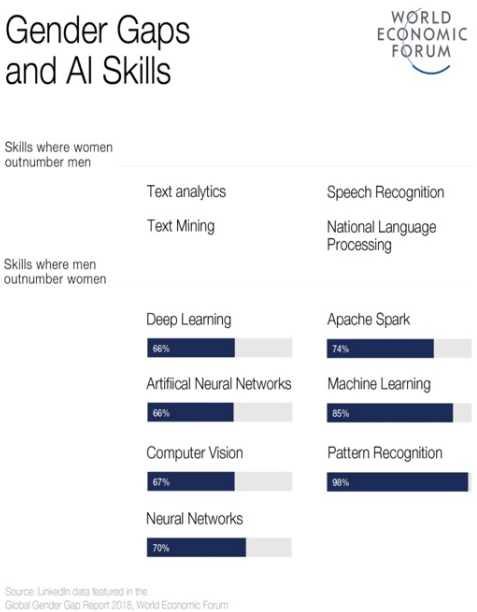
Gender-based Stereotypes and Biases: Similarly, in some ways, gender-based stereotypes are being taught to AI subconsciously. This can be seen through various examples: Amazon adopted a hiring tool, Facebook's selective algorithmic and delivery based on gender, and error-prone IBM, Microsoft, and facial recognition technologies usually miscategorised women and people of colour. This is mainly because the algorithms are trained to predict outcomes based on historical data, which can be scarce or nonrepresentative. For instance, Amazon's automated employment recruiting platform was developed to evaluate, score, and rank job applicants using highly efficient machine learning algorithms. These algorithms worked based on past data where white male persons were considered more efficient and capable, so based on this, they tried to eliminate job applications of women and persons of colour. Hence, it can be observed that training the algorithm patterns is essential.

The Black Box Conundrum: The major problem has been that advanced machine learning models rely on multiple self-calibrated algorithms, creating a black box that makes it impossible for humans to trace how the machine is deciphering the data to make an algorithm. This can be a significant concern when it comes to the adoption of AI. If the reformation of AI algorithms is not considered and this

present-day enigma code is not cracked, that is the black box, and the world will never be able to utilise AI equitably. The intent of making AI an ethical technology, eradicating gender stereotypes, and promoting an inclusive world entirely relies on how data is added in algorithms and how the algorithms perceive the data and give us desired results.

UNVEILING EQUALITY: OVERCOMING GENDER BIAS IN THE AI REVOLUTION

The *World Economic Forum*'s projection that it may take nearly 132 years to achieve global gender equality underscores this issue's persistent and pervasive nature. Even in the era of cutting-edge technology, gender bias remains a significant challenge. To truly grasp why gender bias persists in such a technologically advanced age, it is imperative to delve into the root causes of the problem. This requires a comprehensive analysis to identify where women lack opportunities and representation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Societal norms and cultural expectations often steer women away from pursuing careers in these fields, leading to a pronounced gender gap in tech-related professions. Moreover, biases ingrained in AI algorithms perpetuate discriminatory outcomes, further exacerbating gender disparities. Addressing these issues necessitates targeted approaches, such as promoting STEM education for girls, implementing inclusive hiring practices in tech companies, and fostering diverse and supportive work environments.



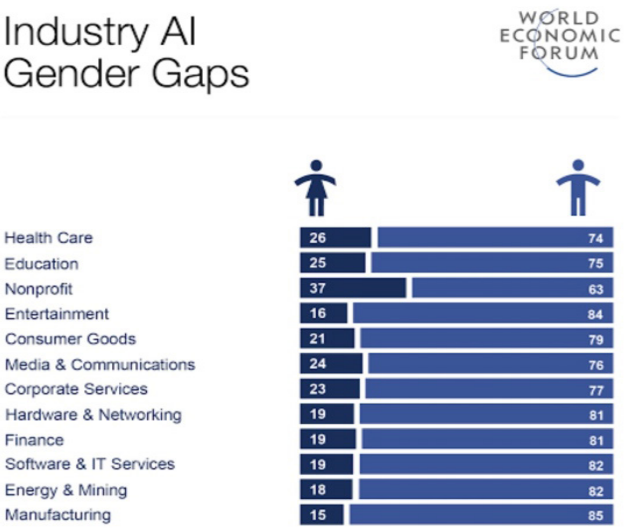


Figure 4: Gender Gaps and AI Skills

Source: World Economic Forum (2019, January). Why AI is failing the next generation of women. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/ai-artificial-intelligence-failing-next-generation-women-bias/

From the above figure, it can be concluded that in every sector, the gender ratio is heavily skewed. The industries in which AI will penetrate already have very few women, and to make the situation worse, it can be seen that when AI is adopted, women can be further neglected or ousted even from the present jobs, as men have significantly outnumbered women in AI-based skills. So, to remove this advantage, there is a need for immediate skills enhancement. The more women are equipped with AI-based skills, the more they can focus on keeping pace with rapid technological developments.

One of the most significant challenges women face in the technology sector is the discrimination perpetuated by recruiting algorithms. Despite possessing the requisite skills and qualifications, women often find themselves disadvantaged when these algorithms are employed in hiring. These algorithms, trained on historical data that may be biased towards specific demographics, inadvertently perpetuate gender discrimination by favouring male candidates over their female

counterparts. This systemic bias not only undermines the potential of talented women but also reinforces gender disparities in the workforce.

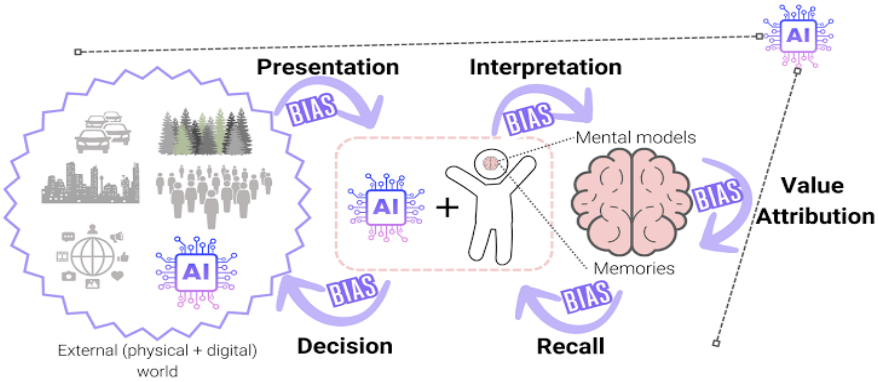


Figure 5: A Taxonomy of Human Cognitive Bias

Source: ELLIS Alicante. (2022). Cognitive Biases and AI. https://ellisalicante.org/cognitive-biases-and-ai

The above figure elucidates how AI algorithms are not immune to societal biases but rather learn and perpetuate them. These algorithms, trained on historical data reflecting societal norms and prejudices, internalise and normalise biases, including the stereotype that women are less capable in STEM fields. Consequently, AI algorithms may unjustly discriminate against women by automatically dismissing their job applications for AI-related roles, assuming they lack the requisite skills or aptitude.

Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to reform and refine AI algorithms with meticulous attention to eliminating bias. AI-driven recruitment tools should be transparent, ethical, and free from gender bias. It is imperative to recognise that the design and development of AI algorithms must involve diverse perspectives and inputs from all segments of society. AI algorithms can be more inclusive and equitable by incorporating insights from a broad spectrum of individuals, including women and other underrepresented groups.

CONCLUSION

At this critical juncture, where every decision shapes the trajectory of progress, it is imperative to tread carefully to avoid undermining the strides made towards gender equality. Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerges as a promising tool in this quest for gender equality. By deploying gender-neutral algorithms, AI has the potential to dismantle biases ingrained in human consciousness. However, realising

this potential requires a multi-stakeholder approach and responsible leadership. Collaboration among governments, tech companies, civil society, and academia is essential to develop and implement AI technologies that promote fairness and inclusivity.

In harnessing AI's capabilities, it is crucial to prevent it from evolving into a force that supersedes human control, akin to the Frankenstein monster. Instead, AI should serve as a moral compass, guiding society towards a future free from gender biases and inequalities. By leveraging technology for inclusive growth and empowering marginalised groups, humankind can steer towards an ideal world where everyone, regardless of gender, enjoys equal opportunities and rights.

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DEMOCRACY CONSTRUCTED: VOTING IN INDIA THROUGH THE LENSES OF *HOMO ECONOMICUS* AND *HOMO POLITICUS*

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Abstract

The trend of providing economic benefits to voters during elections in India has become the regular feature. The situation raises some questions - Do economic policies influence voter preferences across different socio-economic groups in India? What role do regional cultural identities play in shaping political ideologies? Can the coexistence of rationality and emotional allegiance in voting behaviour be quantified, or is it inherently qualitative? What are the implications of these patterns for creating a more participatory and inclusive democracy? Thus, the present research paper explores the dual perspectives of Homo Economicus and Homo Politicus to understand voter behaviour in India's democracy. The study analyses the impact of economic incentives, such as policies affecting income, taxation, and employment, and political factors, including identity, cultural affiliations, and ideological commitments, shape voting patterns. The present study bases on exploration of case studies from various Elections and results from national and state elections and an analysis of historical electoral outcomes. It aims to contribute to democratic theory and electoral behaviour. It explores the dichotomy of economic and political motivations and goes to advocate an integrated framework that reflects the unique characteristics of India's democracy.

Keywords: Voting Behaviour, Homo Economicus, Homo Politicus, Indian Democracy.

INTRODUCTION

If democracy is the dance of rationality and passion, Indian voters are its most accomplished performers. In India, the ballot box is not just a receptacle for votes but a crucible for dreams, desires, and deliberations. Each election is a festival-a Kumbh Mela of competing narratives, clashing ideologies, and stark realities.

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Yet beneath the celebratory chaos lies an enduring paradox: Is democracy the ultimate expression of collective reasoning, or merely the playground of emotional allegiance?

The Indian voter, as enigmatic as the democracy they inhabit, defies simplistic categorization. Western political theories, rooted in Max Weber's rationality or Anthony Downs's economic models, have struggled to decode this complexity, often reducing it to binary frameworks (Weber, 1978; Downs, 1957). On one side stands *Homo Economicus*, the archetype of reason and calculation, meticulously weighing policies that promise better jobs, lower taxes, or subsidies for survival. This voter approaches the booth as a decision-maker, their choices governed by self-interest and economic logic.

For instance, the 2019 Lok Sabha elections saw the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secure a historic mandate, largely driven by middle-class economic optimism and welfare schemes such as PM-KISAN (Kodali, 2023). The BJP's welfare schemes-including Jan Dhan Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, and pension coverage-created a tangible link between governance and citizen welfare, transforming traditional anti-incumbency into pro-incumbency. At the all-India level, we find some evidence that voters who received benefits under Ujjwala, Jan Dhan Yojana or Awas Yojana schemes were more likely to vote for the BJP, whereas recipients of pensions or MGNREGA were less likely to support the BJP (Deshpande et al., 2019).

On the other side emerges *Homo Politicus*, the archetype of belief and belonging, whose decisions are coloured by identity, caste, religion, and ideology. Voting becomes a declaration of selfhood rather than mere choice. In Bihar's 2020 state elections, caste-based voting patterns remained dominant, with Mahadalits, Yadavs, and other groups aligning along entrenched political lines. Religious polarization further intensified this dynamic: three-fourths of Hindu communities (excluding Yadavs) consolidated behind the NDA in the third phase, while Muslim votes in Seemanchal heavily favoured the AIMIM (Sardesai, 2020). Even amid COVID-19-induced economic distress-reflected in CMIE data showing rural unemployment spikes-identity loyalties often overrode material grievances (Varshney, 2022a).

These archetypes seem contradictory, yet Indian voters navigate this duality with ease. How does the cold precision of economic rationality coexist with the fiery zeal of political passion? India's electoral landscape offers a laboratory for this paradox. Consider this, a farmer in Maharashtra weighing free electricity promises against ancestral land loss, where Maratha identity politics often outweighs economic grievances (Jaffrelot and Kumar, 2021); a tech-savvy youth in Bengaluru South, part of India's IT elite, toggling between economic optimism and ideological disillusionment; or a tribal woman in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, torn between local identity politics and national economic narratives (Shah, 2018).

This article ventures into the labyrinth of Indian voter behaviour through the dual lenses of *Homo Economicus* and *Homo Politicus*. Building on Amartya Sen's conception of "rational fools" and Arjun Appadurai's "*Ideology of number*," we ask: *Are economic incentives truly rational when filtered through identity? Is ideological allegiance ever free from survival calculus?* The answers lie not in binaries but in a mosaic of coexistence-a dynamic that sustains the world's largest democracy (Sen, 1999; Appadurai, 1996).

THE RATIONAL VOTER – MYTH OR REALITY?

The archetype of the rational voter-Homo Economicus-looms large in democratic theory. This figure is imagined as a being of cold precision, armed with logic and driven by the primacy of self-interest. In this view, the voter surveys the electoral landscape like a merchant inspecting wares, weighing policies on employment, taxation, subsidies, and welfare as the currency of a grand transaction. Democracy, then, becomes a marketplace where votes are exchanged for prosperity (Achen and Bartels, 2016).

In India, this archetype is frequently invoked. Politicians craft elaborate promises: job creation for the unemployed, tax relief for the middle class, and welfare schemes for the poor. Initiatives like PM-KISAN (direct cash transfers to small farmers) and Ayushman Bharat (universal healthcare) are paraded as golden tickets to rational voter loyalty. The message is clear: *"Vote for us, because we deliver where it counts-in your pocket, on your plate."*

But does this rational voter truly exist? Or is *Homo Economicus* a convenient fiction, a comforting story we tell ourselves about the nature of democracy? Scrutiny of Indian elections reveals cracks in this myth.

Consider the 2015 Bihar assembly elections. While economic development was cited as an important issue, a post-election survey by Lokniti-CSDS found that over 60% of voters ultimately voted along caste lines, overriding economic considerations (Palshikar et al., 2017). Rationality would have dictated a vote for industrial growth and economic reforms, yet the electorate chose a coalition anchored in caste identity-a choice that defied the narrative of economic logic.

A similar pattern emerged in the 2021 West Bengal elections. Despite economic grievances and opposition promises of rejuvenation, the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) triumphed, securing 47.9% of the vote share (Singh, 2021). Exit polls revealed that regional pride and cultural identity played a decisive role, with a Lokniti-CSDS survey reporting that 74% of Bengali voters felt "outsiders" should not dictate the state's politics (Banerjee, 2022). The BJP's campaign, focused on economic and governance issues, failed to resonate beyond its core ideological base (Banerjee, 2016).

Even the 2019 General Elections challenge the myth of the rational voter. While Narendra Modi's government campaigned on economic performance, only 21% of voters cited economic issues as their primary reason for voting BJP, according to a post-poll analysis (Heath and Kumar, 2020). Instead, national security and leadership dominated voter motivations, suggesting that economic rationality rarely operates in isolation.

So, *can rationality ever truly escape the gravitational pull of identity? Or is rationality itself just another name for allegiance dressed in the garb of logic?* Recent scholarship suggests that economic and identity-based motivations are deeply intertwined. As Chauchard argues, "economic appeals are often filtered through the lens of identity, and identity-based appeals frequently contain implicit economic promises" (Chauchard, 2017).

In India, the myth of the purely rational voter collapses under the weight of its own contradictions. Political parties may wish for voters to act like calculators, but voters are negotiators-caught between the promise of material gain and the pull of belonging. One hand weighs the benefits of a welfare scheme; the other holds the intangible pride of cultural identity. This is not a failure of democracy, but its essence. Indian democracy thrives not because voters are perfectly rational, but because they are profoundly human. Homo Economicus may be a myth, but it is a myth that reveals the extraordinary complexity of Indian elections. Rationality and identity are not adversaries; they are co-conspirators in the dance of democracy. And in this dance, the Indian voter leads with a grace that defies all our neat little theories.

THE EMOTIONAL VOTER – IDENTITY BEYOND THE BALLOT

Homo Politicus is the voter who wears their heart on their sleeve, their ballot inked not just with choice but with identity. This voter doesn't merely decide; they declare. Driven by ideology, culture, and belonging, *Homo Politicus* is a being of deep roots and fierce loyalty. For them, democracy is not just governance; it is a stage where histories are avenged, cultures defended, and futures imagined.

In India, this archetype reigns supreme. It is *Homo Politicus* who rallies behind a leader not for promises of jobs but for promises of dignity, or in the name of identity. Party symbols become more than political logos-they are totems of identity, bridges to ancestors, shields for communities, and vessels for dreams (Chandra, 2004). Political narratives, woven with the threads of regional pride, caste solidarity, and cultural symbolism, become irresistible forces, sweeping away the cold calculations of *Homo Economicus*.

Consider the sheer power of regionalism in West Bengal's 2021 elections. Amid economic distress and promises of alternative development models, it was

not economic logic that carried the day but a fierce assertion of Bengali identity. The ruling party's slogan, "Bangla Nijer Meyekei Chay" ("Bengal wants its own daughter"), was more than rhetoric; it was a call to protect a cultural ethos that voters felt was under siege (Banerjee). The Trinamool Congress (TMC) secured 47.9% of the vote share, despite the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) aggressively campaigning on economic governance and employment. According to a Lokniti-CSDS survey, 71% of TMC voters cited 'Bengali pride' as a major factor in their choice, compared to only 28% who mentioned economic policies.

Or take the enduring caste dynamics in Uttar Pradesh. The political landscape here is carved not by economic policy but by caste alliances. In the 2017 UP Assembly elections, the BJP swept the state with 312 out of 403 seats, yet over 60% of Dalit voters remained loyal to the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) despite economic outreach from the BJP (Jaffrelot, 2021). For a Dalit voter, supporting the BSP is not just a political act but a reclamation of dignity and voice in a society that has long marginalized them. Similarly, dominant caste voters often support rival parties not merely for economic incentives but to secure or maintain status in a social hierarchy that defines their identity.

This pattern is not unique to UP or Bengal. In Tamil Nadu, where the AIADMK and DMK have alternated power for decades, elections are as much about Tamil cultural identity as about governance. In the 2021 Assembly elections, 73% of DMK voters cited 'Tamil pride' as a major reason for their choice, far outweighing concerns about job creation or welfare schemes (Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections 2021: Dravidian Politics at Crossroads|Economic and Political Weekly; Lokniti-CSDS, 2021). Language, history, and cultural autonomy often prove more persuasive than GDP growth rates or industrial policies.

In these cases, emotional allegiances do not just overpower economic reasoning-they render it almost irrelevant. And why shouldn't they? For Homo Politicus, *identity is not an abstraction; it is survival.* Belonging to a community, protecting a culture, or asserting regional pride is as much about self-preservation as self-expression. *Is identity not also a form of rationality, deeply rooted in collective memory and existential necessity?*

Yet, it is important to understand that the emotional voter does not reject reason; they redefine it. To align with one's caste, region, or culture is not irrational-it is profoundly logical when seen through the lens of history and community. Identity, after all, is the anchor that steadies the voter in a turbulent sea of promises and propaganda. It is the compass that points them toward safety, belonging, and purpose.

This is the magical madness of Indian democracy. The voter does not just choose policies; they reaffirm who they are. *Homo Politicus* may be driven by passion, but

that passion is neither random nor fleeting. It is deliberate, rooted in the soil of shared histories and collective futures. As they step into the polling booth, the voter does not simply cast a ballot; they perform an act of identity, proving once again that in India, democracy is less a transaction and more a profound act of self-definition.

DEMOCRACY'S LIVING PARADOX

Democracy, at its core, is a living paradox-a ceaseless negotiation between reason and passion, the cold calculus of what is and the fiery vision of what could be. In India, this paradox is not a flaw but a feature, woven into the fabric of its political and cultural consciousness. The Indic tradition has always grappled with this duality: the pursuit of Artha and the adherence to Dharma are not opposites but partners in the dance of life (Kangle, 1965; Badrinath, 2006). Kautilya's Arthashastra extols statecraft grounded in economic and military strength, while the Mahabharata and Ramayana remind us that material victories are hollow without ethical legitimacy.

This ancient debate finds a modern stage in every Indian election. The ballot box becomes a new Kurukshetra, where voters weigh self-interest against collective good, passion against reason, and tradition against transformation. Here, the Indian voter is a philosopher in action, inheriting centuries of civilizational wisdom and deploying it in the messiness of contemporary politics.

But this tension is not uniquely Indian. Western philosophy, too, oscillates between Kant's rational imperative-where ethics and logic are paramount (Kant, 1996)-and Nietzsche's celebration of the will, desire, and identity (Nietzsche, 1998). Yet India's democracy gives these forces a distinctive vibrancy. The farmer in Punjab weighs the promise of higher MSPs against decades of loyalty to a particular party. The urban professional in Mumbai is torn between tax reforms and the emotional pull of a leader's cultural narrative. The first-time voter, armed with data from social media, is swept up in the fervour of a movement that promises both jobs and pride (Heath and Kumar, 2020).

India revels in this tension. Reason and passion coexist, not as adversaries, but as uneasy allies. The voter who chooses a party for economic policies may still be moved by its cultural vision. The voter driven by caste or regional identity still weighs economic pragmatism. This synthesis-chaotic, layered, and profoundly human-is what makes Indian democracy both maddening and magnificent.

THE COEXISTENCE: THE INDIAN VOTER AS A DUAL BEING

The Indian voter is not a monolith, nor a simple sum of rational calculations or emotional allegiances. Instead, they stand at the crossroads of Homo Economicus

and Homo Politicus, not as two halves of a divided being, but as a singular, complex entity negotiating the pulls of reason and emotion (Jaffrelot, 2003).

Empirical studies confirm this fusion. Post-poll surveys from CSDS-Lokniti consistently reveal that while economic issues like inflation and unemployment are top concerns, factors such as religion, caste, and language remain equally decisive (CSDS-Lokniti 2019; Chauchard 2017). A young voter in Bengaluru may be disillusioned by joblessness yet inspired by a leader's vision of national renewal. A tribal farmer in Chhattisgarh may value free seeds and fertilizer but also remain loyal to a party that has symbolized their struggle for dignity and rights. These are not contradictions, but reflections of a deeper truth: economic incentives and ideological commitments are intertwined in the mind of the voter.

The 2014 general elections exemplified this blend. Economic reforms and the promise of development resonated widely, but it was the narrative of national pride and strong leadership that sealed the deal for millions. A CSDS post-election analysis found that over 30% of voters who cited economic issues as their main concern still voted primarily based on leadership and ideology (CSDS-Lokniti 2014). In the 2021 West Bengal elections, economic concerns were loud, but they were drowned out by the assertion of Bengali identity and the defence of cultural autonomy (Banerjee, 2022). In both cases, the rational and the emotional did not clash-they merged, each reinforcing the other.

This coexistence is not static. Sometimes, economic and identity concerns align, creating a powerful synergy. At other times, they compete, forcing voters into a delicate balancing act. The Indian voter is not torn between two identities; they are the synthesis of both, voting with mind and heart, negotiating the complex terrain of democracy with a sophistication that defies simplistic analysis.

THEORETICAL CHAOS: BEYOND THE BINARY

Neat categories-*Homo Economicus and Homo Politicus*-oversimplify the messy realities of Indian democracy. To label the voter as purely rational is to ignore the fire of their passions; to insist they are purely emotional is to overlook the sharpness of their calculations. The truth lies in the interplay between the two, in what might be called *Homo Civicus*: the citizen who navigates this turbulence with rare and dynamic instinct (Chauchard, 2017).

Voter motivations are best understood as a spectrum. On one end lies the cold calculation of survival-policies that promise employment, subsidies, and security. On the other burns the fire of identity-the pride of region, the solidarity of caste, the loyalty to a leader who speaks to their soul. Most voters occupy the vast middle ground, where these motivations merge and mutate, shaping decisions that defy simple categorization.

Consider the Indian farmer. Their livelihood depends on pragmatic issues: MSPs, irrigation, and debt relief. But when they step into the voting booth, they are also a bearer of identity-Dalit, Jat, Maratha-each layer influencing their choice as much as the economic policies on offer (Jaffrelot, 2021; Kumar, 2021). Or the urban millennial, toggling between promises of economic growth and the allure of an ideology that resonates with their sense of self. *Homo Civicus* is not a compromise between reason and passion; they are the embodiment of their coexistence.

This integrated model challenges binary frameworks. It suggests that motivations are dynamic, shaped by the interplay of individual needs and collective aspirations. By embracing the spectrum of voter motivations, we can better understand the Indian voter, who thrives in this chaos. Their decisions may look inconsistent to the outside observer, but to Homo Civicus, they are profoundly logical, rooted in the realities of life, community, and identity.

THE TANDAVA OF DEMOCRACY

Indian democracy is not a rigid structure but a Tandava-a dynamic interplay of forces, much like Shiva's cosmic dance as *Ardhanareeshwara*, where masculine and feminine energies coexist in a single form. It thrives not despite its contradictions, but because of them. Voters balance economic pragmatism and emotional allegiance; leaders shift between reformers and storytellers; and caste, class, and ideology shape the system's rhythm (Varshney, 2022b).

India's elections are not just contests for power-they are reflections of societal consciousness. The 2019 and 2024 elections embodied this duality, where welfare policies stood alongside nationalist sentiment, and voters reconciled both in their choices. This tension is not uniquely Indian: Americans often vote for cultural values over economic interests, and Europeans debate immigration between pragmatism and identity (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Mudde, 2019). But India, with its scale and diversity, perfects the art of coexistence rather than resolving contradictions.

DENOUEMENT: TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY

We return to the paradox of the Indian voter. This paper set out to unravel the dual nature of voter behaviour, to probe the coexistence of *Homo Economicus* and *Homo Politicus*, and to understand how Indian democracy thrives in the space where rationality and identity converge. What emerges is not just a theory of voter behaviour but a testament to the resilience and richness of Indian democracy itself.

The findings are clear: the Indian voter is neither purely rational nor entirely emotional. They are a dual being, navigating a landscape where economic incentives meet ideological commitments, where self-interest merges with collective identity.

This coexistence is not a flaw but a feature-a reflection of the complexity that defines human decision-making (Chauchard, 2017).

For policymakers and strategists, the implications are profound. To truly engage the Indian voter is to recognize and respect this duality. Policies cannot appeal solely to logic or emotion; they must speak to both. Welfare schemes and economic reforms must be coupled with narratives that resonate culturally and emotionally. Similarly, ideological platforms must be grounded in practical benefits that address everyday concerns. The key is balance-a balance that acknowledges the voter as a whole person, not a fragmented archetype.

Moreover, the need for voter education is urgent. An inclusive democracy requires citizens who understand and embrace their duality, who see no contradiction in balancing rationality with identity. Civic education should empower voters to make informed decisions, not by choosing one dimension over the other but by navigating the interplay between the two.

Ultimately, democracy is not just a system of governance; it is the mirror of our collective complexity. It reflects the messiness of human nature, the contradictions of our motivations, and the beauty of our ability to coexist despite them. Indian democracy, with all its chaos and contradictions, reminds us that governance is not about perfection. It is about participation. It is about giving every voter, whether driven by logic, passion, or both, a voice.

And so, the education of democracy continues. Democracy remains alive, vibrant, and inclusive, not because it solves our contradictions but because it celebrates them. The Indian voter, in their duality, stands as the ultimate proof that democracy is not a destination but a journey-a journey towards understanding, coexistence, and the shared dream of a better tomorrow.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIHAR VICTIM COMPENSATION SCHEMES: A STUDY OF LEGAL ASPECTS

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Abstract

Victim of crimes have moral right to compensation. Even the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 has provisions to protect rights of victims by compensation. In the light of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (hereinafter 'the BNSS') and judgments of the Supreme Court, Bihar Government has launched victim compensation schemes. In pursuance of provisions of BNSS and judicial orders, many states, including the State of Bihar, have made and amended victim compensation schemes. The present paper attempts to examine the implementation of such schemes and underlines the maladies in the process. With application of doctrinal method of research, it finds that there is gap between the purpose of the scheme and misuse by not only victims but also by public prosecutors. It makes us to suggest developing the effective mechanisms and create awareness among not only victims but also among the citizens, judicial officials, public prosecutors and legal service authorities at district level.

Keywords: Crime-Victims, Compensation Laws, Bihar State Legal Services Authority, CrPC, BNSS, IPC.

INTRODUCTION

The laws in India, handling crimes, have been accused-centric and silent on the compensation to victims. The judiciary in India has noticed the issue time and again in judgements of various cases and directed state to make provisions of compensation to victims.[1] This has been termed as 'Victimology' by Justice Pardiwala in *Rajendra Bhagwanji Umraniya* v. *State of Gujarat* observed, "…though human life cannot be restored but then monetary compensation will at least provide some solace."[2] Compensation to the victims has also been kept in category of the

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fundamental rights. It will be evident from the judgement in case of *Rudal Sah* v. *State of Bihar*[3] in which Rudal Shah was kept in jail for fourteen years before his acquittal. The issue of right compensation was discussed in the light of Article 21 of Indian Comstitution and writ of *habeas corpus* under Article 32 and the Supreme Court passed an order for compensation.

Although Section 357 of the CrPC, 1973 makes provision of compensation only in case of conviction, yet this section was not sufficient to solve problems of compensation. The Law Commission of India in its 154th Report suggested to incorporate the 'Victim Compensation Scheme' in the law. The Malimath Committee also suggested for 'Victim Compensation Fund' administered by Legal Services Authority.[4] This has been recognized by UN General Assembly twice in 1985 and 2005 for restitution and rehabilitation.[5] In view of this doctrine, the Section 357A was inserted in 2009 which came into force in December 31, 2009. This provision-imposed duties on every State Government to prepare victim compensation scheme with co-ordination of Central Government. In pursuance of this amendment, many States including State of Bihar made the scheme. The BNSS 2023 which repleaded the 'CrPC', 1973, has made the provisions. A comparative chart of the provisions is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Comparison between the BNSS & the CrPC

Marginal Notes	*The BNSS, 2023*	*The CrPC, 1973*
Order to pay compensation	Section 395	Section 357
Victim Compensation Scheme	Section 396 [Sub-sections 1 to 6]	Section 357A
Compensation to be in addition to fine in case of certain rape cases and acid attack victim	Section 396(7)	Section 357B
Treatment of victim	Section 397	Section 357 C
Arrest or accusation without reasonable ground or cause		
Compensation to persons groundlessly arrested	Section 399	Section 358
Compensation for accusation without reasonable cause.	Section 273	Section 250

There are many statutes deal with compensation for victims such as, the IPC, 1860 (BNS 2023), the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, the BNSS, 2023 & special laws.

The IPC, 1860: The victim of a gruesome acid attack, Laxmi filed a writ petition to the Supreme Court in May, 2006. The SC directed the Law Commission of India to submit a Report. The Commission submitted 226th Report in July 2009 and requested for inclusion of Section 326A and compensation for victim. Parliament

amended the IPC and inserted section 326A. The section was providing the fine must be just & reasonable to meet medical expenses of victim. Fine will be paid to victims. Section 124(1), the BNS replaced the section 226A, the IPC.

The PO Act, 1958: Section 5 of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 deals with payment of compensation by the accused (as per 154th Report of Law Commission). The section says that a court releasing an offender under section 3 & section 4 may pass an order directing the accused to pay reasonable compensation for loss or injury caused to any person. In case of non-payment, it will be recovered as a fine.

It will be the duty of the Probation Officer to advise & assist the offenders in paying compensation ordered by the Court.

The BNSS, 2023: The BNSS has a victim-centric approach. Many provisions of the CrPC, 1973 has been accepted without any substantial change except numerical change. Table 1 clearly shows a comparison between the BNSS and the CrPC. Provisions of the BNSS related to the compensation are the following:

Section 395 of the BNSS is similar to section 357 of the CrPC. This section is applicable only in case of conviction of an offence of which fine is part of punishment. This section is applicable not only at the stage of trial, but also before appellate courts and revisional courts. The Court may pass an order that fine recovered would be paid to the victim.

Section 395 has limited scope. Reason of this is that section 395 is applicable only in case of conviction. Many times, court did not impose fine. Sometimes courts impose fine, but amount of those fine may not be sufficient to heel loss or injury of victims. Many times, poor convicted persons instead of paying fine prefer to jail.

This section is not complete without support of section 396 of the BNSS. Section 396 of the BNSS covers those area which had not been covered under section 395 of the BNSS.

SECTION 396, THE BNSS

Section 396, the BNSS is combination of section 357A & section 357B, the CrPC, 1973. Sub-sections 1 to 6, the BNSS is similar to section 357A, while sub-section 7, the BNSS is similar to section 357B, the CrPC. These sub-sections are the following:

(1) *Section 396 (1), the BNSS: Preparation of Scheme* – Sub-section 1 of the Section 357A imposes mandatory duties over every State Government to prepare victim compensation scheme and to arrange fund for this purpose. The State Government may co-ordinate with the Central Government for this purpose. Purpose of the Scheme is to provide compensation to victim or his dependents. This compensation

is given to victims who suffered loss or injury as a result of crime and who require rehabilitation.

(2) *Section 396 (2) & (3): Trial stage & Compensation* – These sub-section deal with compensation at the stage of the trial. Sub-section 3 is specific at the stage of conclusion of trial. Under sub-section 2 authorizes the Court to recommend compensation at any stage of trial. Quantum of such compensation shall be decided by DLSA or SLSA, as the case may be, as per scheme prepared by respective State under sub-section 1. Sub-section 3 is very wider. If the victim has to be rehabilitated, the trial court may pass an order for compensation even in the following circumstances – (i) where the accused is acquitted, or (ii) here the accused is discharged, or (iii) Where accused is convicted and compensation awarded under section 357 is not sufficient for compensation.

(3) *Section 396 (4), the BNSS: Pre-trial stage & Compensation* – Sub-section 4 covered compensation at pre-trial stage. It is applicable when victim is identified, but offender neither identified nor traced and trial had not been started. In such cases, victim or his dependent may give application to State Legal Services Authority or District Legal Services Authority. For the example, acid victim of Gaya District of Bihar had been identified, but acid attackers had not been identified. In such circumstance, the victim may give application either to Bihar State Legal Services Authority (in short BSLSA) or Gaya District Legal Services Authority under section 357A, the CrPC.

(4) *Section 396 (5), the BNSS: Time-limit for awarding compensation* – Sub-section 5 is applicable at pre-trial stage as well as post-trial stage. This sub-section 5 is applicable in the following circumstances:

- This section is applicable either on the recommendation of the court or on receipt of the applicable of the victim for awarding compensation,
- SLSA or DLSA will conduct inquiry for awarding of adequate compensation, and
- This inquiry must be completed within two months.

(5) *Section 396 (6), the BNSS: Immediate first-aid facility or medical benefits free of cost* – Sub-section 6 authorizes SLSA or DLSA for awarding immediate first-aid facility. There are two parts of this sub-section. First part deals with first-aid facility or medical benefits available at free of cost on the certificate issued by the police officer not below the rank of officer in charge of the police station or Magistrate of the area concerned. Second part deal with any other interim relief as the appropriate authority deems fit.

(6) *Section 396 (7), the BNSS: Compensation in addition to fine* – The Compensation payable by the State Government under section 396, the BNSS is in addition to fine to the victims under sections 65, 70 & 124(1) of the BNS, 2023.

Special Statutes: The PoA Act, 1989 & the POCSO Act, 2012 also deal with compensation. The PoA Rule, 1995, Schedule, Annexure I, Read with Rule 12(4), says that DM/SDM/ or any Executive Magistrate will provide relief according to Annexure I along with other relief. It covers 47 types of offences. Lucknow Bench highlighted misuse of compensation scheme of PoA Act, 1989 in *Israr @ Israr Ahmad and Others* v. *State of U.P. Thru. Prin. Secy. Home and Another.*[6] As per Section 33 of the POCSO Act & 9 of the POCSO Rule, 2020 Special Court may award compensation. Compensation is given as per schemes made under section 357A, the CrPC (now section 396, the BNS). Maximum compensation in Bihar is awarded to the POCSO victim.

THE BIHAR VICTIM COMPENSATION SCHEMES

In pursuance of order passed by the Supreme Court in *Laxmi* v. *UNO,*[7] the Governor of the Bihar by using the power given under section 357A, the CrPC made the 'Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2011'. Acid attack is uncivilized & heartless crime.[8] It was very unfortunate that only INR 25000/- was provided for acid attack victim. It was criticized by the Supreme Court *and* directed to all State to make uniform victim compensation scheme and minimum od Rupees three lakh. The Court directed the State to consider to regulate sell of acid also.

In pursuance of this order, the Governor by using the power given under section 357A made 'the Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014'. By the Scheme, 2014, the Scheme 2011 was repealed.

Later on, the Supreme Court in *the Laxmi Case*[9] on April 10, 2015 directed to establish 'the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board' along with other suggestions. The Supreme Court in *Parivartan Kendra* v. *Union of India*[10] clarified the ratio of *Laxmi Case* and directed to implement ratio of *Laxmi Case*.

The Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014 was again amended in 2018 & 2019. In compliance of the order dated May 11, 2018 and the Bihar Victim Compensation (Amendment) Scheme, 2019 was made by adding a chapter on the Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/other Crimes. Mandatory reporting of FIR by SHO/SP/DCP to SLSA/DLSA was also provided.

The Supreme Court in *Tehseen S. Poonawalla* v. *Union of India and Others*[11] directed State Governments to prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme. Bihar Governor made the Scheme, i.e. Bihar Lynching and Mob Violence Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018 on Sep. 18, 2018 by using power given under section 375A.

Victims under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 is also given compensation as per rule made by states and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, 1995. Schedule of this Rule contains three columns. Serial no, name of offences and minimum amount of compensation have been mentioned in columns first, second and third respectively.

The Supreme Court in *Laxmi* v. *Union of India* dated February 11, 2011 issued mandatory direction for making Scheme under section 357A especially for acid attack victims. Till this order, even a single State had not complied this section. Many states made the Scheme after this order. Governor of the Bihar in co-ordination with the Central Government also made the Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2011.[12] It was repealed in 201

The Supreme Court in *Laxmi* v. *Union of India*[13] criticized the Scheme, 2011 and suggested uniformity in compensation. The Court suggested for three lakhs rs. The Governor of the Bihar by using the power given under section 357A made the BVC Scheme, 2014[14]. The Scheme superseded the BVC Scheme 2011.

THE BIHAR VICTIM COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) SCHEME, 2018

Consequence up on the Supreme Court of Indian directed to constitute the 'Criminal Injuries Compensation Board'. Central Victim Compensation Fund (C.V.C.F) Guidelines 2016 dated 06.07.2016 directed States to make District Victim Compensation Fund. In compliance of order of the Supreme Court and the Guidelines, 2016, the Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014 was amended by the Bihar Victim Compensation (Amendment) Scheme, 2018. Salient features of the Amendment are the following:

(1) Establishment of District Criminal Injuries Compensation Board – District Criminal Injuries Compensation Board consisting of District Judge (Chairperson), District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police and Civil Surgeon or CMO of the District as members. This Board was established in compliance of *Laxmi Case.*[15] This Board shall examine the claim and decide quantum of compensation.

(2) District Victim Compensation Fund – Para 3A was inserted in the Scheme, 2014. This Fund was established in every district of Bihar. This fund shall be operated by the Secretary of the DLSA on the sanction of Chairman of the concerned DLSA.

(3) Uploading of information on official website – Para 10A was inserted. All information relating to Bihar Victims Compensation Schemes will be uploaded on the website of the Department of Law, Government of Bihar.

(4) Substitution of Schedule – Schedule 1 of the Scheme 2014 was also substituted. Amount of compensation was enhanced. Amount of compensation was enhanced. For example, in case of rape and acid attack, amount of compensation was enhanced up to seven lakh rs. Description of injuries/loss were also added.

(5) Enhancement of compensation in special circumstances

- If the victim is less than 14 years, amount of compensation specified in the Schedule will be increased up to 50%.
- If the acid attack victim has lost her 80% eye sight or her face permanently disfigured and in rape case where victim is blind or otherwise handicap, the District Criminal Injuries Compensation Board may, instead of giving lump sum amount, fix amount ten thousand per month to victim. Final decision will be taken by the DLSA.

(6) Form 1 – Form 1 was inserted which deals with "Application for the Award of Compensation under Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014 for Relief. Any victim or dependent may fill this form and submit to DLSA of the concerned area.

THE BIHAR VICTIM COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) SCHEME, 2019

The Supreme Court in *Nipun Saxena & Anr.* v. *Union of India & Ors*[16] ordered the NALSA to prepare scheme for compensation for women victims. The NALSA prepared the Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/other Crimes. The Court accepted this Scheme and directed all States to accept this on May 11, 2018. In pursuance of this direction, the Governor of Bihar amended the BVC Scheme, 2014 by the Bihar Victim Compensation (Amendment) Scheme, 2019.[17] Special features of this Amendment are:

(1) Adding of Chapter 2 – By this Amendment, Chapter 2 was added in the Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014. Near about contained of 8 pages were added. Name of this chapter was "the Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/other Crimes, 2019".

(2) Subject matter – It is applicable to the victim & dependent of Bihar. Such victim must be women. This chapter is gender based. Victim is eligible for multiple schemes. But compensation given under section 396(7) of the BNSS[18] shall be considered at the time of giving compensation under this Scheme.

(3) Definitions – Many definitions were added including dependent, DLSA, BSLSA, Women Victim Compensation Fund, Schedule, Form, Sexual Assault Victim and 'Women Victim/survivor of other Crime' etc. This victim scheme covers, rape,[19] outrage of modesty,[20] sexual harassment,[21] disrobing,[22] voyeurism,[23] stalking,[24] words or gestures intended to insult modesty of women,[25] dowry death,[26] cruelty caused by husband or his family,[27] acid attack,[28] & their abetment & attempt.

(4) Establishment of Women Victim Compensation Fund – Separate 'Women Victim Compensation Fund' was established. It has separate bank account. It receives amount from Central Victim Compensation Fund Scheme, 2015[29], Bihar Victim Compensation Fund, State budges & contribution from companies under 'Corporate Social Responsibility'. Compensation to eligible victims shall be paid from this fund. The BSLSA will operate this.

(5) Mandatory reporting of FIR by SHO/SP/DCP to SLSA/DLSA – It is mandatory duty of SHO/SP/DCP regarding mandatory reporting of FIR related to those offences which are covered by this Scheme to the Bihar Legal Services Authority (BSLSA)/concerned District Legal Services Authority. Benefit of this reporting is that on the basis of such report, the BSLSA or the DLSA may take suo motu action and grant interim compensation after conducting preliminary inquiry.

(6) Application for compensation – Application for award of the compensation can be given by the victim/dependent/SHO to BSLSA or concerned DLSA. Application must be given in Form I[30] along with the following documents:

- copy of FIR or complaint, as the case may be,
- medical report, if available,
- death certificate, if available,
- judgment, if available
- recommendation of court, if available.

Application may be submitted online also.[31]

(7) Factors relevant for consideration – Many factors including loss of opportunities of education & employment, gravity of offence, sexually transmitted disease including AIDS, pregnancy of victim, etc are considered at the time of deciding compensation.

(8) Method of disbursement of compensation – Compensation will be disbursed in the account of victim/dependent by the BLSA. If the victim had no account, the DLSA will support in opening of account. In case of minor, 80% compensation shall be deposited in the fix deposit.

Limitation & Appeal – Within three years from the date of occurrence or conclusion of trial compensation can be claimed. Appeal from Secretary, DLSA must be filed to Chairperson of the DLSA within 30 days.

(9) Schedule – Schedule contains four columns. Column 2 contains particular of loss or injury. Columns 2 & 3 contains minimum & maximum amount of compensation respectively. For example, in case of loss of life or gang rape, minimum amount of compensation is five years & maximum amount is ten lakhs Rs. If a woman was gang raped and she died subsequently. She will be entitled for minimum 10 lakh Rs. and maximum 20 lakh Rs. Compensation.

Table 2 shows that Bihar Victim Compensation Schemes are utilized by victims. Increasing number of victims and compensation awarded to them are showing effectiveness of this scheme.

Table 2: Year wise victim compensation chart[32]

S. No.	*Years*	*Number of victims*	*Amount of compensation (in Rupees)*
1.	2020 – 2021	221	6,50,17,000/
2.	2021 – 2022	544	15,13,89,500/-
3.	2022 – 2023	593	16,63,67,500/-
4.	2023 - 2024	724	19,99,91,000/-

As per Section 33 of the POCSO Act & 9 of The POCSO Rule, 2020 Special Court may award compensation. Such compensation will be paid as per Scheme prepared under section 357A, the CrPC (now section 396, the BNS). Maximum beneficiary of compensation schemes in the State of Bihar are victims under the POCSO Act. Chart 1 shows that 57 %, 67.83%, 73.86%, 79% in 2020 –21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, respectively compensation was awarded to the victims under the POCSO scheme.

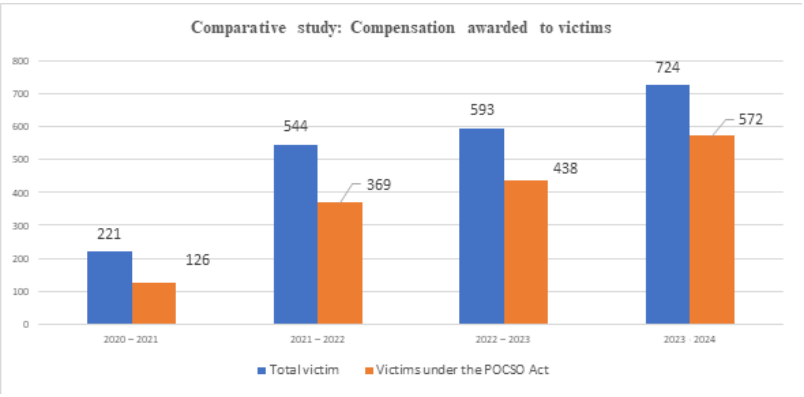

Chart 1: Comparative study: Compensation awarded to victims[33]

THE BIHAR LYNCHING AND MOB VIOLENCE VICTIM COMPENSATION SCHEME, 2018

The Supreme Court in *Tehseen S. Poonawalla* v. *UOI & Ors*[34] directed to all States to make Scheme by using powers given under section 357A (now section 396, the BNS). Many States had not complied this order.[35] State of Bihar complied in letter & spirit. The Governor of the Bihar in the compliance of this direction made the

Bihar Lynching and Mob Violence Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018[36] by using the power under section 357A. There are the following features of the Scheme:

1. Implementation of the scheme shall be according to the Bihar Victim Compensation Scheme, 2014 which were amended time to time.
2. At the time of deciding amount of compensation, bodily & psychological injury, loss of opportunities & educational opportunity and medical expenditure must be considered.
3. DLSA will not provide only free legal aid, but also interim & final compensation. The interim relief will be paid within 30 days.
4. A court shall be designated as 'Speedy Trial Court' which will complete trial within six months from the date of the taking cognizance.
5. There is one Schedule. The Schedule contains four columns. Injuries caused by mob-lynching has been categorized into five categories. Maximum amount of compensation is three lakhs rs,

Table 3 contains details of compensation awarded and accident of death and violence caused during mob-lynching:

Table 3: Year wise compensation[37]

S. No.	*Year*	*Death & violence*	*Compensation*
1.	2020 – 21	0	0
2.	2021-22	6	9,25,000
3.	2022-23	1 (Mob-violence)	25000
4.	2023-24	0	0

CONCLUSION

Bihar Victim Compensation Schemes are result of many judgments & orders of the Supreme Court. Today, these schemes cover different types of offences. Amount of compensation is also satisfactory. The Scheme 2011 was providing only 25, 000 rs for acid attack victim. The BVC Scheme, 2014 after 2019 Amendment provides minimum 7 lakh & maximum 8 lakhs for such victims. The Government also provides free medical treatment to acid victims. Three types of funds are working. These are – 'Victim Compensation Fund', 'District Victim Compensation Fund', and 'Women Victim Compensation Fund'. Many bodies paly vital role for awarding compensation including 'Criminal Injuries Compensation Board', 'Bihar State Legal Services Authority' and 'District Legal Services Authorities' etc.

The schemes need to make more effective. There is need to create more awareness, speed up process, and establish equality among all. Corruption is another challenge. Some professional persons are involved in many districts. The Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court in *Israr Case*[38] highlighted corruption

in compensation schemes. He suggested that compensation must not be awarded at the initial stage. It must be awarded only at the stage of conviction. Although this judgment is not binding over Bihar. But it has persuasive nature for the State of Bihar. This suggestion must be implemented with certain modifications especially in case of compensation of offences under the PoA Act, 1989 & the POCSO Act, 2012.

Law related to 'Bihar Victim Compensation Schemes' are scattered. The BVC Scheme, 2014 had been amended in 2018 & 2019 at the major level. Due to scattered BVC Scheme, 2014 and Amendments 2018 & 2019, it creates confusion to ordinary persons who wants to read and understand these schemes. The Scheme 2014 must be consolidated by the BSLSA and consolidated schemes must be uploaded on the official website of the BSLSA.

As per NCRB data, 2022, total cases decided under the POCSO Act is 28135. Out of this, 19226 accused were either acquitted or convicted. In this way, near about 68% were acquitted or discharged. Many cases were compromised. Above 70% compensation in the State of Bihar is being paid to POCSO victims. During 2023 – 2023, 79% compensation were given to the POCSO victims. It creates some doubts. I also heard many stories of corruption in compensation schemes from many public prosecutors and judges of Bihar on the condition that I would not reveal their names. Time has come to constitute committee. Bihar State Government must constitute a committee consisting of retired judge of Patna High Court, Senior Public Prosecutor and one member from the civil society for review Bihar Victim Compensation Schemes.

ENDNOTES

1. The judgements in some cases, worth reference - *State of Punjab* v. *Gurmit Singh* (1996 2 SCC 384), Nipun Saxena case (2019 SCC, 703), *Zahira Habibulla H. Shiekh* v. *State of Gujarat* (2004, 4 SCC, 158) – have maintained that victims of rape face social boycott, loss of self-respect and make her future life hard. So the laws are not only for accused and society but for the victims also.
2. *Rajendra Bhagwanji Umraniya* v. *State of Gujarat*, 2024 SCC OnLine SC 927. Date of the judgment: May 09, 2024, para 22.
3. AIR 1983 SC 1086. Date of the judgment: August 01, 1983.
4. Committee on Reforms of Criminal Justice System, *Report*, Vol. 1, March 2003, p. 271. It is popularly known as Malimath Committee.
5. Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, 1985. And Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, 2005.
6. 2022 SCC OnLine All 518. Date of the judgment: July 26, 2022.
7. Date of the order: February 11, 2011.

8. State of H.P. v. Vijay Kumar, (2019) 5 SCC 373.
9. (2016) 3 SCC 669
10. (2016) 3 SCC 571. Date of the judgment: Dec. 07, 2015.
11. (2018) 9 SCC 501. Date of the judgment: July 17, 2018.
12. Available at:https://thc.nic.in/Central%20Governmental%20Schemes/Bihar%20 Victims%20Compensation%20Scheme,%202011.pdf (visited on September 28, 2024).
13. Ibid.
14. Available at: https://patnahighcourt.gov.in/bslsa/pdf/Publication/34.pdf (visited on September 29, 2024).
15. Ibid.
16. (2020) 18 SCC 499/ 2018 SCC Online SC 2439.
17. Date of making scheme: July 23, 2019. Available at: https://patnahighcourt.gov.in/bslsa/pdf/Publication/41.pdf (visited on October 5, 2024).
18. This provision is in pari materia to section 357B of the CrPC, 1973.
19. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Section 63.
20. Id. Section 74.
21. Id. Section 75.
22. Id. Section 76.
23. Id. Section 77.
24. Id. Section 78.
25. Id. Section 79.
26. Id. Section 80.
27. Id. Section 85.
28. Id. Section 124.
29. Suryansh Singh, and Aryan Garg. "Comparative Analysis of Victim Compensation Scheme of State of Gujarat and Bihar." Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research, 5, 2023, pp. 1-11. HeinOnline.
30. Form I had been attached with the Amendment Scheme, 2019.
31. Online application can be submitted at: https://nalsa.gov.in/lsams/nologin/victimcompensation.action?requestLocale=en (visited on October 6, 2024).
32. Available at: https://patnahighcourt.gov.in/bslsa/pdf/Publication/454.pdf (visited on October 5, 2024).
33. Ibid.
34. (2018) 9 SCC 501.
35. *Indian Muslim for Progress and Reforms* (*IMPAR*) v. *Union Of India & Ors*. (April 21, 2023) directed to submit compliance status report of victim compensation as directed in Tehseen S. Poonawalla Case.
36. Available at: https://patnahighcourt.gov.in/bslsa/pdf/Publication/145.pdf (visited on October 5, 2024).
37. Available at: https://patnahighcourt.gov.in/bslsa/pdf/Publication/454.pdf (visited on October 5, 2024).
38. Supra n. 21.

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AGRICULTURE SECTOR OF INDIA: ANALYSING THE NEXUS OF NPA, PSL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Sarvesh* and Karuna Shanker Kanaujiya**

Abstract

The agricultural sector of India has always played as the backbone of the Indian economy. Therefore it is important how maintain credit flow in this sector. Keeping this idea in mind to increase credit in the agriculture sector, agriculture primary sector lending was included in the Priority sector lending (PSL) policy from the beginning. However, at the same time, the policymakers also facing the problem of non-performing assets. A critical nexus exists between Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), Priority Sector Lending (PSL), and economic growth in India's agricultural sector. The analysis focuses on determining how NPAs influence credit accessibility within the PSL framework and, as a result, whether or not agricultural development is hampered or facilitated. This research seeks to illuminate the intricate relationship between NPAs, PSL, and economic growth in India's agricultural domain through empirical analysis and policy evaluations, providing insights critical for policymakers, financial institutions, and stakeholders striving to optimize credit mechanisms and sustain agrarian progress.

Keywords: Non-performing assets, Priority sector lending, agriculture, Commercial banks and Economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence, there has been a need to formulate a leading policy to overcome the credit crisis in the primary sector. Priority sector lending (PSL) an essential component of India's banking policy mandates a certain percentage of lending to specific sectors, including agriculture, to provide credit access to marginalized and underprivileged sections. As one of the primary contributors to India's economy,

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the agriculture sector remains the cornerstone of employment, livelihoods and national GDP. However, its continued growth faces complex challenges, further exacerbated by the complicated dynamics associated with non-performing assets (NPAs), Priority Sector Lending (PSL) and how they affect economic growth. In recent years, India's agricultural landscape has faced ups and downs influenced by financial implications. NPAs, denoting loans that borrowers fail to repay within the stipulated time frame, have posed substantial concerns within India's banking and financial systems. India's banking sector is struggling with high NPA levels, especially in agriculture-related loans. In this regard, as per Financial Stability Report (RBI, 2021), the gross NPA ratio of banks for the agriculture sector was 9.8 percent, 11.3 percent and 7.5 percent for industry and services, respectively. Nevertheless, the primary goal of PSL is to ensure that adequate and timely funds are available to specific sectors of society at reduced rates in order to assist them in growing efficiently (Yadav and Sharma, 2016). Since the introduction of the concept of PSL in India in 1968, the role of PSL in the country's economic growth and its impact on bank asset quality have been a subject of debate. Banks are expected to help uplift of the poor sections of society so that these people can benefit from the credit schemes. In the absence of credit for priority sectors, the economic gap may widen, resulting in a concentration of wealth in the hands of a few select players (Kohli, 1997). The directed credit for specific sectors has a spillover effect on non-priority sectors, and thus a decrease in PSL may result in an economic downturn (Naastepad, 2001). Reddy (2015) focused that NPLs are negatively related to return on assets, capital adequacy ratio, priority sector advances, growth in advances, total assets, and GDP growth, whereas operating cost ratio is positively related.

Mujumdar (1998) argued that because priority sectors are significant to high and stable GDP growth, it should be the business of public sector banks to support these sectors whether or not credit targets exist. Ninth five year plan was also recognizes the critical role of priority sector that credit policy must be re-oriented to reverse the sector's recent neglect. PSL ensures balanced economic growth by increasing employment opportunities and promoting social equity. Agriculture and related activities continue to employ a large portion of India's growing population. Furthermore, many people who cannot find work in formal, organized sectors are either attempting to establish a small business or are employed by these labour-intensive small and medium enterprises. It is critical to ensure a consistent flow of funds for these sectors to progress steadily and effectively contribute to the country's GDP. Sustainable development and prosperity of priority sectors reduce the burden on non-priority sectors regarding job creation and contribution to the country's economic acceleration.

OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of Priority Sector Lending of public and private banks on India's agricultural sector.
- Aside from this overarching goal, we try to understand the significance of priority sector lending in agriculture and examine the current status and trends in PSL for the agricultural sector. Furthermore, study also focused to understanding the complex dynamics between Non Performing Assets (NPAs), PSL and economic growth of India's agriculture sector.
- By shedding light on these complicated relationships, the study hopes to provide valuable insights to policymakers, financial institutions and stakeholders.
- The ultimate objective is to optimize the credit system while contributing to sustainable development in India's agricultural landscape.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although several studies such as Das and Ghosh (2007), Rajaraman et al. (1999) and Mishra and Dhall (2009) discuss the various issues of NPAs and their determinants. These studies have primarily examined only public sector banks in the country. As a result, after a cyclical downturn, while banks are dealing with large NPAs and low recovery rates, examining anxious asset recovery is critical. Studies by Amsden and Yueh (1993), Preston (1993) and Vittas and Cho (1996) have emphasized the importance of directed loan schemes for industrialization and balanced economic development. However, studies on bad-debt recovery are more common in developed economies. Whereas rising actual interest rates and unemployment are the most significant challenges for Indian banks regarding bad-debt recovery. As I found, this is the first study to evaluate the key determinants of NPA and recovery rates of public and private sector banks from 1998-1999 to 2017-2018 and 2003-04 to 2017-2018, respectively. In keeping with the ideas Altman et al. (2004), also examines the interdependence of these determinants. The Basel Committee (2006) and Moody's (2010) believe that recovery is related to default risk through both systematic and idiosyncratic factors. This study is important for recent policy changes, especially those pertaining to NPA recovery, as the RBI has stated in the Systematic Risk Survey conducted in October 2018 that higher credit risks have resulted in the proliferation of bad loans in the banking system. The Narasimham Committee II concluded in its report in 1998 that credit given to these specified sectors was actually responsible for the deterioration in commercial banks' asset quality. The committee recommended that credit be extended to these sectors with caution.

The existing economic literature on NPLs divides the determinants of Not Performing Lending (NPLs) into two categories: macroeconomic and bank-specific determinants (Louzis et al., 2012; Klein, 2013; Makri et al. 2014; Ekanayake

and Azeez, 2015; Ghosh, 2015; Dimitrios et al., 2016; Patra and Padhi, 2016; Rajha, 2016; Amuakwa-Mensah et al., 2017; Kjosevshi and Petkovski, 2017). Economic growth, interest rate, stock market index, fiscal deficit ratio, market capitalization ratio, and other macroeconomic factors (for example, inflation, exchange rate, unemployment rate, and public debt etc.) are important determinants of NPL. Furthermore, the operating expenses ratio, returns on equity, capital adequacy ratio, credit deposit ratio, PSL advances to total advances, branch growth and a variety of other bank-specific indicators (e.g., bank size, net interest margin and returns on assets etc.) are important determinants of NPLs. Higher GDP growth usually results in more income, which improves borrowers' debt serviceability and, as a result, helps to reduce NPLs (Nkusu, 2011; Khemraj and Pasha, 2009). Using a Random effects model and including broad economy characteristics such as inflation and GDP growth (Das & Utpal, 2021) NPAs have a negative impact on India's commercial banks' return on assets. Gaur and Mohapatra (2020) studied 45 scheduled commercial banks over 14 years (2004-2018). The study determined a positive correlation and bidirectional causal relationship between PSL and GDP, which means PSL contributes to overall economic growth. Furthermore, PSL is insignificant to the NPA ratio, implying that credit has been extended.

PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING AND NON-PERFORMING ASSETS

The RBI Department of Banking Supervision (1999) investigated the impact of priority sector advances on NPAs and discovered that on March 31, 1996, the proportion of priority sector NPAs to total NPAs was 48.27 percent, which had gradually declined to 46.40 percent by March 31, 1998. Despite being lower than the proportion of non-priority sector non-payments, the proportion of priority sector non-payments is significantly higher, given that priority sector advances accounted for only 30-32 per cent of total bank credit during the period.

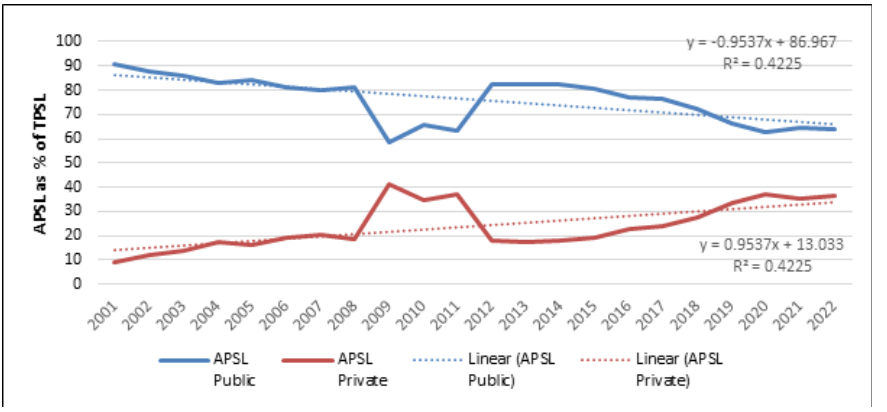


Figure 1: Performance of PSLs in the Agriculture Sector (Public vs Private Banks)

Source: Authors Construction

Figure 1 depicts agricultural priority sector lending (PSL) by public and private banks. Public banks' PSL decreased in the beginning years, while private banks' PSL increased from 2008 to 2012, public banks remained at the lowest level of lending. This is undesirable from the perspective of public-sector lenders. However, it increased after 2012, which continued until 2016. But again minimum decline was until 2020 and remained stable in subsequent years. The situation was reversed for private banks and observed, that private banks outperformed public banks in the PSL sector.

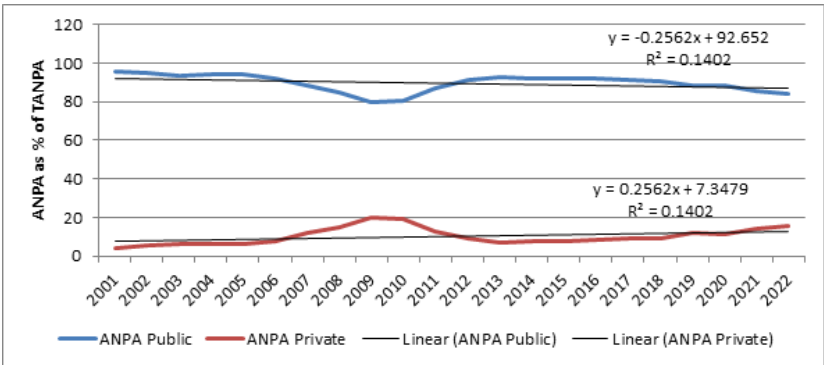


Figure 2: Performances of NPA in the Agriculture Sector (Public vs Private Banks)

Source: Authors Construction

Figure 2 depicts the comparative performance between public and private banks' agricultural NPAs. Public banks agricultural NPAs decline in the early years, while private banks' agricultural NPAs increased from 2009 to 2010. It has the highest level, whereas, in the same year, public banks have the lowest level, which is suitable for public banks'. After 2010, there was an increase in public bank NPA. Still, since 2016, NPAs has been steadily decreasing, indicating that better recovery in public banks NPAs compared to previous years is good from the banks' perspective, which is expected to increase bank profitability. It is possible to put it to use in future.

However, the gradual increase in the proportion of non-priority sectors may indicate that NPAs on the industrial sector borrower accounts have become more common in recent years. Shabbir and Mujoo (2014) compared NPAs in public, private and foreign sector banks' growth in sector-specific advances and NPAs over 11 years (2001-2011). Researcher focused that public sector banks have more Non-performing Assets (NPAs) compared to private-sector banks'. When analyzing sector-wise advances and NPA in priority sectors, SSI contributes the most to NPA in priority sectors, followed by weaker sections and agricultural advances. Desai (2017) studies found that NPA in priority sector is positively related with agricultural lending. He also focused that PSL is unappealing to commercial banks for several reasons including low loan value, low agricultural productivity,

defaulting borrowers and government interference. As manufacturing in the country has yet to reach its full potential, the industrial sector has proven to be a significant contributor to the priority sector NPA. This study can benefit banks and regulators strengthen credit standards, reduce NPAs in risky sectors, and promote more funding in the industry, resulting in positive results. As per Chalam (2017), PSL is the root cause of problems with bank asset quality and must be eliminated by the government.

While investigating the causes of bad loans in India's banking system, Vallabh et al. (2007) found a negative impact of directed credit schemes on NPA levels. Rajeev and Mahesh (2010) discovered that PSL loans account for a higher proportion of bad loans. After the reforms, PSL was examined by Sooden and Kumar (2007) and a balanced approach was proposed considering the quantum of NPAs in priority sector advances. Although, Dhar and Bakshi (2015) conducted research to determine the primary determinants of NPAs in Indian banks and found that PSL did not affect increasing NPA.

Das, Senapati, and John (2009) examined the Impact of Agricultural Credit on Agriculture Production: An Empirical Analysis in India and discovered significant regional disparities in agricultural credit disbursement by scheduled commercial banks. Simultaneously, agrarian GDP's share of total GDP is declining. Despite several gaps in the current institutional credit delivery system, such as insufficient credit to small & marginal farmers, a scarcity of medium and long-term lending, limited deposit mobilization, and a heavy reliance on borrowed funds by foremost agricultural credit purveyors, these findings demonstrate that agriculture credit remains an essential factor in supporting agricultural production in India.

The issues concerning the need for PSL were identified in the RBI (2005) draft technical paper of the internal working group. The working group recommended the need for PSL prescriptions, as well as the priority sector's composition, which includes agriculture, small scale industries, small road, water transport, education, and housing. To improve credit flow to the PSL and ensure that a certain percentage of total bank credit flows to this sector, the PSL obligations of banks may be linked to the total disbursements made by banks in the previous year. According to JaynalUd-din Ahmed's (2010) research, the recovery position in agriculture and allied activities in the three districts under consideration is discouraging compared to other PSLs. The volume of NPAs has grown in lockstep with the growth of PSL. However, PSL is not the only factor contributing to the increase in the volume of NPAs. Still, also other factors are responsible, such as capital adequacy ratio, NPA-to-advance ratio, credit deposit ratio etc.

Therefore, many studies are solely focused on bank priority sector lending, with most of the studies focusing on commercial banks' PSL and NPA practices. Although Dhar and Bakshi (2015) considered PSL as a determinant of NPA, the

study only addressed public sector banks, and the explanatory variables were limited to internal factors. However, to gain a better understanding of bad loans and design appropriate management policies, a comprehensive analysis of bank-specific and external variables is required. However, no particular research has been conducted in India to establish the analytical relationship between NPA, PSL, and agricultural economic growth. The researcher chose the topic for research to address the aforementioned issue because the sample studied includes representatives from all scheduled commercial banks operating in India. Considering the contribution of the agri-sector in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to India's economy, the findings of the current study will help banks in their improvement and expansion of PLS.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: DATA AND MODEL

Data

The study is based on secondary data taken from RBI data base and RBI financial reports as illustrated in Table 1. The study spans 22 years (from 2001 to 2022) and includes different groups of banks, namely public sector and private sector banks among India's scheduled commercial banks.

Table 1: Data description of selected variables

Variable Name	*Acronym*	*Description*	*Data Source*
Priority Sector Lending	PSL	PSL advances related agriculture, MSMEs and others priority sector per year (In Rs. Crores)	Reserve Bank of India
Agriculture Priority Sector Lending	APSL	PSL advances related agriculture priority sector per year (In Rs. Crores)	
Agriculture Non-performing assets	ANPA	Agriculture non-performing assets as a percentage of Agriculture advances (In Rs. Crores)	
Agriculture Gross Domestic Product (Dependent)	AGDP	Overall AGDP growth as % of gross domestic product (In Rs. Crores)	

Source: Authors' Compilation

Model

Furthermore, the analysis of the selected variables has carried out using the correlation matrix which explains the PSL, Agriculture PSL, Agriculture NPA (independent variables) and AGDP (Dependent). Simple OLS method has been

used for analysing the impact of the PSL, Agriculture PSL, and Agriculture NPA of Public and Privates Banks on the AGDP. Finally, ANOVA estimates have been analysed to understand the level of variance in the regression model. We used the following regression models for impact analysis which are described econometrically below:

1. Model for Public Banks:
   $$\mathbf{AGDP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 APSL_{pub} + \beta_2 ANPA_{pub} + \mu} \quad \text{... (1)}$$
   Where AGDP stands for GDP of agriculture sector, $APSL_{pub}$ refers to agriculture PSL by Public Banks, and $ANPA_{pub}$ represents agriculture NPA of Public Banks. α_0 is the constant term and β_1, β_2 are the respective coefficients. μ is the error term in the model.
2. Model for Private Banks:
   $$\mathbf{AGDP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 APSL_{pvt} + \beta_2 ANPA_{pvt} + \mu} \quad \text{... (2)}$$
   Where AGDP stands for GDP of agriculture sector, $APSL_{pvt}$ refers to agriculture PSL by Private Banks, and $ANPA_{pvt}$ represents agriculture NPA of Private Banks. α_0 is the constant term and β_1, β_2 are the respective coefficients. μ is the error term in the model.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The table 2 presents descriptive statistics pertaining to Agricultural PSL and Non-Performing Assets (NPA) in public and private sector banks, along with the Agricultural Gross Domestic Product (AGDP). It provides insights into mean values, variability (standard deviation), shape of distribution (kurtosis and skewness), and spread (range). For Agricultural PSL, Public Banks exhibit a slightly higher mean (12.65) compared to Private Banks (11.43), with lower variability in the former (standard deviation of 1.09 versus 1.44). However, Private Banks show a wider spread in PSL (range of 4.85). In terms of NPA, Public Banks have higher mean (9.95) and slightly wider variability (standard deviation of 1.12) compared to Private Banks (mean 7.74, standard deviation 1.32). Additionally, the AGDP mean is 14.23 with a smaller range of 0.75, depicting stability in the agricultural economic sector.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the selected variables

Statistics	*APSL of Public Bank*	*APSL of Private Bank*	*ANPA of Public Bank*	*ANPA of Private Bank*	*AGDP*
Mean	12.65	11.43	9.95	7.74	14.23
Standard Deviation	1.09	1.44	1.12	1.32	0.23
Kurtosis	-1.57	-0.73	-1.58	-1.15	-1.14
Skewness	-0.22	-0.39	0.33	0.15	0.20
Range	3.12	4.85	3.01	4.17	0.75

Source: Authors Calculation

The table 3 correlation matrix illustrates the relationships between Agricultural Priority Sector Lending (PSL), Non-Performing Assets (NPA), and Agricultural Gross Domestic Product (AGDP). All variables show the strong positive correlations indicating a close association between them. Precisely, high correlations between Agricultural PSL of Public and Private Banks (0.95), Agricultural NPA of Public and Private Banks (ranging from 0.88 to 0.94), and AGDP with all other variables (ranging from 0.95 to 0.98) signify a robust connection. These high correlations suggest a strong interdependence among Agricultural PSL, NPA, and AGDP, indicating that changes in one variable correspond with changes in the others.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

	APSL of Public Bank	*APSL of Private Bank*	*ANPA of Public Bank*	*ANPA of Private Bank*	*Agriculture GDP*
APSL of Public Bank	1				
APSL of Private Bank	0.95	1			
ANPA of Public Bank	0.92	0.88	1		
ANPA of Private Bank	0.93	0.97	0.94	1	
AGDP	0.95	0.97	0.96	0.98	1

Source: *Authors Calculation*

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA) AND REGRESSION ESTIMATES

The ANOVA table 4 for the public bank displays statistical information regarding the regression analysis conducted. It consists of three key sections: Regression, Residual (figures 3 & 5), and Total. The regression section outlines the degrees of freedom (df), the sum of squares (SS), mean squares (MS), F-statistic, and the significance of F. With 2 degrees of freedom, the regression model explains variations in the data significantly, as indicated by the high F-statistic of 150.924

and a corresponding significance (Significance F) of 2.18, suggesting that the regression model is statistically significant. The residual (figures 3 & 5) section reveals details about the unexplained variability or errors within the model. It includes the degrees of freedom, sum of squares, and mean squares for residuals (figures 3 & 5), representing the difference between observed and predicted values.

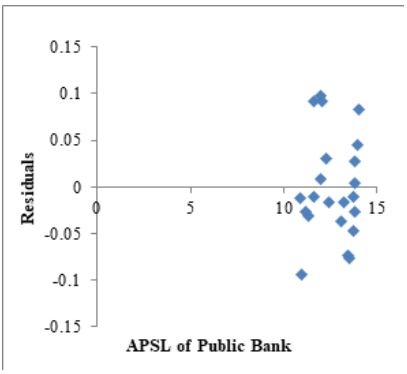


Figure 3: APSL of Public Bank Residual Plot

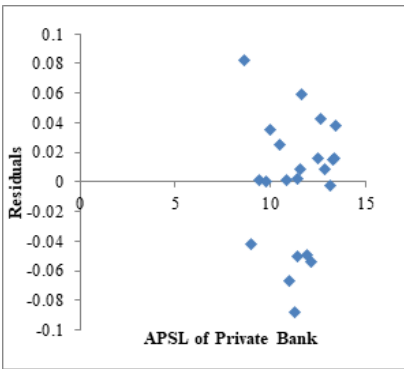


Figure 4: APSL of Private Bank Residual Plot

Source: Authors Construction

Table 4: ANOVA estimates of Public Bank

	Df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	2	1.023	0.51	150.924	2.18
Residual	19	0.06	0.003		
Total	21	1.09			

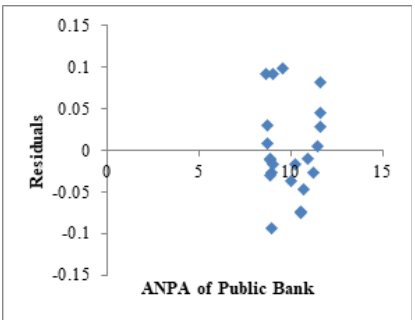
Source: *Authors Calculation*

Table 5: Regression estimates for Public Banks

	Coef.	*s.e.*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	11.96	0.16	75.04	0.00	11.63	12.29	11.63	12.29
APSL of Public Bank	0.09	0.03	3.00	0.01	0.03	0.15	0.03	0.15
ANPA of Public Bank	0.11	0.03	3.83	0.00	0.05	0.17	0.05	0.17
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R				0.97				
R Square				0.94				
Adjusted R Square				0.93				
Standard Error				0.06				

Source: *Authors Calculation*

The table 5 illustrates the coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, p-values, and confidence intervals for the regression model involving agriculture PSL and Non-Performing Assets (NPA) within the context of the Public Bank (figures 7 & 9).. The Intercept, starting at 11.96 with a standard error of 0.16, represents the estimated value of the AGDP when all of the predictors are zero. Agriculture PSL and agriculture NPA coefficients are positive (0.09 and 0.11, respectively), indicating that an increase in these variables leads to a predicted increase in the AGDP.



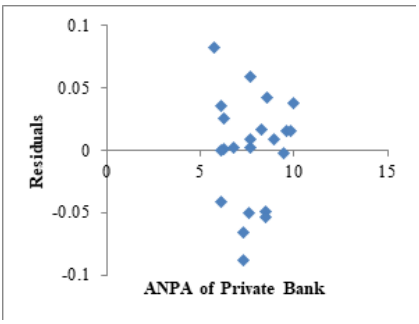


Figure 5: ANPA of Public Bank Residual Plot **Figure 6:** ANPA of Private Bank Residual Plot

Source: *Authors Construction*

The t-statistics (3.00 for agriculture PSL and 3.83 for agriculture NPA) show the significance of each predictor variable about the AGDP. With p-values of 0.01 and 0.00, respectively, both predictors appear statistically significant, below the conventional significance level of 0.05. The lower and upper 95 per cent confidence intervals (0.03 to 0.15 for Agriculture PSL and 0.05 to 0.17 for Agriculture NPA) determine the range in which the actual population parameters will likely fall. In totality, the table 5 indicates that both agriculture PSL and agriculture NPA of the public bank there are statistically significant positive effects on agricultures economic growth. High Multiple R (0.97) and R Square (0.94) values signify a robust relationship, validating the model's accuracy in explaining variability in the AGDP. Adjusted R Square (0.93) provides a more conservative estimate of the model's reliability, considering the number of predictors involved. The low Standard Error (0.06) indicates that the model's predictions are generally close to the actual observed values.

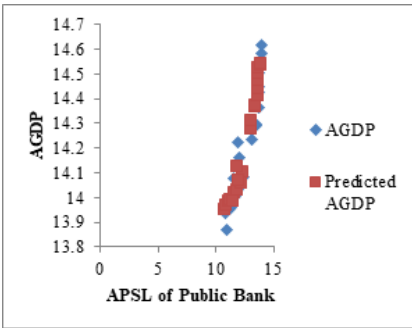


Figure 7: APSL of Public Bank Line Fit Plot

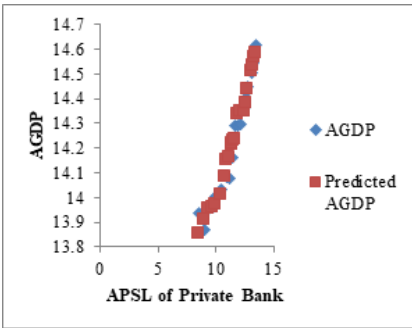


Figure 8: APSL of Private Bank Line Fit Plot

Source: Authors Construction

Table 6: ANOVA Table of Private Bank

	Df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	2	1.05	0.52	262.10	1.47
Residual	19	0.04	0.00		
Total	21	1.09			

Source: *Authors Calculation*

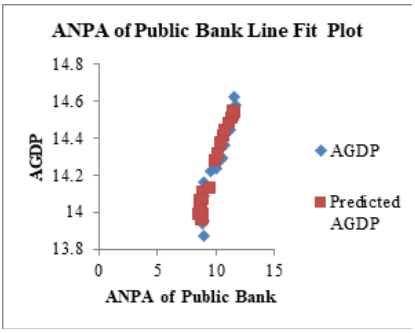
Table 6 for the Private Bank displays that with 2 degrees of freedom, the regression models able to explain the variance significantly as indicated by the high value of F-statistic of 262.10. Residual (figure 4 & 6) section shows details about unexplained variability or errors within the model. It includes degrees of freedom, sum of squares, and mean squares for residuals (figure 4 & 6), reflecting the difference between observed and predicted values.

Table 7: Regression estimates for Private Banks

	Coef.	*s.e.*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	12.75	0.10	122.42	5.38	12.53	12.96	12.53	12.96
APSL of Private Bank	0.05	0.03	2.00	0.06	-0.002	0.10	-0.00	0.10
ANPA of Private Bank	0.11	0.03	3.96	0.00	0.05	0.17	0.05	0.17
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R						0.98		
R Square						0.96		
Adjusted R Square						0.96		
Standard Error						0.05		

Source: *Authors Calculation*

The results of regression estimation for private banks show in table 7. The Intercept, starting at 12.75 with a standard error of 0.10, represents the estimated value of the AGDP when all predictor variables are zero. For Agriculture PSL of Private Bank, the coefficient is 0.05 with a standard error of 0.03, yielding a t-statistic of 2.00 and a p-value of 0.06. While the coefficient suggests a positive effect on the agriculture gross domestic product (AGDP), the p-value is slightly above the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating a less statistically significant relationship. Regarding Agriculture NPA of Private Bank, the coefficient is 0.11 with a standard error of 0.03, resulting in a t-statistic of 3.96 and a highly significant p-value of 0.00. This implies a statistically significant positive impact on the AGDP.



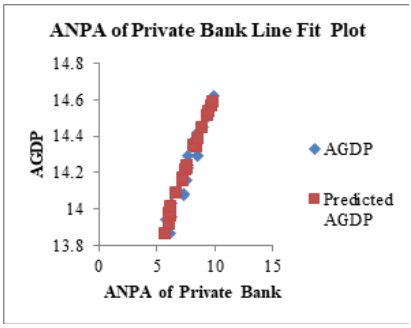


Figure 9: ANPA of Public Bank Line Fit Plot **Figure 10:** ANPA of Private Bank Line Fit Plot

Source: Authors Construction

Overall, while Agriculture PSL of the Private Bank might have a less statistically significant impact, agriculture NPA appears to significantly influence the AGDP within the regression model (figures 8 & 10). In totality, the high Multiple R (0.98) and R Square (0.96) values suggest a robust relationship between the predictors and the AGDP. The low standard error (0.05) indicates precise predictions, and the adjusted R square (0.96) value confirms the model's reliability in explaining the variation in the AGDP with high accuracy.

POLICY SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the analysis the following policy suggestions and recommendations are better for all stakeholders:

1. Establish robust monitoring for agriculture credit in public and private banks, ensuring efficient allocation through regular evaluations of loan disbursements.
2. Implement proactive measures such as financial literacy, improved credit assessment, and timely assistance to reduce non-performing assets, especially in agricultural credit.

3. To promote collaboration between banks, agriculture experts and policy makers to design tailored financial products and support mechanisms for the agriculture sector.
4. Incentivize responsible agricultural lending with tax exemptions, reduced reserves, and preferential access to financial facilities, promoting sustainability and efficiency.
5. Invest in capacity building initiatives to enhance the financial literacy and business management skills of farmers and agriculture-entrepreneurs. This may lead to reduction in non-performing assets.
6. Promote on-going analysis and monitoring of the relationship between the PSL, NPA and AGDP. This should include periodic evaluation to assess the effectiveness of policy interventions and make necessary adjustments.
7. To conduct public awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of agricultural credit and its impact on the overall economy. This may increase public support and understanding of policies aimed at promoting agricultural development.
8. Priority sector is an area in which only a few commercial banks are interested in investing their funds. Banks must put 40 percent of their credit into this sector.

By implementing these policies and recommendations, policy makers, regulatory bodies need a holistic approach between NPA, PSL and agricultural development in India that integrates policy reforms, integrates capacity building, financial inclusion and risk mitigation to ensure sustained and inclusive growth in agriculture sector, which contributes significantly to the overall economic development of the country.

CONCLUSION

Public banks indicate higher mean values for Agricultural Priority Sector Lending (PSL) and Non-Performing Assets (NPA) compared to private banks. However, Public Banks exhibit lower variability in PSL, suggesting a more consistent approach in lending practices. The AGDP remains stable with a narrower range in both sectors, reflecting resilience in the agricultural economic sector. Strong positive associations exist between PSL, NPA, and AGDP in both public banks and private banks. High correlations indicate interdependence among PSL, NPA, and AGDP; implying changes in one variable tend to impact others consistently. The regression models in both sectors exhibit strong predictive capabilities and reliability in explaining variations in AGDP. The interconnectedness of PSL, NPA, and AGDP underscores the complex dynamics within the agricultural banking sector, emphasizing the need for careful consideration of these factors in economic analyses and policymaking. This comprehensive analysis emphasizes

the multifaceted relationships and differential impacts of Agricultural PSL and Non-Performing Assets on the AGDP within the contexts of public and private banking sectors.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: THE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE TOWARDS TRANSGENDERS IN INDIA

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the pervasive yet systematically silenced issue of sexual violence against transgender individuals in India. It argues that this violence is not a series of isolated incidents, but a systemic crisis rooted in a complex interplay of historical marginalization, profound social stigma, and critical failures within the legal, judicial, and law enforcement frameworks. The paper traces the historical context, It then delves into the multifaceted nature of the sexual violence against them, often compounded by intersectional factors such as caste and class. A central focus of the analysis is the Indian legal landscape in protection of rights of transgender community. It finds the inadequacies of existing laws, including the cisnormative definition of rape under Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the widely condemned Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which offers grossly insufficient protection and punishment for sexual assault against transgender people. The paper further highlights the immense barriers survivors face when seeking justice, from police hostility and misgendering to insensitive medical examinations and a lack of safe shelters. Finally, it concludes by outlining a series of urgent, multi-pronged recommendations for legal reform, systemic sensitization, and societal change needed to ensure justice, dignity, and safety for all transgender citizens of India.

Keywords: Transgender, Rights, Legal Reform, Sexual Violence, Societal barriers, India.

INTRODUCTION

In the sprawling, complex tapestry of modern India, a silent epidemic rages on, largely invisible to the mainstream discourse and unaddressed by the state's machinery of justice. This is the epidemic of sexual violence against transgender individuals-a

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community that exists at the sharp intersections of gender non-conformity, social ostracism, and systemic neglect. The violence they face is not merely physical; it is a brutal assertion of power, a tool of erasure, and a consequence of a society that has historically failed to protect, and often actively persecuted, those who defy its rigid gender binaries. The silence surrounding this issue is not accidental. It is a manufactured silence, built from the bricks of stigma, fear, and impunity. It is the silence of a survivor who fears being brutalized further by the very police they approach for help. It is the silence of a legal system whose definition of a victim has been, for too long, tragically narrow. It is the silence of a society that prefers to look away.

This article aims to break that silence. It posits that the alarming prevalence of sexual violence against India's transgender population is a direct outcome of three interconnected factors: a legacy of colonial-era laws that criminalized their existence and dismantled their historical social roles; a contemporary legal framework that remains woefully inadequate and discriminatory in its protection against sexual assault; and a deeply entrenched culture of transphobia that permeates law enforcement, healthcare, and society at large, creating insurmountable barriers to justice. While landmark judicial interventions like the *NALSA* judgment have affirmed the constitutional rights of transgender citizens, their transformative potential has been stymied by legislative and administrative apathy. This paper will explore the historical roots of this marginalization, document the harrowing scope and nature of the violence, dissect the legal and systemic failures that enable it, and celebrate the courageous resistance of a community fighting not just for survival, but for a life of dignity and justice. The fight against sexual violence in India remains incomplete until it includes the voices and protects the bodies of its most vulnerable citizens, and this article is an attempt to amplify that urgent call to action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While the document is an original article, it reviews and synthesizes several historical, legal, and sociological sources to build its argument:

i. Historical Context: The text reviews the shift from the pre-colonial integration of 'third gender' communities (like the *hijras*, *Aravanis*, and *Kinnars*) to their severe marginalization under British colonial rule. It specifically highlights the devastating impact of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 and Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized their existence and forced them into extreme poverty.
ii. Empirical Data on Violence: The article references a 2017 study by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) which documents significant

police harassment and violence against transgender individuals. It also cites a UNDP-supported study indicating a staggering lifetime prevalence of sexual violence against the community, often beginning before the age of eighteen.

iii. Legal Precedents and Statutes: The review heavily analyzes the 2014 Supreme Court *NALSA v. Union of India* judgment as a foundational milestone for transgender rights. It contrasts this with critiques of contemporary statutes, specifically the widely condemned Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and the cis-normative definitions of rape under Sections 63 and 64 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS).

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

i. Scope: The scope of this paper encompasses a comprehensive analysis of the systemic sexual violence faced by transgender individuals in India. It covers the historical timeline from pre-colonial integration to modern-day marginalization, evaluates the current legal frameworks (such as the Transgender Persons Act of 2019 and the BNS of 2023), and examines the intersectional barriers within law enforcement, healthcare, and the judiciary.

ii. Objective: The primary objective of the article is to "break the silence" surrounding this epidemic by documenting the multifaceted nature of the violence and dissecting the legal and systemic failures that enable it. Furthermore, it aims to highlight the resistance of community-based organizations and outline urgent, multi-pronged recommendations for legal reform, systemic sensitization, and societal change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the text provided, the paper employs a Qualitative, Socio-Legal Doctrinal Analysis.

i. It analyzes primary legal statutes (BNS 2023, IPC 1860, Criminal Tribes Act 1871, Transgender Persons Act 2019) and landmark jurisprudence (*NALSA v. Union of India*) to identify legislative flaws and discriminatory language.

ii. It integrates secondary empirical findings (such as NHRC and UNDP reports) to substantiate claims about the prevalence of violence and police brutality.

iii. The research utilizes an intersectional framework to examine how social identities like caste and class compound the vulnerability of transgender individuals to violence.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF VULNERABILITY

To understand the contemporary vulnerability of transgender people in India, one must look back at the seismic shift in their social standing precipitated by British

colonialism. For centuries, individuals who today might identify under the broad umbrella of 'transgender' held unique and often respected positions within the subcontinent's diverse cultural landscape. The *hijra* community, in particular, with its lineage traceable to ancient texts, occupied a distinct social niche as performers, spiritual figures, and bestowers of blessings at births and weddings (Nanda: 1998). While not entirely free from prejudice, they were a recognized and integrated 'third gender', operating within a societal framework that acknowledged gender fluidity beyond a strict male-female binary. Communities like the *Aravanis* in Tamil Nadu and *Kinnars* in other regions similarly held specific cultural and religious significance.

This complex social fabric was violently torn apart by the imposition of Victorian morality and colonial law. The British administration, unable to comprehend non-binary gender identities, viewed them through a lens of criminality and deviance. The turning point was the enactment of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. This draconian law classified entire communities, including *hijras* (referred to as 'eunuchs'), as "hereditarily criminal." It mandated their registration, restricted their movement, and criminalized their traditional practices of dressing in women's attire and public performance (Hinchy: 2019). Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860, which criminalized "carnal intercourse against the order of nature," became another potent weapon. While ostensibly about specific sexual acts, it was broadly interpreted to persecute and prosecute anyone who deviated from heterosexual and cisgender norms, effectively rendering the very existence of transgender people illegal (Gupta: 2006). However, this provision has been repealed under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

This state-sanctioned persecution had devastating and lasting consequences. It dismantled traditional community structures, severed sources of income, and stripped transgender individuals of their social standing. Pushed to the absolute fringes of society, they were systematically excluded from education, formal employment, housing, and healthcare. This forced marginalization created a direct pipeline into extreme poverty, which in turn left many with no choice but to engage in begging (*badhai* and *mangti*) or sex work for survival (UNDP:2010). This economic precarity is not a matter of choice but a direct legacy of historical injustices. It is this manufactured vulnerability-being poor, homeless, and engaged in criminalized forms of work-that exponentially increases their exposure to exploitation and sexual violence today. The colonial state did not just marginalize transgender people; it created the very conditions for their systemic abuse, a reality that post-independence India has been slow and reluctant to dismantle.

THE ANATOMY OF VIOLENCE: A MULTI-FACETED ASSAULT ON DIGNITY

The term 'sexual violence' barely scratches the surface of the spectrum of abuse faced by the transgender community in India. The violence is multifaceted, pervasive, and often perpetrated with a chilling sense of impunity. It occurs in homes, on streets, in police stations, and within intimate relationships, compounded by the ever-present threat of social boycott and systemic apathy.

i. Corrective Rape and Punitive Violence: A particularly heinous form of sexual violence is "corrective rape," an act intended to brutally "punish" or "cure" an individual's gender identity or expression. Transgender women are often targeted by men who seek to violently assert a patriarchal and cis-heteronormative order, using rape as a weapon to enforce conformity (Human Rights Watch: 2020). Similarly, transgender men and non-binary individuals face sexual violence aimed at undermining their identity and forcing them into roles deemed "appropriate" for their sex assigned at birth. This violence is not just a physical violation, but a profound psychological attack designed to annihilate a person's sense of self.

ii. Custodial Violence and Police Brutality: For many marginalized communities in India, the police are a source of fear rather than safety, and this is acutely true for transgender people. The police station, a place where a survivor should be able to file a complaint, often becomes another site of trauma. Numerous reports document cases where transgender individuals, particularly those in sex work or begging, are subjected to extortion, illegal detention, verbal abuse, and horrific sexual assault by police officers themselves (PUCL:.2014) They are routinely misgendered, mocked for their identity, and threatened with false charges under laws like the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act. A 2017 study by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) found that a significant percentage of transgender respondents reported facing harassment and violence from the police (NHRC: 2018). This reality creates a terrifying catch-22: the very individuals tasked with protecting them are often among their most dangerous perpetrators, ensuring that the vast majority of crimes go unreported.

iii. Familial and Intimate Partner Violence: The journey of coming out is fraught with peril. Rejection by family is a common and painful experience, which can escalate to physical and sexual violence. Many are thrown out of their homes, making them vulnerable to homelessness and street-based violence. Furthermore, violence also exists within the community and in intimate relationships. The immense psychological distress caused by societal oppression, coupled with poverty and lack of resources, can contribute to cycles of abuse within partnerships that are difficult to escape due to the absence of support systems (Dutta & Roy: 2021).

iv. Public Harassment and Daily Abuse: The everyday existence of a transgender person is often a gauntlet of harassment. From verbal taunts ("chhakka," "hijra") and sexualized gestures to groping and physical assault in public spaces, the constant threat of violence is a lived reality. This ambient violence serves as a constant, draining reminder of their perceived "otherness" and lack of safety in society.

v. Intersectionality of Violence: It is crucial to analyze this violence through an intersectional lens. A transgender person's vulnerability is magnified by their other social identities. A Dalit trans woman, for instance, faces a triple burden of oppression based on her caste, gender identity, and perceived gender. She is targeted not just for being transgender, but for being a Dalit, making her susceptible to the most brutal forms of caste-based sexual violence (Semmalar: 2018). Similarly, trans people from religious minorities, with disabilities, or from impoverished backgrounds face compounded layers of discrimination that increase their risk of violence and decrease their access to justice. The fight for trans rights is inextricably linked to the fight against casteism, classism, and other forms of structural oppression. The data available, though scarce due to systemic underreporting, paints a grim picture. A study supported by the UNDP found that a high percentage of transgender people in India experience sexual violence in their lifetime, with a staggering number experiencing it before the age of eighteen (UNDP: 2012). This is not just a statistic; it is a national crisis demanding immediate and unequivocal action.

A BROKEN PROMISE: THE FAILURES OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In theory, the Indian Constitution guarantees justice, liberty, equality, and dignity to all its citizens. In practice, the legal framework has been a source of immense betrayal for transgender survivors of sexual violence. Despite some progressive judicial pronouncements, the laws on the books and the system designed to implement them are riddled with gaps, ambiguities, and outright discrimination.

i. The Landmark *NALSA* Judgment: The 2014 Supreme Court judgment in *National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India* was a revolutionary moment. The Court affirmed the fundamental rights of transgender persons, recognizing their right to self-determine their gender identity as male, female, or third gender. It declared that discrimination on the basis of gender identity was a violation of the Constitution and directed the central and state governments to grant legal recognition and take concrete steps, including reservations, to address the community's social and economic marginalization.[1] The *NALSA* judgment was a beacon of hope, a powerful affirmation of dignity that, it was believed, would pave the way for a more just and inclusive legal system.

ii. The Betrayal of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019: The hope ignited by *NALSA* was significantly dampened by the legislation that followed. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, was passed amidst widespread protests from the very community it claimed to protect. While it prohibits discrimination, its provisions on sexual violence are a shocking display of legislative inequality. Chapter VIII, Section 18(d) of the Act addresses "harm or injury or endangering the life, safety, health, or well-being, whether mental or physical, of a transgender person or tending to do acts including causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse." For these offenses, the punishment prescribed is imprisonment for a term "which shall not be less than six months, but which may extend to two years, and with fine."[2]

iii. This provision is a grave injustice. For comparison, the punishment for the rape of a cisgender woman under Section 64 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) is a minimum of seven years to ten years and can extend to life imprisonment. By prescribing a maximum punishment of a mere two years for sexual abuse against a transgender person, the Act creates a hierarchy of victims. It sends a chilling message that the sexual violation of a transgender body is a lesser crime, that their dignity is less valuable, and that their life is less worthy of protection. This is a direct contravention of the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution and the *NALSA* judgment. Activists have rightly condemned this as an "insult," a law that further victimizes survivors rather than protecting them (The Hindu: 2019).

iv. The Problem with the Definition of Rape: A core issue lies within the definition of rape itself, under Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS). Following the 2013 criminal law amendments (the Verma Committee recommendations), the definition was expanded, but it remains fundamentally cis-normative and phallocentric. It defines rape as penetration of, among other things, the "vagina, urethra, or anus of a woman" or making her perform such acts. The perpetrator is defined as a "man." This leaves a host of questions unanswered, and a vast number of victims unprotected. Can a transgender woman, legally recognized as a woman post-*NALSA*, file a case of rape under Section 375? While some high courts have interpreted it inclusively, there is no explicit clarity, leading to confusion and inconsistent application.[3] More glaringly, the law offers no recourse for a transgender man or a non-binary person who is subjected to penetrative sexual assault. The legal framework simply does not have the language or the scope to recognize their experience of sexual violation as 'rape', leaving them in a legal vacuum.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS: THE INSURMOUNTABLE WALL TO JUSTICE

Even if the laws were perfect, they would mean little in the face of a system that is actively hostile to transgender survivors. For a trans person who has endured sexual violence, the path to justice is not a path at all, but an obstacle course designed to break their spirit and ensure their silence.

i. Police: The First Wall of Hostility: The first point of contact for any survivor, the police station, is often the site of their second victimization. Survivors are met with a wall of prejudice, apathy, and outright contempt. The litany of abuses is long and well-documented:
   a. Refusal to Register FIRs: Police frequently refuse to file a First Information Report (FIR), the crucial first step in any criminal investigation, dismissing the survivor's account or blaming them for the assault (CHRI: 2019).
   b. Misgendering and Harassment: Survivors are deliberately misgendered, referred to by their "deadnames" (pre-transition names), and subjected to humiliating and transphobic slurs. Their gender identity itself is questioned and ridiculed.
   c. Extortion and Threats: Particularly when the survivor is involved in sex work or begging, police use the complaint as an opportunity for extortion, threatening to file false cases against the survivor if they do not pay a bribe or withdraw their complaint.
   d. Blaming the Victim: A pervasive culture of victim-blaming means that the survivor's character, clothing, or profession is put on trial. They are often asked, "What were you doing there?" or "Why were you dressed like that?"-questions that shift the blame from the perpetrator to the survivor.

ii. The Trauma of Medical Examinations: Should a survivor overcome the hurdle of the police, the mandatory medical examination presents another layer of trauma. Public hospitals are rarely equipped with staff who are sensitized or trained in trans-affirmative healthcare. Survivors report being subjected to invasive and humiliating examinations, gawked at by multiple staff members, and asked intrusive questions about their bodies and transition process that have no bearing on the assault (Sangam: 2016). The lack of established protocols for examining transgender survivors of sexual assault means their experience is often one of profound indignity, deterring many from seeking necessary medical care or completing medico-legal procedures.

iii. Judicial and Legal Apathy: Within the courtroom, the prejudice continues. A lack of sensitization among lawyers, prosecutors, and even judges means that a transgender survivor's testimony is often viewed with skepticism. They may face inappropriate cross-examination about their gender identity and sexual history, turning the trial into a demeaning spectacle. The slow pace of

the Indian judicial system means that cases can drag on for years, forcing the survivor to repeatedly relive their trauma while the perpetrator remains free.

iv. Absence of Support Systems: The final, crushing barrier is the near-total absence of institutional support. There are virtually no state-run shelters that are specifically designed to be safe and inclusive for transgender survivors of violence. General shelters for women are often unwilling to admit trans women, while shelters for men are unsafe spaces. This leaves survivors with nowhere to go, forcing many to return to the very abusive environments they sought to escape (Naz: 2015).

This multi-layered systemic failure-from the police station to the hospital to the courtroom-creates a culture of impunity. Perpetrators know they are unlikely to face consequences, and survivors know that seeking justice is likely to invite more trauma. This is how the silence is enforced.

WAY FORWARD

Despite the immense structural violence and systemic neglect, the transgender community in India has refused to be silenced. The fight for justice is being waged with extraordinary courage and resilience, led by trans activists and supported by allies who are chipping away at the walls of prejudice.

i. The Power of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): The most effective and life-saving work is happening at the grassroots level. Transgender-led CBOs and NGOs across the country, such as Sangama in Bengaluru, Pehchan, and the All India Hijra Kalyan Sabha, have become the first responders and primary support systems for survivors. They provide a range of critical services that the state has failed to offer: crisis intervention, counselling, assistance with filing police complaints, connecting survivors with trans-friendly lawyers and doctors, and creating informal community shelters. These organizations are not just service providers; they are hubs of resistance, advocacy, and empowerment. They document human rights violations, campaign for policy change, and create spaces of solidarity where community members can find acceptance and strength.

ii. Advocacy and Legal Battles: The fight is also being waged in the courts and corridors of power. A new generation of trans activists, lawyers, and academics are challenging discriminatory laws and demanding accountability. They are filing Public Interest Litigations (PILs), critiquing flawed legislation like the 2019 Act, and tirelessly advocating for the proper implementation of the *NALSA* judgment. The push for a horizontal reservation policy, for instance, is a key demand, as economic empowerment is seen as a crucial step in reducing vulnerability to violence (Mogli: 2020).

iii. Digital Activism and Reclaiming Narratives: In the digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for breaking the silence. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook allow trans individuals and groups to share their stories, raise awareness about specific cases of violence, and mobilize support for campaigns. This digital activism bypasses traditional media gatekeepers, who have often ignored or stereotyped the community. It allows for the reclaiming of narratives, with trans people telling their own stories in their own voices, challenging transphobic tropes and building a powerful sense of online community and solidarity.

iv. Art, Culture, and Visibility: From poetry and theatre to film and performance art, creative expression has become a vital form of resistance. Trans artists are using their work to explore themes of identity, pain, resilience, and joy, fostering greater public understanding and empathy. Increased visibility in popular culture, when done respectfully, also plays a role in normalizing transgender existence and challenging the prejudice that fuels violence.

CONCLUSION: A CALL FOR JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

The fight against sexual violence towards transgender people in India stands at a critical juncture. The silence has been broken, not by the state, but by the relentless courage of the community itself. However, their voices are still struggling to be heard over the din of systemic prejudice and legislative inertia. The current situation is untenable and a deep stain on India's claim to be a modern, inclusive democracy. The path forward requires not just incremental changes but a fundamental overhaul of law, policy, and societal attitudes.

A multi-pronged strategy is imperative:

i. Urgent Legal Reform: The Transgender Persons Act, 2019, must be amended to bring the punishment for sexual violence on par with that for the rape of a cisgender woman. Furthermore, Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) must be reformed to be gender-neutral, recognizing that anyone, regardless of their gender identity, can be a victim of rape, and anyone can be a perpetrator. The law must protect the person, not a narrow, cis-normative definition of gender.

ii. Systemic Sensitization and Accountability: Massive, ongoing, and mandatory sensitization programs must be implemented for all police personnel, judicial officers, prosecutors, and public healthcare providers. These cannot be one-off workshops but must be integrated into their core training and performance evaluations. Strict and swift action must be taken against officers who refuse to file FIRs or are themselves perpetrators of violence.

iii. Establishment of Inclusive Support Systems: The government must allocate significant resources to establish trans-inclusive crisis centers and safe shelters

across the country. These institutions should be run in consultation with, or by, community-based organizations who have the requisite expertise and trust.

iv. Full Implementation of the *NALSA* Judgment: The spirit and letter of the *NALSA* judgment must be implemented in its entirety, including providing reservations in education and public employment. Economic empowerment is one of the most effective long-term strategies to reduce vulnerability to exploitation and violence.

v. Public Awareness and Education: Large-scale public awareness campaigns are needed to combat transphobia, educate citizens about transgender identities, and foster a culture of respect and acceptance. This education must begin in schools.

Breaking the silence is only the first step. The true measure of justice will be when a transgender survivor can walk into a police station without fear, receive compassionate care at a hospital, see their attacker prosecuted under a fair and equal law, and find a safe space to heal. Until that day, the fight continues. It is a fight for the soul of a nation, for the promise of its constitution, and for the fundamental human right to live a life free from violence and full of dignity.

SYNTHESISED FINDINGS

i. What are the historical roots that have led to the current vulnerability of transgender people in India?

The vulnerability is deeply rooted in British colonial rule, which dismantled the respected, integrated roles that 'third gender' communities historically held in Indian society. The imposition of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 and Section 377 of the IPC criminalized their identities, restricted their movement, and pushed them to the absolute fringes of society, leading to systemic poverty and reliance on begging or sex work for survival.

ii. How does the current Indian legal framework fail to protect transgender survivors of sexual violence?

The legal framework fails on two primary fronts. First, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, creates a "hierarchy of victims" by prescribing only six months to two years of imprisonment for sexual abuse against a trans person. Second, the definition of rape under Section 63 of the BNS (2023) relies on strict male/female binaries, leaving questions about trans women's inclusion unanswered and entirely ignoring the penetrative sexual assault of transgender men and non-binary individuals.

iii. What systemic barriers do transgender survivors face when attempting to access justice?

Survivors face an "insurmountable wall to justice," beginning with police hostility, which includes refusal to register FIRs, misgendering, extortion, and victim-blaming. This is compounded by invasive and humiliating medical examinations at public hospitals lacking trans-affirmative care, deep-seated apathy within the judiciary, and a complete lack of safe shelter spaces to escape abusive environments.

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2 The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, No. 40 of 2019, Parliament of India.

3 For an inclusive interpretation, *see KK v. State of Kerala, Kerala High Court (2017)*, where the court r

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WATER CONSERVATION THROUGH LOCAL INITIATIVES: LESSONS FROM MIZORAM, INDIA

Rosangliana Pachuau*

Abstract

The people of Mizoram depend heavily on water and its resources for their survival. As such, three major river water conservation initiatives namely Save the Riparian, Save Tlawng, and Save Chite Lui were taken with scope of people's participation. The main driving force behind these initiatives has been a strong desire to preserve the state's rivers' water supplies and catchments, particularly in and around Aizawl, the capital. It makes an urgent imperative to assess the impact of these initiatives. With this objective in mind, the present paper intends to examine the contexts, local goals and accomplishments, and the general sentiment of the local population toward these grassroots efforts on the basis of secondary sources of data. The study finds that these three projects have sparked local movements in which a large number of individuals have participated, particularly local college and university students and the general public. It is suggested that these grassroots projects might be expanded to get more traction and more active involvement, particularly from local youth organizations and political associations.

Keywords: River-Water conservation, Save the Riparian, Save Tlawng, Save Chite Lui, People's Participation, Mizoram.

INTRODUCTION

Aside from its social and cultural significance, ecological systems support a variety of living forms and offer ecological services in all their facets, such as flood management, habitat for biological diversity, and adaptation and mitigation to the effects of climate change. These biological systems include tundra and arctic environments, as well as tropical evergreen rainforests. Riparian and river environments, which sustain a variety of life forms and related biodiversity, are

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considered to be the cradle of civilization. Despite making up only (2.4%) of the world's geographical area, India is home to (9.13%) of the world's flora and (6.7%) of its wildlife, making it one of the 17 mega-diverse nations. The Indo-Burma Region, one of India's four biodiversity hotspots, includes Northeast India, one of the country's most biologically diverse regions.

The Indo-Malayan bio-geographic region encompasses the state of Mizoram, which is bordered to the east and south by Myanmar and to the west by Bangladesh. Mizoram, however, is located in the Northeast biogeographic zones, per the Wildlife Institute of India's biogeographic classification of India. Mizoram, which is situated on the high hills in India's eastern region, is home to a wide range of flora and animals. Its lush, green, varied environment features steep slopes that are divided by rivers that flow north and south. Mizoram is endowed with a wealth of natural beauty, including verdant valleys, streams, and deep canyons between the hills and falls. The present paper will describe local actions that led to comprehensive policy-driven water governance in the state. The state's water regimes have been completely overhauled and its water supplies have been conserved as a result of these three grassroots initiatives. These efforts, which garnered a lot of political and public support, sought to implement drastic changes that would portray the state as one that is environmentally balanced and sustainably run.

SAVE THE RIPARIAN INITIATIVE

The initiative to *'Save the Riparian'* together with the Save the Riparian team, the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department of the Government of Mizoram's Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0 branch launched the riparian initiative. The Save the Riparian movement began on March 26, 2024, and ran for 20 days, ending on April 20, 2024. A 2.3-kilometer stretch of Sakhisih Lui (River) between Model Veng and Mission Vengthlang was cleaned during this 20-day initiative. This Sakhisihlui empties into the state's longest river, Tlawng.

People now understand the importance of keeping their homes and immediate environment clean as a result of this 20-day effort. The necessity of preserving the ecological health of these streams, which in turn impacts the overall ecological stability, has been reemphasized by the cleaning of this river. Following the project's successful completion, a new 30-day project was started on May 1, 2024. Within the following 30 days, this initiative will start cleaning the entire downstream of the Tuikual Lui (river). Additionally, awareness campaigns about the value of preserving, conserving, and maintaining clean rivers, streams, and other water bodies were to be held in each of the state's districts.

For the 3rd phase of the works under this initiative, a program of cleaning of stretches along the world bank road highway and waterway was taken up from 17th

January, 2025 under the auspices and financial support of Mizoram Rural Bank. Save the Riparian members, local artists and school students join the initiative wherein more than 2.06 tonnes of wastes were removed from the area.

SAVE TLAWNG RIVER

The longest river in Mizoram is the Tlawng, which runs roughly 185 kilometers through the state. It starts in the Zopui hills, which are located 8 km east of Lunglei town at an elevation of roughly 1598 m above mean sea level (MSL) in latitudes 22°51' N and longitudes 92°48' E. At Katakhal River where it empties into the Barak River, the lowest point is roughly 6 meters. It is around 5846 square kilometers. It travels through five districts in the state of Mizoram: Lunglei, Aizawl, Serchhip, Mamit, and Kolasib. Over its course, a number of tributaries join laterally. It flows toward the north. It flows through Lunglei district for almost 50 km before entering Aizawl district, which is close to Khawlek hamlet. The river Tlawng's principal tributaries are Tut and Teirei. Before joining the main Tlawng river, the Teirei river runs almost 40 kilometers parallel to it. Following its confluence with the western bank tributaries Tut and Teirei, it merges into the Barak River in the Cachar region of Assam, where it is referred to as the Dhaleswari and Katakhal rivers. It serves as Aizawl City's primary water supply. The undulating hill ranges that make up the Tlawng river basin include moderate to gentle slopes in the lower course and severe slopes in the higher course. There is a lot of monsoon rainfall and a tropical, humid environment in the Tlawng river basin.

Mizoram activists and professionals joined forces to form a new group called "Save Mizoram Rivers" to protect Mizoram's rapidly deteriorating rivers. The meeting, which was chaired by Mr. H. Rammawi, Vice Chairman, Mizoram State Planning Board, on November 23, 2022, in Aizawl, was attended by all stakeholders, including the Planning Department of Mizoram, the Aizawl Municipal Corporation, the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, and the Non-Governmental Organization "Save Mizoram Rivers". Two-thirds of the rivers in the mountains are dry during the dry season, and there are few thick forests at the mouths of these rivers. The Mizoram government is drafting two bills to protect Tlawng and other rivers and groundwater in the state, but he said that for the measure to be successful, recommendations and follow-ups on the government's efforts must be made.

Human activities and the inappropriate disposal of soil and waste are leading to significant pollution in the major rivers of Mizoram. This effort is part of the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) Phase II campaign, where plastic waste management plays a crucial role. It was uplifting to see the enthusiastic involvement of all community members, with 934 individuals from 85 branches of the Young Mizo Association (YMA), alongside officials and employees from the Public Health

Engineering Department (PHED). The waste collected along the river during the community cleanup was transported by garbage trucks to an appropriate plastic disposal facility.

The harmful effects of plastics, which are a non-biodegradable material that can take centuries to break down, are widely recognized. illegal dumping equates to discarding waste containing hazardous substances directly into a river or stream, leading to extensive harm to aquatic life and contaminating the water intended for human usage. The Tlawng River, home to diverse species, suffered significantly from this issue, with its inhabitants gradually falling victim to plastic pollution. Pollution from plastics in river ecosystems has a direct effect on livelihoods, resulting in financial losses and elevating the risk of flooding in both urban and rural regions.

Due to the southwest monsoon, Mizoram receives significant rainfall between May and September. Rainfall constitutes the sole water supply for the state, replenishing both surface and groundwater, with surface water flowing through numerous streams and rivers across the hilly landscape. The inhabitants of Mizoram depend on these rivers as their main water source because accessing groundwater in the mountainous terrain is challenging. Aside from household usage, the river water serves various purposes in agriculture, industry, transportation, aquaculture, tourism, and other fields.

SAVE CHITE LUI (RIVER)

The Chite Lui River flows through a lush alluvial valley in the state of Mizoram, nestled at an elevation of around 1,000 meters. The river originates in the Bawngkawn range in North Aizawl and flows for about 20 kilometers before joining the larger River Tuirial. The Chite Lui (River) is more than just a body of water; it is an essential part of the Mizo people's cultural fabric, and songs and stories that have been passed down through the generations pay homage to its significance.

According to legend, a young boy named Fiara Water was frequently disturbed by his cruel stepmother. One spring, when there was a shortage of water and people were frantically looking for drinking water, Fiara's (Person) stepmother challenged and punished him by having him fetch water. The youngster succeeded in finding flowing water concealed beneath trees and bushes, which is thought to have been the Chite Lui river. Well-known Mizo poet Rokunga wrote poems and songs about the river, which are highly popular in Mizoram, even among Mizo tribes in Myanmar.

Unplanned construction, waste disposal, and encroachments are causing an alarming degradation in the river's health. This necessitates an urgent call for preservation efforts. The river flows through aizawl and has now been reduced to a

stream with growing urbanization. It is becoming narrower day-by-day and losing its identity because of the waste thrown in it and rampant encroachments. Houses, shops, garages, and restaurants have been steadily encroaching on the river, which has resulted in a concerning loss of natural vegetation and a lot of soil erosion. Untreated garbage from nearby industries, such as vehicle washing residue and dirty water drainage, is dumped into the river, making it a dumping ground for a variety of waste from the growing metropolitan population. Pollution from waste disposal is equally harmful.

The Effects on Livelihoods, Biodiversity, and Health- These actions have numerous repercussions: First, the pollution of the river negatively affects its aquatic life, biodiversity, and general health; Second, the polluted river poses serious health risks to those who depend on it for a variety of purposes; and Third, those who live along the river's banks and depend on it for their livelihoods face an uncertain future as their primary resource is endangered.

Preservation Initiatives: Engaging the Public- The Zoram Research Foundation launched a campaign in 2007 to raise awareness and rally support, and locals and volunteers have also stepped up and participated in recurring campaigns to clean the river banks. Despite the overwhelming obstacles, a number of people and organizations have taken up the cause of saving the Chite Lui River. These cleanup efforts have focused especially on plastic garbage, which accounts for almost (80%) of the waste recovered from the river; one noteworthy accomplishment in this area is the building of a plastic road in Reiek village using recovered polythene waste.

WAY FORWARD

Notwithstanding these admirable efforts, more must be done to guarantee the Chite Lui river's health and longevity, including raising public awareness of the river's significance and the harm that human actions cause to its health and implementing proactive measures to show a greater commitment to conservation.

One such step is the establishment of strong solid waste management systems to stop more contamination; this should be a collaborative effort between the community and the local government, with rules and procedures rigorously enforced to guarantee adherence. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to heed the clear and urgent call to conservation and preserve the vibrant, life-giving Chite Lui River. The Mizoram people rely on the river for their livelihood, and its ecological significance and rich cultural significance make it crucial to protect not just a river but a culture, a community, and a diverse ecosystem.

To raise public awareness of the river's importance, more work is needed. More proactive measures are needed to demonstrate that the issue is handled seriously. Implementing solid waste management practices can help prevent further pollution.

Although the Chite Lui is a river that evokes many feelings and memories, its current situation is very different from the romanticism that is connected to it. It is an obvious example of how the river is being killed by illiteracy, unlawful encroachment, and uncontrolled urbanization.

The initiative to save Chite Lui has been resurrected after a decade. The cause of Chite Lui was initially taken up in 2007 by the Zoram Research Foundation (ZRF), a grassroots group that collaborates with local communities on traditional water management and livelihood in Mizoram. For the next ten years, the Chite Lui rescue effort was put on hold, but it was revived in 2017. In order to gather information on the sensitive regions where unearthed soil and waste were being thrown, a baseline survey of the river was first carried out for a month.

On June 2, 2017, the state governor became the patron member of the Save Chite Lui Coordination Committee (SCLCC), which was formed by the state government. After that, the Save Chite Lui Action Plan (SCALP) was put into action, with the main objectives being to build check dams and other barriers to prevent rubbish from entering the river and to increase public knowledge of the river through various awareness programs. Volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, including kids, have helped clean the river three times in the past year. In order to stop trash from spilling into the river from its tributaries, check dams and other barriers will be built during the second phase of the action plan.

The volunteers of the National Service Scheme (NSS) assisted the coordination committee in the river cleanup efforts. Even though their assistance is co-ordinate through the local government departments, the community actions, as described earlier are instilled into the value system and ideals which these organizations like NSS regularly take up in the state. Campaigns to raise awareness about the need to protect the river have been initiated in educational institutions, and flyers have been circulated to educate the public about the significance of Chite Lui. Recognizing the emotional connection people have with the river, the state government enacted the *Chite Lui (Prevention and Control of Water Pollution) Act* in 2018, which prohibits the disposal of animal remains, biomedical waste, or any form of refuse into the water. According to the state environment department, the government is deeply invested in the river's future, having planted hundreds of saplings along its banks over the past two years. The church, which holds significant importance for the community, has been conducting awareness initiatives aimed at environmental protection for the last two to three years.

CONCLUSION

Ernest efforts of these grassroots movements, focusing on local sustainability and conservation measures have resulted in widespread awareness of the need to

protect water sources, streams, rivers and rivulets and has also induced such values to the local people and residents of the area. Boyed by the political and community support, it is expected that these initiatives will go a long way in making aware and act in protecting and preserving these ecosystems and their associated habitats, which in turn is linked to the welfare of human beings, in totality. The continued support of both the community and political actors, it will go a long way in turning the tide in favour of ecology, local rehabilitation and achieving sustainability from bottom up.

In the current societal set up of the state, taking into consideration the relative homogeneity of the people of the state in terms of language, belief systems and other cultural milieu, it is not an exaggeration to state that societal traditions reflect the common values of the people and the state, as a whole. Civil society groups inspire the governmental departments for setting up actionable way points, for which leadership rests upon the civil society groups functioneries. There is also an inherent respect and trust build into these institutions as agents of change.

Governmental agencies/departments should continue to rope into these groups and their activities, in harmony with the activities of the government schemes, so that overall efficiency and service delivery continues to take place. More active and detailed collaborations, in terms of setting up Memorandum of Understanding, etc to co-ordinate, facilitate and ensure service delivery might be fruitful as these initiatives continue in the long run.

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Hindi Section

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भारत में एकीकृत ग्रामीण विकास योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन का जनजातीय समुदाय पर प्रभावः सोनभद्र जिला, उत्तर प्रदेश का व्यैक्तिक अध्ययन

दीपक कुमार खरवार* एवं अमरजीत सोनकर**

सार संक्षेप

बुनियादी ढांचा किसी भी देश की प्रगति और आर्थिक प्रगति के लिए अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है और किसी राष्ट्र की प्रगति की परख उसके बुनियादी ढांचे की गुणवत्ता से होती है। बुनियादी ढांचा निजी और सार्वजनिक, भौतिक और सेवाओं संबंधी और सामाजिक व आर्थिक किसी भी तरह का हो सकता है। आर्थिक बुनियादी ढांचे के अन्तर्गत परिवहन, संचार, बिजली, सिंचाई और इसी तरह की सुविधाएं शामिल हैं जबकि सामाजिक अवसंरचना के अन्तर्गत शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, पेयजल, स्वच्छता, आवास आदि शामिल होता है। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र का मुख्य उददेश्य एकीकृत ग्रामीण विकास के लिए संचालित योजनाओं का जनजातीय समुदाय के जीवन पर पड़ने वाले प्रभावों का मूल्यांकन करना तथा इनके कारण उनके जीवन में आए परिवर्तनों का आकलन करना है। इस लक्ष्य की पूर्ति के लिए सूक्ष्म स्तर पर सर्वेक्षण किया गया जिसमें उत्तर प्रदेश के सोनभद्र जनपद के आदिवासी समुदाय का चयन किया गया है। अध्ययन में पाया गया कि सरकारों के निरंतर प्रयासों के बावजूद आदिवासी समाज के जीवन स्तर के सुधार में पर्याप्त सफलता नहीं मिली है।

प्रमुख शब्द : एकीकृत ग्रामीण विकास योजनाएँ, आदिवासी-जीवन, नीतियां, सोनभ्रद्र, उत्तर प्रदेश

प्रस्तावना

भारत एक विकासशील, कृषि प्रधान एवं गावों का देश है, यहां की अधिकांश जनसंख्या गावों में निवास करती है। इसीलिए कहा गया है कि ग्रामीण विकास के बिना भारत का विकास संभव नहीं है (गोडीवाल, 2014)। ऐसा इसलिए भी है कि ग्रामीण विकास का क्षेत्र तमाम प्रयासों के बावजूद अपेक्षाकृत पिछड़ी दशा में है। यह सत्य है कि देश में ग्रामीण विकास की दिशा में बहुत सारी योजनाएँ व कार्यक्रम संचालित हैं, जिसका बहुत हद तक ग्रामीण विकास में लाभ मिला है लेकिन अपेक्षित परिणाम से अब भी बहुत दूर है। इसका कारण यह है कि इन योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन व दृष्टिकोणों में कहीं न कहीं खामियाँ रह गई हैं। इसलिए इन योजनाओं की एक बार पुनःसमीक्षा करने की आवश्यकता है जिससे इन सबको समग्र रूप से सतत् ग्रामीण विकास के तौर पर निर्धारित किया जा सके (कुमार, 2014)।

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भारतीय संविधान इस बात की अपेक्षा रखता है कि सरकारें समावेशी विकास सुनिश्चित करें। इसका अर्थ है कि विकास में सभी लोगों की भागदारी को सुनिश्चित किया जाए। मौजूदा समय में देश की आबादी का एक बड़ा तबका बुनियादी सुविधाओं से वंचित है। वंचित लोगों को सामाजिक सुरक्षा की आवश्यकता है। सामाजिक सुरक्षा से तात्पर्य है गरीब एवं अशक्त लोगों को आर्थिक रूप से सबल बनाना। यही एक रास्ता है, जिससे गरीब एक सामान्य जीवन जी सकता है। विद्वानों की मान्यता है कि ग्रामीण गरीबों की आवश्यकताओं एवं इच्छाओं की पूर्ति ही ग्रामीण विकास है। भारत की 70 प्रतिशत आबादी अभी भी गावों में निवास करती है और उनके विकास के तमाम प्रयासों के बावजूद आज भी ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में आवास, शौचालय, पानी, बिजली, सड़क जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाओं का अभाव पाया जाता है (सिंह, 2016)।

साहित्य समीक्षा

राधा और मैरी (Radha & Mary, 2020) ने पाया है कि, आवास वित्त एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रकार का वित्त है, जिसका उद्देश्य मानव की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति में सुधार करना है। भारत सरकार बुनियादी ढांचे, रोजगार के अवसरों, स्वास्थ्य और स्वच्छता को उन्नत करके गरीब लोगों की जीवनशैली में सुधार करने की दिशा में अपना हाथ निरंतर बढ़ा रही है। जिससे अर्थव्यवस्था की वृद्धि भी बढ़ रही है। भारत जैसे देश में, जो अपनी आजादी के 75 साल बाद भी विकासशील स्तर पर है, केवल बेहतर आवास वित्त प्रणाली ही गरीब लोगों और मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की बुनियादी जरूरतों को पूरा कर सकती है, जो उनकी आवास समस्याओं से संबंधित है। प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना गरीब लोगों की जीवनशैली को बेहतर बनाने वाली उन योजनाओं में से एक है। कुमार एवं कुमार (Kumar and Kumar: 2016) के विश्लेषण में भारत सरकार की विभिन्न प्रमुख आवास योजनाओं और भारत में आवास की स्थितिय वैचारिक रूपरेखा, ग्रामीण गरीबों की आवास समस्याएँ, ग्रामीण आवास कार्यक्रमों को उन्नत करने की रणनीतियाँ, वित्त की समस्याएँ और नीतिगत निहितार्थों का विश्लेषण किया गया है। अध्ययन में जोर दिया गया है कि आवासन में निवेश का क्षेत्र और व्यापक अर्थव्यवस्था पर सीधा प्रभाव पड़ता है। अख्तर (2024) बताते हैं कि हम भारत को खुले में शौच की बुराई से आजाद (ओडीएफ) बनाने के लिए क्रांतिकारी पहल 'स्वच्छ भारत मिशन' का एक दशक के बाद लगभग 50 करोड़ लोगों ने खुले में शौच करना बंद कर दिया है। इस दौरान स्वच्छता कवरेज 39 प्रतिशत से बढ़कर शत-प्रतिशत हो गया है। लेकिन अब भी मौजूद चुनौतियां खुले में शौच की बुराई को पूरी तरह खत्म करने के लिए लगातार कोशिशों की जरूरत को रेखांकित करती हैं। अध्ययन बताता है कि मिशन के शुरू होने से अबतक भारत ने इस समस्या को मिटाने में तेज प्रगति की है। साथ ही जल, स्वच्छता और आरोग्य में भी उल्लेखनीय सुधार आया है। स्वच्छ भारत मिशन से शौचालयों तक पहुंच और उनके इस्तेमाल के संबंध में करोड़ों देशवासियों के बर्ताव में परिवर्तन आया है। उपरोक्त साहित्यावलोकन से विदित होता है आदिवासियों के जीवन खासकर उत्तर प्रदेश के आदिवासियों पर इन योजनाओं के पड़ने वाले प्रभावों से संबंधित अध्ययनों का अभाव है।

उद्देश्य एवं अध्ययन पद्धति

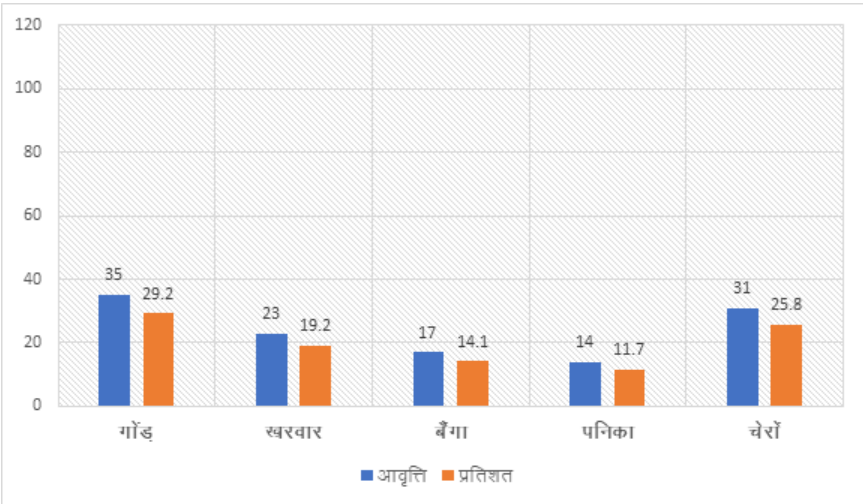
प्रस्तुत शोध मुख्यतः सूक्ष्म स्तरीय सर्वेक्षण पर आधारित है। इस हेतु उद्देश्यपूर्ण प्रतिदर्श के आधार पर उत्तर प्रदेश के सोनभद्र जनपद का चयन किया गया है। सोनभद्र जनपद में कुल 8 विकासखण्ड है। अध्ययन के

उद्देश्य की पूर्ति हेतु बभनी विकासखण्डों का चयन किया गया है। चयनित स्थानों से उद्देश्यात्मक प्रतिचयन (Purposive Sampling) के माध्यम से 120 जनजातीय लाभार्थियों का चयन किया गया है। चयनित उत्तरदाताओं से साक्षात्कार अनुसूची के माध्यम से तथ्यों का संग्रह व विश्लेषण को प्रस्तुत किया गया है। अध्ययन की प्रकृति व उद्देश्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए वर्णनात्मक (Descriptive) शोध पद्धति का उपयोग किया गया है। इस अध्ययन में मात्रात्मक एवं गुणात्मक दोनों पद्धतियों का उपयोग कर विश्लेषण प्रस्तुत किया गया है। इसमें तथ्य संकलन हेतु द्वितीयक स्रोतों का भी उपयोग किया गया है। द्वितीयक स्रोतों के अन्तर्गत विशेष रूप से प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण के वार्षिक रेपोर्टों, विभिन्न सरकारी एवं गैर-सरकारी आकड़ों, पुस्तकों, शोध पत्रों, पत्रिकाओं, सरकारी दस्तावेजों आदि की सहायता ली गई है।

ग्रामीण योजनाओं से संबंधित जागरूकता

प्रस्तुत शोध में जनजातीय समुदाय में एकीकृत ग्रामीण विकास योजनाओं जैसे प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण, स्वच्छ भारत अभियान के शौचालयों, उज्ज्वला योजना के एल.पी.जी. गैस कनेक्शनों और सौभाग्य योजना जैसी चल रहे अन्य योजनाओं के बारे में उनकी जानकारी का स्तर जानने का प्रयास किया गया है।

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 1: जनजाति के आधार पर लाभार्थियों का वर्गीकरण



उपर्युक्त रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 1 से स्पष्ट है कि प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण योजना के तहत चयनित कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं में से 35 अर्थात् 29.2 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाता गोंड जनजाति के हैं, 23 अर्थात् 19.2 प्रतिशत खरवार जनजाति, 17 अर्थात् 14.1 प्रतिशत बैगा जनजाति, 14 अर्थात् 11.7 प्रतिशत पनिका जनजाति के तथा 31 अर्थात् 25.8 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाता चेरों जनजाति से संबंधित है। इनमें गोंड एवं चेरों जनजातीय समुदाय की संख्या लगभग बराबर एवं अन्य की तुलना में अधिक है, जबकि अन्य तीन जनजातीय लाभार्थियों की संख्या थोड़ा कम है।

प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण

प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण को पहले इंदिरा आवास योजना कहा जाता था, जो देश में ग्रामीण गरीबों को मकान मुहैया कराने के लिए भारत सरकार द्वारा 1996 में शुरू किया गया समाज कल्याण का प्रमुख कार्यक्रम था। योजना के अन्तर्गत मकान बनाने के लिए मैदानी क्षेत्रों में 70,000 रुपए और दुर्गम क्षेत्रों में 75,000 रुपए की वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान की जाती थी (सौरभ, 2018)। फिर भी वर्ष 2014 में समवर्ती मूल्यांकन और भारत के नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सी.ए.जी.) की निष्पादन लेखा-परीक्षा के दौरान इस योजना में कतिपय कमियों का पता चला। ये कमियां अर्थात् मकान की कमी का निर्धारण न कर पाना, लाभार्थियों के चयन में पारदर्शिता की कमी, मकान की खराब गुणवत्ता और तकनीकी पर्यवेक्षण की कमी, तालमेल का अभाव, लाभार्थियों को ऋण न मिलना और निगरानी की कमजोर प्रणाली इस कार्यक्रम के प्रभाव और परिणामों पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव डाल रही थी।

ग्रामीण आवास कार्यक्रम में इन कमियों को दूर करने के लिए और 2022 तक जिसे समय-समय पर आगे बढ़ाया जाता रहा है "सभी को मकान" उपलब्ध कराने की सरकार की प्रतिबद्धता को ध्यान में रखते हुए इंदिरा आवास योजना को 01-04-2016 से प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण (पी.एम.ए.वाई.-जी.) में पुनर्गठित कर दिया गया है। जिसमें साफ-सुथरे रसोईघर के साथ मकान के न्यूनतम आकार को बढ़ाकर 20 वर्ग मीटर से 25 वर्ग मीटर कर दिया गया है। इकाई सहायता को मैदानी क्षेत्रों में 70,000 रुपए से बढ़ाकर 1.20 लाख रुपए तथा पर्वतीय राज्यों, दुर्गम क्षेत्रों और आईएपी जिलों में 75,000 रुपए से बढ़ाकर 1.30 लाख रुपए कर दिया गया है। जिसमें लाभार्थी मनरेगा से 90 या 95 दिनों की अकुशल मजदूरी प्राप्त करने के हकदार भी हैं (मिनिस्ट्री ऑफ रूरल डेवलपमेंट, 2022)।

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 2: उत्तरदाताओं को आवास योजना का लाभ मिलने के वर्ष का विवरण

स्रोत: क्षेत्र अध्ययन से प्राप्त प्राथमिक तथ्यों पर आधारित

उपर्युक्त रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 2 से प्राप्त तथ्यों से स्पष्ट है कि कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं में 18 (15.0 प्रतिशत) लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जिनको भारत सरकार द्वारा चलायी जा रही प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण का लाभ 2017 में, 17 (14.2 प्रतिशत) लाभार्थी को ग्रामीण योजना का लाभ 2018 में, 27 (22.2 प्रतिशत) को ग्रामीण आवास योजना का लाभ 2019 में, 21 (17.5 प्रतिशत) इस योजना का लाभ 2020 में, 14 (11.5 प्रतिशत) को 2021 में तथा 23 (19.1 प्रतिशत) को 2022 में मिला है। अतः निष्कर्षतः यह कहा जा सकता है कि वर्ष 2017 से 2022 तक उत्तर प्रदेश के सोनभद्र जनपद के जनजातीय समुदायों का चयन निरंतर

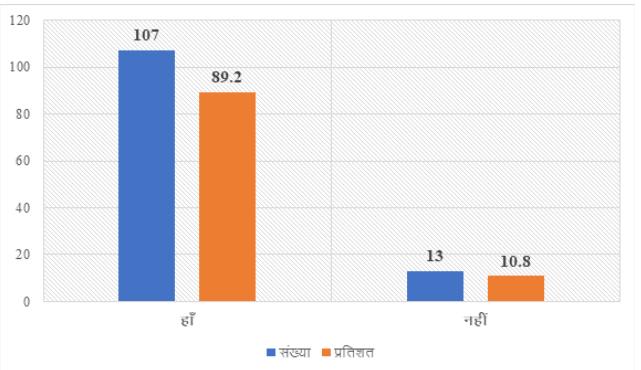
होता रहा है। आकड़ों पर नजर डालें तो वर्ष 2019 एवं वर्ष 2022 में जनजातीय समुदायों को अन्य वर्षों के मुकाबले प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण का लाभ अधिक मिला है।

स्वच्छ भारत मिशन

भारत सरकार ने वर्ष 1999 में स्वच्छता के महत्व के संबंध में ग्रामीण आबादी में जागरूकता पैदा करने के लिए एक स्वच्छता कार्यक्रम निर्मल भारत अभियान (एन.बी.ए.) की स्थापना की थी, जिसे संपूर्ण स्वच्छता अभियान (टी.एस.सी.) के रूप में भी जाना जाता था। समकालीन स्थिति में, निर्मल भारत अभियान (एन.बी.ए.) योजना को समाप्त कर दिया गया और 2 अक्टूबर 2014 को स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के तहत नई योजना स्वच्छ भारत अभियान के साथ पुनःनिर्मित किया गया ताकि 2019 तक भारत को खुले में शौच से मुक्त बनाया जा सके (शर्मा, गुप्ता एवं पाण्डेय, 2022)। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में स्वच्छता कवरेज में तेजी लाने, जागरूकता प्रसार और स्वास्थ्य शिक्षा के माध्यम से समुदायों और पंचायती राज संस्थाओं को स्वच्छता व्यवहारों और सुविधाओं को निरंतर अंगीकार करने के लिए प्रेरित करना, पारिस्थितिकीय रूप से सुरक्षित और सतत स्वच्छता के लिए किफायती और उचित प्रौद्योगिकियों को प्रोत्साहन, ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में समग्र स्वच्छता के लिए वैज्ञानिक ठोस एवं तरल अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन प्रणालियों को अपनाने जैसे विषय स्वच्छ भारत मिशन-ग्रामीण के प्रमुख उद्देश्यों में शामिल हैं। स्वच्छ भारत मिशन की परिकल्पना मात्र शौचालयों का निर्माण ही नहीं बल्कि लोगों के व्यवहार में बदलाव लाने पर ध्यान केंद्रित करते हुए जनता का नेतृत्व वाले आन्दोलन के रूप में की गई है। साफ-सफाई, अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन और स्वच्छता सुनिश्चित करने के अलावा यह मिशन क्षमता निर्माण, समन्वय, प्रचालन तंत्र, वित्त आदि पर ध्यान केंद्रित करता है। एस.बी.एम.-जी. ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में ठोस और तरल अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन गतिविधियों के माध्यम से और ग्राम पंचायतों को खुले में शौच से मुक्त (ओडीएफ), साफ-सुथरा एवं स्वच्छ बनाते हुए स्वच्छता के स्तर में सुधार लाने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है (तोमर, 2016)।

नीचे रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 3 में स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के अन्तर्गत शौचालय योजना के लाभ के वितरण को प्रस्तुत किया गया है:

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 3: उत्तरदाताओं को शौचालय योजना का लाभ मिलने की स्थिति



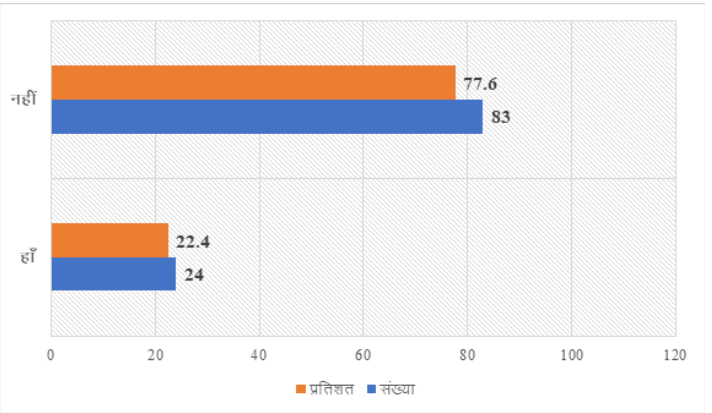
स्रोत: क्षेत्र अध्ययन से प्राप्त प्राथमिक तथ्यों पर आधारित

इसमें स्पष्ट है कि कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं में 107 (80.2 प्रतिशत) लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जिनको स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के अन्तर्गत बनवाए जा रहे शौचालय योजना का लाभ मिला है तथा 13 (10.8 प्रतिशत) उत्तरदाताओं को शौचालय योजना का लाभ नहीं मिला है। आकड़ों के विश्लेषण से यही प्रतीत होता है कि जनजातीय समुदाय में अधिकांश उत्तरदाताओं को स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के अन्तर्गत शौचालय योजना का लाभ मिला है।

स्वच्छ भारत मिशन से व्यवहार परिवर्तन

आधुनिक भारत अपनी तेजी से बढ़ती आबादी को पर्याप्त स्वच्छता प्रदान करने में महत्वपूर्ण चुनौतियों का सामना कर रहा है। 2014 में, स्वच्छता कवरेज केवल 39 प्रतिशत थी, जिससे 55 करोड़ से अधिक लोग, विशेष रूप से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में, बुनियादी शौचालय की सुविधा से वंचित थे और खुले में शौच करते थे। महिलाएं बुनियादी अधिकारों से वंचित होने के कारण अंधेरा होने का इंतजार करती थी। हालांकि इतने प्रयासों के बावजूद भी पूरी तरह से सफलता नहीं मिल पाई थी। इसको ध्यान में रखते हुए भारत को स्वच्छता के लिए अधिक व्यापक और परिवर्तनशील दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता महसूस की गई और 2 अक्टूबर, 2024 को स्वच्छ भारत अभियान की शुरूआत की गई (श्रीवास्तव, 2024)।

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 4: उत्तरदाताओं के परिवार द्वारा शौचालय सुविधा का उपयोग करने की प्रवृत्ति



स्रोत: क्षेत्र अध्ययन से प्राप्त प्राथमिक तथ्यों पर आधारित

टिप्पणी : रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 3 के अनुसार यहाँ केवल 107 लाभार्थियों के विवरण को प्रस्तुत किया गया है क्योंकि 13 उत्तरदाताओं को इस योजना का लाभ नहीं मिला है)

उपर्युक्त रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 4 से स्पष्ट है कि स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के अन्तर्गत लाभान्वित कुल 107 उत्तरदाताओं में से केवल 24 (22.4 प्रतिशत) लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जो शौचालय का प्रयोग करते हैं तथा 83 (77.6 प्रतिशत) लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जो शौचालय का प्रयोग नहीं करते हैं। आकड़ों के विश्लेषण से यह ज्ञात होता है कि अधिकांश उत्तरदाता या उत्तरदाताओं के परिवार द्वारा शौचालय का प्रयोग नहीं किया जाता है। सर्वेक्षण के अनुसार इसका कारण उनके क्षेत्र में पानी की बहुत समस्या है। उनके क्षेत्र में पानी के लिए लोग सरकारी हैण्डपम्प या कुआं पर निर्भर हैं, जो किसी सरकारी योजना के अन्तर्गत लगवाया गया है। एक हैण्डपम्प या

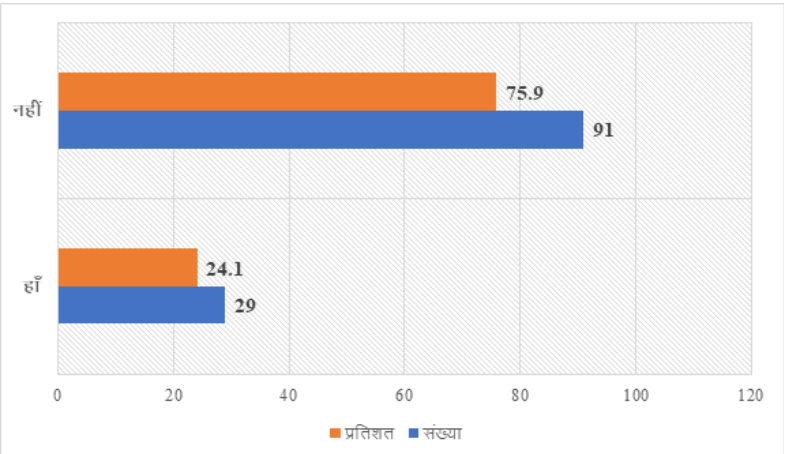
कुआं पर लगभग 20 से 25 परिवार पानी के लिए निर्भर होते हैं। दूसरी समस्या यह है कि इस हैण्डपम्प या कुआं की दूरी लगभग 500 मी. से 700 मी. होती है जिसके लिए प्रत्येक आदिवासी परिवार को अपने घर में जल की आवश्यकता को पूरा करने के लिए हर रोज इतनी लम्बी दूरी तय करनी होती है। उनका मत है कि सरकार ने शौचालय तो बनवा दिया है लेकिन पानी की व्यवस्था नहीं किया जो हमारे लिए सबसे ज्यादा जरूरी है, तो हम बिना पानी का शौचालय का प्रयोग कैसे करें।

पेयजल की समस्या एवं निराकरण

देश के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में पीने का पानी उपलब्ध कराना आजादी के बाद से ही तमाम सरकारों के लिए चुनौती रहा है, और शायद इसी चुनौती को भांपते हुए संविधान निर्माताओं ने संविधान की धारा 47 के तहत साफ पीने योग्य पानी उपलब्ध कराने को बकायदा राज्य के दायित्वों में शामिल किया गया था। अपनी संवैधानिक जिम्मेदारियों के अनुकूल स्वतंत्र भारत की सरकारों ने इस दिशा में ध्यान भी दिया और 10वीं पंचवर्षीय योजना तक साफ पीने का पानी मुहैया कराने के लिए अरबों रुपए खर्च किए गए। इसके बाद के वर्षों में भी कई योजनाओं के तहत पहले की नीतियों और इनमें जनता की भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करने की कोशिश की गई। लेकिन ग्रामीण भारत में पीने के साफ पानी की उपलब्धता की मौजूदा हालत देखते हुए किसी भी तरह से यह निष्कर्ष निकाल पाना कठिन है कि हजारों करोड़ रुपए और दसियों योजनाओं का कोई खास लाभ सकारात्मक परिणाम हासिल हो पाया हो (भास्कर, 2016)।

वर्तमान में जल संकट की समस्या के निराकरण के लिए संचालित योजनाओं में से एक प्रमुख योजना 'जल जीवन मिशन' कार्यक्रम है। केंद्र सरकार ने 15 अगस्त 2019 को जल जीवन मिशन कार्यक्रम का शुभारम्भ किया, जो जल शक्ति मंत्रालय के अधीन कार्य करता है। जिसका लक्ष्य वर्ष 2024 तक 'क्रियाशील घरेलू नल कनेक्शन' (FHTC) के माध्यम से देश के सभी ग्रामीण परिवारों को प्रतिदिन 55 लीटर पानी की पूर्ति करने का लक्ष्य सुनिश्चित किया गया है, (जल शक्ति मंत्रालय, 2025)। इस मिशन द्वारा जल को एक आन्दोलन की भांति विकसित करके देश के प्रत्येक परिवार को जल की उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित करना तथा जल की गुणवत्ता एवं परीक्षण सुनिश्चित करने के साथ भूजल संचयन, वर्षाजल संचयन, जल संरक्षण के माध्यम से इसका पुनः उपयोग के लिए जल अपशिष्ट शोधन जैसे कार्यों को भी सुनिश्चित किया गया है तथा यह मिशन पानी के प्रति सामुदायिक सहयोग जैसे दृष्टिकोण पर आधारित है। जल शक्ति मंत्रालय की रिपोर्ट (2019) के अनुसार देश के 55 प्रतिशत ग्रामीण आदिवासी परिवारों को जल जीवन मिशन योजना के द्वारा नल का कनेक्शन प्रदान किया गया है, जो वर्ष 2019 के पूर्व देश में केवल 17 प्रतिशत परिवार को ही नल का कनेक्शन उपलब्ध था (राज एवं जोशी, 2022)। नीचे रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 05 में हर घर नल योजना के विवरण को प्रस्तुत किया गया हैः

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 5: उत्तरदाताओं को योजना के तहत मिले आवास में हर घर नल जल योजना के तहत पानी की व्यवस्था की स्थिति



स्रोत: क्षेत्र अध्ययन से प्राप्त प्राथमिक तथ्यों पर आधारित

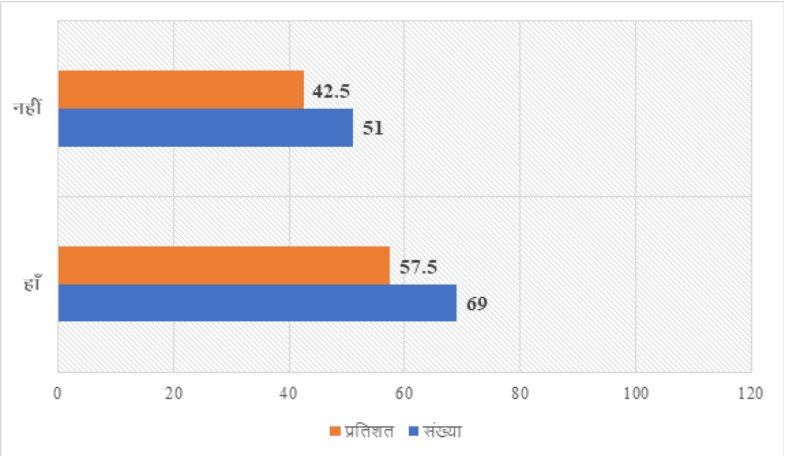
उपर्युक्त रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 5 से प्राप्त तथ्यों के विश्लेषण से स्पष्ट है कि कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं में से 29 अर्थात् 24.1 प्रतिशत लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जिनको हर घर जल योजना का लाभ मिला है तथा 91 अर्थात् 75.9 प्रतिशत लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जिनको हर घर जल योजना का लाभ नहीं मिला है। ज्ञात तथ्यों से स्पष्ट है कि उत्तर प्रदेश के सोनभद्र जनपद के जनजातीय समुदाय के लोगों को हर घर जल योजना का लाभ कम मिला है। अवलोकन से यह प्राप्त हुआ कि जिन लाभार्थियों को योजना का लाभ भी मिला है वह सुचारू रूप से काम नहीं कर रहा है। लाभार्थियों ने बताया कि जब यह नल हमारे घर के सामने लगाया गया था तब एक या दो माह तक ही सुबह-शाम पानी आता था। उसके बाद पानी आना बन्द हो गया और आज तक नहीं आया। पानी की समस्या को लेकर अपनी अन्य समस्याओं को साझा करते हुए अध्ययन क्षेत्र के लोगों ने बताया कि हमारे यहाँ जल स्तर बहुत नीचे चला गया है। व्यक्तिगत तौर पर कोई भी परिवार अपना हैण्डपम्प नहीं लगवा सकता है और यहाँ के पानी में फ्लोराइड और आयरन भी भारी मात्रा में पाया जाता है, ऐसा जांच में कई बार आया है तथा इससे हमें हड्डी, दाँत, त्वचा से संबंधित बीमारियां भी होती हैं लेकिन सरकार हमारे लिए कुछ नहीं करती है। हम अपनी समस्याओं के साथ जीने के लिए मजबूर हैं।

एक अनुमान के मुताबिक आज भी करीब 3.77 करोड़ लोग हर साल दूषित पानी के इस्तेमाल से बीमार पड़ते हैं। करीब 15 लाख बच्चे दस्त से अकाल मौत मरते हैं और पानी से होने वाली बीमारियों के कारण करीब 7.3 करोड़ कार्यदिवस बरबाद हो जाते हैं। इन सबसे भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को हर साल करीब 60 करोड़ का नुकसान हो जाता है। भूजल स्तर का लगातार कम होते जाना तो एक समस्या है, लेकिन जो पानी उपलब्ध है उसकी गुणवत्ता भी चिंताजनक स्तर तक खराब है। करीब 6.6 करोड़ लोग अत्यधिक फ्लोराइड वाले पानी के घातक नतीजों से जूझ रहे हैं, जबकि करीब 1 करोड़ लोग अत्यधिक आर्सेनिक वाले पानी के शिकार हैं। कई जगहों पर पानी में लोहे (आयरन) की ज्यादा मात्रा भी बड़ी परेशानी का सबब हैं (भास्कर, 2016)।

प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना एवं ग्रामीण महिलाओं का बदलता जीवन

दुनिया की 38 प्रतिशत आबादी खाना पकाने के लिए अब भी पारंपरिक जैव ईंधन पर निर्भर है। चुंकि घर संभालने तथा खाना पकाने की मुख्य जिम्मेदारी के कारण ग्रामीण महिलाएं अपने परिवार में केन्द्रीय जिम्मदारी निभाती हैं, इसलिए घर के भीतर के वायु प्रदूषण से अन्य सदस्यों के साथ उनके स्वास्थ्य पर ही अधिक असर पड़ता है। जैव ईंधन के आधे-अधूरे ढंग से जलने और जैव ईंधन के पारंपरिक चूल्हों का इस्तेमाल करने के कारण उत्पन्न हुए प्रदूषण से उनके स्वास्थ्य को खतरा और बढ़ जाता है। 2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार लगभग 12.1 करोड़ परिवार आज भी अक्षम चूल्हों का इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। वर्तमान के आंकड़ों के अनुसार भारत में 40 प्रतिशत जनसंख्या के पास आज भी खाना पकाने के लिए स्वच्छ ऊर्जा उपलब्ध नहीं है। इसलिए रसोई गैस (एल.पी.जी.) को खाना पकाने का प्रमुख स्वच्छ समाधान मानकर, प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना के बड़े कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत 2020 तक लगभग 8 करोड़ एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन प्रदान करने का लक्ष्य निर्धारित कर भारत ने गरीबी की रेखा से नीचे के परिवारों को स्वच्छ समाधान करने का एक साहसिक प्रयास किया है। यह योजना 2016 में उत्तर प्रदेश के बलिया जिले में आरंभ की गई थी। जिसमें शुरूआत में ग्रामीण महिलाओं को 5 करोड़ एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन उपलब्ध कराने का लक्ष्य रखा गया था। सामाजिक-आर्थिक जनगणना आकड़ों के आधार पर गरीबी रेखा से नीचे के जिन परिवारों में वयस्क महिला सदस्यों अथवा किसी अन्य परिजन के नाम पर एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन नहीं था, उस परिवार की वयस्क महिला सदस्य के नाम पर कनेक्शन दिया गया। सरकार ने बाद में इस लक्ष्य को बढ़ाकर 2020 तक के लिए 8 करोड़ कनेक्शन प्रदान करने के लिए निर्धारित कर दिया था (राम तथा मुबारक, 2018)। नीचे रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 6 के माध्यम से एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन के वितरण को प्रस्तुत किया गया है:

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 6: उत्तरदाताओं को उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत मिलने वाले एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन की स्थिति



स्रोत: क्षेत्र अध्ययन से प्राप्त प्राथमिक तथ्यों पर आधारित

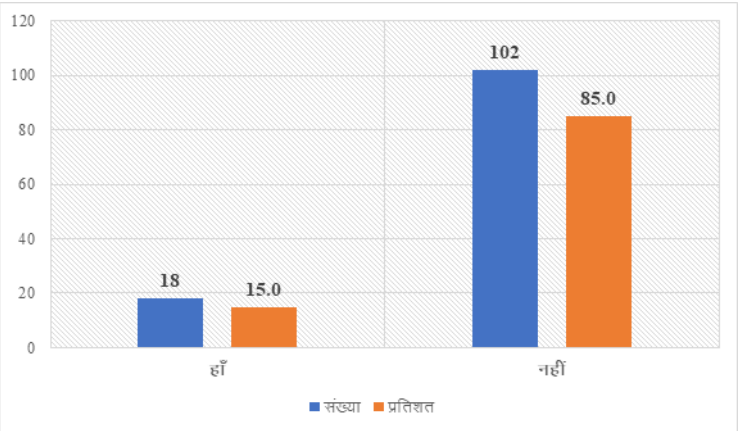
उपर्युक्त रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 6 से प्राप्त तथ्यों के विश्लेषण से स्पष्ट है कि कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं में से 69 अर्थात् 57.5 प्रतिशत लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जिनको उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन का लाभ मिला है तथा 51 अर्थात् 42.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाता ऐसे हैं जिनको एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन का लाभ नहीं मिला है। प्राप्त तथ्यों से ज्ञात होता है कि सोनभद्र के अधिकतर आदिवासी समुदायों को उज्ज्वला योजना के अन्तर्गत एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन का लाभ मिला है। लेकिन लाभार्थियों से संवाद के दौरान यह पता चला कि शुरू-शुरू में जब हमें एल.पी.जी. का कनेक्शन मिला था उस समय सिर्फ एक बार होली और दिवाली त्योहार पर फ्री में गैस मिला था लेकिन एक वर्ष के उपरांत वह भी बन्द हो गया और एक बार सिलेंडर भरवाने के लिए 1,000 हजार से ज्यादा रुपया लगता है जो हम लोगों के बस की बात नहीं है कि इतना महंगा गैस भरवा पाएं। हम लोगों को कोई छूट भी नहीं मिलता है तो हम लोग इतना गरीब आदमी कहां से इतना पैसा लाएंगे। इसलिए हम लोग लकड़ी से चूल्हे पर ही अपना खाना बनाते हैं।

प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना भारत की ग्रामीण महिलाओं को सशक्त अनुभव कराने और घरेलू वायु प्रदूषण का सेहत पर पड़ने वाला असर कम करने का गंभीरता भरा प्रयास है। यद्यपि यह योजना स्वयं में संपूर्ण नहीं है लेकिन व्यवस्थागत नजरिए के साथ इसे शुरू किया गया है और किफायती, सुगमता तथा व्यवहार के पहलुओं पर अभी बहुत कुछ किए जाने की आवश्यकता है। योजना ग्रामीण महिलाओं की आजीविका का कायाकल्प करने वाली है लेकिन इसके लिए अधिक दूरदर्शिता भरे तथा योजनाबद्ध प्रयास की आवश्यकता है।

विद्युत परियोजनाएं एवं ग्रामीण जीवन में प्रकाश

वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में ऐसा कोई भी क्षेत्र नहीं है जिसमें बिजली का प्रयोग नहीं किया जा रहा हो। उद्योग, परिवहन, कृषि आदि सभी क्षेत्रों में विद्युतीकरण के बिना विकास संभव नहीं है। ग्रामीण विकास के लिए वर्तमान केन्द्रीय तथा राज्य सरकारों द्वारा सभी क्षेत्रों में विद्युतीकरण के लिए विभिन्न प्रकार की योजनाओं का क्रियान्वयन किया जा रहा है जिससे आज प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में विकास को देखा जा सकता है। उद्योगों के साथ-साथ यह खेती के आधुनिकीकरण के लिए भी एक आवश्यक इनपुट है। भारत में बिजली का विकास 19वीं सदी के अंत में शुरू हुआ। सन् 1897 मे दार्जिलिंग में बिजली आपूर्ति शुरू हुई और उसके बाद सन 1902 में कर्नाटक में शिवसमुद्रम में पनबिजली केन्द्र काम करने लगा (शुक्ला, 2014)। और इस प्रकार से बिजली का विस्तार स्वतंत्रता के बाद धीरे-धीरे पूरे भारत में हुआ और अब हर गांव को बिजली पहुंचाने के बाद सरकार का अगला लक्ष्य देश के हर घर, चाहे वह शहर में हो या गांव में, को बिजली पहुंचाना है। इस लक्ष्य की पूर्ति के लिए सरकार ने 25 सितम्बर, 2017 को पंडित दीनदयाल उपाध्याय के जन्म दिवस के दिन सौभाग्य योजना की शुरूआत की। योजना के अनुसार 31 मार्च, 2019 तक हर घर को बिजली पहुँचा कर उसे रोशनी दिया जाएगा। इस योजना पर कुल 16 हजार 320 करोड़ रुपए खर्च होंगे (मुखर्जी, 2018)। नीचे रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 7 में बिजली से संबंधित तथ्यों को उत्तरदाताओं के सन्दर्भ में प्रस्तुत किया गया हैः

रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 7: उत्तरदाताओं को योजना के तहत मिले आवास में बिजली की व्यवस्था की स्थिति



स्रोत: क्षेत्र अध्ययन से प्राप्त प्राथमिक तथ्यों पर आधारित

उपर्युक्त रेखाचित्र क्रमांक 7 से प्राप्त तथ्यों के विश्लेषण से स्पष्ट है कि कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं में से 18 अर्थात् 15.0 प्रतिशत लाभार्थी ऐसे हैं जिनको सौभाग्य योजना का लाभ मिला है तथा 102 अर्थात् 85.0 प्रतिशत लाभार्थियों को सौभाग्य योजना लाभ नहीं मिला है। ज्ञात तथ्यों से स्पष्ट है कि अधिकांश उत्तरदाताओं को सौभाग्य योजना का लाभ नहीं मिला है। क्षेत्र अध्ययन के दौरान यह पाया गया कि सरकार द्वारा चलायी जा रही सौभाग्य योजना के अन्तर्गत किए जाने वाले कार्य की गति बहुत धीरे है। शहर से ज्यादा दूर होने के कारण लोगों का ध्यान भी इस तरफ बहुत कम है। स्वतंत्रता के लगभग 75 वर्ष उपरांत भी सोनभद्र के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के आदिवासी समाज आज भी अंधेरे में अपना जीवनयापन करने करने के लिए मजबूर है। इसका एक अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण पहलू यह भी है कि उत्तर प्रदेश का सोनभद्र जनपद को भारत की ऊर्जा राजधानी कहा जाता है। यह जिला स्वयं इतना बिजली उत्पन्न करता है कि दूसरे राज्यों को यहाँ से बिजली प्रदान की जाती है। इसके बावजूद सोनभद्र जनपद के ग्रामीण क्षेत्र के आदिवासी समाज विद्युत योजना से वंचित है। यह एक सोचनीय विषय है कि जहां देश की राजधानी में लोगों को 200 यूनिट तक बिजली फ्री में दी जाती है वहीं स्वयं के जिले में बिजली उत्पादन के बाद भी आदिवासियों के पास बिजली कनेक्शन नहीं है।

निष्कर्ष

भारत सरकार ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में विकास के लिए निरंतर प्रयासरत है, जिसमें प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण, स्वच्छ भारत अभियान के तहत शौचालय का निर्माण, उज्जवला योजना के अन्तर्गत प्रत्येक परिवार के लिए एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन, हर घर नल योजना के माध्यम से सभी के लिए पानी उपलब्ध कराना, सौभाग्य योजना के माध्यम से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में बिजली प्रदान करने जैसी योजनाएं महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रही हैं। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में प्राथमिक स्रोतों से संकलित आकड़ों से ज्ञात होता है कि योजनाओं का संचालन तो हो रहा है लेकिन उसका सुचारू रूप से लाभ आदिवासी समाज को नहीं मिल पा रहा है। आवास और शौचालय तो लगभग सभी को मिला है लेकिन क्षेत्र में पानी के कमी के कारण इसका इस्तेमाल नहीं किया किया जाता है। सौभाग्य योजना के लागू होने के बाद भी लोग बिजली के बिना अंधेरे में अपना जीवन

व्यतीत कर रहे हैं। एल.पी.जी. कनेक्शन तो लगभग सभी उत्तरदाताओं को मिला है लेकिन किफायती मूल्य में न मिलने के कारण लोग इसको भरवाने में असमर्थ हैं। यद्यपि भारत में ग्रामीण विकास की वर्तमान रणनीति पारिश्रमिक एवं स्वरोजगार के नए कार्यक्रमों के जरिए मुख्य रूप से गरीबी उन्मूलन, आजीविका के बेहतर अवसरों, बुनियादी सुविधाओं की उपलब्धता और बुनियादी सुविधाओं पर ध्यान देना है। लेकिन उपरोक्त विश्लेषण के आधार पर निष्कर्षतः यही कहा जा सकता है कि वर्तमान समय में भी उत्तर प्रदेश के आदिवासी समाज बुनियादी सुविधाओं से वंचित है।

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ग्रामीण महिलाओं के सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति पर मनरेगा योजना का प्रभाव

अजय कुमार निराला*

सार संक्षेप

राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम के अंतर्गत यह योजना शुरू में 200 पिछड़े जिलों में लागू की गई थी और 2 अक्टूबर, 2008 को सभी जिलों में विस्तारित कर दिया गया। यह अधिनियम प्रत्येक ग्रामीण परिवार को एक वित्तीय वर्ष में प्रचलित न्यूनतम मजदूरी दर पर 100 दिन का रोजगार सुनिश्चित करता है। इसके तहत पुरुष और महिला दोनों के लिए समान मजदूरी का प्रावधान किया गया। इसके प्रभाव का आकलन करने हेतु सूक्ष्म स्तर पर परीक्षण किया गया जिसके लिए बिहार के अरवल जिला का चयन किया गया है, क्योंकि ग्रामीण विकास विभाग, बिहार सरकार के वर्तमान रिपोर्ट के अनुसार अरवल जिला में मनरेगा योजना के तहत लक्षित कार्य का 100 प्रतिशत कार्य पूरा किया है। अरवल जिला से एक प्रखंड और दो पंचायतों तथा प्रत्येक पंचायत से दो-दो गांवों का चयन किया गया है। प्रत्येक गांव से 20-20 उत्तरदाताओं का चयन उद्देश्यपूर्ण निदर्शन विधि से किया गया जहां से कुल 80 उत्तरदाताओं का साक्षात्कार लिया गया। सर्वेक्षण के परिणाम बताते हैं कि ग्रामीण महिलाओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति को सुधारने में मनरेगा योजना का सकारात्मक प्रभाव रहा है। महिलाओं का इस योजना के कारण उनकी आत्मसम्मान में वृद्धि हुई तथा साथ ही पुरुषों के साथ समानता में सहायता मिली है।

प्रमुख शब्द : सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति, सशक्तिकरण, विकास परियोजना, रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम और आत्मनिर्भर

परिचय

भारतीय संसद ने सितम्बर 2005 में राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण रोजगार गारंटी अधिनियम (2007 से मनरेगा) कर दिया गया है। यह कानूनी अधिकार के रूप में काम करने के अधिकार को सुनिश्चित करता है। यह राज्य द्वारा शुरू की गई सबसे बड़ी मांग आधारित योजना है। यह अधिनियम प्रत्येक ग्रामीण परिवार को एक वित्तीय वर्ष में प्रचलित न्यूनतम मजदूरी पर 100 दिन का रोजगार सुनिश्चित करता है। अधिनियम के प्रमुख प्रावधानों में साइट चयन, कार्यालय का चयन, पालना गृह (शिशु गृह) सुविधाएं, पेयजल, कार्यस्थल पर प्राथमिक चिकित्सा, चोट के मामले में चिकित्सा उपचार और योजना में कार्य के दौरान मृत्यु या विकलांगता के कारण अनुग्रह भुगतान के लिए वर्ष में कम से कम दो बार ग्राम सभा की बैठक बुलाना शामिल है। मास्टर रोल की जांच करने का अधिकार, आवेदन जमा करने के 15 दिनों के भीतर रोजगार उपलब्ध न होने पर

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बेरोजगारी भत्ता का अधिकार, सामाजिक अंकेक्षण, ग्राम सतर्कता समिति, बैंक और डाकघर के माध्यम से मजदूरी का भुगतान, कम से कम एक तिहाई महिला लाभार्थी आदि अधिनियम के प्रमुख प्रावधान हैं। ये प्रावधान सहभागी विकास, सामान्य रूप से कमजोर वर्ग और विशेष रूप से महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण को सुनिश्चित करता है। उपरोक्त उपाय ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिरता और महिला सशक्तिकरण सुनिश्चित करते हैं।

मनरेगा की अनिवार्यताओं में से एक है, महिलाओं को कम से कम एक तिहाई रोजगार उपलब्ध कराना तथा मजदूरी में लैंगिक समानता सुनिश्चित करना। यह योजना ग्रामीण गरीबों, विशेषकर महिलाओं के लिए सम्मानजनक तरीके से जीविका कमाने का एक मूल्यवान अवसर है (द्रेज, 2008)। पंकज और तन्खा ने पाया कि स्वतंत्र कमाई के कारण महिला सशक्तिकरण महत्वपूर्ण परिणाम के रूप में उभरा है। उन्होंने घरेलू आय में ठोस योगदान दिया है और इसने उनकी सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति को प्रभावित किया है। योजना ने महिलाओं की ऋण और वित्तीय संस्थानों तक पहुँच बढ़ा दी है। बैंकों और डाकघरों के माध्यम से मजदूरी भुगतान के अनिवार्य प्रावधान से बड़ी संख्या में महिलाएं संस्थागत वित्त के दायरे में आ गई। प्रस्तुत आलेख मनरेगा योजना के प्रभाव का आकलन करता है।

साहित्य समीक्षा

अम्बष्टा एवं अन्य (2008) के अनुसार घर-घर जाकर रोजगार कार्ड के लिए श्रमिकों का पंजीकरण एवं जिले भर में जागरूकता फैलाने जैसी गतिविधियों के जरिए सीएसओ ने योजना के तहत रोजगार की मांग और ग्राम सभा में महिलाओं की भागीदारी दोनों को बढ़ाया है। अधिकारी और भाटिया (2010) के अनुसार इन्होंने अपने लेख में लिखा है कि महात्मा गांधी नरेगा योजना के तहत मिलने वाली मजदूरी सीधे महिलाओं के खाते में न आकर उनके पतियों के खाते में जाती है जिससे उनका पूर्ण सशक्तिकरण नहीं हो पाया है जिससे कि वह स्वतंत्र रूप से आर्थिक निर्णय ले सके। राय, ज्योतिर्मय (2012) के अनुसार इन्होंने अपने लेख में लिखा है कि मनरेगा योजना ने देशभर में फैले गांवों के लोगों की तकदीर ही बदल दी है। जहां इस योजना ने महिलाओं को पुरुषों के समान पारिश्रमिक कमाने का अभूतपूर्व अवसर दिया है वहीं आर्थिक रूप से स्वावलंबी होने पर महिलाओं को परिवार के आर्थिक मामलों में स्वायत्तता से फैसले लेने का भी मौका मिला है। कांत और अश्विन (2013) के अनुसार इन्होंने उत्तर प्रदेश में मनरेगा योजना में शामिल महिलाओं की भागीदारी का अध्ययन किया और पाया कि मनरेगा में महिलाओं की भागीदारी 33.33 प्रतिशत से अधिक है, जो सराहनीय था। इसके अलावा महिला लाभार्थी अधिक संतुष्ट थी, क्योंकि उन्हें पुरुषों के समान मजदूरी मिल रही थी, साथ-साथ ही वह आर्थिक रूप से भी स्वतंत्र थी। लावणा और मुहिमा (2013) ने पलक्कड़ में मनरेगा में शामिल महिलाओं का अध्ययन किया, और देखा कि मनरेगा में शामिल महिला लाभार्थी आर्थिक रूप से स्वतंत्र हुई हैं और साथ-ही-साथ इस कार्यक्रम ने महिला लाभार्थियों के लिए आत्मसम्मान और स्वतंत्रता की नींव रखी है। भुवाना (2013) के अनुसार, इन्होंने कर्नाटक के बंगलुरू जिले के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों महिला लाभार्थियों पर मनरेगा के प्रभावों का अध्ययन किया। इन्होंने अपने अध्ययन में महिला लाभार्थियों से साक्षात्कार विधि के आधार पर मनरेगा के बारे में पूछा तो महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि मनरेगा वर्क साइट पर सुविधाओं की बहुत कमी है, मनरेगा मजदूरी भी बहुत देर से प्राप्त होता है, साथ ही साथ जॉब कार्ड मिलने में भी बहुत सी समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ता है। इस अध्ययन के आधार

पर लेखक ने सुझाव दिया है कि मनरेगा योजना के तहत रोजगार के दिनों को बढ़ाया जाए साथ ही साथ मनरेगा वर्क साइट पर मुलभूत सुविधाएं उपलब्ध कराई जाएं। विनीता, कुलश्रेष्ठा और उपाध्याय (2013) के अनुसार, इन्होंने हरियाणा के रोहतक जिले में महीला सशक्तिकरण पर मनरेगा के महत्व का मूल्यांकन किया। मनरेगा योजना महिलाओं के लिए एक वरदान सिद्ध हुआ है, इस योजना के तहत महिलाओं को अधिक रोजगार मिला है, जिससे वह आर्थिक रूप से सशक्त हुई, और कोई निर्णय स्वयं लेती है। पंकज, अशोक और तंखा, रूकमिणी (2014) ने अपने लेख पत्र में महिला सशक्तिकरण पर मनरेगा के प्रभाव का अध्ययन चार राज्यों – बिहार, झारखंड, राजस्थान और हिमाचल प्रदेश में विश्लेषण के आधार पर लिखे हैं कि महिलाओं की आय प्राप्ति, घरेलू प्रभाव और पहले की तुलना में पसंद और क्षमता में वृद्धि के माध्यम से नगद भुगतान के कारण अधिक अवसर प्राप्त हुए हैं।

उपरोक्त साहित्य समीक्षा से ज्ञात होता है कि बिहार के संदर्भ में मनरेगा के महिलाओं पर प्रभाव पर अध्ययन का अभाव है।

अध्ययन का उद्देश्य

प्रस्तावित शोध लेख का मुख्य उद्देश्य मनरेगा योजना के तहत काम करने वाली महिलाओं की बदलती सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति और ग्रामीण समाज पर इसके परिणामी प्रभावों का विश्लेषण करना है। जिसके लिए महिलाओं की सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति का, उनके द्वारा परिवार एवं समाज में निर्णय लेने, तथा योजनाओं के कार्यान्वयन में उनकी भागीदारी का आकलन किया गया।

शोध पद्धति

अध्ययन के लिए अरवल जिला का चयन किया गया है। क्योंकि बिहार में मनरेगा योजना के तहत वृक्षारोपन प्रदर्शन रैंकिंग जिलों में अरवल जिला ने अपने लक्ष्य का 100 प्रतिशत कार्य पूरा किया है। अरवल जिला के 5 प्रखण्डों में से एक का चयन योजना के प्रदर्शन और महिला रोजगार के उच्चतम प्रतिशत के आधार पर किया गया है। उपरोक्त कारकों को ध्यान में रखते हुए प्रखंड से दो पंचायतों का चयन किया गया है। प्रत्येक पंचायत से मनरेगा में पंजीकृत जनसंख्या के आधार पर दो-दो गांवों का चयन किया गया है। प्रत्येक गांव से 20-20 उत्तरदाताओं का चयन उद्देश्यपूर्ण निदर्शन विधि से किया गया है। इस अध्ययन में क्षेत्र की सभी सामाजिक श्रेणियों को शामिल करने का प्रयास किया गया है, जिसमें महिला श्रमिकों पर विशेष जोर दिया गया है। कुल उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 80 है।

आंकड़ों के स्रोत

आँकड़े प्राथमिक और द्वितीयक दोनों स्रोतों से एकत्रित किया गया है। ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार और ग्रामीण विकास विभाग, बिहार सरकार की वार्षिक रिपोर्ट, विभिन्न स्रोतों की सर्वेक्षण रिपोर्ट, पुस्तकें, साहित्य और विषय पर लेख द्वितीयक आंकड़ों के प्रमुख स्रोत हैं। प्राथमिक आंकड़े गैर-प्रतिभागी अवलोकन और अर्द्ध-संरचित साक्षात्कार अनुसूचियों के साथ-साथ व्यक्तिगत और समूह चर्चा के माध्यम से एकत्र किया गया है।

अध्ययन क्षेत्र का स्वरूप

2011 की जनगणना के अनुसार, अरवल जिला का कुल जनसंख्या 7,00,883 है, जिसमें पुरुष और महिला जनसंख्या क्रमशः 51.87 प्रतिशत और 48.13 प्रतिशत है। इस जिले का जनसंख्या घनत्व 1,099 प्रति वर्ग कि.मी. है। जिले का लिंगानुपात 928 और साक्षरता दर 67.43 प्रतिशत है। अरवल जिला में 1 अनुमंडल, 5 प्रखंड और 316 गांव हैं (जनगणना, 2011)। प्रस्तुत शोध लेख का अध्ययन क्षेत्र कुर्था प्रखण्ड को चुना गया है, क्योंकि मनरेगा योजना के अंतर्गत महिलाओं का पंजीकरण 47.56 (41,507) प्रतिशत है, जो अरवल जिला के अंतर्गत प्रखण्डों में सबसे अधिक है (www.mgnrega.nic.in, FY-2024-2025)।

कुर्था प्रखण्ड के अंतर्गत 11 पंचायत हैं, जिसमें से दो पंचायतों निधवाँ पंचायत (50.31 प्रतिशत) और सचई पंचायत (49.87 प्रतिशत) का चयन मनेरगा योजना में पंजीकृत महिला उत्तरदाताओं की जनसंख्या के आधार पर किया गया है (www.mgnrega.nic.in)।

पंचायतों और गांवों में उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में चयनित पंचायतों के अंतर्गत गावों में उत्तरदाताओं के चयन का विवरण दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 1: चयनित पंचायतों के अंतर्गत गांवों में उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

जिला का नाम	*प्रखण्ड का नाम*	*पंचायत का नाम*	*गांव का नाम*	*उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या*
अरवल	कुर्था	निगवाँ	लोदीपुर	40
		सचई	फुलसथर	40
			कुल	**80**

निगवाँ पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

प्रस्तुत तालिका में निगवाँ पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 2: निगवाँ पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

विवरण	*कुल*	*पुरुष*	*महिला*
कुल परिवार की संख्या	1,233	.	.
कुल जनसंख्या	7,279	3,715	3,584
अनुसूचित जाति	1,534	802	732
अनुसूचित जनजाति	1	1	–
साक्षर जनसंख्या	3,672	2,217	1,455
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	2,365	1,665	700
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	1,445	1,049	396
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	920	616	304

स्रोत: www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

गांव का चयन

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के लिए अध्ययन क्षेत्र का चयन दैव निदर्शन विधि के माध्यम से निगवाँ पंचायत से लोदीपुर गांव को लिया गया है।

तालिका 3: लोदीपुर गांव का संक्षिप्त विवरण

विवरण	*कुल*	*पुरुष*	*महिला*
कुल परिवार की संख्या	409	-	-
कुल जनसंख्या	2,484	1,281	1,203
अनुसूचित जाति	464	235	229
अनुसूचित जनजाति	–	–	–
साक्षर जनसंख्या	1,081	728	353
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	787	651	136
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	319	306	13
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	468	345	123

स्रोत: www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

सचई पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

इस तालिका में सचई पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

तालिका 4: सचई पंचायत का संक्षिप्त विवरण

विवरण	*कुल*	*पुरुष*	*महिला*
कुल परिवार की संख्या	610	–	–
कुल जनसंख्या	3,587	1,870	1,717
अनुसूचित जाति	1,277	650	627
अनुसूचित जनजाति	–	–	–
साक्षर जनसंख्या	1,890	1,154	736
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	1,045	792	253
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	181	155	26
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	864	637	227

स्रोत: www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

तालिका 5: फुलसथर गांव का संक्षिप्त विवरण

विवरण	*कुल*	*पुरुष*	*महिला*
कुल परिवार की संख्या	324	–	–
कुल जनसंख्या	1,757	940	817

विवरण	*कुल*	*पुरुष*	*महिला*
अनुसूचित जाति	423	226	197
अनुसूचित जनजाति	–	–	–
साक्षर जनसंख्या	1,074	665	409
कुल कर्मियों की संख्या	527	422	105
मुख्य कर्मियों की संख्या	209	198	11
सीमांत कर्मियों की संख्या	318	224	94

स्रोत: www.districthandbookarwal.co.in

उत्तरदाताओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक विशेषताएं

यह खंड सर्वेक्षित पंचायतों में मनरेगा महिला लाभार्थियों के सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति के विश्लेषण से संबंधित है। इसमें लाभार्थियों की आयु, परिवार की आय, परिवार का प्रकार, शिक्षा, भूमि जोत का आकार एवं रोजगार के दिनों की संख्या को दर्शाया गया है, जो उनकी आजीविका के तौर-तरीके की स्थिति पर केन्द्रित है।

आयु

प्रस्तुत तालिका में आयु के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं के विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

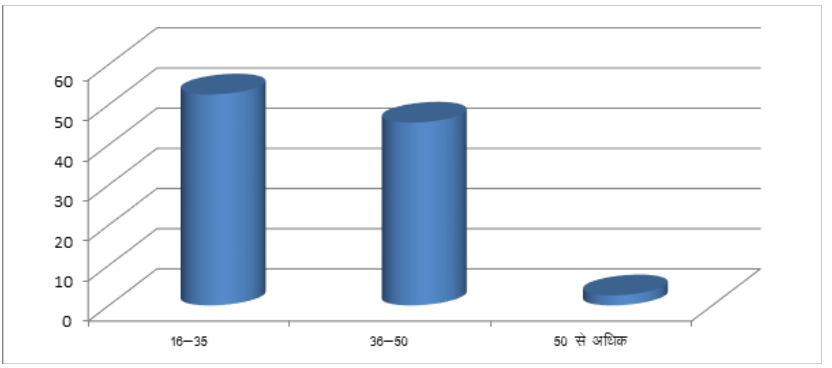
तालिका 6: आयु के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग-समूह	*उत्तरदाता*	
	संख्या	*प्रतिशत*
18-35	42	52.50
36-50	36	45.00
50 से अधिक	2	2.50
कुल	**80**	**100.00**

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 6 के अनुसार, कुल उत्तरदाताओं में से 52.50 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 18-35 वर्ष आयु वर्ग के बीच है, 45 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 36-50 आयु वर्ग के बीच है, तथा 2.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या 50 वर्ष या उससे अधिक आयु वर्ग के बीच है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाले अधिकांश उत्तरदाताओं की आयु 18-35 वर्ष के बीच है।



प्रस्तुत तालिका में जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण को दर्शाया गया है।

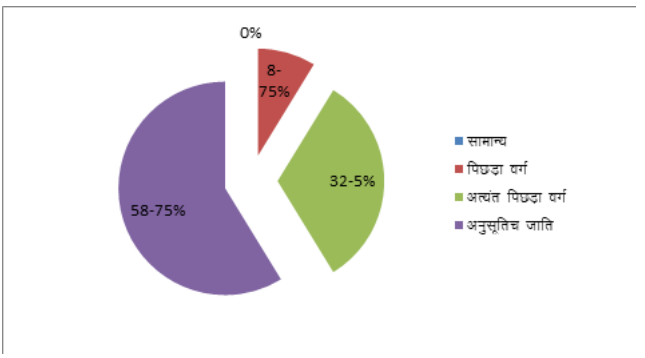
तालिका 7: जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

जाति-समूह	*उत्तरदाता*	
	संख्या	*प्रतिशत*
सामान्य	–	–
पिछड़ा वर्ग	7	8.75
अत्यंत पिछड़ा वर्ग	26	32.50
अनुसूचित जाति	47	58.75
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 7 से पता चलता है कि 58.75 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या अनुसूचित जाति से है, 32.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या अत्यंत पिछड़ी जाति से है, 8.75 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाता पिछड़ी जाति से है, और सामान्य वर्ग के जातियों की संख्या नगण्य है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाले अधिकांश उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या अनुसूचित जाति से है।



चित्र संख्या 1 में, जाति के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत विवरण

पेषा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं के विवरण को निम्न प्रकार है।

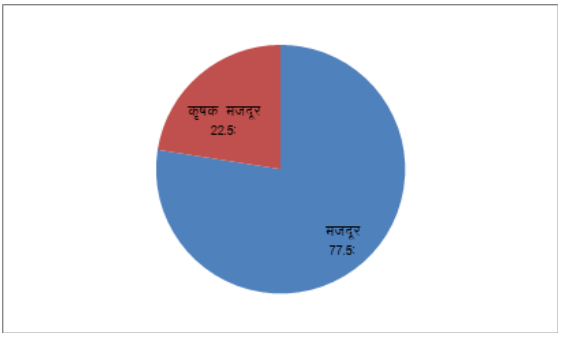
तालिका 8: पेषा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
मजदूर	62	77.50
कृषक मजदूर	18	22.50
कृषक व्यवसाय	0	0
अन्य	0	0
कुल	80	100.00

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 8 से स्पष्ट होता है कि कुल उत्तरदाताओं में से 77.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं का पेषा मजदूरी है, जबकि 22.5 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं का पेषा कृषक मजदूरी से है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के आधार पर देखा जा सकता है कि मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली अधिकांष महिलाऐं मजदूरी का काम करती है।



चित्र संख्याः 1.12.3 में, पेशा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत विवरण

वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण निम्न प्रकार है –

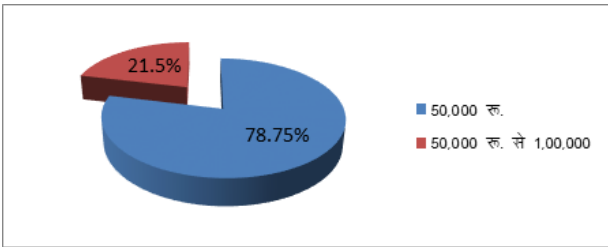
तालिका 9: वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	उत्तरदाता	
	संख्या	प्रतिशत
50,000 रु. तक	63	78.75
50,000 रु. से 1,00,000 रु.	17	21.25
1,00,000 रु. से 2,00,000 रु.	0	0
2,00,000 रु. से अधिक	0	0
कुल	**80**	**100.00**

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 9 के अनुसार, कुल उत्तरदाताओं में से 78.75 उत्तरदाताओं का वार्षिक-आय 50,000 रुपए है, जबकि 21.25 उत्तरदाताओं का वार्षिक-आय 50,000 से 1,00,000 रुपए के बीच है।

उपर्युक्त तालिका के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली अधिकांश महिला मजदूरों की वार्षिक-आय 50,000 रुपए है।



चित्र संख्या 2 में, वार्षिक-आय के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत विवरण

परिवारिक विशेषता के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं की स्थिति निम्न प्रकार है –

तालिका 10: परिवारिक प्रकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	*उत्तरदाता*	
	संख्या	*प्रतिशत*
एकल परिवार	65	81.25
संयुक्त परिवार	15	18.75
कुल	**80**	**100.00**

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

हमें तालिका 10 से पता चलता है कि महिला मनरेगा लाभार्थियों में 81.25 प्रतिशत एकल परिवार में रहते हैं, और 18.75 प्रतिशत संयुक्त परिवार में रहते हैं।

शिक्षा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण निम्न प्रकार से है।

तालिका 11: शिक्षा के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

शिक्षा का स्तर	*उत्तरदाता*	
	संख्या	*प्रतिशत*
अशिक्षित	52	65.00
पढ़ना-लिखना	16	20.00
प्राथमिक शिक्षा	8	10.00
माध्यमिक शिक्षा	4	5.00
उच्च शिक्षा	–	–
स्नातक	–	–

शिक्षा का स्तर	*उत्तरदाता*	
	संख्या	*प्रतिशत*
अन्य	–	–
कुल	**80**	**100.00**

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

तालिका 11 से स्पष्ट है कि मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली महिला लाभार्थियों में 65 प्रतिशत अशिक्षित है, 20 प्रतिशत पढ़ना-लिखना जानती है, 10 प्रतिशत प्राथमिक शिक्षा और 5 प्रतिशत माध्यमिक शिक्षा प्राप्त कर चुकी है।

भूमि आकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण तालिका 12 में है।

तालिका 12: भूमि आकार के आधार पर उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण

वर्ग	*उत्तरदाता*	
	संख्या	*प्रतिशत*
सीमांत (1.00 एकड़ तक)	62	77.50
छोटा (1.01 से 2 एकड़ के बीच)	18	22.50
मध्यम (2.01 से 4 एकड़ के बीच)	0	0
बड़ा (4 एकड़ से अधिक)	0	0
कुल	**80**	**100.00**

स्रोत: सर्वेक्षण आधारित आंकड़ा

उपर्युक्त तालिका 12 के अनुसार, मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली महिला लाभार्थियों में 77.5 प्रतिशत के पास एक एकड़ जमीन है, जबकि 23.34 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों के पास एक एकड़ से दो एकड़ के बीच जमीन है।

ग्रामीण महिला उत्तरदाताओं के सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति के सुधार में मनरेगा योजना का प्रभाव

प्रस्तुत शोध लेख में मनरेगा योजना के प्रभाव को आश्रित चर के रूप में लिया गया है, और इसका मूल्यांकन स्वतंत्र कारकों के उपयोग करके किया गया है। जिससे यह पता चल सके कि मनरेगा लाभार्थियों को मनरेगा योजना से लाभ मिला।

सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति में सुधार के आधार पर महिला उत्तरदाताओं का विवरण तालिका 13 में दिया गया है।

क्र.सं.	विवरण	हाँ		नहीं	
		संख्या	प्रतिशत	संख्या	प्रतिशत
1.	क्या आप आर्थिक रूप से स्वतंत्र हुई हैं?	72	60.00	48	40.00
2.	आपके आत्मसम्मान में सुधार हुआ है?	65	54.00	55	46.00
3.	क्या आपकी घरेलू निर्णय लेने में भागीदारी बढ़ी है?	63	52.50	57	47.50
4.	क्या आप मजदूरी के पैसे की बचत करती हैं?	76	63.00	44	37.00
5.	बच्चों के लिए शिक्षा की संभावनाओं में वृद्धि हुई है?	66	55.00	54	45.00
6.	क्या आप कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक हुई है?	70	58.00	50	42.00
7.	क्या आप संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकारों को समझती हैं?	72	60.00	48	40.00
8.	घरेलू वस्तुओं, रसोई के सामान और उकरणों को खरीदने की क्रय शक्ति में वृद्धि हुई है?	71	59.00	49	41.00
9.	क्या आप अपने बच्चों का नामांकन स्कूलों में कराने में सक्षम हैं?	66	55.00	54	45.00
10.	क्या आप सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग लेती हैं?	68	57.00	52	43.00
11.	क्या आप अपने परिवार की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने में योगदान देती हैं?	69	57.50	51	42.50
12.	क्या आपको कृषि श्रम अधिनियम 1948 के अनुसार न्यूनतम मजदूरी दी जाती है?	63	52.50	57	47.50
13.	मनरेगा योजना में शामिल होने के बाद आपके खान-पान में कोई अंतर आया है?	65	54.00	55	46.00

तालिका 13 से स्पष्ट होता है कि सामाजिक-आर्थिक प्रभाव के तहत मनरेगा महिला लाभार्थियों में 60 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि उनकी आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता में सुधार हुआ है, जबकि 40 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि उनकी आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता में किसी भी प्रकार का कोई परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ है। इसके अलावा 54 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि उनकी आत्मसम्मान में वृद्धि हुई है, जबकि 46 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि उनकी आत्मसम्मान में कोई सुधार नहीं हुआ है।

घरेलू निर्णय लेने के संबंध में, 52.5 प्रतिशत मनरेगा महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि उनकी भागीदारी घरेलू निर्णय लेने में वृद्धि हुई है, जबकि 47.5 प्रतिशत लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि उनकी भागीदारी घरेलू निर्णय लेने में कोई सुधार नहीं हुआ है। इसके अलावा, 63 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा है कि वह अपनी मजदूरी में से कुछ पैसे बचाती हैं, जिससे कि वह आगे चलकर जरूरत पड़ने पर उस पैसे का उपयोग कर सकें, तथा 37 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह अपने मजदूरी में से पैसे को नहीं बचा पाती हैं।

55 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि मनरेगा योजना के आने से उनके बच्चों की शिक्षा दिलाने की संभावनाओं में वृद्धि हुआ है, जबकि 45 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि उनके बच्चों की शिक्षा की संभावनाओं में कोई सुधार नहीं हुआ है।

कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूकता में 58 प्रतिशत महिला मनरेगा लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक हैं, जबकि 42 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वह कानूनी अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक नहीं हैं। इसके अलावा, संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकारों के बारे में पूछा गया तो 60 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकारों को समझती हैं, जबकि 40 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वह संवैधानिक विशेषाधिकार को नहीं समझती हैं।

अध्ययन के तहत जब उनसे घरेलू वस्तुओं, रसोई के सामान और उकरणों को खरीदने के बारे में पूछा गया तो, 59 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह अपने घर के वस्तुओं एवं रसोई का सामान स्वयं खरीदती हैं, जबकि 41 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह अपने घर का सामान खरीदने में सक्षम नहीं हैं। इसके अलावा, 55 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह अपने बच्चों का विद्यालय में नामांकन कराने में सक्षम हैं, जबकि 45 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह अपने बच्चों का नामांकन कराने में सक्षम नहीं हैं।

सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग लेने के बारे में पूछा गया तो, 57 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग लेती हैं, जबकि 43 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि वह सामाजिक गतिविधियों में भाग नहीं लेती हैं, और 57 प्रतिशत मनरेगा लाभार्थियों ने कहा कि वह अपने परिवार की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने में योगदान देती हैं, जबकि 43 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वह अपने परिवार की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने में कोई योगदान नहीं देती हैं।

52.5 प्रतिशत महिला उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि मनरेगा योजना में कृषि श्रम अधिनियम 1948 के अनुसार न्यूनतम मजदूरी मिलती है, जबकि 47.5 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि नहीं मिलती है, और 54 प्रतिशत महिला लाभार्थियों ने कहा है कि मनरेगा योजना में शामिल होने के बाद आपके खान-पान परिवर्तन आया है, जबकि 46 प्रतिशत उत्तरदाताओं ने कहा कि कोई परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ है।

निष्कर्ष

उपर्युक्त निष्कर्ष के आधार पर हम कह सकते हैं कि ग्रामीण महिलाओं की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति को सुधारने में मनरेगा योजना का सकारात्मक प्रभाव रहा है। मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली अधिकांश महिलाओं ने कहा है कि इस योजना में काम करने से उनकी आत्मसम्मान में वृद्धि हुई है, साथ ही साथ उन्हें घर में भी पुरुषों के समान समझा जाता है। वह अपने परिवार में आर्थिक भागीदार के रूप में अपनी भूमिका निभाती है।

मनरेगा योजना में काम करने वाली महिलाओं ने कहा है कि इस योजना के आने से वह अब अपने घर के चारदीवारी से बारह निकलकर काम करने जाती हैं, उन्हें इस योजना के तहत कार्यस्थल पर किसी भी प्रकार का कोई भी भेदभाव नहीं किया जाता है, उन्हें पुरुषों के समान मजदूरी उन्हें भी दिया जाता है।

मनरेगा योजना के तहत मिलने वाली मजदूरी से वह अपने बच्चों को विद्यालय में नामांकन करा रही हैं तथा वह अपने घर के लिए जरूरी सामान भी खरीदती हैं।

कुल मिलाकर कहा जाए तो मनरेगा योजना ने महिलाओं को पूर्ण रूप से सशक्त बनाया है, तथा वह अब कहीं भी आसानी से जा सकती हैं। साथ ही साथ वह अब अपने अधिकारों के प्रति पूर्णरूप से जागरूक हो चुकी हैं।

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अमृतं तु विद्या

मगध विश्वविद्यालय

बिहार के महामहिम राज्यपाल–सह–कुलाधिपति श्री आरिफ मोहम्मद खान के मार्गदर्शन में मगध विश्वविद्यालय, बोधगया, गुणवत्ता, उत्कृष्टता और परिवर्तनकारी उपलब्धियों की असाधारण यात्रा पर द्रुतगति से अग्रसर है। अटूट प्रतिबद्धता के साथ माननीय कुलपति प्रोफेसर एस.पी. शाही के दूरदर्शी नेतृत्व में विश्वविद्यालय नई ऊँचाइयों पर पहुँचने तथा शिक्षा और शोध में अभूतपूर्व मानक स्थापित करने की ओर अग्रसर है। विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति ने छात्रों, शिक्षकों और अन्य सभी हितधारकों को अकादमिक क्षेत्र में उत्कृष्टता प्राप्त करने के लिए नई जिम्मेदारियाँ सौंपी है तथा उनके अब तक के कार्यकाल के दौरान निम्नलिखित उल्लेखनीय कार्य पूर्ण हुए हैं।

- स्नातक और स्नातकोत्तर स्तर पर पारंपरिक और व्यावसायिक पाठ्यक्रमों के विभिन्न सत्रों को नियमित करने हेतु वर्षों से लंबित परीक्षाएं आयोजित कर परिणाम घोषित किए गए एवं शेष प्रगति पर है।
- मार्च 2023 से आज तक 5,50,409 से अधिक प्रमाणपत्रों का निराकरण करते हुए संबंधित विभाग/महाविद्यालयों को भेज दिए गए हैं।
- सत्र 2023–2024 से स्नातक स्तर पर "राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020" लागू कर दी गई।
- विश्वविद्यालय में 409 से अधिक सेमिनार, कॉन्फ्रेन्स एवं वर्कशॉप किए जा चुके हैं।
- विश्वविद्यालय एवं महाविद्यालयों में वर्ग संचालन सुचारू रूप से हो तथा छात्र–छात्राओं की 75 प्रतिशत उपस्थिति सुनिश्चित हो, इसके लिए गंभीर प्रयास लगातार जारी है।
- मगध विश्वविद्यालय ने व्याख्यानों, संगोष्ठियों और कार्यशालाओं का आयोजन कर अकादमिक उत्कृष्टता में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि की है।
- शिक्षण कौशल अंतर–विषयक अध्ययन और शोध में नवाचारों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए यू0जी0सी0 द्वारा स्थापित मानदण्डों को लागू किया गया है।
- अवकाश प्राप्त 90 प्रतिशत एवं शिक्षकेत्तर कर्मियों की समस्याओं का समाधान किया जा चुका है।
- जन शिकायत कोषांग का गठन किया गया है और प्राप्त आवेदनों का ससमय निष्पादन किया जा रहा है।
- विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा मार्च 2023 से आजतक कुल 150 से अधिक परीक्षाएँ आयोजित की गई है।
- अवकाश प्राप्त शिक्षक एवं शिक्षकेत्तर को सेवानिवृत्ति के दिन ही पेंशन भुगतान करने की परम्परा पुनः आरंभ की गई है।
- नैक में अच्छी ग्रेडिंग हेतु विश्वविद्यालय परिवार दृढ़ संकल्पित है।
- विश्वविद्यालय के भवनों के जीर्णोद्धार एवं नवीन भवनों के निर्माण हेतु अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर के वास्तुकार द्वारा DPR तैयार कर कार्यारंभ किया जा चुका है।
- विश्वविद्यालय के छात्र हित में गठित प्लेसमेंट सेल के अंतर्गत परिसर स्थित प्रबंधन विभाग के 12 छात्रों का बंधन बैंक में कैंपस प्लेसमेंट हुआ इसे और अधिक बढ़ाये जाने की योजना है।
- IIT, Patna के Computer Science Department में Artificial Intelligence प्रारंभ के लिए मगध विश्विद्यालय, बोधगया के प्राध्यापकों की Training एवं पढ़ाई प्रारंभ करने के लिए विभिन्न Statutory Bodies द्वारा अनुमोदन प्राप्त कर लिया गया है।
- Permanent IQAC Cell Functional है।
- विगत 9 वर्षों का AQAR (2015-2024) नैक पोर्टल पर सफलतापूर्वक अपलोड कर दिया गया है।
- शोध को बढ़ावा देने के लिए Research Development Cell की स्थापना की गई है। इस प्रकोष्ठ के तहत Research Project के लिए शोधार्थियों को वित्तीय सहायता देने हेतु 05 करोड़ रु0 की राशि आवंटित की गई है।
- विद्यार्थियों की सुविधा के लिए दो बसों का संचालन परिवहन विभाग, बिहार सरकार पटना के द्वारा करवाया गया है।
- माननीय कुलपति महोदय के नेतृत्व में विश्वविद्यालय एवं महाविद्यालय के राजनीति विज्ञान विभाग के पाँच शिक्षकों के साथ सियोल (South Korea) में आयोजित अंतर्राष्ट्रीय राजनीति विज्ञान अधिवेशन में शोध पत्र प्रस्तुत किया और सत्र की अध्यक्षता की जो समावेशी शोध Inclusive Research का अन्यतम उदाहरण है।
- एक दशक के बाद मगध विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा दीक्षांत समारोह 22वें का भव्य आयोजन किया गया और 23वें दीक्षांत समारोह की तैयारी आरम्भ कर दी गई है।
- सत्येंद्र नारायण सिन्हा A.I. Centre का शिलान्यास महामहिम श्री आरिफ मोहम्मद खान, राज्यपाल–सह–कुलाधिपति, बिहार एवं श्री हरिवंश जी, माननीय उपसभापति, राज्यसभा, नई दिल्ली के द्वारा किया गया।
- दो अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समझौता ज्ञापन–प्रबोरोमार्णचनोक संस्थान, लोक स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय, थाईलैंड एवं एस्पायर संस्थान हार्वर्ड विश्वविद्यालय, अमेरिका के साथ किए गए। इसके अतिरिक्त 09 विभिन्न संस्थानों से राष्ट्रीय समझौता ज्ञापन भी हस्ताक्षरित हुए।
- जंतु विज्ञान और गृह विज्ञान के शिक्षकों और शोधार्थियों ने 03 पेटेंट भारत सरकार से हासिल कर विश्वविद्यालय को अत्याधुनिक फलक पर गौरवान्वित किया।

कुलसचिव
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