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*Daniel Gidey Derbew, Kunwar Siddarth Dadhwal & Sandip Kumar Singh*

**Kautilya's Legacy in a multipolar world: India's strategic path to 2047**

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**India's quest for strategic autonomy in the changing geopolitical landscapes**

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# HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY JOURNAL

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# **Negotiated peace in Africa: a case study on the Pretoria Peace Deal between Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Tigray Peoples Liberation Front**

**Daniel Gidey Derbew, Kunwar Siddarth Dadhwal & Sandip Kumar Singh**

## **ABSTRACT**

There are many different methods to put an end to a battle, but traditionally, the majority have been settled either by victor's peace or diplomacy. Concessions, consensus building, and mutual trust are all necessary during negotiations to turn a combative scenario into a resolution. To avoid, manage, and resolve conflicts, regional and sub-regional organizations are essential in mediating disputes between disputing parties. This article explores the AU-led mediated peace accord on the bloody conflict between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, using the Pretoria Peace Accord as a case study. Using a technique of content analysis, the research critically evaluates the existing body of literature while exploring the subject in depth. The conclusions of the study indicate that the African Union (AU), through the efforts of Olusegun Obasanjo and other dignitaries, had a fundamental role in facilitating compromise and mutual confidence between the TPLF and the central government of Ethiopia in supporting the Pretoria peace agreement. The article concludes that the Pretoria Accord proves that negotiated peace would most probably give minimum negative peace, where no direct violence is allowed or exists. The article further suggests that regional organizations play an essential role in resolving conflicts, making sure they can, always, really provide effective arbitration of a given conflict between parties. Reaching the agreement and sustaining it entailed continuous

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diplomatic efforts with the involvement of neutral mediation. The findings point to the fact that despite the negative peace that negotiated peace brings in the short term, it sets the foundations for long-term reconciliation as well as positive peace. It also shows the farther effects of the Pretoria Peace Accord. It points out how the involvement of the AU portrays the notion of “African solutions to African problems,” underlining the ability of regional organizations to address and resolve internal state conflicts. The report also underlines how indispensable it is for such regional efforts to be continually supported by foreign partners like the United States. This article concludes with an elaborate discussion of the African-negotiated peace process, specifically looking at the Pretoria Peace Accord. It sheds much light on the mechanics of regional mediation and the success of African Union engagement in the war in Ethiopia. A deeper comprehension of how negotiated peace may lead to long-term stability in the area and sustainable conflict settlement is made possible by the research.

**Keywords:** *Negotiation, negotiated peace, and Pretoria CoHA.*

## **Introduction**

Considering that international groups insisted on dialogue and negotiated peace, there were 231 ongoing armed conflicts in 151 different sites worldwide between 1990 and 2005, following the end of World War II (Harbom et al., 2006). Moreover, the United Nations confirmation, that nearly 50% success rate of conflicts resolution through negotiated peace, precipitated the pledge for negotiated peace (Bell, 2008). This fact intern made negotiated peace to become standard approach for handling conflicts (Wallenstein & Eriksson, 2009). However, ending war through negotiation is not an easy endeavor. Negotiations entail some level of mutual trust, as well as compromises and consensus-building (Ibid). Furthermore, such negotiations, which aimed to ending conflict, the so called “end” may take many forms (Audebert-Lasrochas et al., 2005). For example, in some cases the ‘end’ may imply ending the killing, in other cases the ‘end’ could take the form of moving conflict from its violent to its political expression ; and still in other cases the ‘end’ may bring conflicting parties to a

total settlement of the issues, which is also known as conflict resolution).

Empirically speaking to Wallensteen & Eriksson, (2009), who employed the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) identified 128 large and small conflicts being fought in the world in the 20-year period (1989-2008). And the bulk of these conflicts, being intra-state, ended with negotiated peace. In the same way, Adetula et al. (2018), who used two years of peace agreements from the UN Peace Agreements Database between 2016 and 2018, identified 833 peace agreements worldwide, in which America participated in 124, Europe in 106, the Middle East and West Asia in 76, Asia and the Pacific in 176, and Africa in 351, accounting for 42% with majority of these peace deals ended with successes. Furthermore, according to a recent analysis by the Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, (2023), 39 peace procedures and discussions were recognized on a global scale throughout the year 2022. The investigation of these peace negotiations and their various circumstances discloses a wide range of facts and processes, as an outcome of the various character of the armed wars and socio-political disasters to which they are tied. These peace processes and negotiations include: the National Harmony Agreement for Haiti, which was signed by the government of Senegal and the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) faction led by Cesar Atoute Badiate, which established a peace agreement with various party-political groups, civic society groups, and the private sector for an all-encompassing shift and apparent determinations; the Peace Deal that was signed by the Ethiopian government and the political and armed experts of the Tigray region, which effectively “ended” the conflict between the two main actors in the conflict; and many more (Ari, 2023).

However, the focus of this article is on the peace agreement that was signed by the Ethiopian government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region (Ibid.). Hitherto, it is imperative to recognize that “peace is notoriously hard to maintain among deadly enemies, but in some cases, it succeeds and in others it fails” (Analytica, 2024). The Objective of this article is not a

detailed investigation of these 38 negotiated peace treaties for the year 2022, nor is it a continent-specific exploration of peace treaties across Africa. Previously, the article focused on the negotiated peace between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Tigray military and political authorities led by the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) (Gebresenbet & Tariku, 2023b). The article is divided into five sections, the first of which is an introduction, the second of which is a literature review on negotiations and negotiated peace, the third of which is an overview of the Tigray conflict and the subsequent negotiations aimed at ‘ending’ the conflict, and the fourth of which is devoted to concluding remarks.

### **Negotiation and negotiated peace: state of the art**

Although the name ‘peace process’ or ‘negotiated peace’ is relatively new, the principle is as old as conflict or war itself. Long ago, sophisticated links between ceasefires and peace talks were well established and acknowledged (Stepanova, 2023). Yet, there is no legal definition for the term ‘peace agreement’, ‘peace accord’, or ‘peace deal’ (Bell, 2008). The term is also “largely undefined and unexplored”. Bell further goes to assert that, the phrase “peace agreement,” “peace accord,” or “peace deal’ is a colloquial term that encompasses treaties between two or more governments, agreements between state and non-state groups, and even domestic accords (Bell, 2008). If we solely define ‘negotiation’ alone and then combine it with peace, it can give us the full essence of negotiated peace, to do so it is vital to quote (Druckman & Wagner, 2017).

Negotiating, bargaining, haggling, etc. are all terms that describe a similar action, namely seeking to reach an agreement through communication, in order to achieve a desired goal. These actions therefore require at least two persons or parties who desire the same goal, even if they each place a different value on it.

Thus, from this insight negotiated peace can be taken as a negotiation meant for bringing peace via ending conflict or war (Westendorf, 2015).

Historically speaking (Bell, 2008) noted during Roman times Livy talked of three types of agreement as peace agreements. The first type of agreement was that in which the victor-imposed terms on the conquered; the second when states equally matched in war concluded peace on a basis of equality; and the third when states that had never been at war came together to pledge mutual friendship in a treaty of alliance. These three definitions form a useful backdrop to the contemporary peace agreement, and questions of boundary definitions. As a practical matter, the contemporary label 'peace agreement' is most often attached to formally documented agreements between parties to a violent 'intrastate' conflict to establish a ceasefire and new or revised political and legal structures. In short, peace agreements are the codified terms of settlement reached by some or all conflict parties in order to terminate the conflict (Forster, 2019). On his part Pillar (1983) peace negotiation has several turning points and three questions to be answered. These include the when, what and the how questions.

Hitherto, the connection between negotiations and peace processes rests on two apparently straightforward and seemingly persuasive propositions. They are that tangible evidence of a commitment to peace on the part of the major combatants is needed to create the right climate for negotiations to end violent political conflict and that the pursuit of negotiated settlements is needed to sustain any peace processes (Nilsson & Svensson, 2023). They imply a more or less symbiotic relationship between negotiations and peace itself lies through negotiations culminating in political settlement. Overall Peace agreements are arrangements aimed at resolve conflicts and provide a new vision for inter-group and interstate relations at the regional, national, or local level (Turner, 2016). The link is rightly depicted by (Kuzmina et al., 2022):

“The statement ‘he who negotiates does not shoot’ certainly contains an element of truth, but the reverse is also true: ‘he

who shoots does not negotiate'. In modern warlike conflicts... it can be observed that even during wartime, negotiations were nonetheless being conducted through third parties ...”

Nonetheless negotiated peace does not provide peace in by itself, yet it can better apprehend as an initial step on the way to peace (Lyons, 2018). Furthermore, Hampson supposed “negotiated peace is little more than a road map to the peace process. A settlement indicates the direction the parties must move if they are to consolidate the peace, but it usually does not tell them how to get there, except in very general terms (Quoted in Lyons, 2018). Overall, negotiated peace should be understood and assessed in terms of the extent to which they create stable social, political, and security conditions in which political conflicts are no longer settled through violence (Westendorf, 2015).

When we look at the literature on theoretical viewpoints on the success of negotiated peace, we find that Westendorf (2015) identified bifurcated theoretical frameworks. The dichotomy encompasses the minimalist and maximalist approaches on opposite extremes, and Westendorf advocated a midway ground between the two and dubbed it “Minimalist + Politics.” According to Westendorf’s observations, a minimalist conception of success concentrates on physical security and the absence of war, or, in other words, the construction of a negative peace. The maximalist approach, on the other hand, judges’ success by the extent to which a peace process generates a positive peace. This strategy comprises addressing the underlying causes of conflict, which necessitates a far broader spectrum of political, economic, social, and structural changes.

A closer examination of Westendorf, (2015) “Minimalist + Politics” approach necessitates a genuine engagement with the questions of what is actually required to consolidate peace in each specific context, and it may result in a more abstracted focus on establishing security and some basic governance parameters within

which institutions can be constituted and shaped by the community itself. In this article, chose neither the minimalist nor maximalist techniques in this essay, but we used the “Minimalist + Politics” approach to ensure the success of the negotiated peace between the two actors in the next sub-section. However, before entering into a negotiated settlement between these two parties, it is critical to understand a synopsis of the conflict in Ethiopia’s northern region, and the following section is intended for such debate.

### **The Tigray conflict: An overview**

Beginning in November 2020, Ethiopia’s northernmost region has been the battleground of a civil war involving ethnic-regional militias, the central government, and Eritrean troops (Gebrewahd, 2023). According to the ISS-PSC Report (2022), the conflict has plunged the country into severe destabilization, resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians and military personnel. Gebresenbet & Tariku, (2023a) recounted that “the Ethiopian state has never been threatened in recent decades in the way that the war in the north is threatening it.” This is partly due to the fact that between 70% and 80% of the Ethiopian National defense Forces (ENDF) were either neutralized or dispersed within the Northern Command. Additionally, a faction chose to fight on the TPLF’s side.

Dimtsi Woyane TV (2020) reported that, at the height of the crisis, the ENDF was not only divided but also overstretched and ill-prepared for the existential threat it faced (Gebresenbet & Tariku, 2023a). Following this bewildering crisis, the FDRE government launched the “law-and-order operation” (Gavin, 2021). This operation quickly escalated the situation in northern Ethiopia into a bloody internal conflict. Shay, (2022) depicted dynamism of the conflict in the following manner:

- At first, the federal government, backed by Eritrea’s military and Amhara forces, moved into Tigray in response to the attack on the northern command and subsequently, captured Mekelle and forced TPLF to escape to mountainous locations.

- Then, months later, TPLF soldiers regrouped to begin a guerilla campaign that defeated the EDF and recaptured Mekelle.
- In July 2021, the TPLF launched a dislodge against Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government, pushing in many directions and into Addis Abeba.
- Lastly the federal government, armed with new drones and supported by a strong popular mobilization, then defeated Tigray's forces, who returned to their home region in December.
- "The conflict has been characterized by shifting alliances, territorial gains and losses, and a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. Initially, the Ethiopian federal forces, supported by Eritrean troops, gained the upper hand, capturing key cities and regions held by the TPLF.
- However, the TPLF forces regrouped and launched a counteroffensive, regaining control of significant territories and threatening the stability of the central government. This back-and-forth battle has resulted in widespread destruction, displacement, and a severe humanitarian crisis, with millions in need of aid and protection."
- The United Nations (2023) further pointed out the serious crimes of human rights violations, which consist of mass killings, sex-based violence, and use of starvation as a method of war (Bellizzi et al., 2024; Luciano, 2023). The Brookings Institution says that the Tigray conflict is not just another regional crisis, but it reflects broader concerns for the future of the Horn of Africa (Tazo, 2023).
- The protracted conflict puts regional stability at risk, threatening to spill over into neighboring states like Sudan and Somalia. The internal displacement of more than 2 million people has complicated the crisis, rendering it one of the most

demanding humanitarian emergencies in the world today (Munikwa et al., 2023).

- In a nutshell, the Tigray war has come to assume a complex and multidimensional nature, which poses grave threats to the stability of Ethiopia and the larger region.

Millions of people are impacted by the fighting and in desperate need of aid due to the enormous humanitarian cost. A negotiated peace agreement is desperately needed to stop the conflict's ongoing escalation and suffering because of its dynamic nature, which is marked by shifting power dynamics and grave violations of human rights.

This dynamic and violent intrastate conflict has caused irrevocable impacts. For instance Gesezew et al., (2021) argued that:

As a result of the war, it is estimated that more than 52000 civilians have been killed, 2.3million people displaced, while 70000 people have crossed to the neighbouring Sudan in the first 3months of the war. In addition, 7months into the war, the World Food Programme reported that 91% of the region's population required emergency humanitarian assistance...

Weldemichel, (2022), who studied the conflict on the same year stated the impact of the conflict in Tigray by quoting Brown (2021), who alleged "Businesses [in Tigray] have been destroyed. The economy has been destroyed. Crops have been destroyed. Farms have been destroyed. There [is] no banking services anymore; there are no telecommunications services anymore." While Gebresenbet & Tariku, (2023a) contend that "The war affected the three regions [Tigray, Amhara and Afar], yet disproportionately harmed Tigray and Tigrayans". Correspondingly Blinken, (2023), the 71st U.S. Secretary of State stated actors and impact of the conflict in the following manner:

After careful review of the law and the facts, I have determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces, and Amhara forces committed war crimes during

the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Members of the ENDF, EDF, and Amhara forces also committed crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and persecution.

Apart from socio-economic and security catastrophe, the Tigray conflict and the subsequent negotiated peace has polarized academicians, analysts, and policy researchers. To comprehend this, it is vital to quote (Gebresenbet & Tariku, 2023a):

The war in northern Ethiopia has had two major effects on Ethiopian and foreign experts of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. First, it has been a divisive issue among Ethiopian scholars and experts, and eventually most had to pick sides. It also divided foreign experts, who also picked sides in the conflict ...Their tweets and opinion pieces easily show whose side they are on and the extent to which they are willing to defend that side's actions. As such, most scholars (both Ethiopians and foreigners) were reduced to mere activists rather than voices of reason and resolution.

To summarize, the Tigray War, sometimes known as the war on Tigray, law enforcement in Tigray, and so on, is Ethiopia's bloodiest intra-state conflict (Abbink, 2023; Gebrehiwot et al., 2023; Gebresenbet & Tariku, 2023a). And it is debated from a variety of perspectives, beginning with conflict causation, particularly triggering causes to conflict actors, conflict impact, and the eventual negotiated peace between the two key conflict's actors. Furthermore, what, why and who directed Pretoria negotiated peace is also contested. Nevertheless, there is one consensual issue that is the FDRE and the TPLF, signed the Pretoria negotiated peace and 'finished' this bloody conflict, at least for one year. And it is AU-lead one year negotiation process, which engage Ethiopian parties and consistently maintaining calls for them to embrace an immediate and unconditional comprehensive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, engage in political dialogue without any preconditions and to ensure immediate and unhindered humanitarian access. Built upon it, this

article in general and the forthcoming sub section in particular, is designed for detailed discussion on this negotiated peace

### **Negotiated peace between FDRE and TPLF: CoHA**

The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), also known as the Pretoria Accord, was a critical turning point in the peace process between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). Regarding hostile propaganda, hate speech, civilian protection, humanitarian access, and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of fighters, among other important problems, this accord sought to usher in a new era (Abbink, 2023; Gebrehiwot et al., 2023). Both the FDRE and the TPLF were subject to specified measures established in the negotiated peace deal. By sending troops around the nation and interacting with international forces, the TPLF pledged to uphold the FDRE's constitutional authority. The TPLF further promised not to assist or participate in any armed opposition. While the FDRE administration pledged to suspending all military operations against TPLF combatants, restoring critical services for Tigrayans, and allowing parliament to remove the TPLF's terrorist designation. According to Africa Union, (2022):

The [Pretoria] agreement marks an important step in efforts to silence the guns and provides a solid foundation for the preservation of Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the immediate cessation of hostilities, the resumption of unhindered humanitarian access, the restoration of services as well as healing and reconciliation.

The Pretoria accord, in the opinion of the African Union (AU), is a critical step in the right direction toward putting an end to gun violence and offers a strong framework for maintaining Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. A military pact known as the Declaration of the Senior Commanders on the Modalities for the Implementation of the deal for Lasting Peace, which was signed on November 12 in Nairobi, Kenya, served as further support for the peace deal (Akamo & Fisseha, 2023). The advantages of the peace

reached in Pretoria for Ethiopia and the parties involved in the war are emphasized in this supplemental agreement. The realization of the African Union's goal to "silence the guns" and highlight the significance of "African solutions to African problems" is a noteworthy accomplishment (Gebresenbet & Tariku, 2023a). Gebresenbet & Tariku, (2023a) contend that in addition to examining AU officials at a higher level, an analysis of the AU's role in the negotiated peace process should consider the early envoy nomination process and Olusegun Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy. The United States and the AU-led team were instrumental in enabling the negotiated peace (Akamo & Fisseha, 2023). Nonetheless, there are still issues with the CoHA and the negotiated peace. According to Abbink, (2023), in order for the peace process to be completely successful, three important concerns must be resolved:

- **Inadequate Disarmament of the TPLF:** The TPLF did not completely give up its weapons or abandon all the territory they had taken. The TPLF is also making an effort to regain control over the people of Tigray. Concerns over the TPLF's commitment to the peace process and the likelihood of more hostilities are raised by this partial disarmament.
- **Lack of stability and ongoing armed insurgencies:** Long-term peace and stability in the northern area are still unattainable. An important question is still how the subversion of the TPLF is related to other military insurgencies like the Oromo Liberation Army. The continuous unrest jeopardizes regional security as a whole and weakens efforts at peace.
- **Insufficient Rehabilitative Measures for Tortured Citizens:** There has been a lack of resolute action taken toward the rehabilitation of victims in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray. A great deal of the conflict's victims are still suffering from its effects, and the process of rapprochement and community reconstruction is hampered by the absence of adequate rehabilitation programs. In conclusion, even though Ethiopia

and the parties involved in the conflict have benefited much from the Pretoria Accord and it has set the foundation for peace, resolving the remaining issues and securing the continuous commitment of all parties are necessary for the agreement to reach its potential. Implementing the agreement's provisions effectively and resolving the important problems raised by Abbink, (2023) are prerequisites for the negotiated peace to succeed.

### **Concluding remarks**

By using the violence in Tigray as a case study and the ensuing post-conflict negotiated peace in Pretoria, the paper seeks to analyze negotiated peace in Africa. The essay has examined several contentious topics, such as the relationship between conflict and its consequences, reporting on conflicts, the impact of conflicts, and the negotiated peace that followed. We contend that the Pretoria peace agreement benefitted Ethiopia generally and the two main warring parties specifically, notwithstanding the discussions and debates centered on the conflict in general and the negotiated peace that followed. The TPLF's attacks and diplomatic retreats called into question Ethiopia's territorial integrity, which the Pretoria Accord helped to assure. Through their agreement to a cessation of hostilities, both parties made it possible to restore vital services and humanitarian aid, thereby improving the lives of those affected by the fighting. Relief has come for the people of Tigray, who have endured much suffering from the continuous bloodletting and military incursions. In addition, the negotiated peace by the African Union (AU) and their partners has achieved a great deal. The success of this agreement shows the worth of "African solutions to African problems," which highlights the role of regional institutions in solving conflicts. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo utilized shuttle diplomacy to bridge differences among the warring parties for the long-lasting accord.

According to Salemot & Matshanda (2023), this diplomatic effort that was supported by the US was key in the negotiations of the peace deal. While the article acknowledges the success stories above, it also points out that CoHA is yet to be fully implemented

and that Tigray is yet to witness true peace. There are still issues to be resolved, especially the occupied territories and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of fighters. These unsolved challenges stand as major obstacles to the long-term stability and peace of the region. Despite these obstacles, the research argues that, when analyzed from the perspective of our suggested “minimalist + politics,” the peace that the CoHA negotiated is successful. This perspective prioritizes immediate, tangible gains such as security from bodily harm and the cessation of open hostilities, which are key components of what is referred to as “negative peace.” Unlike positive peace, which involves addressing deeper structural issues and creating a sustainable peace, negative peace is characterized by the absence of explicit violence and fighting. Although tremendous strides have been made with the Pretoria Preserving and expanding upon the gains achieved so far will need continued international support and efficient execution of the agreement’s provisions.

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## **Contested borders and national security: understanding the India-China tensions**

**Rakhee Viswambharan & Karthik Suresh**

### **ABSTRACT**

Though the border dispute has held great significance in India-China relations over the past 62 years, it has not hindered broader interaction between these two major international players, particularly in the post-Cold War era. China's economic growth and India's democratic polity have drawn the attention of many developed and developing nations. However, China's human rights record remains a contentious issue in international politics, especially within the neo-liberal framework of the post-Cold War period. It is in the interest of both India and China to resolve the border dispute amicably through mutual trust and confidence-building measures. A zero-sum approach by either side in settling the border dispute would provide external powers with an opportunity to exploit the volatile situation in the region, to the detriment of the security of both nations. The growing interaction between India, the United States, and Japan, while not explicitly targeting any country, disrupts China's unchallenged dominance in Asia. If China's communist leadership recognizes the urgency of addressing domestic and regional concerns—such as resolving the Tibetan struggle for genuine autonomy within the People's Republic of China (PRC) and reaching a border settlement with India along the McMahon Line - it would not only heal the wounds of the 1962 war but also provide a permanent solution to the Tibetan issue. These steps would enable China to focus more effectively on domestic challenges, including human rights violations, while enhancing its overall security. Notably, China has amicably resolved border disputes with countries such as Russia, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. This paper aims to examine the India-China border dispute from a security perspective.

**Keywords:** *Tibet, border dispute, human rights, post-Cold War, zero-sum game.*

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## Introduction

The strategic significance of the Himalayan region lies in the fact that the boundaries of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and Myanmar converge. In addition, the area is the source of water for nearly half of the world population. The region is inhabited by people of Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic faiths. This ethnic-religious mix makes the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region prone to conflict and external interventions. The Himalayan region had witnessed many major land-frontier disputes. Since 1947, India and Pakistan are locked in a conflict over Kashmir. The seven-decade old India–China border dispute remains unresolved and the Tibetan peaceful struggle for right to self-determination (UNESCO 1989) continues unabated.

This paper argues that Tibet is central to the India-China border problem and border dispute is the major security issue in the Himalayan region. The dispute can be resolved by China accepting Tibet's right to self-determination. Prior to Tibet's annexation by China in 1951 India and China did not have a common border. The restoration of buffer zone between India and China is essential to border settlement between the two countries and the security of the region. India maintained good relations with Tibet during the British period. However, with the signing of the India-China agreement of 1954 and the subsequent recognition of Tibet as the integral part of China, India forfeited many of the trading rights and diplomatic privileges that it enjoyed in Tibet.

Moreover, India's stand on the Tibetan issue at the United Nations (UN) in the 1950s, adversely affected the prospects of the UN intervention in the Tibet. India's idealist approach neither helped solve the Tibetan imbroglio nor did it aid the resolution of border dispute and thereby India's core security issues. In fact, India's idealism was reciprocated by realist policy of China which resulted in India-China war of 1962. However, despite the lingering Tibet and border dispute, the two most populous nations of the world have enhanced their economic engagements in the post-Cold War globalization era. The emergence of nontraditional threats to

national security has also necessitated greater cooperation between the two.

### **The Tibetan issue**

The unresolved Tibetan issue is a challenge as well as an opportunity to enhanced India - China relations. The issue is embedded in the history of Tibetan nationalism and Tibet-China relations, which can be divided into four main periods. (Smith 1996; Goldstein 1989; Grunfeld 1987). The first phase from 630 to 842 represents the beginning of the consolidation of the Tibetan state and its consequent fall in 842. In the post fall phase, political unity continued to elude Tibet till mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, when Tibetan Lamas established a political—spiritual relationship known as ‘cho-yon’ or ‘priest-patron’ relationship with the Mongol empire. From 1260 to 1368 and then again from 1644 to 1911, Tibet remained a dependent state under the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Ching dynasties respectively. From 1368 to 1644, Tibet was independent of Ming dynasty of China. During the second phase, Tibet was under the direct rule of China for a short span of three years from 1911-14.

In the third phase (1914-50) Tibet had experienced an upsurge of, nationalism, which was stimulated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the British imperialist interference and in Tibet and Chinese attempt to impose direct control over it. However, during this phase with the British assistance Tibet managed to enjoy de-facto independence, devoid of international legitimacy.

In the fourth period (1950 to the present) Tibetan independence was forcibly eliminated. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) annexed Tibet in the 1950 under the garb of ‘peaceful liberation’ from ‘imperialist forces’. Tibet was forced to sign a ‘17-Point Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet’ with China in 1951. The agreement brought the Tibetan national identity under stress as it paved the way for China to impose ‘socialist transformation’ of Tibetan society. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), the Tibetan culture was once again subjected to intense assimilationist pressure. However, after 1980,

Tibetan culture and nationalism revived. During this phase Tibetans gained international support for right to self-determination (Smith 1996).

The great power game was well visible in Tibet from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1904 the British troops entered Tibet and forced China to sign an agreement. This British move was inspired by Viceroy Lord Curzon's perception regarding the Russian moves in Central Asia and in particular Tibet. However, the Britain did not approve the invasion of Tibet and the Chinese suzerainty was restored. The 1907 convention by Russia, China and British-India approved the Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. In the 1914 Shimla convention Tibet attended as an independent entity along with British India and China. The convention resulted in drawing the Mc Mahon line that demarcated the border between India and Tibet. There is difference of opinion regarding the Chinese approval to the final outcome. However, given the weak power position of China at that times it had only limited option.

It is important to note that Tibet was never formally recognized by the League of Nations or the United Nations. However, between 1913-51 Tibet had an independent government, currency, army, judicial and postal systems. Furthermore, the Tibetan government enjoyed formal bilateral relations with the neighboring countries such as Mongolia, Nepal, India, and Bhutan, and concluded treaties with China and Britain. The Tibetan claim that they have every right to self-determination as China had illegally occupied their territory in the name of 'peaceful liberation of Tibet'. The Chinese annexation of Tibet, in fact, eliminated the long existed buffer zone from the region and a common border was formed between India and China. When two equally powerful nations based on nationalist feeling emerged and they share a contested common border both nations try to resolve the border issues through a zero sum game. It appears that the denial of autonomy to the Tibetan people by the communist China further worsened the India – China relations.

## **Tibet and India-China border dispute**

It appears that there are four major factors which form Tibet and India - China Border Dispute:

- (i) Tibet's Status
- (ii) Tibetan refugees in India
- (iii) Common Security Concerns
- (iv) Tibet in India - China border dispute

### **(i) Tibet's status**

Independent India had shown less interest in Tibet. However, when the PLA entered Tibet, India deplored the invasion of 26 October 1950, the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, told the Chinese foreign office how it looked at the event that "In the context of world events, invasion by Chinese troops of Tibet cannot but be regarded as deplorable and in the considered judgment of the Government of India, not in the interest of China or peace." (Mehrotra, 2000:14)

Again on 7 December 1950 the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru reiterated India's stand in the Parliament:

It is not right for any country to talk about its sovereignty or suzerainty over an area outside its own immediate range. That is to say, since Tibet is not the same as China, it should ultimately be the wishes of the people of Tibet that should prevail and not any legal or constitutional arguments — the last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and of nobody else (Mehrotra 2000:14) The then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru's statement well reflected India's stand on right of the people for self-determination.<sup>1</sup>

After initial support for Tibet's claim for self-determination, the Indian stance on the issue changed in the wake of Indo - China bilateral agreement of 1954, known as Panchasheel.<sup>2</sup> As per the agreement India had accepted China's claim on Tibet. On 29 April 1954, India agreed to the Chinese insistence on referring to Tibet

as ‘Tibet Region of China’. Though India did not provide any direct support to the Tibetans right to self-determination when it was taken up at the UN General Assembly in 1958, it did provide political asylum to Dalai Lama and his followers in 1959.

## **(ii) Tibetan refugees in India**

India had provided political asylum to Dalai Lama and over 80,000 Tibetans refugees. India’s consistent official policy has been to disallow anti-Chinese activities by Tibetan refugees on Indian soil. However, India has allowed the Tibetans to run a government-in-exile, the Central Tibetan Administration. So long as the exiled community stays in India, Tibetan nationalism and the demand for self-determination will remain a major apprehension for PRC. (Suresh R. 2011; 246) India has refused to reduce or suspend its support to Tibetan refugees in India. This is one of the major irritants in India – China relations. The Chinese complain that such open encouragement and support given by the government of India to the Tibetan in their ‘anti - China activities’ constitute interference in China’s internal affairs and harms the progress of India - China relations. However, an independent Tibet as a buffer state between the two would ensure India’s security.

## **(iii) Common security concerns**

It appears that Tibet is an extremely important factor in security paradigm of both India and China. Since its geopolitical position has impacted it between two great powers, it has to be dependent on either China or India, having no other choice. Tibet has always had a high degree of spiritual identification with India. The Republican Chinese officials way back in 1910 expressed similar assessments when they stated: ‘Tibet is a buttress on our national frontiers – the hand, as it were, which protects the face – and its prosperity or otherwise is of the most vital importance to China’.

India has its reciprocal fears arising from Chinese military presence in the Tibetan plateau.<sup>3</sup> The true extent of China’s military presence in Tibet cannot be gauged, given the extreme secrecy surrounding information about the PLA. The presence of Chinese strategic forces on the Tibetan plateau adds another

dimension to India's China threat perception. Again China's management of water resources emanating from Tibet, which feed the Indian subcontinent, also features in Indian security conceptions. The historical memory and sense of betrayal and humiliation on account of the 1962 war that continues to disturb India and casts a shadow over Indian perceptions of China.

In essence, the complex of security concerns connected to Tibet underpins the strategic rivalry between these two major Asian players, India and China. Consequently, the China and India have common security concerns that are connected to Tibet. These issues can be well addressed only through mutual trust and confidence building measures. Though there are mechanisms to resolve the border dispute amicably since 1988 through the joint working group (JWG), little progress has been reported so far. Meanwhile the external powers exploit the conflicting situation to their advantage through various overt and covert moves.

#### **(iv) Tibet in India – China border dispute**

The border dispute continues to elude resolution ever since India and China have acquired a common border when the PRC occupied the Tibetan plateau in 1950-51. The historical roots of the India-China border dispute can be traced to the imperial period when the great game between British India, Czarist Russia and Qing China over Tibet and Central Asia. Empires thrived on uncertain borders were more preferable to imperial powers as clearly demarcated borders constrained their own ambitions and strategic flexibility. In addition, the inhospitable terrain of the high Himalayas, the absence of sophisticated surveying technologies and existence of a functioning Tibetan state made the delimitation of India's northern border either unnecessary or difficult.

Nevertheless ultimately in the Shimla convention of 1914, in fact, made the border line between British India and Tibet. However, in the mid-20th century, when two equally nationalistic and territorial states gained control over the India and China, the latter was not ready to accept the British proposed Mc Mahon line. This stand of China was well reflected especially after the signing of the 'India–

China Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India' (April 29, 1954) in which India for the first time accepted Tibet as a part of China. On the Indian side Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru at the time of signing of Panchasheel agreement thought that the boundary was no longer an issue, and that the Chinese have accepted the historical status quo.

The Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote of this to the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in 1958 when the border issue heated up:

When the Sino-Indian Agreement in regard to the Tibet region of China was concluded, various outstanding problems, including some relating to our border trade, were considered.... No border questions were raised at that time and we were under the impression that there were no border disputes between our respective countries. In fact we thought that the Sino-Indian Agreement, which was happily concluded in 1954, had settled all outstanding problems between our countries.<sup>4</sup> He had also expressed shock at seeing maps printed in China showing certain 'Indian' areas to be part of China.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the India - China border problem is embedded on Tibet as China had no border with India except through Tibet and India's border with Tibet was a well-settled border negotiated at the Shimla conference of 1914. Therefore, it appears that a solution to the Indo-China border problem lays in the Tibetan claim for the right to self-determination.

### **India-China border dispute: proposals for peaceful settlement**

Among various proposals put forward to settle the Tibet issue and India - China border dispute the Dalai Lama's five-point peace plan for Tibet, known as the Strasbourg Proposal of June 1988 assumes great significance. The proposal called for the transformation of "the whole of Tibet, including the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo," into a zone of peace and nonviolence. The establishment of a peace zone "would be in keeping with Tibet's historical role" as a "buffer state separating

the continent's great powers.” Dalai Lama explained the relevance of Strasbourg Proposal:

Historically, relations between China and India were never strained. It was only when Chinese armies marched into Tibet, creating for the first time a common border that tensions arose between the two powers, ultimately leading to the 1962 war. Since then, numerous dangerous incidents have continued to occur. A restoration of good relations between the world's two most populous countries would be greatly facilitated if they were separated-as they were throughout history-by a large and friendly buffer region.<sup>6</sup>

It appears that the proposal that Tibet should become a buffer region is almost identical to the Indian government's proposal for the demilitarization of Tibet, an idea India toyed with prior to independence. (Zhao 1996:255) After independence, India advocated this idea until the 'liberation of Tibet' by the PLA in 1951. However, the Dalai Lama's call for the establishment of a peace zone or demilitarization of Tibet has failed to draw a positive response from the Chinese government, to which it was addressed. A demilitarized buffer zone along the Indo-China border would have brought peace in the region. It is also argued that such a demilitarized buffer zone would have accelerated the bilateral interaction between the two major Asian powers, India and China. However, the Tibetan proposal was long rejected by the Chinese communist leadership.

Recently India and China met at Beijing to strengthen coordination mechanisms along the disputed border including the on the ground implementation of a border defence agreement aimed at formalizing patrolling and minimizing the occurrence of incidents along the disputed borders. The meeting had explored into the ways and approaches to safeguard peace and tranquility in the border areas. The meeting was the sixth round of the working mechanism which was set up in 2012 with the objective of cross ministerial platform focusing on the ground issues in the border areas. However, it appears that all these efforts fails to achieve

anything concrete towards the settlement of border dispute mainly due to the fact that once China accepts the Mc Mahon line between India and China its claim on Tibet would further diminish. This is mainly because the acceptance of British negotiated Mc Mahon line by China is tantamount to accepting the independent status of Tibet.

Thus it appears that Tibet has shaped the informal and invisible dynamics of India - China relations and politics from 1950 to the present. Tibet is also the legal foundation on which both India's and China's border claims rest. It is important to note that China had amicably settled all border claims with Russia, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Again, China had long ago settled its territorial dispute with Myanmar along the Mc Mahon line.

It appears that in the post-cold war period any further delay on the part of China to resolve the border dispute with India would be detrimental to China on two counts. Firstly, it provides an opportunity to strengthen the bounds of India – US – Japan relations. Such an alliance, especially in the context of prevailing South China Sea and East China Sea disputes act against the China's interest. Secondly, the alliance of world's largest democracy and world's most powerful military power and powerful economic power with a strong democratic system would pose a major challenge to communist regime in China. Any kind of strong bonds of friendship among these three major players appears to pose internal as well as external threat to the survival of the present communist regime in China.

In such a situation the viable option before China is to set its own house in order, both within China as well as in Asia. The acceptance of Tibetan demand for autonomy within PRC and non-zero sum amicable settlement of the border dispute with India along the Mc Mahon line would not only improve the image of China in the comity of nations but also enhance its security. Further the post-cold war blurred boundary between human security and national security on the one hand and national security

and international security on the other hand also emphasize the imperatives of pacific settlement of border disputes.

It is important to note that the existence of the liberal economic system and an authoritarian political system led to various internal contradictions within China. Similarly the coercive methods adopted to enforce law and order, without protection and promotion of the basic human rights of the citizens, in the age of information and communication technology appears to pose a major threat to the survival of the present Chinese communist regime. The disintegration of the Russian Communist regime after 70 years of its existence also shows that there are limits to any regime to rule by force and denial of basic freedom of individuals to a longer period. The communist regime in China will complete 70 years of its coercive rule by 2019. The universal quest for democracy, human rights and global economic integration along with ICT would sweep any regimes that fail to maintain basic human freedom. It appears that any further failure on the part of present communist regime in China to initiate political reforms commensurate with the economic reforms would be detrimental to the survival of the present communist regime in China. Concomitantly the suppression of ethnic minorities aspiration for self-determination appears to spell doom on the present communist regime in China. All these factors point towards an imminent transition to democratic system in China and pacific settlement of the Tibetan issue and the India - China border dispute. Once Tibet regains its historical position as a buffer state between India and China the security issues in the Himalayan region cease to exist.

## Notes

1. Tibet is not a province of China. It is different from China proper. We recognize that and, therefore, we consider it to be an autonomous region of the Chinese State. The Chinese people are called the Han people. The Tibetans are not Hans. The Tibetans are Tibetans. See the transcript of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru press conference held on 4 April 1959 in New Delhi.

2. (i) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) mutual non-aggression (iii) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (iv) equality and mutual benefit; and (v) peaceful co-existence.
3. Chinese irredentism and communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of the Western powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial national or historical claims. The danger from the North and North-East, therefore becomes both communist and imperialist. See the Letter from Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru New Delhi 7 November 1950
4. Notes, Memoranda and letters Exchanged and Agreements signed between The Governments of India and China White Paper III, MEA, Government of India, New Delhi.
5. Indian Parliament on Issue of Tibet, Lok Sabha Debates 1952 -2005, Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre, New Delhi, 2006.
6. See 'Strasbourg Peace Proposal', Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, India, 2013.

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## Kautilya's legacy in a multipolar world: India's strategic path to 2047

Bhawna Sharma

### ABSTRACT

Interstate relations have great significance through the ages in our civilization. Even in Ramayana and Mahabharata there is concept of *doot*, which can be traced from ancient time as a synonym to the contemporary concept of ambassador. In Indian philosophy priority is given to *Purusharthas: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha* in respective order so to behave morally is very important, but when the question of state security arises then political pragmatism is adopted. Ancient Indian political thinker Kautilya; who was the intellectual guardian, teacher, guide and philosopher of Chandragupta Maurya; during their tenure they protected region from foreign invaders and unified large part of the country. The Arthashastra treatise by Kautilya rooted in Indian subcontinent; needs to revisit so we can get insights from distilled noted wisdom. It enriches our thinking and expand our feeling of pride to indigenous political wisdom. The Arthashastra which is the science of statecraft may help India to attain rightful place of *Vishva Guru* in the world. The intention to tap Arthashastra is to investigate scientifically and analyse the interstate relations described in it. For this the methodology of content analysis of sources is adopted. In contemporary scenario the character of warfare has changed but the essential nature still continues. These days nations are not interested in waging wars but judicious amalgamation of hard and soft power may bring into existence smart power.

**Keywords:** *Kautilya, Arthashastra, Interstate relations and Statecraft.*

### Introduction

The predicament of Bharat prior to 325 BC was met with an immaculate diagnosis by the mighty Kautilya in the form of his prescription called the Arthashastra. This meticulous and comprehensive pharmacopoeia will sure serve as a panacea for all

the maladies of Bharat in 2047. Kautilya's "Arthashastra" is one of the unique paths breaking magnum opus on statecraft. His book "Arthashastra" has a broader scope, with 15 books, 150 chapters and 180 topics. This is relevant for rulers who wish to run an effective government. Among different topics dealt in this diplomacy and war, including military strategies are the two concepts which are treated in most detail. Kautilya, the ancient Indian political thinker is the intellectual forerunner of Realism. One of the key subject matters of "Arthashastra" is; it is Power and Power alone which, only when exercised by the king with impartiality and in proportion to guilt either over his son or his enemy, maintains both this world and the next. The Just and the victorious king administers justice in accordance with *Dharma* (established Laws), *Samstha* (Customary law), *Nyaya* (edicts, announced law) and *Vyavahara* (evidence and Conduct) (Shukla, 2019, xxxiii).

Vedic Literature is the main source for the study of ancient Indian political ideas and institutions. The History of the tradition of Indian politics is as old as *Vedas*. Politics was known in the early Smritis and Puranas as *Dandaniti*, whose content was a crystallization of Arthashastra and Dharma Sastra tradition (Rao, 1979, p.1). Kautilya bases his Arthashastra not only on the texts of polity that were available during his time but also on the experience and knowledge he had acquired by personal observation and study of political phenomena and institutions (Rao, 1979, p.4). Kautilya's Arthashastra was rediscovered in 1905 by Rudrapatna Samasastri, who was a Sanskrit scholar and librarian at the Oriental Research Institute Mysore. He published Arthashastra in 1909 and its first English translation was published in 1915 so we can say that it came under observation in 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was an efficacious moment in tracing roots of indigenous knowledge. Since then, Arthashastra becomes a very popular text and it is taught not only in political science but also in history, public administration, economics, sociology, ethics, commerce, management, laws, Sanskrit, defence and strategic studies and so on; this indicates the richness of content in Arthashastra. Kautilya a brilliant strategist; scientifically

articulates the process of strategic and intelligence appreciation first time in the Indian strategic thought (Thakur, 2021, p.108).

This treatise was believed to be composed around the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE, but still having great relevance the reason being although after the treaty of Westphalia, state becomes sovereign and state-system has been changed; but the nature of states is still same; second thing is that Kautilya was a professor of political science at the Takshashila University of ancient India, and later the mentor and chief minister of emperor Chandragupta Maurya who ruled over the mighty Indian empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In present times, India being a rising superpower can draw its strategic dimensions from Arthashastra moreover; security and development are inherently interlinked in globalized world. We confidently accept its pertinence to present scenario. Henry Kissinger's characterization of the Arthashastra as "a practical guide to action" highlights its enduring influence on political strategy and statecraft as it provides a detailed and pragmatic approach to governance, power, and diplomacy (Bhatia, 2016). Kautilya gives organic theory of State. He also believes in divine origin theory and according to him the prime objective of state is "Yogkshema". Which is interpreted as divine provision for attainment of balanced needs of spirituality and worldly requirement. As according to Upanisadic philosophy an individual is having different sheaths which is; "panchkosaya manava". The seven constituent elements or prakrits of State are Svamin/King, Amatya, Janapada / Rashtra, Durga / Pura, Kosa, Danda / Bala and Mitra. They are arranged in descending order of importance. Each succeeding element is less important than the one before it. According to Kautilya defense of state is the responsibility of the ruler and Mitra also known as ally; whose quality and quantity determines the state's position in the political world. Means Mitra is considered as the vital force so "political isolation means death". It means State is at risk or may have to face negative consequences when it becomes isolated from global diplomatic, economic and political network. because of this many times we read about diplomatic sanctions, trade restriction, non-recognised territories in UN, in such scenario the isolated state may lose its ability to shape the global scenario. We can say

political economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) factors are used for strategy formulation. We cannot imagine a nation-state having no such interaction in globalized world. Kautilya in his Arthashastra used the word “state policy” instead of “foreign policy”. Among fifteen books almost nine books deal with international relations. These books are from book six to fourteen which are titled as:

- The Circle of Kings as the Basic
- The Six Measures of Foreign Policy
- Concerning the Topic of Calamities
- The Activity of King about to March
- Concerning War
- Policy towards Oligarchies
- Concerning the Weaker King
- Means of Taking a fort
- Concerning Secret Practices (Kangle, 1972).

King's status determines his foreign policy. That policy varies according to whether it is directed toward kings who are superior, inferior or equal to him (Modelsky, 2013). Three main policy comes under state policy and these are -

- Four *Upayas*
- The Six-Fold Policy or *Sadhgunya*
- The Mandala theory or Rajamandala or Circle of States

These are the means of overcoming opposition means they are powerful techniques. Four *Upayas* are one of the major objects of diplomacy. *Upayas* have a wider application as they are useful for securing the submission of anyone. They can be used in both domestic and external politics. These are

- *Sama*
- *Dana*
- *Bheda*
- *Danda*

*Sama* is the general attitude of friendliness and persuasion. It is the way of polite argument, approach-based reason, interest and

loyalty. It is the method of reconciliation without aggression and in mutual respect. *Dana* implies monetary considerations which may include agreement involving loss, limitation of interest, withdrawal to the other party in exchange for gaining one's objects. Kautilya recommends that policies of *Sama*, *Dana* should be applied to the inferior kings. *Bheda* means sowing dissention or the policy of divide and rule. It is an important instrument of diplomacy through which even a strong king can be brought under subjection. According to him there are different means of sowing the seeds of disputes and conflicts. Such as by instigating and anyone of the neighboring kings, a scion of enemy's family. *Danda* means use of force if first three methods fail then *Vijigishu* should follow the policy of *Danda*. *Danda* when awarded in right manner becomes positive and helps the people as well as the states but if it is inflicted whimsically, it creates negative results. These four *Upayas* can be used alone or in combination of one or more than one. Depending on the circumstances Kautilya permits taking recourse of these modes singly or cumulatively. The success gained by resorting to one or more of these modes respectively as the single, double, triple or the fourfold success in accordance with the number of modes applied.

These are the four pillars of strategic policy and we usually witness *Sama*, *Dana*, *Bheda*, and *Danda* also many times in contemporary scenario. *Sama* and *Dana* such as inviting leaders of different countries and exchange of gifts between them or releasing fund during disaster or sending medical aid, formation of alliances and signing treaties. *Bheda* is usually practice by nations in the name of religion or nationalism in different rival countries but nation states do not talk much about in these contexts. But every country has their own intelligence system to support these *Upayas* such as in south Asia:

- Afghanistan: National Directorate of Security (NDS)
- Bangladesh: National Security Intelligence (NSI)
- China: Ministry of State Security (MSS)
- India: Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)
- Maldives: Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)

- Nepal: National Investigation Department (NID)
- Pakistan: Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)
- Sri Lanka: State Intelligence Service (SIS)

*Danda* is in the form of blockade, putting sanctions, taking back the status of most favored nations, interventions, boycotts, retaliation and the extreme form of *Danda* is war and aggression, although, they have been declared illegal means but in the contemporary scenario these are still continue in use we are witnessing this in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, Philistine and many more. K.M. Panikkar highlighted two dictums of the Arthashastra which are of great relevance. First and foremost is What produces unfavourable result is bad policy. Which clearly means policies, actions or decisions that creates unexpected results are bad and which creates desired or positive results are considered good policy. That indicates diplomacy is not concerned with ideals but with achieving practical results for the state. So, state may deviate from idealism for the sake of communication, negotiation, intelligence gathering, image management, and policy implementation. Second When advantages to be derived from peace and war are equal one should prefer peace, because war inflicts loss of power and wealth. Similarly, if the disadvantages to be derived from neutrality and war are equal one should prefer neutrality. So, to do better in diplomacy requires introspection, which make necessary a deeper understanding of Kautilya and the relevance of his distilled recorded wisdom of a number of centuries warfare and diplomacy (Gautam, 2013).

### **The Six-Fold Policy or *Sadhgunya***

The Six-Fold Policy or *Sadhgunya* it is mainly concern with foreign policy based upon the status of the actor (Modelski, 1964, p.553). It is the cornerstone of his analysis. Kautilya wishes to create a strong state with the power of dominance over the other states. The Six-Fold Policy or *Sadhgunya* determines the relation of states with one another. It is the fundamental philosophy of war which determines the victory or defeat of the king. Kautilya has advised *Vijigishu* to adhere to any of these modes, as warranted by

circumstances. “The welfare of state depends on an active foreign policy. The king who understands the interdependence of the six methods of foreign policy; plays as he pleases, with other rulers bound to him by the chains of his intellect.” (Rangarajan, 2000, p.564). Under this Six-Fold Policy Kautilya gave six key words for each policy

- *Sandhi*
- *Vigraha*
- *Asana*
- *Yana*
- *Sansarya*
- *Dvaidhibhava*

Kautilya’s description of foreign policy is grounded on the statement that peace is preferable to war. The *Sandhi* means making peace by entering into an agreement with specific conditions with another ruler if that ruler is stronger than him. He speaks that ‘non-intervention, negotiating a peace treaty and making a peace by giving a hostage, all mean the same thing’. The aim of peace may include different objectives. It is non- aggression strategic partnership. It can be of various types relating to the army, wealth and territory. The elaboration of various types of Sandhi’s listed by Kautilya reflects his considerable attention to the problem of distinguishing between types of unequal political partnership. Broadly, Kautilya classified various kinds of Sandhi into two groups *Kal Sandhi* and *Sthavar Sandhi*. As the name suggests that *Kal Sandhi* is temporary alliance or short duration treaty and *Sthavar Sandhi* means permanent alliance or long duration treaty. In the present times also, we witness different kinds of treaties, alliances, groupings. These treaties can be bilateral or multilateral may be for short duration or long duration may be regarding political, economic or strategic issues. But now a days; after treaty of Westphalia and establishment of U.N. the treaties can also be between the nations of equal powers.

Kautilya mainly focuses on diplomacy rather than direct entry into the war. If the objectives are not achieved through *Sandhi* than

**Vigraha** should be adopted. It is hostility, which includes any damage to the enemy. It is to be adopted when both the kings are equal in power spectrum. It has an offensive as well as defensive purpose. It is categorised into three classes "*Prakash Yuddha*" or open war, "*Kuta Yuddha*" or secret war and "*Tusnim Yuddha*" or undeclared war. Open war is fighting at a specified time and place. Secret war means terrorizing, sudden assault, threatening in one direction while attacking in another, without specifying time or place, when an enemy is suffering from a disaster or misfortune. Undeclared war is using spy system and occult practices against the enemy (Rangarajan, 2000, p.596).

**Asana** denotes the position where the rival kings stand alert for opening charge. Kautilya's policy of Asana appears linked to the present-day realistic approach that the states are in war or either in preparation of war. Being indifferent to a situation is staying quiet. When a king considers that neither he nor his enemy can harm the other, he shall remain quiet. Extending one's own power is preparing for war. A king with special advantages shall make preparations for war. This can be called the transition phase. *Asana* is different from the policy of non-involvement. It is to wait and watch and act accordingly.

**Yana** means execution of military campaign; as a part of six-fold policy Kautilya explained it in book seventh titled "The Six Measures of Foreign Policy" but in detail this *Yana* is discussed in ninth book titled "Concerning War". This reflects the significance of this in interstate relations along with this, it is totally irreversible step. It is to be adopted when the benefits of waging war are more than using other methods and the constituent elements of state are strong enough and there is increase in potential of state. So, the King who possessed necessary means shall march against his enemy. In modern times entering into war means failing of diplomacy and more stress is on peace promotion through balance of power, international law, international morality, world public opinion, international organizations, collective security, disarmament and arms control, united nations, use of peaceful

means of conflict resolution and diplomacy. When all these fails nations enter into wars.

*Sansarya* is seeking the protection, when threatened, of a stronger king or taking refuge in a fort. If the king is devoid of strength to defend himself shall seek the protection of another. It is usually adopted when the king is very weak. According to Kautilya friendship with a more powerful monarch carries great danger for kings, except when one is actually at war with an enemy. A king shall seek the protection of one who is stronger than the neighbouring enemy. A king should seek the help of a king who loves him rather than a king who is loved by him (Rangarajan, 2000, p.602). We see such policy adoption in present times also as in August 2022 Afghan President Ashraf Ghani took refuge in the United Arab Emirates, December 2024 Bashar Al Assad took refuge in Russia, August 2024 Sheikh Hasina, along with her sister took shelter in India.

*Dvaidhibhava* is the last option in the six-fold policy. It is the strategy of dual policy, the policy of making peace with a neighbouring king in order to pursue, with his help, the policy of hostility towards another. It is mainly the combination of *Sandhi* and *Vigraha* at the same time. This we usually observe in the behaviour of Pakistan in south Asia.

In this way Kautilya suggested *Sadhgunya* policy without favouring a particular policy among the six. The policy which increases power and provides protection to the gained power is considered the appropriate one. This six-fold policy elicits the Indian strategic culture. Kautilya in his sixth book, chapter two titled “Concerning Peace and Activity” very well said that the source of peace and activity is the Six-Fold Policy. Decline, stability and advancement are the consequences of the Six-Fold Policy. (Kangle, 1972, p.336).

### **The Mandala theory or Rajamandala or circle of states**

The Mandala theory also known as “Rajamandala” or “Circle of States”. It could be described in short in modern times as the model of a loose bi-centric international system (Modelski, 1964,

p.554). Where the global dynamics is shaped by two powerful, but not entirely dominant, centres of influence with interactions marked by flexibility, competition, and cooperation rather than rigid or centralized control. The mandala consists of twelve states and these are *Vijigishu*, *Ari*, *Mitra*, *Arimitra*, *Mitramitra*, *Arimitramitra*, *Parsnigraha*, *Akranda*, *Parsnigrahasara*, *Akrandasara*, *Madhyama* and *Udasina*.

*Vijigishu* is the king who wish for the victory and having excellent personal qualities, resources and constituents of his state, follows good policies. It is in the centre of "Circle of States". *Ari* (the enemy), *Mitra* (ally of *Vijigishu*), *Arimitra* (ally of *Ari*), *Mitramitra* (ally of *Mitra*), *Arimitramitra* (ally of *Arimitra*), These five states are in front of the *Vijigishu* state consecutively. At the rear side of *Vijigishu* four more states *Parsnigraha* (enemy of *Vijigishu* in rear side), *Akranda* (ally of *Vijigishu* in rear side), *Parsnigrahasara* (ally of *Parsnigraha*), *Akrandasara* (ally of *Akranda*). *Madhyama* (Middle King) and *Udasina* (Neutral King). The Middle king and the Neutral king are both outside the immediate circles of the conqueror and the enemy but powerful enough to influence the interaction between the two. It is also likely that, once the conqueror has subjugated his enemy, the Middle king may become the natural enemy, because of the common border. It is, therefore, in the conqueror's interest not to let the Middle king become too powerful. By and large the Neutral king is to be treated in the same way as the Middle king except for the fact that since he has no common borders with any, he is a bit remote from the scene of action. However, he is even more powerful than the conqueror, the enemy and the Middle king. (Rangarajan, 2000, p.676).

"Most people know little of what Kautilya actually said in the Arthashastra. The only thing they can recall is the 'mandala' theory, based on the principles: 'Every neighbouring state is an enemy and the enemy's enemy is a friend.' This popular view is not only simplistic but untrue." These lines are from the preface of the edited book "The Arthashastra" written in 1990 by L N Rangarajan. These lines are tested through R P Kangle's study. He

refers to Book Seven, Chapter 18 and Sutra 29. The neighbouring princes, *samantas*, may normally be supposed to be hostile. But it is possible that some may have a friendly feeling towards the *Vijigishu*, while others may even be subservient to him. Neighbouring states thus fall in three categories, *aribhavin*, *mitrabhavin* and *bhrytyabhavin* (Gautam, 2013, p.27). So, it is wrongly assumed that all neighbours are natural enemies. The neighbour can be of hostile temperament called *aribhavin*, or can be of friendly temperament called *mitrabhavin* or can be of brotherly temperament called *bhrytyabhavin*. The mandala theory has mainly two objectives; first and foremost, the national security and the second one is the national interest. Interstate relations are to be dealt cautiously. If interstate relations are ignored the state will soon fall prey to the conspiracy hatched by others. The solution is to remain vigilant and to treat the offence as the best defense. This establishes that the state is not only capable of defending itself but can also inflict damage on other states if need arises. According to Kautilya power and success both are important as Power is possession of strength whereas Success is obtaining happiness. Power is further classified in three-folds the power of knowledge, the power of the treasury and the power of might. (Kangle, 1972, p.338). *Madhyama* (Middle King) and *Udasina* (Neutral King) have different status in the Circle of States as they are two non-aligned powers. *Madhyama* occupies the territory close to *Vijigishu* and his immediate enemy. So, *Madhyama* is able to help both the kings whether they are at peace or at war or resisting either of them. On the other hand, *Udasina* or the neutral king who is situated beyond territory of either kings detached and very powerful. In this way, the core region in circle of the states is *Vijigishu*, *Ari*, *Madhyama* and *Udasina*. In the Circle of States, the grouping of *Vijigishu*, *Mitra*, *Mitra-Mitra* can be termed as friendship alliance system. In this way not more than three Kings who are each other's friend. So, when we draw parallel to it in modern times with international organisations or regional groupings, we say that; they are objective based alliances but not friendship alliances. In the Mandala, the proximity among different kings is established through both in an official and unofficial

manner, at official level through envoy and at unofficial level through spy system. These two institutions have pivotal role concerning the states internal as well as external security.

### Envoys

For the conduct of foreign policy, the coordination of diplomatic entities and the relevant due procedure is also of prime importance. Kautilya has gone into the details of appointment of envoys, their normal and specific duties and their privileges and exemptions. They are basically the spokesperson of the king. Kautilya categorised them in three groups in the order of merit respectively *Nisrishtarth*, *Parimitartha* and *Shasnahar*. Kautilya in his first book and sixteenth chapter regarding envoy mentioned that the appointment of envoy should be followed if choice of decision is there. "One endowed with the excellences of a minister is the plenipotentiary. One lacking in a quarter of the qualities is the envoy with a limited mission. One lacking in half the qualities is the bearer of a message" (Kangle, 1972, p.53). This shows that if a person is having less than half of the qualities of minister, he should not be appointed as envoy. Along with this *Nisrishtarth* is the envoy having all the qualities of being a minister and status equal to minister. *Parimitartha* is the envoy having three-fourth of the qualities of being a minister authorised to come to terms in a specified mode and *Shasnahar* is the envoy having three-fourth of the qualities of a minister and empowered to communicate political messages only.

### Spies

For the support of interstate relations Kautilya supports appointment of persons in secret service, we can also call spying agent. Kautilya is in favour of disseminating spies to have a constant surveillance among the friends, enemy, Madhyama, Udasina as well as among the high officers of each of those kings. Along with these types of spies and verification of the reports by spies is also needed. Regarding spies Kautilya in first book and eleventh chapter mentioned "With the body of ministers proved upright by means of secret tests, the king should appoint persons in

secret service, the sharp pupil, the apostate monk, the seeming householder, the seeming trader and the seeming ascetic, as well as the secret agent, the bravo, the poison giver and the begging nun. A pupil, knowing the secrets of others, and bold, is the sharp pupil. Encouraging him with money and honour”. (Kangle, 1972, p.36). Kautilya advises the king to develop his state by raising its resources and power. Concerning this, spy system plays an important role and is an essential element for the maintenance of internal security as well as for interstate affairs.

### Conclusion

Kautilya was not war maniac, what he suggested is for the security and progress of the state. He is more concerned to *Vijigishu* rather than international society. This made his remarkable similarity with realism; the power view of international politics. The core element of his prescription are statism, self-help and survival. Further he is more concerned with the end result, so end justifies the means. Much of his focus was on strategy rather than entering into war. One of the famous quotes from Arthashastra is that “the arrow shot by an archer may or may not kill a single person, but skilful intrigue devised by wise man, may kill even those who are in womb” (Kangle, 1972, p.857). We are indebted of Kautilya because of his detailed explanation of four *Upayas*, the Six-Fold Policy or *Sadhgunya* and the Mandala theory or Rajamandala or Circle of States which still enlightens us. Arthashastra is so rich that still it appears unexplored in dealing with contemporary security challenges. Kautilya’s foreign policy analysis have no parallel elsewhere.

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## India's quest for strategic autonomy in the changing geopolitical landscapes

**Binesh Bhatia, Naresh Kumar, Stanzin Namgail & Girish Chandra Bhatt**

### ABSTRACT

The existing global landscape has spotted multifaceted geopolitical tensions, regional conflicts and shifting power structures. Crises in the South China Sea, Taiwan, Ukraine and the Middle East present serious threats to both regional and global security. These disputes not only endanger national sovereignty and territorial integrity but also have far-reaching implications for global stability, trade and economic growth. The geopolitical order stands at a crossroads: rising powers are adopting increasingly assertive diplomatic strategies, while proponents of a status quo struggle to retain dominance. The geopolitics of global contestation in gaining merit are altering the balance of power struggle between the United States of America, the People's Republic of China and certainly The Russian Federation. Confidence-building measures are crucial to mitigate a viable and peaceful resolution to contemporary conflicts as research suggests. Since India gradually improves its position in the global order, it is bound to face the dilemmas of foreign policy choices. Confidence-building measures are essential for fostering viable, peaceful resolutions to contemporary conflicts, as highlighted by research. As India strengthens its position in the evolving global order, it faces complex foreign policy dilemmas. Despite these challenges, India plays a critical role in promoting peace-building and ensuring regional security, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond. The study underscores how protracted conflicts undermine multilateral democratic institutions and challenge state policy-making frameworks. By focusing on *Indian foreign policy* in this age of conflict, the paper seeks to analyse

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its decision-making processes and explore policy options that align with India's quest for strategic autonomy.

**Keywords:** *Geopolitics, Contemporary conflicts, Indian foreign policy, Strategic autonomy.*

## Introduction

With India's commitment to democracy, pluralism and its growing economic and military capabilities make it a vital player in the contemporary global affair. In the current geopolitical landscape, India navigates multi-aligned relationships with major powers including the United States, China and Russia while addressing regional security challenges such as terrorism and piracy. India has adopted an active and nuanced foreign policy which promotes peace and stability in the region. This multi-faceted approach involves diplomatic engagements, economic cooperation and strategic partnerships. Today the active geopolitical conflicts pose a direct challenge to Indian foreign policy on the global stage. The regional contest in the Indo-Pacific where Chinese dash lines in the South China Sea and East China Sea regions have created much anticipated difference of opinion (Henrich et al., 2010). The Russia-Ukraine conflict initiated by the Russians as of February 2022 (Demir, 2022). The ongoing Israel-Palestine crisis, a result of the October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas attacks reigniting the tensions in the Gaza and West Bank sectors and the loss of lives of the civilian population (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024). These conflicts have forced India to carefully choose its foreign policy decisions while maintaining its strategic autonomy, as balancing relationships with conflicting countries has become complex. In fact, Indians occasionally use the *Monroe Doctrine* (1823)<sup>1</sup> as a model for Indian foreign policy since they see their country as a benevolent hegemon in the Indian Ocean area. (Holmes, 2023). India's ability to maintain neutrality and engage in diplomatic dialogue with all parties is crucial in ensuring stability and peace in these conflict zones. By actively participating in international forums and advocating for peaceful resolutions, India continues to play a constructive role in addressing these global challenges (Narlikar, 2017). The Ukraine conflict presents

itself as a major obstacle to India's historic principle of neutrality and strategic autonomy as Western powers, including the U.S., repeatedly threatened India with sanctions for acquiring energy resources from Russia (Topchi, 2022). Despite mounting pressure, India is able to maintain its historical ties with the Russian Federation. It is a success for Indian foreign policy, measured by the fact that India has strengthened its partnerships with Western nations, who view Russia as the aggressor and support the Ukrainians with economic cooperation and critical arms supply. India's balancing act was also reflected in the United Nations, whereby, carefully abstaining from various voting procedures, it was able to maneuver striking a balance between both parties. The Indian government emphasised the need for peaceful dialogue and an end to the war, reiterating Prime Minister Modi's axiom of "*not an era of war*" (Roy, 2023). Prime Minister Modi is perhaps the only leader who met both President Zelenskyy and President Putin personally, and conveyed India's support for the peace settlement between the two countries (Peri, 2024). Further India and the state of Israel have enjoyed strong ties both on the diplomatic front and in the technological sphere. Although sharing similar interests in various domains, the Indian state has historically had a stance of favoring the two-state solution for peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, yet again complimenting its balance in the Middle Eastern region crucial for trade and energy imports (Alterman & Mohan, 2023). The terrorist attack executed by the Hamas group on Israel has questioned the neutral stance. India has shown solidarity with the civilians and the state of Israel condemning the act of terrorism. "We stood in solidarity with Israel at their moment of crisis, when they were facing these terror attacks" PM Modi said in addition to expressing his condolences for the deaths in the October 7 terror attack in Israel (UN Press, 2023). Towards the east, the South China Sea remains a critical zone of geopolitical tension particularly for India, as it navigates complex relationships with China and other regional players. India's balancing act in this region involves addressing territorial disputes, overlapping maritime claims and strategic interests of extra-regional powers. As India aligns its interests with Southeast

Asian nations, it aims to counterbalance China's assertiveness (Grossman, 2023). The increasing militarisation of the region and involvement of non-regional powers such as the United States, changes various dimensions in India's strategic calculus particularly emphasising the need for strategic partnerships to ensure regional stability (Paul, 2018).

### **Objective of the study**

To analyse contemporary geopolitical conflicts and India's contention for strategic autonomy.

### **Methodology**

The paper is based on qualitative research methodology using secondary data sources to analyse regional conflicts and their repercussions on global security. The present study has been divided into three sections focusing "Indo-Pacific region and the Taiwan dilemma, The Russia-Ukraine conflict and multi-alignment, and Navigating the troubled waters of the Israel-Palestine conflict" while examining India's foreign policy.

### **Indo-Pacific region and the Taiwan dilemma**

India was amongst the first countries in the world to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950. Despite the annexation of Tibet, a buffer between India and China, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru forged cordial relations with Beijing. In addition, New Delhi adopted the One-China policy in spite of the unfinished Chinese civil war resulting in the formation of Republic of China (ROC), prominently known as Taiwan (Gokhale, 2022). As per official standings of the Government of India, Taiwan is recognised under the One-China policy, but allegiance to the One-China policy started to wane in the beginning of the 21st century as the indications of difficulty on the Sino-Indian border appear to remain and the United States - India relations were improving steadily (Mohan, 2022). As of 2010, following the visit of then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, India discontinued this practice. This decision was rooted in India's dissatisfaction with China's issuance of 'stapled visas' rather than conventional visas for residents of Jammu and Kashmir

traveling to China (Mohan, 2010). Taiwan is in the midst of the Indo-Pacific's power politics contest as the People's Republic of China and the United States aim for dominance in regional geopolitics. India aims for significant influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and wants to be a net security provider in the region (Singh, 2021). This leverage major choke points and thus crucial in the context of growing Chinese aspirations (Scott, 2008). More than 80% of the world's seaborne trade in oil transits through the IOR narrow straits (Singh, 2022). The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean has portrayed a major struggle of power among global powers to secure trade routes implying a security dilemma to India (Medcalf, 2020). The expansionist method of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the twenty-first century has challenged India's national interest. The ensuing geopolitics and race for hegemony among global powers in IOR largely lay stress on India's regional security structure. In the Chinese periphery, among other conflicts the Taiwan issue has emerged as a major flashpoint. India seeks to maintain good relations with both China and Taiwan. India's stance on the Taiwan issue is driven by a desire to balance its relationships with China and the United States, while also advancing its own strategic interests in the region (Satoru, 2023). The Taiwan issue has substantial implications for India's relations with China and the United States (Pant, 2020). China views India's relations with Taiwan as a challenge to its sovereignty and has responded with increasing assertiveness in the region and The United States, on the other hand, has sought to strengthen its relations with India as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the region. India's stance on the Taiwan issue navigates complex dynamics, while advancing its own interests (Medcalf, 2020) and backing international norms on open seas. China's increasing perseverance in the region poses a significant challenge to India's foreign policy decision making and to develop effective strategies for the foreseeable future. New Delhi while balancing its relationships has also advanced its own strategic interests through its Act East policy and pursuit of economic and security cooperation with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). India currently attempts to manage China's

assertiveness in the region using diplomatic measures including its balancing act with growing relations with the U.S., Japan and allied nations, setting up economic viability both at home and in abroad through attracting foreign investments and expanding its military industrial base through various partnerships and technology transfers. The Taiwan issue poses significant challenges to Indian foreign policy, including balancing relations, managing China’s assertiveness and advancing India’s own strategic interests. For this, India avoids strong political connections based on ideology and military contracts and concentrates more on economic cooperation. As per Table 1.1, in 2022-23 the annual bilateral commerce trade substantially touched US \$10.9 billion in 2023 (Hashmi & ORF, 2023).

**Table 1.1: Trade between India and Taiwan, 2015-23**  
(in US\$ billion)

Year	Exports	Imports	Total Trade	Balance of Trade
2015-16	1.4	3.3	4.7	(-) 1.9
2016-17	2.2	3.1	5.3	(-) 0.9
2017-18	2.15	3.9	6.05	(-) 1.75
2018-19	2.6	4.5	7.1	(-) 1.9
2019-20	1.7	4	5.7	(-) 2.3
2020-21	1.6	4	5.6	(-) 2.4
2021-22	2.7	6.2	8.9	(-) 3.5
2022-23	2.6	8.3	10.9	(-) 5.7

*Source:* Department of Commerce, Government of India (2023)

New Delhi wants to encourage more Taiwanese capital to participate in India’s economic development and ranks as the sixteenth largest trading partner for Taiwan standing as the twenty-seventh largest import source for the republic (Vanvari & Tan, 2021). Taiwanese companies had invested in the infrastructure, petrochemical, steel, electronics, shipping and finance sectors here in India. Additionally, as per market trends New Delhi is eager to collaborate with Taiwanese businesses in manufacturing semiconductor chips as the technology thrives in Taiwan making it a crucial part of the China-Taiwan geopolitical tensions (The Economist, 2023). As the world becomes more technology driven,

marvels such as semiconductors come as significant factors for powering the growth of a nation's economic and industrial ecosystem. India thus pursuing to become a potential player for global chip manufacturing has instigated its growing efforts for semiconductor cooperation (*The Strategic Implications of Chip War for India* – CENJOWS, 2024).

Despite ongoing challenges pertaining to the areas of infrastructure and supply chain, such a collaboration is crucial to India's semiconductor aspirations due to its reciprocal advantages. One of India's prominent challenges is its inability to draw in Taiwan's semiconductor giants, such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). Today India's initial semiconductor industries benefit greatly from technological assistance from collaboration with Taiwanese businesses. Vedanta and Foxconn recently inked a Memorandum of Understanding to produce semiconductors in India. The two businesses first-of-its-kind cooperative venture will help the prime minister realize his goal of developing an Indian chip manufacturing ecosystem. (KNN India, 2022). The growing bilateral relations between the two democracies as a result of Chinese peripheral diplomacy and economic viability not only poses major ramifications for Taiwan but for India as well. The Taiwan question, as China grows, has become a more concerning part of the geopolitical dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to promoting its own strategic interests in the area, India's position on the Taiwan problem must negotiate a number of intricate relationships, including those with China and the U.S.

The Indian Foreign policy through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, a strategic partnership of likeminded democracies or more commonly known as the 'QUAD' initiative is striking a balance in the region without indulging into a direct conflict. The QUAD partnership, with members like the United States, already committed to the Taiwanese defence, houses an option of extending its favour in the defence of Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific (Fong, 2022). Taiwan, when compared with a much bigger China, may have a hard time defending itself on its own. Taiwan and the

QUAD countries ought to work together in order to prevent the Chinese from attempting to invade the island nation. Increasing Taiwan's military cooperation with the regional alliance network is not only advantageous to the island but also a tremendous advantage to QUAD members and other governments in the region. It is of utmost importance for many QUAD members that the region including the Taiwan challenge remains under control (Sang & Le, 2022). Countries like Japan mark Taiwan as "extremely important" and the belief is shared by the Americans and Australians too. It is but India that has not yet fully and openly endorsed its support for Taiwan (Kishi, 2022). Also, the QUAD is less likely to react to a Taiwan Strait emergency successfully without Taiwan's integration in such forums. The QUAD countries mutually agree to expand the participants in the strategic alliance (Chen, 2022). It is quite crucial in order to convince member countries to move forward together, as each QUAD member considering their own interests and geopolitical determinants will move forward with the challenge and assess how the QUAD and Taiwan will complement each other. In such geopolitical settings it becomes significantly important for member countries to discuss the development of a shared defense policy enhancing the military capabilities of the allied (Chen, 2022). Towards south in the South China Sea (SCS), Chinese territorial claims under its self-proclaimed Nine-dash line theory heavily dominates the regional maritime boundaries. Such claims has erupted maritime disputes with its South East Asian region neighbours and displayed regional hegemonic ambitions of the PRC. The countries like the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and more have their reservations on China's threatening acts to dominate the region. India's diplomatic response to SCS emphasizes freedom of navigation aligned to International laws (Xu, 2014). Continuing its efforts in the region, in 2016, India and USA signed the "Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement" (LEMOA) to strengthen maritime cooperation and security (PIB, 2016). This established US-India's strong defence ties with ASEAN countries as a counter to Sino-Pak nexus in the Himalayas. While avoiding actions and policies that could provoke new tensions or crises, India's approach to

diplomacy actively seeks peaceful resolutions and aims to minimize regional conflicts. This strategy is exemplified by Prime Minister Modi's visits to Russia and Ukraine conflict, where he sought frameworks for global peace, as discussed further in the subsequent section of this paper.

### **The Russia-Ukraine conflict and multi-alignment**

Modern traditional styled conflicts were supposed to be a swift effort. Innovations across multiple dimensions of technology, particularly within the military-industrial complex and dual-use technologies, the implementation of new doctrines and tactics, as well as military drills were intended to reduce the timeframe of a conflict. However, the current situation deviates from these expectations. The concept of a short and decisive battle originated from the complexities posed by traditional wars and engagements between various nation-states most prominently seen in the 20th century. As humanity has progressed and transformed over centuries, so too have the strategies and rationales behind waging a war. We find ourselves once again today in an epoch characterized by protracted conflicts. The dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in December 1991 signified the conclusion of the Cold War and facilitated the establishment of the Russian Federation alongside fourteen additional states (Kanet & Kozhemiakin, 1997). For many observers the conclusion of the Cold War and the fragmentation of the Soviet Union were paradoxically significant events. The current President, Vladimir Putin characterized this occurrence as “*the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century*” (Kramer, 2019). In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's disintegration, its successor, the contemporary Russian state continued to embody the same contest for dominance in the global geopolitical landscape and the power politics that were historically pursued by the Tsars and the Soviets. The ambitions and dilemmas have been widely visible in the context of the Russia-Ukraine hostilities which continues unabated two years into the confrontation as of February 2022 (Troianovski & MacFarquhar, 2022). The crisis in Ukraine offers valuable insights for India. Presently Ukraine finds itself caught between two

formidable powers contesting for their geopolitical ambitions. India too faces similar scenarios dealing its hands and having to navigate and balance its relations with the United States and its European allies, as well as the Russia-China coalition.

There were various instances during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict where the Indian Foreign Minister was questioned by Europeans for the purchase of Russian energy supplies which the minister rebutted with the dictum of 'multiple options' (Bhattacharya, 2024). The art of harmonizing the significant factions of the global power politics is gaining traction for the Indian state in the global multipolarity is paving a way for multiple options or '*multi-alignment*' for others to follow. As the global power politics moves into a sense of multipolarity major powers and rising powers are becoming more and more significant, especially for countries like Russia which is struggling to maintain its power and influence in the world of rising China and the hegemonic West. The 'Primakov doctrine'<sup>2</sup>, named after Yevgeny Primakov, a former Russian Prime and Foreign Minister, has been emphasised by Russia's current Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov as a concept promoting multipolarity that future historians will examine closely (Sysoyev, 2014). This doctrine asserts that a unipolar world dominated by a single center of power that is the United States, is impossible for Russia. Instead, the Russian foreign policy should aim for a multipolar world, managed by a coalition of major powers – Russia, China, and India along with the United States. As per the framework, Russia seeks not to confront the United States alone but rather collaborate with other major powers to limit the United States' influence and also position itself as an essential player whose approval and dissent are crucial for resolving significant issues confronting the international community. It is argued that a unipolar world is fundamentally unbalanced while multipolarity would establish checks and balances against unilateral and arbitrary exertions of power by a hegemon (Rumer, 2019). Such drive towards multipolarity is asserting India towards being of great strategic value for the Russians. The West has long been cautious of Russia, which has succeeded in maintaining its significance in the global power

landscape for centuries. Even after the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia resurfaced as a formidable nation capable of contesting Western supremacy most evidently perceived in Ukraine, Georgia, Central Asia and the Caucasus among the many other regions.

Ukraine's geographical position caught between European nations favouring Western power dynamics and the Russians and its ethnic diversity has majorly contributed to the ongoing crisis and challenges within Ukraine (Gerard, 2017). This situation has afforded India a crucial strategic window to assess the implications of the Ukrainian situation within the broader context of global power struggles and to reassess its own strategies in this environment. In this reassessment, the West is striving to bring India closer by underscoring the threat that China poses and the growing partnership between Russia and China. In the present geopolitical landscape concerning India, the influence of China is a significant factor for India's decision-making. Daleep Singh, the Deputy National Security Advisor, conveyed to India's External Minister in 2022 that it is improbable Russia would provide support to India in a conflict with China (Chang, 2022). This was illustrated in the Galwan clashes in 2020 when Russia maintained a neutral stance. The Western allies, particularly the United States, condemned Chinese aggression against India's sovereignty and reaffirmed their commitment to protect their allies and partners (Sharma & Dhar, 2024). These assessments along with the security dilemma and strategic threats facing India are notably shifting India's strategic calculations and pursuit of autonomy which will undoubtedly influence the re-evaluations being undertaken by the Indian side in the long term. Such changing dynamics of global politics pose considerable challenges for the India-Russia partnership as well, especially given China's growing influence and efforts of dominance in its peripheral region and the West putting in efforts to influence India. As China fortifies its strategic ties with Russia (Kapoor, 2024). Thus, India carefully navigates its alliances and security strategies in this increasingly complex geopolitical environment.

## **Navigating the troubled waters of the Israel-Palestine conflict**

Historical ties and contemporary strategic interests have influenced the Israel-Palestine conflict and India's stance on the delicate matter. During the Nehruvian era, India avoided Cold War alignments and fostered strategic relations with both Israel and Iran reflecting India's complex geopolitical positioning. During Indira Gandhi's tenure, India supported Arab nations, particularly advocating for Palestinian self-determination, to appeal to Muslim voters and balance Pakistan's influence (Aishwarya, 2022) in the region. Although India had recognised Israel in 1950, the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel were only made in 1992 (Bhaduri, 2023). The menace of terrorism and the growing American interests have further strengthened India-Israel relations, signaling a shift toward pragmatic diplomacy along with bilateral trade in the military sectors and technology sharing in various academic fields including agriculture as established by the 'Indo-Israel Agriculture Project' (Kumaraswamy, 2004). India's foreign policy regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, India maintained a strong pro-Palestinian stance on international platforms, supporting Palestinian rights and opposing the creation of Israel voting against the partition of Palestine in the UN in 1947 driven by its desire to align with Arab nations and its large Muslim population. However, post-Cold War, India began reassessing its foreign policy. The establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 marked a pivotal shift, and since then, India has sought to balance its ties with both Israel and Palestine. While strengthening relations with Israel, India continues to support the Palestinian state and its rights. Recent developments, such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2017 state visit to Israel, symbolize deepening relations between the two countries (Pate, 2020). Modi's government has prioritised Israel within India's foreign policy, enhancing military and economic cooperation, making Israel India's second-largest defense supplier, and growing bilateral trade to nearly \$4.6 billion. Diplomatic engagement under Modi's leadership has been marked by visits to both Israel and Arab countries, showcasing a subtle approach to balancing security concerns and economic interests

while fostering strong relations with both parties (Radhar, 2023; Kumaraswamy, 2022). India's evolving stance allows it to play a more significant role in Middle Eastern diplomacy, potentially acting as a mediator in the Israel-Palestine conflict, underscoring India's regional stability and global aspirations (Dash, 2024). India's foreign policy toward Israel and Palestine is also shaped by its economic interests, which have evolved in the context of geopolitical dynamics and historical relationships. India's strategic approach to maximizing its national interests in the region is evident in its balancing relations with Arab nations and Israel. Israel has become a key partner in defense and technology, with India benefiting from advanced military technology and equipment critical to its national security (Rajeev, 2012). Expanding trade relations, Israel has become a significant partner in agriculture, water management, and cyber security (Pete, 2020). India's political stance on Palestine remains supportive, particularly in international forums, helping to strengthen its ties with Arab nations while countering Pakistan's influence in the region (Singh, 2001; Rajeev, 2012; Kumaraswamy, 2008). Additionally, India has aided Palestine, reinforcing its commitment to the two-state solution and enhancing its influence in the Arab world (Dash, 2024). An unstarred question was put up in the Rajya Sabha regarding India's position in the ongoing Palestine-Israel war. Question number 1994, put forward by Shri Abdul Wahab (Member of Parliament from Kerala), asked for answers regarding details of the talks initiated by India, the country's position at multilateral forums, the view India holds concerning the asylum or any other assistance to Palestinians on humanitarian grounds. The answer given by the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs was that the terror strikes on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the civilian casualties in the current Israel-Hamas conflict have been strongly denounced by India and that the country has demanded a halt to hostilities and ongoing aid for Gaza's citizens.

During the continuing crisis, India has contributed 70 tons of humanitarian goods, including 16.5 tonnes of medications and medical supplies. India has always adopted a hyphenated foreign policy regarding Israel and Palestine. But by emphasizing the

relationship with Israel and tying it to the Palestinian Authority, India was effectively precluded from pursuing a sensible policy that would have served its interests. India has been moving toward a de-hyphenation of policy in recent years. India's policy towards Palestine has been long-standing, and the country has always supported a negotiated two-state solution towards the establishment of a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine within secure and recognized borders, living in peace with Israel. The UN General Assembly, which consists of 193 members, overwhelmingly approved the draft resolution "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" that Senegal presented on Tuesday, December 3, 2024. India supported the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution, supporting the need for a comprehensive, equitable, and long-lasting peace in West Asia and demanding that Israel leave the Palestinian territories it has occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. India needs a stable West Asia for its connectivity programs and projects like the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC). This projected economic corridor promotes connectivity and economic integration between Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Asia to support economic development. The viability and sustainability of the project may be seriously threatened by the Israel-Palestine conflict and thus cause serious concern for India's plan to counter China's presence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

## Conclusion

India's foreign policy faces significant challenges from active conflict zones like Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine, which directly impact its global geopolitical priorities. India emphasizes resolving these conflicts, especially those with severe humanitarian consequences, through mutual dialogue. This approach aligns with India's strategic independence and commitment to multilateralism, vital for realising the vision of *Viksit Bharat*. A stable global atmosphere fosters trade, economic growth and India's role as *Vishwa Mitra* – a trusted global partner. The Ukraine conflict tests India's principles of neutrality and strategic autonomy. Despite Western threats of sanctions for energy trade with Russia, India

continues its historical partnership with Moscow, reflecting confidence in its foreign policy stance. India's balanced role has bolstered its image as a rising global power as acknowledged even by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), BRICS, and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) highlight India's growing influence amidst China's expanding global footprint. While China's rise unsettles the West and repositions Russia as a junior partner, India could leverage these dynamics to resolve disputes and build trust. Moreover, post-COVID supply chain diversification narratives increasingly include India alongside Southeast Asian nations like Vietnam despite China's continued dominance. India-China relations strained by incidents like the Galwan clashes and Beijing's growing influence in South Asia underscore India's need for strategic partnerships. Balancing U.S.-China rivalry, especially concerning Taiwan remains critical as India views China as its primary security challenge.

A peaceful global environment would strengthen India's economic and geopolitical positioning in the long term. India's nuanced approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict demonstrates its dedication to balance and stability in the Middle East, crucial for energy security and economic interests. While condemning terrorism following the October 7 Hamas attack, India reiterated its support for a two-state solution and peaceful dialogue. This balance is further reflected in India's abstention from recent U.N. votes on the conflict emphasising national and economic security considerations. The rise of non-state actors and new global powers adds complexity to power politics, requiring India to deftly navigate relationships amid evolving geopolitical realities. India's success in maintaining cordial ties with conflicting parties, resolving disputes and fostering trust is integral to its foreign policy efficacy. Thus, balancing immediate challenges include energy security, economic interests and regional stability with long-term aspirations underlines India's role as a confident, independent actor on the world stage.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship and publication.

## Notes

1. President James Monroe's 1823 foreign policy declaration is known as the Monroe Doctrine. The doctrine described the United States' position in the Western Hemisphere and its ties to Europe as follow:
  1. *Non-intervention*: The United States would refrain from meddling in European matters.
  2. *No new colonization*: No further European colonialism or puppet monarchies were allowed in the Western Hemisphere.
  3. *Hostile acts*: The United States would be the target of any European ambitions to occupy the Western Hemisphere.
2. The Primakov Doctrine emphasises Russia's geopolitical goal of asserting its sovereignty and altering the world order to maintain balanced international relations by placing a strong emphasis on diplomatic, economic and military means. By developing strategic partnerships with up-and-coming nations like China and India, and establishing a counterbalance to NATO's influence. The Primakov Doctrine underscores the necessity of restoring Russia as a major world force. The doctrine also places a high priority on enhancing Russia's position in the post-Soviet sphere, which Moscow considers vital to its geopolitical security.

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## India-Nepal relations: geo-strategic challenges from Kalapani and Lipulekh Tri-Junction

Rakesh Kumar & H.K. Thakur

### ABSTRACT

India-Nepal relations have historically been characterized by deep interdependence and cultural affinity. However, recent territorial disputes, particularly concerning the strategically significant Kalapani and Lipulekh tri-junctions, have introduced complex challenges to this traditionally close partnership. Situated at the confluence of India, Nepal, and China, these contested areas are not only pivotal for regional security but also hold significant implications for trade routes, military strategy, and diplomatic engagements across South Asia. This article critically examines the geo-strategic significance of these disputed territories, assessing their impact on India-Nepal bilateral relations and the broader dynamics of regional stability. The analysis underscores the challenges arising from overlapping territorial claims, which are further exacerbated by China's expanding influence in the region. By investigating the strategic underpinnings of these disputes, the article evaluates potential diplomatic pathways and confidence-building measures to address the growing strain on bilateral ties. In conclusion, the article offers strategic recommendations emphasizing the importance of mutual respect, sustained dialogue, and collaborative efforts to foster a peaceful resolution. It argues that such measures are essential to safeguarding regional stability and preserving the historically robust relationship between India and Nepal.

**Keywords:** *India-Nepal relations, Lipulekh, Kalapani, Territorial disputes, Regional security, China's influence, Diplomatic alternatives.*

### Introduction

India-Nepal relations have long been shaped by a complex interplay of geographical, historical, cultural, and strategic factors. Among these, the border dispute at the Kalapani-Lipulekh tri-

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junction stands as a prominent and contentious issue, influencing bilateral ties and broader regional dynamics in South Asia. Located at the crossroads of India, Nepal, and China, the Kalapani-Lipulekh region is not only a critical geographical point but also a strategic flashpoint, reflecting deeper concerns about sovereignty, security, and regional geopolitics.

The root of the Kalapani-Lipulekh dispute lies in divergent interpretations of historical treaties and maps, particularly the Treaty of Sugauli (1815–16) between Nepal and the British East India Company. While Nepal claims the area based on historical and cartographic evidence, India asserts its control over the region due to its perceived strategic necessity and longstanding administrative presence. The issue escalated significantly in 2019 when India published a new political map following the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir, which included the disputed region. Nepal responded with its own political map in 2020, claiming the territory, thus exacerbating tensions between the two nations.

The geo-strategic importance of Kalapani and Lipulekh is underscored by their proximity to the Himalayan passes that serve as critical links between India and Tibet, a region of growing geopolitical competition with China. For India, control over these areas is vital for northern border security and access to trade routes with Tibet. For Nepal, the issue is equally significant, symbolizing national sovereignty and territorial integrity, with strong domestic political overtones.

This article seeks to explore the geo-strategic challenges posed by the Kalapani and Lipulekh tri-junction in the context of India-Nepal relations. It delves into the historical roots of the dispute, its implications for bilateral ties, broader regional dynamics of South Asia, particularly in the face of China's expanding influence and also providing an alternative for the future. By analyzing this issue through the lenses of geography, history, and geopolitics, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the enduring complexities shaping India-Nepal relations.

### **Current geo-strategic status**

The current geo-strategic status of the Kalapani-Lipulekh tri-junction is a complex and contentious issue, deeply embedded in regional geopolitics and reflecting the intersecting strategic priorities of India, Nepal, and China. For India, the region holds critical importance for national security and serves as a gateway to Tibet (Muni, 2020). The issue resurfaced prominently on November 2, 2019, when India released an updated political map following the reorganization of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. This move sparked disagreements between India and Nepal regarding the inclusion or exclusion of specific territories (Kumar, 2021, p. 100). In particular, the updated map showed the disputed Kalapani area as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district (Nayak, 2020, p. 2). Although India had depicted this region in its maps for decades, the latest map reignited longstanding disputes (Aryal & Pulami, 2024, p. 698; Xavier, 2020, June 11).

In response, Nepal strongly opposed India's actions, asserting that the region in question is an unresolved territory belonging to Darchula district in its Sudurpashchim province (Nayak, 2020). In November 2019, Nepal's foreign ministry issued an official statement expressing dissatisfaction and concern over the disputed area's depiction in India's revised map. The statement read:

The Nepal government is committed to protecting the country's external borders and it is determined on its principled position that such border disputes with the neighbouring countries should be resolved through diplomatic channels after assessing the historical documents, facts, and evidence (Statement cited in Mohan, 2022).

The publication of the revised political map was followed by the construction of a link road. On May 8, 2020, India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh digitally inaugurated an 80-kilometer link road from Dharchula to the Lipulekh Pass, connecting India with the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China (Rae, 2021; Kumar, 2021, p. 100; Muni, 2020). This project aimed to facilitate faster

access to the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage route and exemplifies India's intent to strengthen logistical and strategic connectivity in the Himalayas (Muni, 2020).

However, Nepal has vehemently opposed the development, asserting that it violates its territorial sovereignty, as the road traverses territory it claims as its own (Aryal & Pulami, 2024, p. 692) and denouncing India for changing the status quo without first consulting diplomats and issued a note (Kumar, 2021, p. 100). The note read:

The Government of Nepal has consistently maintained that as per the Sugauli Treaty (1816), all the territories east of Kali (Mahakali) River, including Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh, belong to Nepal. This was reiterated by the Government of Nepal several times in the past and most recently through a diplomatic note addressed to the Government of India dated 20 November 2019 in response to the new political map issued by the latter (MFA, 2020).

Additionally, Nepal escalated the dispute by officially releasing a new map in 2020, incorporating Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura into its national boundaries (Mohan, 2020; Rae, 2021, p. 21) and subsequently provides a legislative cover through a constitutional amendment in June 2020 (Rae, 2021, p. 106). This move, while politically significant domestically, has deepened the diplomatic standoff between the two countries.

The strategic significance of the tri-junction is heightened by its proximity to China, adding layers of complexity to regional dynamics. For India, retaining control over Kalapani and Lipulekh is crucial not only for securing its borders but also for countering China's expanding influence in the Himalayan region. Incidents like the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes (The Hindu, 2022) and China's growing infrastructural presence in Nepal have intensified India's apprehensions about potential encirclement. By 2015, China had overtaken India in foreign direct investments in Nepal, contributing 42% of Nepal's total FDI during 2015–16 (Thakur, 2023, p. 425). Additionally, Nepal joined China's Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI) in May 2017 (Murton, 2024, p. 82), proposing thirty-five projects for consideration under the initiative. Beijing later requested that the list be narrowed down to nine key projects. On April 29, 2019, during the second Belt and Road Forum (BRF), the foreign ministers of Nepal and China formalized agreements, officially integrating Nepal into China's overarching BRI framework aimed at fostering 'Belt and Road Cooperation: Shaping a Brighter Shared Future' (Murton & Lord, 2020, p. 5).

Nepal, on the other hand, finds itself in a precarious position, striving to assert its sovereignty while navigating the strategic interests of its two powerful neighbours. The dispute has stoked strong nationalist sentiments in Nepal, with political parties frequently using the issue to rally public support. In particular, KP Sharma Oli has been accused of leveraging the controversy to consolidate his political dominance in the country. In Nepal, the concept of popular nationalism often stems from the creation of an opposing entity or the 'other', with India frequently assuming this role (Aryal & Pulami, 2024, p. 693). This dynamic further complicates the possibility of a diplomatic resolution.

Despite several rounds of diplomatic dialogue, the stalemate persists, reflecting deep-seated mistrust and a lack of political will on both sides to compromise. The issue transcends bilateral relations, emerging as a symbol of the broader geopolitical tensions in South Asia, particularly in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative and India's Act East Policy. The ongoing impasse at Kalapani-Lipulekh thus serves as a microcosm of the challenges faced by India and Nepal in balancing their historical ties with contemporary strategic imperatives.

### **Geo-strategic impact of Kalapani and Lipulekh Tri-Junction on India-Nepal relations and South Asia**

The Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute is not merely a territorial disagreement but a complex geo-strategic issue with far-reaching consequences for the bilateral relations between India and Nepal, and for the broader South Asian security architecture. These regions, located at the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and China, hold

immense strategic importance for both countries, and the dispute over them has significantly altered the dynamics in the region.

### **Strategic importance of Kalapani and Lipulekh: a geopolitical perspective**

Kalapani is a strategically important tri-junction valley situated at the intersection of India, China, and Nepal, currently administered by India. It includes the Lipulekh Pass, which serves as a connection to Tibet. The Kalapani region remains undemarcated and is a subject of dispute between India and Nepal, with Nepal asserting claims over a significant portion of the territory (Sharma, 2024). The area represent a critical intersection of geopolitical, strategic, and historical importance and covers an 330 sq. km area, in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, is bordered by the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China to the north and Nepal to the east and south (Bhattacharjee, 2020, May 24). Kalapani, located near the headwaters of the Kali River (Rae, 2021), is pivotal for determining the western boundary between India and Nepal, as per the Treaty of Sugauli (Trivedi, 2008, p. 201). Similarly, the Lipulekh Pass serves as a vital trade and military corridor connecting India with Tibet. These areas form a tri-junction connecting India, Nepal, and China, making them a focal point for regional geopolitics (Muni, 2020). These locations are also crucial for maintaining India's northern border security against potential Chinese incursions and facilitating trade and movement through the Himalayan region.

Historically, Lipulekh Pass has been a significant trade route linking India with Tibet and China, particularly during the British colonial era (Muni, 2020). The British recognized the region's value for commerce, particularly in trading Tibetan wool, and promoted the Kali River as the boundary with Nepal (Dhungel et al., 2021, p. 22). Beyond trade, the Lipulekh Pass holds cultural importance as a route for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims traveling to Kailash Mansarovar. For centuries, these Himalayan passes supported the livelihoods of mountain communities and fostered cross-border cultural exchanges (Bhattacharjee, 2020; Chandran, 2024).

The strategic significance of Kalapani and Lipulekh became evident during the 1962 Sino-Indian War, which exposed India's vulnerabilities in defending poorly fortified Himalayan routes. While India faced advances from Chinese forces through other passes like Se La in Tawang, the lack of military preparedness at Lipulekh underscored the critical need for stronger defenses in these regions (Bhattacharjee, 2020, May 24; Kumar, 2020).

Today, these regions play a crucial role in India's border management strategy. Kalapani serves as a strategic observation point overlooking Tibet and the adjoining Chinese territory. The region also provides access to the Lipulekh Pass, a crucial trade and pilgrimage route with significant military importance (Muni, 2020, May 22). Infrastructure connecting India to Lipulekh via Kalapani through road connection enhances troop mobility and logistical support, essential for a robust defense in the Himalayas (Kumar, 2021; Xavier, 2020).

The Lipulekh Pass holds considerable strategic importance for India, acting as a vital conduit for the movement of troops and supplies to the north-western section of the Indo-Tibetan border (Muni, 2020). Its location offers a direct route for military operations and logistical support, improving India's capacity to deploy forces swiftly in response to potential threats from China's Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Additionally, the pass plays a crucial role in sustaining communication and supply chains with forward military positions. India's infrastructure development in the Lipulekh area is part of a broader plan to strengthen border defences and enhance rapid mobilization in the event of Chinese aggression (Khanal, 2021; Subramanian, 2020). This strategic location enables India to project its influence and maintain a strong presence in a sensitive geopolitical region, thus safeguarding both national security and regional stability.

### **Historical context and competing narratives**

The Treaty of Sugauli, which Nepal and the British East India Company signed in 1816, is the source of the Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute (Rae, 2021; Sharma, 2024). Significant

geographical changes resulted from the treaty, which was concluded following the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816), sometimes referred to as the Gorkha War, and marked the conclusion of hostilities with a British triumph (Muni, 2015, p. 400; Baral, 2018, p. 205). For the first time, an official border between the two countries was formed by this agreement (Tripathi, 2019, p. 191). The treaty established the Mechi River as Nepal's eastern border and the Mahakali River as its western border. It also described how ridges in Sikkim and the Darjeeling hills would be included (Thapliyal, 2024, p. 219; Trivedi, 2008, p. 201).

Determining the Kali River's origin is at the heart of the Kalapani controversy. The origin of the River is interpreted in a variety of ways (Nayak, 2020, p. 3). India says the river starts at Lipulekh and then joins other streams and tributaries to become the Mahakali. On the other hand, Nepal claims that the Kali River comes from Limpiyadhura, while the stream that comes from Lipulekh is known as Lipu Khola. Thus, Kalapani is the region that lies between these two streams (Muni, 2020; Sharma, 2024). Nepal refers to Article 5 of the Treaty of Sugauli, which states:

The Rajah of Nepal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connection with the countries lying to the west of the River Kali and engages never to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants thereof (Rae, 2021, p. 107).

Thus, Nepal argues that all territories east of the Kali River historically fall under its jurisdiction. While India agrees with this principle, its claims stem from the ambiguity in the treaty regarding the identification of the Kali River and its source (Muni, 2020).

Nepal argues that maps produced between 1819 and 1867 clearly indicate that the Kali River originates from Limpiyadhura. These maps assert that, in accordance with Article 5 of the Treaty of Sugauli, all territory east of this river belongs to Nepal. However, after 1879, the stream originating from Lipulekh began to be identified as the Kali River, while the river flowing from

Limpiyadhura was renamed Kuti Yangti (Dhungel et al., 2021, pp. 6-7). Nepal contends that this change might have been deliberately implemented by the British government to advance their commercial and strategic interests, particularly to utilize the Lipulekh Pass as a trade route to Tibet (Muni, 2020).

India subsequently inherited control over the Kalapani and Lipulekh regions from the British administration, with Independent India gaining access to these areas following British rule (Muni, 2020). According to Indian official records, administrative and revenue documents from the 1830s, preserved by the Uttar Pradesh state government, indicate that Kalapani was historically administered as part of the Pithoragarh district. India later reinforced its claim through administrative actions and the deployment of security forces (Gupta, 2000, October 17; Kumar, 2021, p. 100). Furthermore, a scientific survey conducted in 1879 produced a map that identified the Lipulekh Pass as part of India and designated Kalapani as the origin of the Kali River, with the Kuti Yangti recognized as one of its Himalayan tributaries converging near Gunji (Rae, 2021, p. 118). This historical complexity continues to fuel the competing narratives of both countries over the Kalapani and Lipulekh region.

### **Security concerns and regional stability in South Asia**

The Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute transcends bilateral tensions, carrying significant implications for the security and stability of South Asia. The region is inherently fragile due to longstanding territorial disputes, ethnic tensions, and political instability. Territorial disputes are a key source of conflict, exemplified by the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. The dispute, which stems from the 1947 partition, has led to multiple wars and ongoing military skirmishes. Despite international mediation efforts, the conflict remains unresolved and continues to destabilize the region, with both countries maintaining nuclear arsenals (Ganguly et al., 2019; John, 1997). Similarly, the India-China border disputes, particularly along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), have caused military confrontations, most recently

in Galwan Valley on 15, June 2020 (Pathak, 2024), illustrating how territorial claims in the Himalayas remain a volatile flashpoint.

Ethnic tensions also deeply impact South Asia, as seen in Sri Lanka's civil war between the Sinhalese-majority government and Tamil separatists. The war, which lasted from July 1983 to May 2009, resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and set development back by decades, widespread suffering and exacerbating ethnic divisions (Anandakugan, 2020; The Economic Times, 2023). In a different context, Balochistan's insurgency in Pakistan highlights the ongoing struggle of ethnic Baloch separatists seeking greater autonomy or independence. The Pakistani state's military response has only deepened the region's instability, making it a persistent challenge for both domestic governance and regional security (Bansal, 2008).

Political instability in South Asia is exemplified by Afghanistan's prolonged conflict, which saw the hardline Islamist Taliban return to power in 2021 (The Hindu) after two decades of United States (U.S.) intervention, lasted on 31 August 2021 as the longest war in American history (The White House, 2021). During U. S. stay in Afghanistan or the Afghan war, cost the US more than \$2 trillion and resulted in thousands of casualties to all concerned parties (Najam, 2024, p. 957). This has created a significant security vacuum, impacting not only Afghanistan but also its neighbours, particularly Pakistan and India. Similarly, Nepal's volatile politics, characterized by frequent changes in government and internal divisions, has hindered its ability to manage both domestic affairs and foreign relations, especially with India and China, creating a fragile geopolitical environment (Kulkarni, 2024). These examples collectively illustrate how unresolved territorial, ethnic, and political issues in South Asia pose significant risks to regional stability, with spillover effects that extend beyond national borders.

The Kalapani-Lipulekh issue underscores the challenges faced by smaller states, such as Nepal, in navigating the complex geopolitics of South Asia. Nepal, situated as a landlocked nation between China and India, faces challenges in maintaining a trade

and military equilibrium between these two powers in the geopolitical arena. To address this, Nepal adopts a hedging strategy aimed at fostering peaceful relations with both neighbours (Johny, 2024, p. 1). China's expanding economic and political clout in Nepal has elevated Kathmandu's role as a key player in South Asian geopolitics, enabling it to act as a counterbalance to Indian influence (Bhattarai, 2022). One prominent example of this is the surge in imports from China, particularly electric vehicles (EVs), which has significantly increased in recent years. Simultaneously, imports from India have declined, sparking concerns in New Delhi over its waning economic influence in Nepal. On the political front, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), or CPN-UML, is widely regarded as advocating for closer relations with China. This stance aligns with the party's ideological orientation and nationalist outlook, which is often perceived as being critical of India (Tamang, 2024, August 9).

For Beijing, Nepal represents a strategic gateway to South Asia, enhancing its regional presence and influence. Conversely, New Delhi views China's growing foothold in Nepal as a direct challenge to its security and strategic interests in the region. This dynamic has compelled Nepal to adopt a more independent stance, navigating the competing interests of its two powerful neighbors, which not only strains its traditionally close relationship with India but also raises the stakes in South Asian geopolitics (Bhattarai, 2022, p. 62). This dynamic compels Nepal to adopt a more independent stance, potentially straining its historically close ties with India and amplifying regional geopolitical tensions.

### **Way forward: alternatives and suggestions**

The resolution of the Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute requires a multifaceted approach encompassing diplomatic engagement, third-party mediation, Economic cooperation and regional cooperation. Strengthening bilateral mechanisms and implementing confidence-building measures (CBMs) are essential for fostering mutual trust and preventing conflict escalation.

One significant CBM is the India-Nepal Joint Commission, established in 1987 to provide a platform for deliberations on bilateral issues, including border disputes (MEA, 2024). After being inactive for over two decades, the Commission's revival in 2014 reflected renewed commitment to sustained diplomatic dialogue (MEA, 2024). Similarly, the Boundary Working Group (BWG), created in 2014, addresses technical aspects of border management, such as constructing, repairing, and restoring boundary pillars and clearing 'no-man's land' (Drishti IAS, 2020). These technical efforts support a more stable boundary framework and help minimize disputes.

Furthermore, the Foreign Secretary-level mechanism tackles specific boundary disputes, including Kalapani and Susta, leveraging technical expertise from the BWG at the Surveyor General level (Giri, 2019). Together, these institutional mechanisms provide a structured pathway for constructive engagement and peaceful conflict resolution.

In addition to bilateral measures, third-party mediation could be explored to facilitate dialogue. International precedents, such as the Permanent Court of Arbitration's resolution of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border dispute (2000) and U.S. mediation in the Egypt-Israel peace agreement (1979), demonstrate how impartial mediation can resolve complex territorial issues (Permanent Court of Arbitration, n.d.; Carter, 2024). However, any mediation effort must align with the preferences and sensitivities of both nations to avoid infringing on their sovereignty. A combination of strengthened bilateral mechanisms, technical cooperation, and, where appropriate, third-party facilitation offers a pragmatic roadmap to resolve the Kalapani-Lipulekh dispute. These efforts would not only promote stability in India-Nepal relations but also contribute to regional harmony.

In tandem with diplomatic efforts, both India and Nepal must balance their national interests with regional stability. India's strategic concerns about China's growing influence in Nepal must be carefully managed (Tamang, 2024), as Nepal's sovereign rights and security are equally critical for maintaining peace in the

region. Positioned as a buffer state between the two regional giants, India and China, Nepal must navigate its foreign policy to safeguard its territorial integrity without compromising its diplomatic relationships with either country (Chand, 2023, p. 3).

A collaborative security framework could be developed to address these concerns, ensuring that both nations respect each other's security imperatives while fostering regional stability. Additionally, multilateral cooperation through regional organizations like SAARC, of which Nepal became a founding member in 1985, could provide a platform to address not only territorial disputes but also broader security and economic issues. This approach could promote a more collaborative and stable regional environment for India and Nepal (Teekah, 2024).

In addition to these diplomatic measures, security sector reforms are essential. Both India and Nepal must enhance border management and surveillance to prevent misunderstandings and military standoffs. Joint security exercises, such as the 'SURYA KIRAN' series, started in 2011, play a crucial role in enhancing military relations, fostering mutual understanding and trust between their respective security forces (Sinha, 2024). For instance, the 17th edition of the exercise, conducted in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, from November 24 to December 7, 2023, focused on strengthening coordination and cooperation between the two nations (PIB, 2023).

In the long term, India's approach to Nepal must evolve from viewing the country merely as a buffer state to one of regional cooperation. Strengthening Nepal's neutrality and encouraging it to maintain a balanced relationship with both India and China would ensure long-term peace and stability in the region (Bhattarai, 2022). A cooperative regional approach to South Asian security would provide a comprehensive solution to the Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute, helping to maintain a stable and secure South Asia.

## **Conclusion**

The territorial dispute over Kalapani and Lipulekh has significantly strained India-Nepal relations, evolving from a bilateral issue to a broader regional security concern. Situated at the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and China, these territories hold crucial geo-strategic value due to their proximity to important trade routes and the evolving security landscape in South Asia. The conflict, rooted in historical maps and competing territorial claims, has escalated in recent years, particularly with the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution and construction of the road through the Lipulekh pass by India in 2020. This move exacerbated Nepal's concerns and ignited a diplomatic row that continues to reverberate through regional dynamics.

The geo-strategic impact of the Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute is far-reaching. On a bilateral level, it has strained India-Nepal ties, impacting not only diplomatic relations but also cooperation in sectors like trade, security, and regional integration. Nepal's increasing alignment with China, particularly through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has further complicated the situation, with the dispute now being viewed through the lens of India-China competition in the region. This alignment has implications for South Asian stability, as it introduces new dimensions to the strategic balance, particularly in the context of China's growing influence in Nepal and its potential to use the dispute as leverage in its broader geopolitical ambitions.

Addressing this dispute requires a careful and nuanced approach. It is critical for both India and Nepal to engage in sustained dialogue and diplomatic negotiations, underpinned by mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and historical concerns. Regional cooperation, facilitated through forums like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) or other multilateral platforms, could offer a path forward to easing tensions and fostering greater understanding. A long-term resolution lies in recognizing the geo-strategic significance of both countries and ensuring that their respective national interests are balanced through diplomacy rather than unilateral actions.

Ultimately, the resolution of the Kalapani and Lipulekh dispute will not only determine the future trajectory of India-Nepal relations but will also have broader implications for regional peace and stability in South Asia. A diplomatic resolution will set a positive precedent for managing border disputes in the region, promoting stability, and mitigating the influence of external powers that may seek to exploit these tensions for their own strategic gains.

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## Cantonments in Himachal Pradesh: historical perspectives and colonial imprints

Jitender & Arun Kumar Singh

### ABSTRACT

Himachal Pradesh, a small hill state in India, has historically been a focal point of British interest for various strategic and environmental reasons. Sharing a historical connection with present-day Punjab, the region was often referred to as the 'Hill Cantonments Region,' established by the British during their colonial rule. This paper examines the establishment of cantonments in Himachal Pradesh from the nineteenth century onwards, delving into the historical context and underlying factors that motivated their development in different parts of the state. It explores the strategic, climatic, and geographic considerations that influenced the selection of these locations and their role within the broader colonial framework. The study concludes that while cantonments in the Shimla and Punjab hill regions did not directly contribute to significant colonial urbanization, they offered advantages such as scenic beauty, isolation, altitude, favorable terrain, ample personal space, salubrious climate, familiar topography, efficient natural drainage systems, and strategic positioning. These factors not only served British colonial interests but also ensured the enduring relevance of these cantonments in post-independence governance and development.

**Keywords:** *Cantonment, Shimla, Solan, Subathu, Jatogh, Dagshai, Yol.*

### Introduction

Himachal Pradesh, a picturesque hill state in India, captivated the British during the 19th century for various reasons. This paper delves into the establishment of cantonments by the British in Himachal Pradesh during this period. For Thousands of years, humanity has gazed upon the Himalayas with a sense of awe and respect. These majestic peaks were viewed as sanctuaries for profound reflection and detachment from the hustle and bustle of

daily life. They were believed to be the adobe of the Gods. Thus, the centuries of pilgrimages produced temples and hermitages (Gillian Write 1991, p. 14). Still, there were no major urban settlements except Trigarta, Chamba and Kuluta prior to 17th century as the landscape had little appeal and mountains were difficult geographic terrains (Write 1991, p. 14). Uncomfortable long journeys restricted the interaction between plains and the hills. For most of the year, the mountains belonged to the hill people, and nomadic herders and scattered settlements, both urban and rural, tended to be confined to the valleys, which were the locations of cultivation and trade mostly.

In western Himalayan history, hills remained part of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh mostly. Insight into the early 19th-century backdrop of the Punjab hill states can be attained by delving into the works of J. Hutchison and J.P.H. Vogel, authors of a comprehensive two-volume tome titled “History of the Punjab Hill States.” Their meticulous research not only delineates the geographical features of the area but also furnishes invaluable insights into its political structure during the pre-British era. In the course of the topographical description of the *Punjab Hill States*, they shed abundant light on how these hill states were affected by the political change under the Gurkhas and provided information on the arrival of the British in the Shimla hills (Sharma 2019, p. 2).

The British were unaware of the health benefits of the Shimla hills until the 19th century when the threat posed by the Gurkhas in the hills appeared. After 1809, the Gurkhas began to increase their territory in the Shimla Hills and cemented their military might under Amar Singh Thapa (Simla District Census 1961, p. 9). Following their conquest of minor chieftains, the Gurkhas fortified numerous strongholds along the Sikh borders, aiming to assert their supremacy. Their rule was marked by unrelenting severity and dominance over the region. After subduing Sirmur and the Shimla Hills and gradually capturing the majority of the hill fortifications between the rivers Jumuna and Sutlej, they established their capital at Arki, 20 miles west of Shimla (Census 1961, p. 9). They converted existing tribes into slavery and

imposed the harsh taxes on the impoverished. The result of this brutal policy was that many of the oppressed mountaineers eagerly desired to place themselves under British protection to drive the Gurkhas out of their country (Francis White 1838, p. 10).

The British promptly embraced the proposal for primarily two compelling reasons: first and foremost, they perceived a looming threat from the escalating influence of the Gurkhas, who commanded a critical trade route to Tibet and central Asia. Secondly, The Gurkhas, encouraged by their long courses of success in subduing many mountainous chiefs, emboldened them to gradually encroach on the British outposts of the low belt of wood and marshy *Tarrai* which lay at the foot of the hills, stretching along from the Bhrmaputra to Rohilakhund chiefly belonging to the states under the British Government, or to those which were under its protection (Sharma 2019, p. 3).

In 1814, the British made the decisive resolution to oust the Gurkhas from the hill territories with the aim of annexing the strategically vital hill regions and safeguarding their holdings in the plains against Gurkha assaults. The British army officer Major Ochterlony led the campaign against the Gurkhas (Final Settlement Report of Simla District 1884, p. 6). Hence, it was in 1814 that the British first made their appearance in this region (Hamilton 1820, p. 618). Following the defeat of the Gurkhas, a treaty known as the Treaty of Sagauli was signed in 1815. Through this treaty, the British assumed control of the hill tracts. Subsequently, in the 1840s, the East India Company established several cantonments in the lower Shimla hills to serve as auxiliary bases for soldiers from the Bengal presidency who were stationed in the sweltering plains of India.

‘Cantonment’ is taken from the French word ‘canton,’ which means quarters (Lewis 1997, p. 77). The term was widely utilised in India. It described the military installations across the region, often designed based on a layout resembling a permanent camp. The cantonments were designed to meet the military and

residential requirements of the officers, troops and ancillary personnel, both European and native (Moore 1862, p. 17). A Cantonment was an area marked out from the general civil administration and set apart as a place in which the first consideration was the health of the troops (Fell 1929, p. 114). In broader contexts, the term “cantonments” has been defined as the temporary living accommodations erected by the army for soldiers engaged in manoeuvres. For over 150 years, it has been applied to the enduring military bases in India where troops were regularly stationed. A study of cantonment has a great significance. Indeed, the cantonment has an institution that was instrumental in building the British Empire in India (Jacob 1994, pp. 1-2).

The precise historical origins of each cantonment are often challenging to trace. Some were obtained through compensation to the original landholders, while others came under government control through conquest or appropriation. Still, others resulted from treaties negotiated with the relevant ruling chiefs. The foremost objective of establishing cantonments was to ensure the health, welfare and discipline of the troops quartered there with a higher level of sanitation and public safety in a healthier environment, free from epidemics and crimes (Standing Committee on Defence 1998, p. 1).

The establishment of cantonments as a matter of policy was initiated by Robert Clive in 1765. Originally, cantonments were intended solely as barracks or other structures built for accommodating troops. However, by the early 19th century, the term had evolved to encompass a broader meaning, indicating a designated area exclusively reserved for military use. Clive recommended to the Select Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1765 for the ‘approbation’ building of cantonments for at least 1200 Europeans and 5000 sepoys at Boinpore near Kasimbazar (Jacob 1994, p. 19). Though the British ruled over a large number of countries on all continents, they did not establish cantonment anywhere else (Committee on Defence, p. 1). They built 114 cantonments situated throughout India. Over half of the settlements were located on the plains, some 5% of them between 1200 and 7800ft. above sea level

in the so-called ‘hill stations’ (King 1976, p. 97). The cantonment towns in the hills were established to fulfil four basic requirements:

- a) To fulfil military and defence roles aimed at safeguarding the hill territories from external invasions.
- b) To offer secluded woodland environments for the British community, facilitating unrestricted interaction amongst themselves while enjoying relative isolation from diverse social groups.
- c) To uphold law and order within the area.
- d) To ensure a salubrious climate devoid of the pollution, heat, and unsanitary conditions prevalent in the plains, thus promoting the swift recovery of sick British soldiers

### **Establishment of cantonments in Himachal Pradesh**

In 1815, the first colonial settlement, which emerged in the Shimla hill region, was the cantonment town of Sabathu. It was situated on a spur of not more than 4500 ft. above sea level on the old road from Kalka to Shimla (Gazetteer of Simla District 1888-89, p. 113). The name Sabathu is a combination of two words: ‘*Suba*’, meaning a province, and ‘*thaur*’, meaning a seat or place in Hindi. This place was once the seat of the Gurkha province. During their regime, the Gurkhas appeared to have garrisoned the place with their troops and built a fort that had two ‘Guard Tower’ (Census 1961, p. 12). On defeating and ousting the Gurkhas in 1815, the British official Sir Ochterlony retained the stronghold of the Sabathu in his hand as a political and military outpost, as the family to which it originally belonged was extinct, and its possession was claimed by several contending parties, among whom were the ranks of Keonthal and Baghat, then in disgrace; and also it was considered to afford a significant military position for securing to the British the undisturbed command of the lower hills (Select committee on Indian Territories 1852-53, p. 3).

Lieutenant Ross, the foremost British political overseer, bestowed with the title of Assistant Political Agent for the hill territories, elected Sabathu as his central command. Commencing operations from a swiftly erected wooden edifice in 1818. Following Ross's tenure, Captain Charles Kennedy assumed leadership in Sabathu. In due course, he erected his esteemed 'Durbar Hall', subsequently renowned as Kennedy House, further solidifying colonial administration's presence in the vicinity. It became the principal cantonment of British troops, which, until 1842, served as headquarters of the Nassiri Battalion (Indian Territories 1852-53, p. 3). In 1843, the European regiment occupied Sabathu for the first time, and the total outlay at Sabathu was 2 30,427 rupees (Indian Territories, p. 3). Now, the Western command has a Gurkha training centre at this place.

By the dawn of 1830, Shimla had ascended to prominence as the acknowledged governmental and military summer headquarters of India. To Lord Dalhousie, it was not Shimla's beauty that mattered but its geographical location: "You have one in Punjab, another in North-West Frontier yet enough to influence Oudh." Growth was rapid in the next decades or two, and a number of new Himalayan stations were opened. Gradually, it became the custom for the provincial government to officially transfer administrative operations to the summer capital for several months each year, and also, the seasonal movement of people to hill stations was established (Spencer and Thomas 1948, p. 641).

In 1840, a decree was passed to broaden the scope of hill settlements, extending their benefits to more infirm troops serving in the plains. Therefore, due to the nearness to the plains of Punjab, in around 1840, military authorities regarded the Kasauli hill tract, at an elevation of 6,365 feet above sea level, as a suitable location for garrisoning the troops (Gazetteer Simla District, p. 114). During that year, Colonel Tapp, serving as the political agent at Sabathu, embarked on the inaugural survey of the Kasauli hills. Subsequently, in 1841, Sir Henry Lawrence, assuming the role of Political Agent at Sabathu, erected the premier bungalow, "Sunnyside," positioned directly opposite the Sabathu Ridge,

overlooking his daughter's resting place within Sabathu. In 1842, after a survey, it was decided to develop a cantonment in this area, and Kasauli was made into a permanent military station (Handbook of Kasauli Cantonment 1923, p. 8). This pargana was originally belonged to the Baghat State. In 1842, the British government made an effort to build up a cantonment for the sum of Rs. 5,000 and an annual payment of Rs. 507 (Gazetteer, p.29). In 1863, further land was acquired from the Rana of Baghat. The first troop which occupied the cantonment was the 13 Somerset Light Infantry on their return from Afghanistan in 1843 (District Census 1961, p. 12). In the valleys, the cultivation was rich and varied; the patches or terraces assumed the appearance of tolerably sized fields (Purbury 1842, p. 124).

Dagshai was established as another British military station 10.7 miles northeast of Kasauli (Gazetteer of Simla District 1997 [1904], p. 2). In 1847, the illustrious East India Company laid the cornerstone of this settlement, securing five villages from the esteemed Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh, with magnanimity unmatched, granting them freely. These villages bore the names of Dabbi, Baddhtiala, Chunawad, Jawag, and Dagshai, forever woven into the fabric of this burgeoning endeavour. The new cantonment was named after the last village name, as it was the largest and most strategically located (The British originally acquired this land to build a jail to keep the foreign political prisoners (The Tribune Saturday Plus 1999). It was the only cantonment in Shimla Hills which had a jail built on a branch road below the barracks. Dagshai jail was constructed in 1849 at a cost of Rs. 72,875 (Census 1961, p. 12). However, the outlay of Dagshai cantonment was rupees 3,49,031 (Report on Indian Territories, p. 3).

Jutogh was earmarked as an additional location for quartering troops owing to its adjacency to Shimla, deemed strategically advantageous for military operations. The station of Jutogh was situated on a detached spur hill overlooking the Old Kalka Road Shimla Road, some three miles from the west end of Shimla

(Gazetteer Simla District, p. 115). It was a small military station. The land was obtained from the State of Patiala in 1843 in exchange for two villages, namely the Dhurrai and Tohal, in the pargana of Bharauli; a sum of Rs. 1,931 as a compensation to the proprietors of the soil (Gazetteer, p. 29). A Gurkha regiment first occupied it (Gazetteer, p. 109).

With the arrival of the British in the Shimla Hills, Kalka's significance burgeoned, emerging as the initial lowland tract to intersect the foothills. Recognizing its strategic value, the British deemed imperative to assert dominion over a parcel of land nestled at the hill's base, ample enough for the establishment of a bustling marketplace and depot along the communication route to Shimla. Thus, in 1843, diplomatic exchanges were initiated with the Maharaja of Patiala to materialize the creation of a station at Kalka

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of European officials and soldiers for garrisoning in the invigorating hill environment, the British recognized the significance of providing the benefits of the hill climate to the European children of those in the service of the East India Company. Thus, Sanawar, renowned as the Henry Lawrence Military Asylum, situated 3.5 miles northeast of Kasauli, was designated as a site for the asylum, subsequently evolving into a renowned educational institution. The states of Patiala and Baghat bordered it (Gazetteer of Simla 1904, p. 2). In 1847, the British Government assumed control of the land occupied by the Lawrence Military Asylum, which previously belonged to the State of Baghat, integrating it into their territorial domain. In 1852, the institution was opened with 14 children and Mrs. George Lawrence undertook its management (The Lawrence Assylum Kussowlee 1850, p. 42).

The last hilltop settlement in this region was the Solan cantonment. Solan was a small plot of land on the southern slope of Krol mountain, on the Cart Road between Kalka and Shimla, 31 miles from Shimla and 9.4 miles beyond Dagshai (Gazetteer of Punjab Province 1984, p. 350). In 1862, the site was initially earmarked as a rifle range for the troops stationed at Dagshai, following a requisition from C.C. Dagshai for land near Solan for this purpose.

Consequently, negotiations commenced with the Wazir of Baghat for the acquisition of the land and the identification of an appropriate location. This tract was transferred to the military authorities under the condition that, during periods of inactivity at the rifle ranges, neighbouring village zamindars could avail the land for cattle grazing. Subsequently, it became evident that as hospitals and other military infrastructure had been established along the Solan ridge, integral to the cantonment, the original range boundaries required adjustment to encompass this area for policing and sanitation measures.

Dalhousie Cantonment is a town in the Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. In the wake of 1857, the Military Department of Govt of India expanded its survey of the lower Himalayas, identifying a suitable location for building sanatoria and cantonment for quartering British soldiers and military units. It was a cool and healthy hill station justified on strategic and health grounds. In the following years, Baloon, Bakloh, Chakrata, and Ranikhet in the western lower Himalayas were established. In 1863, one-third of British troops in India should be located in the hill station cantonment Dalhousie was first surveyed in 1853. In 1866, Bakloh was acquired as a Gorkha cantonment from the raja of Chamba. In 1868, British troops moved into barracks in Bakloh. By 1878, an 18-foot road connected the new cantonment to the plains.

Yol is a cantonment in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh; the town gets its name from Yol (Young Officers Living), a small town established by the British Indian army in 1849. The Yol cantonment was built in 1942. Yol was allocated to a prisoner-of-war camp that hosted German soldiers in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and Italian soldiers in the Second World War.

These military settlements were established adjacent to the lands of hostile hill tribes to bolster the frontiers and forestall potential skirmishes. Dominance over these pivotal sites in the Shimla hills was deemed imperative for reinforcing their political influence in

India. Moreover, the British envisioned that by relocating a significant populace, encompassing civilians and military personnel alike, to the invigorating English climate of the hills, they could forge a secure nucleus not only for the governance of India but also for its extensive cultural and societal development. Erected atop open hill summits, commanding views over the plains, these installations potentially mirrored the British confidence in their unassailable supremacy. Consequently, strategic importance took precedence over considerations of accessibility. The urbanization scheme in the Shimla hills during the British period was a meticulously planned endeavour. Mapping helped usher in the planned development and growth of the towns around Shimla. Their command of industrial technology and knowledge of cartography enabled them to build settlements at such great heights (King, pp. 57-65).

The military cantonment boasted meticulously designed structures and neatly arranged streets. It encompassed barracks for infantry and artillery units, with or without their families, along with separate officer bungalows, hospitals, the Mall Road, cemeteries, churches, and an officer's club. Additionally, it featured drill grounds, rifle ranges, military supply depots, water houses, magazines, gun sheds, workshops, dairy farms, and bazaars to fulfil daily needs. Each cantonment ensured efficient communication through paved roads, rail links, post offices, telegraph lines, telephone connections, and police stations. The administration of the cantonment was managed and supervised by a committee under the direction of the commanding officers of the area (Grewal 2009, p. 98).

The colonization of the Shimla hills and Punjab hills undoubtedly encountered formidable obstacles. However, these narratives of hardship are frequently marginalized in colonial discourse, which tends to depict territorial acquisitions as seamless processes. Such portrayals perpetuate the unchallenged legitimacy attributed to 'white' settlements. Throughout the British era, numerous villages surrounding established towns underwent complete relocation or, in certain instances, displacement to make room for the

establishment of new cantonments. Moreover, in the development of hill stations, deforestation depleted hills of their wooded areas, while valley inhabitants were deprived of their water sources, redirected to cater to the needs of the stations. Hill rulers were compelled to provide forced labour, known as ‘begaris’, for road and construction projects. In essence, these instances starkly illustrate the dire circumstances faced by the impoverished hill communities, as the British stripped the native inhabitants of these regions of their fundamental rights.

Accordingly, in the midst of the 19th century, in line with the altered environmental policies, these hill settlements were acquired after prolonged negotiations with local rulers to serve administrative, educational, recreational, and military purposes. They provided a haven where European invalids could recuperate from the heat and diseases of the tropics, while also reinforcing a sense of cultural superiority. These newly established urban centres in the Shimla hill region were primarily situated along ridges, offering commanding views of the valleys and overlooking the plains of Punjab. Over time, these hill towns flourished to accommodate the sizable European population.

The colonial urban settlements in the Shimla and Punjab hills didn’t form a cohesive cluster or continuous chain of urban centres. Instead, they comprised several detached tracts acquired over time for various purposes such as establishing sanatoriums, maintaining peace, and consolidating political power in India. The geography of the hills played a pivotal role in shaping these urban centres. Factors like scenic beauty, isolation, altitude, terrain, clean air, pleasant climate, gentle topography, natural drainage, strategic location offering clear views of lower valley towns, natural defence, and distance from indigenous populations were significant considerations for the British in selecting these locations.

## Conclusion

The establishment of cantonments in Himachal Pradesh during the British colonial period was driven by strategic, administrative, and climatic considerations. These military settlements served as key outposts to secure the frontier, consolidate political power, and provide a healthier environment for British troops and officials. Despite the displacement of local populations and environmental impact, these cantonments played a significant role in shaping the urban landscape of the region. Their planned development, characterized by well-organized infrastructure and meticulous mapping, reflected British colonial power and confidence. However, the colonial urban settlements did not form a cohesive cluster and were scattered across the hills, emphasizing their strategic locations and isolation. The enduring significance of these cantonments underscores the enduring legacy of colonialism in Himachal Pradesh, with factors like scenic beauty, altitude, and strategic positioning contributing to their continued relevance.

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## Deities, kings, and memory: folklore as a living archive in the Shimla Hills

Malvika Singh Rana & B.K. Shivram

### ABSTRACT

Folklore emerges as a vehicle for making sense of historical events and their associated practices in regions where princely and divine domains intersect, creating a fusion of religious and temporal powers. Local rulers in such areas governed territories and maintained close ties with regional deities, whose support legitimized their authority and cemented their claims to power. Focusing on the legend of Banad Devta, a regional deity, and the Thakur of Rawin, a minor principality located east of Jubbal in Himachal Pradesh, this study attempts to understand regional power dynamics, social hierarchies, and ritual practices through the lens of folklore. In this context, folklore helps to interpret popular customs and practices, particularly in how it continues to uphold the symbolic authority of figures like the Thakur of Rawin in public consciousness, even after formal titles have diminished. The analysis demonstrates that in regions such as the Shimla Hills, folklore acts as a living archive, enriching our understanding of historical events and often filling the gaps left by written records.

**Keywords:** *Folklore, Memory, Kingship, Legitimacy, Social hierarchy.*

### Introduction

The Shimla Hills possess a rich history characterized by a complex interplay between sacred and princely narratives, where the lines between political and divine authority often blur and influence one another in intricate ways. In this region, local rulers not only governed their territories but also engaged deeply in the religious realm, aligning themselves with deities that affirmed their legitimacy and claim to rule. The region acts as a living testament to the interdependence of the divine and the temporal, where folklore, popular memory, and rituals preserve the legacy of these intertwined histories. Grounded in a shared cultural and historical context, the folklore surrounding the deity Banad and the Thakur

of Rawin encapsulates a profound narrative that helps us understand social hierarchies, ritual practices, and historical relationships.

Rawin, one of the 18 primary chiefships (*Athara Thakurais*) in the Shimla Hill States, was situated approximately 118 km east of Shimla (Ahluwalia, 1988, p. 55). It was split into two main parts, with the northern section encompassing the parganas of Shalgawan and Ratahar, and the second part consisting of a single isolated village named Salna. The northern portion was bounded by the Shilanti Khad and the Pabar River, with the Rawin parganas of Keonthal to the north. These parganas, which included the areas of Sharachli, Batar, and Katasu, were kept by the British after the Gurkha War in 1823 and later exchanged for Shimla with Keonthal in 1830. The eastern border of this section touched the isolated village of Sansog, part of Tehri Garhwal, while Tarhoch was to the south and Jubbal to the west. The detached section, Salna, was surrounded by Dhadi to the north and west, Tarhoch to the south, and Tehri Garhwal territory to the east (Punjab States Gazette, 1910).<sup>1</sup> Prior to the Gurkha war, most of Rawin's land (Sharachli, Katasu, Batar) aligned with the theistic domain of Banad Devta, the tutelary deity (*kul devta*) of the Rawin Thakur.



**Fig. 1: Map of Rawin (represented by the highlighted area)**

### The deity's pilgrimage

According to the lore, Banad Devta was residing in the village of Parounthi, an area under the jurisdiction of the Raja of Jubbal, where a disease led to a number of cattle deaths. The deity refused to accept ritual offerings (*pūjā*) because of the pollution caused by cattle deaths. After some days, the Devta who speaks through his oracle (*māli*) requested the Raja of Jubbal to take him on a pilgrimage to Badrinath and Kedarnath, seeking to cleanse himself from the impurity caused by the cattle deaths.

सिरठी परौंठी गोउता पाए, (*As the cows die in Sirthi and Paraunthi*)

लाये बनाइसिया गंगा रे बाए। (*Banad yearns for the Ganga*)

However, the Raja of Jubbal is said to have dismissed the Devta's appeal and even mocked the deity for not being able to bear the cost of the pilgrimage. He then suggested that since the Thakur of Rawin held a special reverence in the Devta's domain, it would be more fitting for him to fulfil the request. This can be interpreted as a statement steeped in the layers of social hierarchy and regional power dynamics. Historically, the Thakur of Rawin had sought and accepted assistance from Jubbal to resist the Gurkha incursions, which led to an acknowledgement of Jubbal's authority from 1816 to 1832. This dependency was used by the Raja of Jubbal to assert Rawin's status as a feudatory. It was only in 1898 that the status of Rawin along with Dhadi, was confirmed as independent (NAI, 1898). The British decision to place Rawin's territories under the administration of Keonthal redefined Rawin's political and symbolic status and further diminished Thakur's temporal authority. The Raja's suggestion to Banad Devta was a deliberate way to downplay Rawin's independence and show that, in the Raja's opinion, Rawin's ruler was not truly his equal but a lesser leader who should be subordinate to Jubbal.

राजा कैणी जुबलीयो बोलने बोले,

(*The Raja of Jubbal then mocks*)

गंगा जोगे खोरचो तेरे का होले।

(*The journey to ganga is beyond your means*)

As the lore goes, the Thakur of Rawin, Dhian Singh (1848-1887), who resided in Chalaug (present-day Nandpur region of Jubbal Tehsil), was afflicted by a *dōṣ* (divine curse). Upon consulting his advisors, he was counselled to seek guidance from his tutelary deity, Banad.

उतरो देओ कुलो रो धामा रो ओशा,

*(The tutelary deity came down in fever's guise)*

राती कियो बियाणी चलाओगो दोशा।

*( At dawn a divine curse was afflicted in Chalaug)*

During their encounter, the deity expressed the desire to undertake the pilgrimage. The Thakur, however, hesitated at first, saying that he would not be able to bear the kind of cost required to go on the pilgrimage.

ठाकुरो पूजो ध्यान सिंघो, लांबिया लोई,

*(Dhyan Singh arrives in robes so grand)*

गंगा जोगे, खोर्चो मुखे ना होए।

*(But the cost for Ganga I cannot withstand)*

This provides a glimpse into the precarious economic condition of Rawin, which was also lagging behind in the payment of the usual Nuzzerana (tribute) to the British government (NAI, 1898). As Hari Singh has written in his memorial:

“Like all other chiefs the Rawin Thakur always and has been and is a well-wisher and Loyal subject of Great Britain, and could not have lagged behind in the payment of the usual Nazarana or tribute had the whole of his State like all other hill chiefs been conferred upon him.”

Nevertheless, when the Devta promised that the majority of the expenses would be covered by his own riches and that the Thakur only needed to carry the deity and remain by his side throughout the pilgrimage, the Thakur agreed to the proposal. He subsequently embarked on the pilgrimage, attired in the garments of a yogi, accompanied by a small retinue.

ठाकुरा रो ध्यान सिंघा, बाही के खोड़ा,

*(Oh! Dhyan Singh, you stand steadfast by my side)*

खर्चो खजाने रो, सारतो कोरा।

*(From my treasure, all costs shall be supplied)*

मेरी शराचली नांगी तारारो,

*(My Sharachli, like a naked sword it stands)*

जिंदड़ी नाओ पिठड़ी बदरी केदारो।

*(With its grace, I shall bathe in Badri and Kedar's lands)*

The thakur and his retinue returned with the deity after a duration of eight months. The journey during this period was fraught with challenges, primarily due to the lack of communication channels and the difficult terrain, which posed significant risks. The perilous conditions heightened communal anxieties, and the sole hope during this time was for the safe return of the pilgrims. During this period, no celebrations or festivities, including marriages or feasts, were held. Drums and other musical instruments were silenced, overnight travel was prohibited, and sweets were strictly avoided. The silence of festivities symbolized the sombre mood and the shared anticipation of the deity's safe return. This period remains significant to the local community, as it continues to be observed during the pilgrimages of the Devta, a practice recorded in 1955, 1967, 1975, 1994, and 2017<sup>2</sup>. This not only highlights the continuity of this tradition but also emphasises its centrality in reaffirming communal bonds and the sacred connection with the deity.

### **The pilgrimages importance for Rawin Thakur**

The journey undertaken by Thakur Dhian Singh established a distinctive bond between his lineage and the deity, characterised by a sense of gratitude and mutual affinity. The deity declared the Thakur to be his *nyāsī* (someone who sits close to the deity during worship) which gives him the authority to participate in the deity's puja within the Garbhagriha (inner sanctum), even without the customary dhoti, a garment mandated for all other attendees. Further, his presence is mandated during the opening and closing of the *havan kuṇḍ* during ceremonies such as the *śānt Yağña*.

According to Mr. Shiv Singh, the *kārdār* (administrator) of the deity, the former Thakur of Rawin was seen riding his horse to the temple premises alongside the Devta's chariot (*rath*) during the *śānt Yağña* of 1996 in Pujarli, with the devta not minding the leather saddle of the horse—a material typically regarded as impure. The act redefines the concept of purity, rendering it a flexible, dynamic attribute that adapts to specific relational and ritual circumstances (Douglas, 1992, p. 7). In this way, what is traditionally considered defiling becomes acceptable within a certain context, shaped by the unique relationship between the Thakur and the deity. Here, purity becomes a flexible attribute, shaped by relationships rather than rigid adherence to norms. By riding alongside the deity's chariot, the Thakur not only asserts his unique status but also visually manifests his alliance with Banad Devta for the community to witness.



**Image 1: The former Thakur Rawin with the Devta during the *shānt yagya* of 1996, in Pujarli, Tehsil Jubbal**

The pilgrimage occurred at a time when Rawin faced significant political and territorial challenges, which subsequently also impacted its economic stability. Kulke elaborates that in colonial India's princely states, the loss of political power led rulers to focus their ritual policies on reinforcing and elevating their contested social status, both within regional circles and at the

imperial level (Kulke, 2010, pp. 603). During this time, when the authority of the Thakur weakened considerably, in both practice and perception, unlike traditional methods of reinforcing kingship through the construction of grand temples or by donating land and offerings to the deity, the Thakur maintained his authority primarily through an act of devotion. Galey suggests that territorial control is only legitimised through religious sanctuaries and cultic units. Instead of relying solely on military or administrative methods to assert authority, the king's influence is affirmed by his association with sacred sites and religious practices (Galey, 1983, p. 189). In this context, the Thakur strengthened his role as a ruler whose legitimacy was rooted in his ties to the deity rather than in his control over territory. This arrangement underscores the dual structure of authority in traditional Indian kingship, where sacral legitimacy could persist independently of secular authority. This allows the people to relate to the Thakur of Rawin not just as a ruler but as a figure symbolically enmeshed with divine endorsement and ritual purity. Even with the removal of the kings and the decline of official titles, kingship of the Thakur of Rawin endures through its association with the deity.

The pilgrimage, which included both financial contributions and the physical participation of the deity's subjects accompanying the Thakur, strengthened the bond not only between the Thakur and the deity but also between the Thakur and the local population. This collective experience reinforced the Thakur's legitimacy as a devout leader perceived to be chosen by and aligned with the divine will and laid the groundwork for establishing his vertical authority as a ruler (Eschmann et al., 1986, p. 137).<sup>3</sup> The community's collective memory continues to uphold these traditions, with the symbolic role of the Thakur functioning as a means of maintaining his nominal authority within public consciousness.

This serves as a distinctive case study illustrating the reliance of royal power on temple honours, with the role of *nyāsī* assigned to the Thakur symbolising a culturally privileged position in relation to the deity. As articulated by Appadurai and Breckenridge, the

public rituals of the temple provide a framework for defining, reinforcing, or even altering the rights and privileges tied to specific groups – in this case, the Thakur ( Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1976, pp. 187-188). Kingship is conferred or renewed through specific investiture rituals like the bestowing of the role of the *nyāsi* to the Thakur, underscoring that power is not an inherent trait of any leader; only those who complete the requisite rituals are endowed with legitimate authority (Galey, 1989, p. 130). In this context, the authority is inherently anchored in temples, where the deity represents the ultimate sovereign with the right to grant titles and important positions (Dirks, 2008, p. 288). So, if it is in the nature of gods to be dependent on men for their power, it is also in the nature of men to be dependent on gods in order to manifest their own (Galey, 1989, p. 150). This reciprocal dependence not only validates human authority but also reinforces the sanctity and supremacy of divine will in the political order.

### **Folklore as a living archive**

The term “folk” refers to any group of people who share at least one common trait, whether it’s occupation, language, religion, or another linking factor. “Lore,” refers to the content of folklore rather than the people who engage with it (Dundes, 1965, pp. 2-3). Folklore includes a wide range of expressions, including myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, jokes, riddles, charms, blessings, curses, and greetings; as well as folk practices such as costume, dance, drama, art, medicine, instrumental music, songs, speech, metaphors, and poetry as well as games, gestures, symbols, prayers, recipes and architectural styles (p.3).

Significant gaps exist in historical knowledge, and the further back we look, the scarcer are the resources available to historians. Much is required to form a complete picture of the past, particularly regarding the everyday thoughts and actions that remain undocumented. These elements – rituals, beliefs, and daily practices, often overlooked in chronicles—may not seem to directly influence the course of civilization, yet they shape the personal, religious, and political lives of individuals (Gomme,

1908, pp. 10-12). In this context, the study of folklore offers valuable insights into these dimensions of life by preserving beliefs, customs, and expressions that define various communities.

Folklore functions as a form of cultural autobiography, capturing the essence of societal values and norms, while embedding symbolic beliefs and “folk ideas” in stories that resonate across generations (Dundes, 1969, p. 471). To make unique experiences comprehensible, folklore situates them within a broader, familiar context, creating a narrative that is accessible to the community (Connerton, 1989). Bascom argues that one of folklore’s primary functions is to legitimise and reinforce the cultural practices, institutions, and social norms of a society (Bascom, 1954, p. 33). In this case study, the popular song of Thakur Dhiyan Singh is used to make sense of present practices and social norms as well as hierarchies. Legends and traditional narratives thus offer a means of preserving societal structures while simultaneously providing explanations for them. This function is particularly crucial for societies in which traditional values and norms play a significant role in shaping daily life, as folklore helps justify existing behaviours and community values, thereby promoting continuity. Folklore serves to legitimise social roles and hierarchies by narratively defining the responsibilities and characteristics of various societal roles.

This makes the ‘folk’, not just passive subjects but active agents in crafting and preserving their stories. It reflects a participatory historical approach, gathered from the voices of many contributors across various classes and social ranks (Botkin, 1940, p. 309). Folklore and its form act as living vestiges of cultural memory (311). Historical legends, such as those concerning Banad Devta and his unique relationship with the Thakur of Rawin, are not simply remnants of a bygone era; they are dynamic, carrying the collective consciousness and emotional bonds of the community within them.

The historian’s challenge lies in recognizing that folklore, though often dismissed as unreliable or fanciful, embodies cultural truths that enrich understanding. For example, the story of Banad Devta

describes how he bestowed privileges upon the Thakur following a religious journey—a narrative that signifies more than just a simple occurrence. The specific relationship a deity has with the *raja* is considered to be “historically- based”, in the sense that it refers to a particular episode that happened in the past (Berti, 2006, pp. 39-61). This reveals the complex interplay between theistic authority and temporal power, ritual legitimacy, and social memory. It acts as an insight into the communal psyche, seeing history through the shared lens of belief, ritual, and reverence, serving as a bridge between the past and present, breathing life into historical research and highlighting the roots of social structures that shaped communities such as those of the Shimla hills.

This approach transforms social history from mere documentation into a narrative with deep, interconnected roots that bring out the vitality and human essence of the past (Botkin, 1940). The history of the region, then, emerges from the collective memories and oral traditions passed down through generations, embodying what can be termed *Everyman's history* (Botkin, 1940). Thus, the folklore of Banad Devta and its ongoing resonance in popular memory reflect a history told by and for the people—a testimony to the power of oral traditions and collective remembrance in shaping the historical consciousness of a region. This perspective invites us to see that the history of Rawin and its Thakur is not confined to the pages of old records but thrives in the songs, stories, and rituals.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the history of the Shimla Hills is richly woven with sacred and princely traditions, where political authority and divine agency intertwine to form a complex legacy. The narratives surrounding Banad Devta and the Thakur of Rawin illustrate how sacred and royal histories intersect, grounding political legitimacy in religious authority. The pilgrimage undertaken by Thakur Dhian Singh of Rawin represents more than an act of devotion; it symbolises the enduring essence of kingship, even amid shifting territorial and economic landscapes. By participating in this pilgrimage with the deity, the Thakur reaffirmed his symbolic role,

securing divine endorsement that legitimised his authority in the eyes of the local people.

In this context, folklore serves as a vital resource, preserving these stories as communal memories and upholding social structures that outlast political changes. Through oral traditions, the people of the Shimla Hills sustain a historical consciousness that binds temporal power to sacred tradition. Folklore thus functions as a “living history,” highlighting the region’s enduring cultural and political identity. This study positions folklore as a crucial resource for historical inquiry, revealing the unique ways in which collective memory sustains and legitimises historical legacies. Beyond its narrative charm, folklore reveals the ways in which collective memory sustains historical legacies, offering insights into the complex relationship between power, religion, and society. It is through this intricate interweaving of sacred and political traditions that the region’s enduring legacy is both constructed and remembered.

## Notes

1. In the memorial addressed to the Queen, the Thakur of Rawin, Hari Singh (son of Dhian Singh), appealed against the Government of India’s order that designated him merely as a *zaildar* under Jubbāl’s jurisdiction. He recounted that, following the conclusion of the Gurkha War, Rawin’s territory was severely diminished when the British reallocated portions of it to Jubbāl, Garhwal, and the British themselves. According to Hari Singh the redistribution occurred due to the Rana of Rawin’s minority and the influence of his regent, who was the father-in-law of the Raja of Jubbāl and acted in Jubbāl’s interest. He asserts that even though territorially not dominant anymore, the chief of Rawin was independent of Jubbāl.
2. Phone correspondence with Mr. Shiv Singh, Kardar of Devta Banad, November 2, 2024. In all the subsequent journeys the deity was accompanied by at least one member of Dhian Singh’s lineage from Rawin.
3. Vertical legitimation focuses on building support within the local population of a smaller area (a sub-region). Horizontal

legitimation focuses on gaining recognition from other kings, equals and potential challengers.

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## **Community perception of CSR and its impact on sustainable development and corporate image**

**Dharmender Mehta**

### **ABSTRACT**

The perception of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the community plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable development and influencing the corporate image. It is imperative to understand the significance of CSR in promoting sustainable practices and how it can positively impact a company's image in society. When discussing the community's perception of CSR, it is essential to emphasize the connection between CSR and Sustainable Development and its impact on Perceived Corporate Image. There is a noticeable link between the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives carried out by Indian corporations and their adherence to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since 2014. This timeframe coincides with the implementation of mandatory CSR regulations under the Indian Companies Act of 2013. Therefore this study is an attempt investigates the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Hydro and Cement companies with regards to community development and sustainability, in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Companies Act, Section 135 of 2013. This study aims to examine the impact of multidimensional CSR constructs on the Corporate Image (CI), Ethical Citizenship (EC), and Sustainable Development Initiatives (SD) of Hydroelectric and Cement Companies operating in Himachal Pradesh. A structured questionnaire of 49 items is used to record respondents' perceptions. The selection of the companies was based on total CSR spending since companies' act made CSR spending mandatory. In this study, the population residing in the immediate vicinity of all cement and Hydroelectric companies has been considered to prepare a sampling frame from which a sample of 408 respondents was derived. The research data went through analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to confirm the research hypotheses. The findings of the study indicate that CSR constructs do not directly have a significant impact on Corporate Image. However, CSR affects Corporate Image indirectly through corporate sustainable development initiatives. Furthermore, it was observed that Corporate Ethical Citizenship also has a positive influence

on corporate image and the sustainable development of society. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there are significant implications for enhancing CSR spending to promote Sustainable Development and Corporate Image.

**Keywords:** *CSR, Ethical Citizenship, Sustainable Development, Corporate Image, PLS-SEM.*

## **Introduction**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the ethical principle that businesses have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of society and the environment, without seeking immediate or direct benefits in return (Singh 2013). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses various concepts such as “Business Ethics,” “Corporate Citizenship,” “Corporate Environment Management,” “Business & Society,” and “Corporate Governance”. While major corporations are the primary drivers of the social responsibility concept, socially responsible activities may be found in all sizes and types of businesses, both public and private, from sole proprietorships to multinational conglomerates (Ismail, 2009)”. Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives are of the utmost importance in cultivating positive perceptions among stakeholders, ultimately enabling corporations to attain enduring advantages through the cultivation of a positive corporate image and the enhancement of relationships between companies and stakeholders (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010).

There exists an organic link between the CSR activities undertaken by the Indian corporate sector and their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2014 onwards; the period after mandatory CSR came into existence as per Indian Companies Act, 2013 (Poddar et al., 2019). CSR entails the proactive involvement and active participation of companies in community development programs. Companies are actively engaging in transparent dialogue and collaborative efforts with different groups to develop social projects and initiatives (Acharya and Patnaik 2018).

The primary objective of these endeavours is to create a positive impact and foster trust by actively promoting social change. CSR's Role in Community Development is becoming more and more important as it creates active, sustainable communities founded on social justice and respect. This research paper investigates the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Hydro and Cement companies concerning community development and sustainability, as per the provisions outlined in the Companies Act, Section 135 of 2013.

The Schedule 7 of the Indian Companies Act, 2013, establishes a comprehensive framework within India. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promote the engagement of the private sector in pursuing developmental objectives. This facilitates the participation of companies from various sectors in addressing the shared objective of sustainable development and addressing the socio-economic and environmental challenges currently present in the country. Community Development promotes justice, equality, responsibility, choice, participation, mutuality, and reciprocity, and through continual learning, it empowers, enables, and educates (Federation of Community Development Learning, 2009). Porter and Kramer (2006) suggest that adopting a strategic approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR) that aligns with a company's core priorities, strengths, and capabilities enables the development of socially and financially responsible resolutions to prevailing CSR challenges. CSR has significant ramifications for both the community and the field of Community Development across various dimensions.

Corporate image is an abstract term that influences the public's overall assessment of the firm (Guo and Liu 2004). The concept of corporate image is multifaceted, leading to variations in its interpretation among scholars. The corporate image, as perceived by stakeholders, refers to their understanding and evaluation of the social concerns associated with a corporation (Lai et al., 2010). Some academics use the phrases "corporate image," "corporate reputation," and "corporate identity" interchangeably, whereas others are interested in clarifying the distinctions among them

(Phillips et al. 2019). The implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives has been found to enhance brand loyalty, corporate image, and awareness, as well as foster long-term commitment and environmental protection. Consequently, these initiatives help mitigate reputational damage and enhance the attractiveness of corporations to a diverse range of stakeholders, including employees, business partners, shareholders, governments, and customers (Jonhson et al., 2010). Therefore, this study specifically examines the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainable Development and Corporate Image (CI), focusing on the perspective of the local community in which the company operates. The study has made a comprehensive examination of the existing body of literature, which encompasses the fundamental components of CSR, Ethical Citizenship, Sustainable Development, and Corporate Image.

### **Literature review**

In recent years, a growing number of corporations have been allocating substantial amounts of time and resources towards initiatives aimed at promoting community engagement. These projects encompass a diverse corporate initiative aimed at providing support for the training and education of adults and youth within local communities (David et al., 2002). The term “corporate community involvement” has evolved to encompass the concept of corporate philanthropy. The act of corporate investment in community development is regarded as a novel paradigm that is anticipated to yield favourable business outcomes and contribute to the overall well-being of the economy (Ford Foundation, 2001). Corporate Social Responsibility comprises the notion that companies bear a moral responsibility to the society in which they conduct their operations, necessitating ethical conduct that surpasses legal obligations and extends beyond the interests of conventional stakeholders, including employees, consumers, suppliers, and the local community (Snider et. al., 2003). Stakeholders’ participation has a favorable effect on both the CSR initiatives and the company’s reputation. CSR performance is a powerful management tool for elevating a business’s reputation. It

suggests ways in which CSR management and sustainable development could be enhanced (Khuong et.al., 2021). Corporations are progressively being associated with or asserting responsibility for various aspects of the sustainable development agenda, including sustainable production and consumption, climate change and energy, protection of natural resources and environmental enhancement, and the promotion of sustainable communities (Moon, 2007). Investments in CSR can boost corporate profitability and reputation. Further CSR can attract investors, increase employee contentment, and cultivate a culture of innovation (Lantos, 2001).

The concept of Corporate Citizenship was first coined by professionals in 1990 to establish a connection between a company's actions and offerings and its involvement in broader societal matters, ultimately leading to reciprocal advantages (Valor, 2005). Business ethics and the triple bottom-line, which balances social, environmental, and economic considerations, and societal commitment, in which businesses assume tasks that were previously reserved for the state, express the broader value orientations that characterise modern corporate ethics and social and societal responsibility. (Rendtorff, 2019). Corporation exists in society and has rights and responsibilities as a member (or citizen) of that society (Carroll et al., 2012). Corporate Citizenship practices are derived from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives that businesses adopt in response to public pressure. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that public expectations are inherently unpredictable and unstable, which consequently requires Corporate Citizenship to continuously adjust and evolve (Verbeke and Tung, 2013). Naglaa et al., (2021) has studied the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Corporate Image in the construction industry. The dependent variable in this study is Corporate Image (CI), which is being examined to determine the potential impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practises on CI in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Further the Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility on Corporate Image has been studies by Arendt and Brettel, 2010; Cowan, and Guzman, 2020; Ailawadi, et al., (2001); and Visser,

(2006). It is widely acknowledged by scholars and experts that corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a significant role in the formation and development of corporate identity (CI). Corporate Image has conventionally been described as the overall evaluations made by external observers regarding a corporation, which are formed through assessments of the corporation's financial, social, and environmental effects that have been associated with it over a period (Barnett et al., 2006). However, there is a lack of consensus in the academic literature regarding the precise definition of corporate reputation. The distinction between brand, image, identity, and reputation has not been established (Yang and Grunig, 2005). According to Hart (1995), firms switch their competitive strategies based on natural resources into long-term competitive advantages by prioritizing investments in external social legitimacy and corporate reputation building.

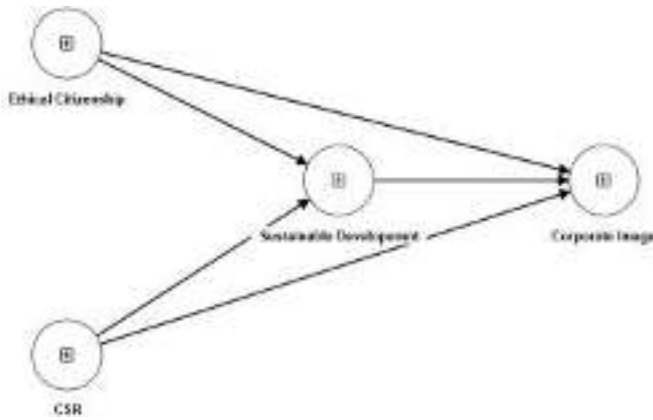
### **Research design**

This study aims to examine the impact of the multidimensional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) construct on the Sustainable Development (SD), and Corporate Image (CI) of Hydroelectric and Cement Companies operating in Himachal Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh large-scale industry presence is very scanty. Although many industrial houses are operating in Himachal Pradesh they can only be grouped in small and medium scale industrial units incurring negligible CSR expenditure. Given that most of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending in the state is incurred by Cement and Hydro Power Projects, these industries were selected for the current study. These companies were deemed appropriate for testing and validating the hypotheses of the study due to their significant expenditure on corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is now mandated to be 2% of the average profit earned in the past three years according to the Indian Companies Act, 2013. The research employed a sample of 408 participants, focusing on the nearby community residing close to both the Hydroelectric Project and Cement Plant. A structured questionnaire of 49 items is used to record respondents' perceptions and a 5-Points Likert scale has been applied to record

responses. The sample size adequacy was achieved by utilizing the G\*Power software (Faul et al. 2007). The research data went through analysis using a Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling–SEM) to confirm the research hypotheses. The PLS-SEM comprises the analysis and interpretation of the measurement model and structural model. The measurement model establishes the reliability and validity of the construct, whereas the structural model helps in hypothesis testing. The following hypothesis was formulated to evaluate the relationship of various conceptualized constructs under study:

- H<sub>1</sub>** : CSR Practices Have a Significant and Positive Impact on Corporate Image.
- H<sub>2</sub>** : CSR Practices Have a Significant and Positive Impact on Sustainable Development.
- H<sub>3</sub>** : Ethical Citizenship Practices Have a Significant and Positive Impact on Corporate Image.
- H<sub>4</sub>** : Ethical Citizenship Practices Have a Significant and Positive Impact on Sustainable Development.
- H<sub>5</sub>** : Sustainable Development Has a Significant and Positive Impact on Corporate Image.
- H<sub>6</sub>** : Sustainable Development mediates the relationship between CSR and Corporate Image.
- H<sub>7</sub>** : Sustainable Development mediates the relationship between Ethical Citizenship and Corporate Image.

The proposed model (Figure 1) is derived from the concept of the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1998) to facilitate and enact the implementation of sustainable development and Carroll's CSR pyramid which encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organisations at any given point in time" (Carroll, 1979). There exists an organic link between the CSR activities undertaken by the Indian corporate sector and their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2014 onwards; the period after mandatory CSR came into existence as per Indian Companies Act, 2013 (Poddar et al., 2019).



**Figure 1: Proposed research model**

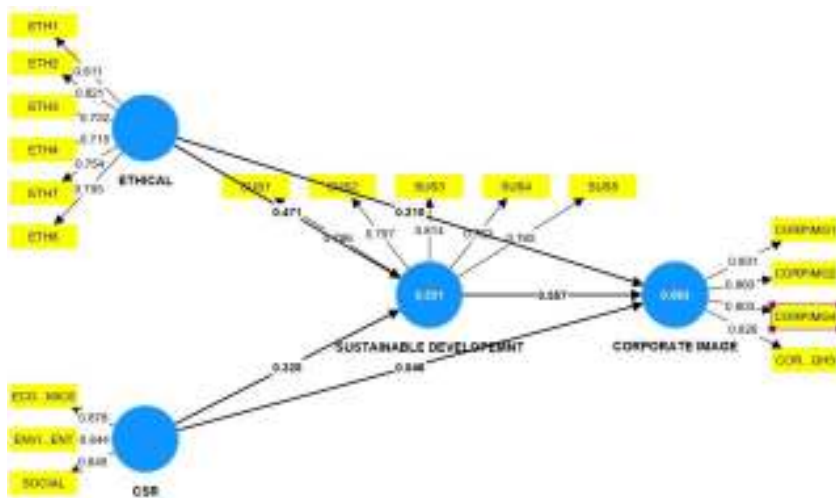
*Source:* Developed from a Literature Review

### **Analysis and interpretation**

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is a statistical analytical model that is commonly utilized for hypothesis testing. This preference is based on several factors, including the small sample size, lack of normality in the data, and the ability of PLS-SEM to work effectively even when distributional assumptions are not met (Binsawad, 2020)

### **Step 1: Outer model**

Confirmatory factor analysis (also known as CFA) is a subset of factor analysis that may be found in the field of statistics. In several fields of the social and behavioural sciences, confirmatory factor analysis has established itself as a crucial analytical method. It is a member of the family of approaches for structural equation modeling that enable the examination of causal relationships between latent and observable variables in a priori-specified, theory-derived model (Mueller and Hancock, 2001). Figure 2 depicts the overall proposed model of CSR-Corporate Image CFA results.



**Figure 2: Confirmatory factor analysis**

*Source:* PLS-SEM 4 Output

### Measurement model

The quality of the constructs under study is determined through the evaluation of the measurement model. Evaluation of Factor Loading will be followed by the establishment of reliability and construct validity (Table-1).

### Factor loadings

Factor Loading refers to “the extent to which each of the items in correlation matrix correlates with the given principal component, factor loadings can range from -1.0 to +1.0, with higher absolute values indicating a higher correlation of the item with the underlying factor” (Pett et.al.,2003). None of the items in the study had a factor loading less than the recommended value. “0.70 or higher is preferred (Table 1).

### Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

VIF statistic is utilized to assess multicollinearity in the indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to Hair et al (2011), multicollinearity is not a serious issue if the value for VIF is below

3. All the VIF values for the indicators under study for each of the indicators below the 3 (Table 1).

### **Reliability analysis**

According to Mark (1996), “Reliability is defined as the extent to which a measuring instrument is stable and consistent. The essence of reliability is repeatability. If an instrument is administered repeatedly, will it yield the same result”? Cronbach’s alpha and Composite Reliability are the two statistics that determine Internal Consistency Reliability. Composite Reliability should be 0.7 or higher. If it is exploratory research, 0.6 or higher is acceptable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The results for both Cronbach’s alpha and Composite Reliability results are presented in Table 1. The Cronbach’s alpha ranged from 0.819 to 0.856 whereas Composite Reliability statistics ranged from 0.831 to 0.859. Both indicators of reliability have values over the required threshold limit of 0.70 (Hair et al, 2011). Hence Construct reliability is established (Table 1).

### **Construct validity**

The Construct validity of a test refers to how effectively it measures the idea it was designed to evaluate. In PLS-SEM construct validity is verified when convergent and discriminant validity is established.

### **Convergent validity**

“Convergent validity is the degree to which multiple attempts to measure the same concept agree. The idea is that two or more measures of the same thing should co-vary highly if they are valid measures of the concept” (Bagozzi et al 1991). When the AVE is greater than or equal to the recommended value of 0.50, items converge to measure the underlying construct and hence convergent validity is established (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the current study, Convergent validity results depict that all constructs have an AVE > 0.50 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Reliability and validity analysis**

Variable/Indicators	Factor Loadings	VIF	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Corporate Image</b>			0.677	0.841	0.841
CI1	0.801	1.806			
CI2	0.860	2.256			
CI3	0.803	1.797			
CI4	0.826	1.996			
<b>CSR</b>			0.732	0.831	0.819
SocCSR	0.878	2.194			
EcoCSR	0.844	1.557			
EnvCSR	0.845	2.098			
<b>Ethical Citizenship</b>			0.583	0.859	0.856
EC1	0.811	2.131			
EC2	0.821	2.076			
EC3	0.752	1.708			
EC4	0.715	1.539			
EC7	0.754	1.786			
EC8	0.755	1.843			
<b>Sustainable Development</b>			0.617	0.845	0.844
SD1	0.786	1.820			
SD2	0.797	1.969			
SD3	0.814	1.960			
SD4	0.762	1.695			
SD5	0.765	1.762			

Source: Author's Calculation, PLS-SEM 4 Output

### **Discriminant validity**

“Discriminant Validity is the degree to which measures of different concepts are distinct. The notion is that if two or more concepts are unique, then valid measures of each should not correlate too highly” (Bagozzi et al. 1991).

### **Fornell and Larcker criterion**

According to Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, discriminant validity is established when the square root of AVE for a construct is greater than its correlation with all other constructs. In the present study Table 2, the square root of AVE for a construct was found greater than its correlation with another construct, which

gives strong evidence to support that discriminant validity exists among constructs.

Table 2: Fornell and Larcker

Constructs	Corporate Image	CSR	Ethical Citizenship	Sustainability
Corporate Image	<b>0.823</b>			
CSR	0.541	<b>0.856</b>		
Ethical Citizenship	0.623	0.666	<b>0.769</b>	
Sustainability	0.731	0.639	0.687	<b>0.785</b>

Source: Author’s Calculation, PLS-SEM 4 Output

HTMT is based on the estimation of correlation between the constructs. Discriminant validity is established based on the HTMT ratio. The threshold limit of the HTMT ratio is still under debate Kline (2011) suggested a threshold of 0.85 or less, while Teo et al (2008) recommended a liberal threshold of 0.90 or less. The HTMT results show (Table 3) that the HTMT ratio is less than the required threshold of 0.90.

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	Corporate Image	CSR	Ethical Citizenship	Sustainability
Corporate Image				
CSR	0.645			
Ethical Citizenship	0.727	0.780		
Sustainability	0.866	0.752	0.803	

Source: Author’s Calculation, PLS-SEM 4 Output

Step 2: Model fit test

The predictive ability of a model is evaluated using R-square Values ( $R^2$ ), which indicates the percentage of a variable’s variance that can be accounted for by its variables. The greater the value of  $R^2$  the more accurate the model’s predictive power. The results of the model fit test meet the overall model validation, where the  $R^2$  value obtained is 0.563. The  $R^2$  values of 0.75, 0.50,

or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables in the structural model can be characterised as significant, moderate, or weak, correspondingly (Hair et al., 2011). In behavioural sciences, any value of  $R^2 > 20\%$  is considered high (Rasoolimanesh et. al. 2017). Cohen (1988) also suggested  $R^2$  values for endogenous latent variables as follows: 0.26 (substantial), 0.13 (moderate), and 0.02 (weak). The  $Q^2$  value for PLS Predict output is  $0.428 > 0$  (Hair et al.,2011). A global model fit indicator, such as SRMR, is crucial in modern studies of PLS-SEM models for judging their goodness of fit (Hair et al 2020). The SRMR value of 0.066 (Table 4) in the model is significantly lower than the cut-off value of 0.08, indicating that the model used in the research had enough explanatory power (Henseler et al. 2016; Hu and Bentler 1999). Therefore, the data processing can proceed to the third stage, which involves hypothesis testing.

**Table 4:  $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$  and SRMR values**

Constructs	$R^2$	$Q^2$	SRMR
CSR, Corporate Image, Ethical Citizenship, Sustainability	0.563	0.428	0.066
$R^2$ above 0.50=Moderate $Q^2$ met. SRMR: fulfilled			

Source: Author's Calculation, PLS-SEM 4 Output

### **Step 3: Path analysis (hypothesis testing – inner Model)**

The significance test was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in Smart PLS to obtain the p-values and t-values. The criteria for determining significant conclusions, as outlined by Hair et al. (2011) involve reference values such as a p-value of less than 0.05 and a t-value greater than 1.96.

### **Direct relationship**

The next step in PLS-SEM is the assessment of hypothesized relationship to provide support for the proposed hypothesis. The bootstrapping (5000 resampling) procedure was used to determine t-values and percentile confidence intervals for path analysis (Hair et. al. 2017). Standardized regression coefficients and the effect

size ( $f^2$ ) of the dependent variables were calculated. The results are presented in Table 5 and Figure 3.

The findings reveal that CSR has a direct but insignificant impact on corporate Image ( $\beta=0.030$ ). Therefore Hypothesis-1: There is a significant impact of CSR on CI is rejected. CSR initiatives affect SD significantly ( $\beta=0.312$ ) thus verifying Hypothesis-2: There is a significant impact of CSR on Sustainable Development. Similarly, the results also show a positive and significant influence of EC ( $\beta=0.251$ ), of companies on CI and hence Hypothesis-3: There is a significant impact of Corporate Ethical Practices on Corporate Image has also been supported. Likewise, the finding also reveals the positive and significant influence of EC ( $\beta=0.486$ ), on SD and hence Hypothesis-4: There is a significant impact of Corporate Ethical Practices on Sustainable Development has also been supported. Further, there is a positive and significant influence of SD ( $\beta=0.537$ ) on CI and hence Hypothesis-5: There is a significant impact of Sustainable Development on Corporate image has also been supported.

### **Mediation results**

For hypothesized mediation relation the results revealed significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) mediating role of Sustainable Development as Hypothesis-6: Sustainable Development mediates between CSR and Corporate Image with  $\beta=0.167$ ,  $t=4.700$ ,  $p=0.000$ . The direct effect of CSR on sustainability was insignificant ( $\beta=0.030$ ,  $t=0.591$ ,  $p=0.555$ ). However, with the inclusion of the mediator, the total effect becomes significant ( $\beta=0.197$ ,  $t=14.813$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Hence it can be concluded that corporate Sustainable Development initiatives mediate fully the relationship between CSR and Corporate Sustainable Development. Similarly, Hypothesis-7: Sustainable Development mediates between Ethical Citizenship and Corporate Image with  $\beta=0.261$ ,  $t=6.707$ ,  $p=0.000$ . The direct effect of Ethical Citizenship on Corporate Image was insignificant ( $\beta=0.251$ ,  $t=4.535$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). However, with the inclusion of the mediator, the total effect is still significant ( $\beta=0.512$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Hence it can be concluded that corporate Sustainable Development

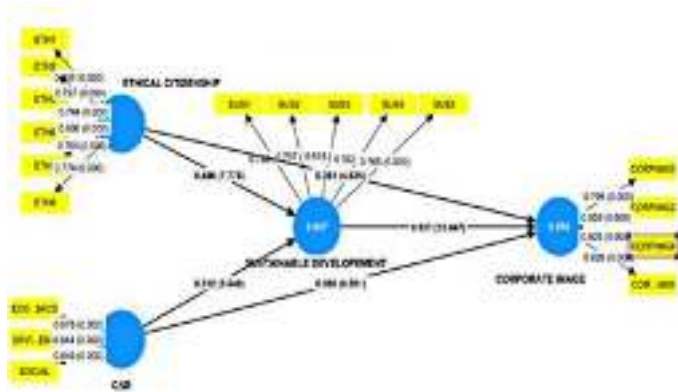
initiatives mediate partially the relationship between Ethical Citizenship and Corporate Image.

The contribution of each independent variable to the R-square values of a dependent variable is measured through  $f^2$  (Cohen 1988). Levels of  $f^2$  i.e., 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate a small, moderate, or large effect size respectively. In addition, Henseler and Chin (2010), established a minimum value for  $f^2$  as 0.02. As can be seen from the results, this minimum value exceeds in all cases except for Direct effects of CSR on Corporate Image ( $f^2=0.001$ ). However, in all other cases effect size range from small to medium range. (Table 5).

**Table-5: Direct relationship and mediation results (structure model with t-statistics)**

Hypothesised Relationship	H <sub>a</sub>	$\beta$	$f^2$	SD	t-value	p-values	Decision
CSR -> Corporate Image	H <sub>1</sub>	0.030	0.001	0.050	0.591	0.555	Rejected
CSR -> Sustainable Development	H <sub>2</sub>	0.312	0.115	0.056	5.549	0.000	Supported
Ethical -> Corporate Image	H <sub>3</sub>	0.251	0.063	0.055	4.535	0.000	Supported
Ethical -> Sustainable Development	H <sub>4</sub>	0.486	0.280	0.062	7.778	0.000	Supported
Sustainable Development-> Corporate Image	H <sub>5</sub>	0.537	0.310	0.050	10.647	0.000	Supported
CSR> Sustainable Development-> Corporate Image	H <sub>6</sub>	0.167		0.036	4.700	0.000	Supported
Ethical > Sustainable Development-> Corporate Image	H <sub>7</sub>	0.261		0.039	6.707	0.000	Supported

Source: Author's Calculation, PLS-SEM 4 Output



**Figure 3: Path analysis and hypothesis testing**

**Variance Accounted For (VAF)**

Table 6 further demonstrates the indirect impacts and Variance Accounted For (VAF). Variance Accounted for indicates the proportion of indirect effect to total effect (Hair et. al. 2011). The specific indirect effect of CSR on Corporate Image via Sustainable Development is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.167$ ). Regarding VAF, the indirect effect of CSR on Corporate Image is about 84.77 % of the total effect. Similarly, the specific indirect effect of Ethical citizenship on Corporate Image via Sustainable Development is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.261$ ). Regarding VAF, the indirect effect of Ethical citizenship on Corporate Image is about 50.98 % of the total effect.

**Table 6: Variance Accounted For (VAF)**

Hypothesis	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Direct Effect in %	Indirect Effect in %
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	VAF= Direct Effect/Total Effects	VAF= Indirect Effect/Total Effects
CSR> Sustainable Development-> Corporate Image	0.197	0.03	0.167	0.03/0.197=15.23%	0.167/0.197=84.77%
Ethical > Sustainable Development-> Corporate Image	0.512	0.251	0.261	0.251/0.512=49.02%	0.261/0.512=50.98%

Source: Author’s Calculation, PLS-SEM 4 Output

## Findings and managerial policy implication

The study has identified evidence suggesting that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have a positive effect on Sustainable Development and Corporate Image. The hydro and cement companies in Himachal Pradesh demonstrate a heightened concern for their environmental, economic, and ethical responsibilities, thereby enabling them to effectively attain their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research has yielded a significant discovery regarding the sequential mediation of CSR and Corporate Image through Sustainable development. This paper aims to provide theoretical insights into the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on the Corporate Image of companies. Additionally, it seeks to examine the indirect effects of CSR on Corporate Image by considering the mediating role of Sustainable development. This assertion is supported by the fact that there exists a full mediation between CSR and Corporate Image, through the mediation being complete. However, it is important to note that there is no evidence of a directional cause in this relationship. Additionally, Variance Accounted for (VAF) indicates the proportion of indirect effect to total effect (Hair et. al. 2011). The indirect effect of CSR on Corporate Image via Sustainable development measures is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.197$ ). Regarding VAF, the indirect effect of CSR on Corporate Image is about 84.77 % of the total effect. Similarly, VAF, the indirect effect of Ethical CSR on Corporate Image is about 50.98% % of the total effect.

The findings of this research have important implications for policymakers in the hydroelectric and cement sectors. It highlights the need to move beyond solely focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility and instead prioritize Sustainable Development and ethical considerations within CSR practices. From a pragmatic standpoint, it is evident that the incorporation of CSR initiatives focused on sustainability can yield numerous benefits. These initiatives, aimed at improving community satisfaction, not only promote the advancement of a more prosperous society but also strengthen the overall corporate image among the public. About

public policies, the findings presented herein demonstrate the potential advantages that can be derived from the implementation of awareness-raising initiatives and support programs designed to incentivize hydroelectric and cement enterprises to adopt sustainability-oriented CSR practices. These benefits would extend to both the broader society and the aforementioned companies. However, the research possesses inherent limitations that contribute to the identification of potential avenues for future research. This research paper is predicated on findings derived solely from a subset of hydroelectric and cement companies. Therefore, it is important to note that the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other geographical areas due to the influence of various factors on CSR, including cultural norms, ethical considerations, legal frameworks, and economic conditions. Hence, it is recommended that future research endeavors employ a more extensive sample size encompassing diverse geographical areas and other industrial sectors. Similarly, the present article solely relies on cross-sectional data, thus implying that these findings may be subject to temporal fluctuations. Hence, it would be of scholarly interest for future investigations to employ longitudinal data to evaluate potential temporal variations.

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## Challenges in accessing agricultural credit among tribal and non-tribal communities in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh

Vijay Kumar & Karan Thakur

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges faced by tribal and non-tribal farmers in accessing agricultural credit in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, with a focus on identifying disparities between these communities. Using data collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed via the Mann-Whitney U test, the research identifies significant differences in the perception of barriers to credit access. The findings indicate that tribal farmers experience greater difficulties than their non-tribal counterparts, particularly in terms of awareness about loan schemes, accessibility to financial institutions, and securing sufficient loan amounts. Additionally, while interest rates were not considered as a major concern by either community, the study highlighted the significant burden of non-interest costs such as application fees, service charges, and the time and travel expenses incurred by farmers, especially those in remote tribal areas. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions, including financial literacy programs, improved banking infrastructure, and more accessible loan products tailored to the specific needs of tribal communities. These measures can help bridge the gap in agricultural credit access and promote financial inclusion for marginalized communities in rural India.

**Keywords:** *Access; Agriculture; Credit; Chamba; Farmers; Tribal; Non Tribal; Himachal Pradesh.*

### Introduction

In present developing India, rural areas depended on agriculture; still continue to hold significant importance, not only as sources of livelihood but also as key contributors to employment generation. Agriculture is the largest source of livelihood for the rural

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population, which not only provides food and economic opportunities for rural population but also is devotion for them. It plays a critical role in the improvement in the life of people and overall development of the country as well (Kumar, V. 2022). Agriculture is the backbone of rural India, plays a vital role in ensuring the sustenance of farmers' lives. Currently, Indian agriculture is undergoing a transitional phase, where modern inputs, technologies, and resources have become indispensable (Kumar, A. Shinoj, P. & Joshi, P.K. 2010; Khan, N. et al., 2021). In this modernization process, alongside advanced techniques and inputs, finance emerges as a critical input (Yang & Zhu, 2013). Agricultural credit holds a unique yet highly significant place in this context. As an important tool to empower the farmers, credit is central to this transformation to take up necessary inputs, modern farming techniques and technologies (Scobie, G.M. & Franklin, D.L., 1977).

Most of the farmers in India belong to the small and marginal categories, and their share in the agricultural landscape has been steadily increasing, as highlighted by the 2015 Agricultural Census. According to 2015-16 Agriculture Census there was a 1.53% decrease in the total operated area compared to 2010-11 and 146.45 million operational holdings are there in India, with an aggregate area of 157.81 million hectares. However, there was an increase in the number of operational holdings and the average size of operational holdings decreased from 1.15 hectares in 2010-11 to 1.08 hectares in 2015-16, More than half of these operational holdings (126.06 million) are marginal and small, covering a total area of 74.07 million hectares, accounting for 46.94 percent of the total Holdings. The prevalence of small landholdings contributes to the poverty and low income levels among many Indian farmers, limiting their ability to invest in agricultural improvements (Sidhu & Gill, 2006).

In the context of agricultural growth, land and labor are no longer the primary drivers. Instead, capital investment and scientific knowledge have become crucial sources of agricultural advancement, with their contributions rapidly increasing (Rao,

C.H. 1980). This shift highlights the growing importance of finance for modern inputs and technological advancements with adequate credit in driving agricultural productivity and transformation (Scobie, G.M. & Franklin, D.L., 1977). For regions like Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, where diverse geographical and socioeconomic conditions prevail, access to agricultural credit is essential for sustaining and modernizing farming practices. Credit helps farmers to buy necessary inputs and adopt modern technologies to improve their farm production (Etonihu, Rahman, and Usman, 2013), it is an important means of supporting the poor farmers by stabilizing their income and reducing their vulnerability to financial hardships (Elias, Ahmad, and Patil, 2015). However, to access credit by farmers are fraught with challenges, particularly for marginalized communities such as tribal and small-scale farmers. However, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of credit systems. Research shows that farmers face many problems, such as unfair treatment, issues of collaterals, awareness or financial struggles, and other issues that affect their ability to get credit. These challenges make it harder for them to access the adequate agricultural credit properly, highlighting the need to understand these problems better.

In developing economies, farmers often face credit constraints and low income due to their inability to provide collateral to secure bank loans, this limits their access to formal financial support for farming purpose (Conning and Udry, 2007). Farmers in India rely for institutional and non institutional sources to avail credit for their farming and non farming purpose also (Tak & Tak, 2010). Informal sources include family, friends, relatives, and moneylenders, while formal sources operate through a well-organized three-tier structure. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and NABARD serve as the apex institutions in this system, while commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), and cooperative banks provide direct credit to farmers. Additionally, many banks collaborate with village-level societies and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to deliver credit at the grassroots level (Kumar, Singh & Kumar, 2007). Ayegba, & Ikani (2013) mentioned that the

agricultural development can be accelerated by providing farmers with adequate credit at the right time, in the right place, and through the right institutions. Over the years, there has been a significant shift in the share of formal and informal credit sources in India. In 1951, institutional credit accounted for only 7.3% of borrowings by cultivator households, with a large 92.7% coming from non-institutional sources such as moneylenders and informal lenders. By 2016, this trend had reversed, with institutional sources making up 72% of borrowings, leaving only 28% from non-institutional sources. This change highlights the increasing role of formal financial institutions in providing credit to farmers, supported by policies and initiatives to reduce dependence on informal credit. Institutional agricultural credit has played a pivotal role in promoting modern farming techniques and private investments in agriculture by ensuring farmers have timely access to adequate credit at low-interest rates (Kumar & Thakur, 2023). However, despite the growing share of formal credit, farmers still face several challenges in accessing it. Issues such as the limited availability of financial institutions, their distance from farmers' homes, high-interest rates (Shobha & Siji, 2018), lack of awareness about various loan schemes, complex loan processes, and the need for collateral continue to create barriers (Sahni, M., 2020; Dhakshana & Rajandran, 2018). These challenges underscore the need for focused efforts to make formal credit more accessible and farmer-friendly.

This study seeks to address these critical gaps by investigating the underlying factors that hinder access to agricultural credit for tribal and non-tribal farmers in Chamba. Access to credit is influenced by several factors which also lead to several challenges. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue, highlighting the systemic, institutional, and socio-cultural challenges that contribute to the inequities in credit access. The findings will offer insights for policymakers to design targeted interventions that promote financial inclusion and support sustainable agricultural development in the region.

## **Review of literature**

Subramanian, & Sunil (2017), observe that ensuring timely and adequate access to agricultural credit is essential for the growth of the farming sector. Efforts must focus on eliminating illegal costs associated with obtaining credit, which often burden farmers and hinder financial inclusion. Additionally, measures should be implemented to provide the required credit promptly and in sufficient amounts to meet the diverse needs of farmers. These steps are critical to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural finance systems.

Alam Khan, P., & Nazeer, D.I. (2019) identify and examine the challenges faced by farmers in obtaining and repaying agricultural loans. Farmers encounter issues such as crop failure, fluctuating monsoons, and insufficient awareness of loan procedures, collateral requirements, low yields, and volatile market rates. Major barriers include poverty, illiteracy, lack of mechanization, inadequate capital formation, poor marketing facilities, and limited knowledge of high-demand crops. Borrowers often face additional costs and procedural difficulties in securing credit, which can have long-term negative effects. Eliminating unnecessary costs and simplifying credit access are essential for mitigating these challenges.

Odinwa, et al. (2022), examine the challenges faced by farmers in accessing agricultural credit for enhanced food production, particularly in Delta State. It highlighted that farmers are more familiar with informal credit sources compared to formal ones, which remain largely inaccessible. Key challenges identified include a lack of trust by lending institutions, inadequate leadership vision in agriculture, and insufficient awareness of available credit facilities. Other barriers include high interest rates, lack of required savings with banks, diversion of loans for non-agricultural purposes, and the absence of insurance practices among farmers. Additional challenges include gender disparities, farmers' inability to repay revolving loans, illiteracy, the cost and

demand for feasibility reports, and farmers' aversion to risk. These issues collectively hinder effective access to agricultural credit.

Soundarya & Parimalarani (2022), conducted a study in Tamil Nadu focusing on understanding the challenges faced by farmers in accessing agricultural credit from financial institutions. The findings revealed that the primary issues included delays in loan disbursement, high costs associated with the credit application process, inadequacy of loan amounts, and a lack of knowledge about agricultural credit. Farmers also struggled with completing loan applications and were unaware of various loan schemes offered by banks. Additionally, the scale of finance was found to be insufficient. The study emphasized that the inadequacy of loan amounts was the most significant challenge, highlighting the growing credit needs of farmers in line with the rising costs of cultivation.

Lakhan, G.R. et al. (2020) identified challenges in agricultural finance provided by commercial banks. Bankers faced issues like indiscriminate borrower selection, political pressures, and delays due to incomplete documents such as no-dues and title deeds. Borrowers encountered problems including lack of awareness about loan programs, rigid procedures, delays in loan sanctioning, and disbursal processes.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To examine the challenges faced by tribal and non-tribal communities in accessing agricultural credit in Chamba.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the challenges faced by tribal and non-tribal communities in accessing agricultural credit in Chamba. It aims to identify and analyze the socio-economic, institutional, and procedural barriers that hinder credit accessibility for these communities. The study also seeks to highlight disparities between tribal and non-tribal communities of study area in terms of their perception about the different problems faced by them in accessing the agriculture credit in term of overall cost of credit in other variables. By understanding these

challenges, the research intends to provide actionable insights to improve the financial inclusion of farmers in the region.

### **Research methodology**

Study comprised primary data to obtain the required objective of the study. Primary data is collected using a semi structured questionnaire-cum-schedule, designed to capture comprehensive information about farmers' experiences with agricultural credit access. Three stages sampling with stratification was adopted. In the first stage all the seven blocks of Chamba district was selected, in second stage 3 villages with highest rural population from each development block was selected, and in 3<sup>rd</sup> and final stage 20 rural households accessing credit was selected purposively in the study. Total 420 respondent households were selected from the population of 94,596 rural households calculated by Finite Population Correction Factor formula to determine sample size.

The collected data analyzed employing statistical tools to identify patterns and relationships between different variables. Comparisons are made between tribal and non-tribal communities to understand disparities and unique challenges.

### **Scope of the study**

The research aims to provide actionable insights into improving credit access for both tribal and non-tribal farmers, addressing systemic and regional challenges while suggesting policy interventions for financial inclusivity.

### **Study area**

The study is focused on Chamba, a district located in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India. Chamba is known for its diverse geography, ranging from plains to mountainous regions, and is home to both tribal and non-tribal communities engaged in agriculture which is a unique combination of the district. The district's agricultural landscape is characterized by traditional farming practices comprising small and marginal farmers in majority, and the farming community relies on agricultural credit

to sustain and improve their livelihoods. Despite the availability of various credit sources, there are significant challenges in accessing financial resources. This study explored these challenges in detail, focusing on both tribal and non-tribal farmers in Chamba.

## **Analysis and interpretation**

### **(i) Overall cost of the credit**

The overall cost of credit encompasses all expenses incurred by farmers while obtaining and utilizing agricultural loans. These costs include interest rates, Loan Charges beyond Interest, Negotiation Cost and Cost of Time and Travel, such as travel expenses to banks and time lost during loan application and approval processes, for tribal and non-tribal farmers in Chamba, additional factors such as informal charges or bribes, the cost of preparing required documentation, and collateral-related expenses significantly increase the financial burden which are also included in the four main components of these area. These hidden costs disproportionately affect small and marginalized farmers, making credit access both expensive and challenging. Addressing these cost components is essential to ensure affordable and inclusive credit for all farmers in the region.

The analysis highlights the significant financial burdens faced by farmers in accessing agricultural loans. Among the various components, the cost of time and travel stands out as the most substantial expense, with a mean value of 3.78 and the highest variation (standard deviation of 0.782), highlighting the logistical and geographic challenges and even opportunity costs borne by farmers, particularly in remote areas, significantly contribute to the overall cost of credit. The Loan Charges beyond Interest and Negotiation Costs were found to have similar mean values of 2.33 and 2.32, respectively, indicating a consistent additional financial strain due to formal charges and informal negotiation-related expenses. Meanwhile, the amount of interest paid shows a lower mean of 1.73 but with moderate variability (standard deviation of 0.707) reflecting the benefits of standardized interest rates or institutional frameworks offering concessional credit. The overall

cost of credit, with a mean of 2.60 and a low standard deviation of 0.434, reflects the uniformity of the cumulative burden across respondents.

Results of the analysis represent that the respondents did not find interest rates very high, likely because they rely more on institutional sources offering concessional loans to farmers. However, Time and Travel Costs had the highest average, indicating that farmers spend significantly more on travel to access agricultural credit, these costs are likely influenced by geographic and logistical challenges, especially for those in remote areas. In comparison, the average expenses for Interest Paid, Loan Charges, and Negotiation Costs were lower. The low variability in Interest Paid suggests that standardized interest rates or regulations provide consistency across borrowers, Loan Charges and Negotiation Costs showed moderate variability, possibly due to differences in borrower characteristics, loan terms, or negotiation methods. In contrast, Time and Travel Costs showed the greatest variability, driven by factors like distance to credit institutions, making it a critical area for policy makers to address for reducing the overall cost of credit for farmers. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to reduce hidden costs, streamline loan procedures, and address the logistical challenges that disproportionately affect small and marginalized farmers, ensuring equitable access to credit for all.

Table 1: Overall cost of agriculture credit

Overall cost of credit			
	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Amount of Interest paid	725	1.73	.707
Loan Charges beyond Interest	982.67	2.33	.569
Negotiation Cost	977.50	2.32	.598
Cost of Time and Travel	1589.67	3.78	.782
Overall Cost	1092.86	2.60	.434

Source: Field Survey 2023-24.

### **Community wise analysis and cost of agriculture credit between tribal and non-tribal farmers households**

The independent samples t-test was conducted to analyze the community-wide differences in the cost of agriculture, focusing on various cost components. Different component of cost included in the study was interest paid, loan charges beyond interest such as cost of application fees, other forced purchase lender services, service fees charged, bribes in this, rate of minimum deposit, closing costs, amount paid to obtain back collateral, Negotiation costs associated included, money paid to extension agents, amount paid to local officials or leaders, technicians expenses, gifts and bribes to local agents, Time and Travel cost including costs of frequent visits to the bank to get a loan, loss of work time, and the cost to collect documents required for a loan. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances utilized to assess the equality of variances between the two groups, followed by a t-test for Equality of Means to determine if there were significant differences in the mean values of the specified costs. For the category "Cost of Interest paid," the Levene's Test indicates equal variances ( $F=1.167$ ,  $p=.281$ ), and the subsequent t-test suggests no significant difference in means between tribal and non-tribal areas ( $t=-1.725$ ,  $df=418$ ,  $p=.085$ ). However, for others the Levene's Test suggests equal variances.

The analysis revealed several significant and non-significant differences between the two communities. Notably, significant differences were observed for application fees, forced purchase of other lender services, service fees charged, payments made to extension agents, and payments to local officials or leaders. Specifically, application fees exhibited a mean difference of  $-0.440$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that one community incurred substantially lower application fees. Similarly, the forced purchase of other lender services showed a mean difference of  $-0.268$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), highlighting that one community faced fewer forced purchases. Service fees charged also differed significantly, with a mean difference of  $-0.294$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting lower service fees for one community. Payments made to extension agents showed a

mean difference of -0.199 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating disparities in costs, while payments to local officials or leaders displayed a positive mean difference of 0.230 ( $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting higher costs for one community in this regard. On the other hand, cost components such as the rate of minimum deposit, closing costs, bribes, cost of frequent visits to the bank, loss of work time, and document collection costs did not show statistically significant differences between the communities. These findings imply that while certain costs of agricultural credit are similar across communities, others vary significantly due to rely on different institutions and different institutional practices, accessibility to credit facilities, or socio-economic factors. The observed discrepancies highlight the necessity of policy intervention in specific costs like application fees, service charges, and forced purchase to make agricultural credit easily accessible to all. The efforts to rectify these deviations will further help in eliminating the burden on the targeted communities and increase the level of accessibility and affordability in the credit system.

**Table 2: Independent samples t-Test results for community-wise analysis of agricultural costs**

Cost Component	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Sig.)	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Cost of Interest Paid	0.281	-1.725	418	0.085	-0.122	0.070	-0.238 to -0.005
Application Fees	0.001	-4.483	418	0.000	-0.440	0.098	-0.602 to -0.278
Forced Purchase of Other Lender Services	0.568	-3.033	418	0.003	-0.268	0.089	-0.414 to -0.123
Service Fees Charged	0.743	-3.384	418	0.001	-0.294	0.087	-0.437 to -0.151
Bribes Involved to Take Credit	0.002	-0.554	418	0.580	-0.058	0.105	-0.232 to 0.115
The Rate of Minimum Deposit	0.290	-0.768	418	0.443	-0.070	0.091	-0.220 to 0.080
Closing Costs Paid	0.079	-1.606	418	0.109	-0.154	0.096	-0.311 to 0.004
Paid Amount to Extension Agents	0.004	-2.136	418	0.033	-0.199	0.093	-0.352 to -0.045
Paid Amount to Local Official or Leader	0.636	2.489	418	0.013	0.230	0.093	0.078 to 0.383

Paid Expense for Technician	0.290	-0.697	418	0.486	-0.077	0.110	-0.259 to 0.105
Paid Gifts and Bribes to Local Agent	0.294	0.927	418	0.355	0.096	0.103	-0.075 to 0.266
Cost of Frequent Visits to the Bank to Get Loan	0.569	0.536	418	0.593	0.047	0.087	-0.097 to 0.190
Loss of Work Time	0.371	-0.563	418	0.574	-0.052	0.093	-0.206 to 0.101
Cost to Collect Documents Required for Loan	0.526	-1.011	418	0.313	-0.099	0.098	-0.260 to 0.062

*Source:* Field Survey 2023-24.

In conclusion, the Independent Samples t Test conducted on the cost of agriculture credit in tribal and non-tribal areas has revealed significant variations in various cost components. While no significant difference was found in the cost of interest paid, this result may be attributed to their reliance on institutional sources that offer concessional credit to farmers at the same rate of interest. This practice extends beyond community identification and regional differences, suggesting uniformity in interest rates provided by these sources to both tribal and non-tribal farmers. While noteworthy distinctions were identified in crucial aspects such as “Application fees,” “Forced purchase of other lender services,” and “Service fees Charged.” The statistical analysis underscores the importance of considering not only interest-related costs but also ancillary expenses, including bribes, minimum deposit rates, closing costs, and expenses associated with negotiation and documentation.

## **(ii) Problems associated with agriculture credit**

The challenges of agricultural finance are numerous and complex. Managing farm finance involves issues at both organizational and functional levels. Farmers obtain credit from non institutional and institutional agencies for various purposes, but many farmers faces difficulties during this process. In this study, we aimed to explore farmers’ perceptions to identify the various problems they face while accessing agricultural credit in the study area, using a 5-point Likert scale. Based on insights derived from previous literature, a comprehensive list of potential issues and challenges

was identified which are related to the access of agriculture credit. Respondents were asked to record their responses on a five-point Likert scale. Following the completion of data collection, descriptive statistical tools were employed to analyze the data. Specifically, measures such as sum, mean, and standard deviation were calculated to interpret the findings. The identified issues were ranked in descending order based on their mean values obtained from the analysis. Additionally, this study emphasizes community-specific challenges in accessing agricultural credit, aiming to provide a clear understanding of the problems faced by farmers within different community contexts. The study has shown the various problems in obtaining the institutional credit, which is presented in table 2.

**Table 3: Overall problems associated with access to agriculture credit**

Descriptive Statistics	Sum	Mean	Rank
The location of banks and credit agencies is far from my village, making them difficult to access.	1598	3.80	1
Visiting banks or credit agencies leads to a loss of my daily wages.	1563	3.72	2
I lack awareness about loan schemes, their processes, and the required procedures.	1546	3.68	3
The loan application process is too complicated and time-consuming for me.	1472	3.50	4
There are frequent delays in the sanctioning of my loan, causing inconvenience.	1395	3.32	5
Banks demand high-value security as collateral, which I find difficult to provide.	1284	3.06	6
The amount of loan sanctioned to me is often insufficient to meet my needs.	1224	2.91	7
The loan repayment period provided to me is too short for me to manage comfortably.	1221	2.91	8
I experience a lack of cooperation from bank staff during the loan process.	1103	2.63	9
Bank officials display favoritism, which affects my fair access to loans.	1041	2.48	10
The interest rates on loans are high, making repayment challenging for me.	629	1.50	11

Source: Field Survey 2023-24.

The findings reveal that the location of banks and credit agencies emerged as the most significant challenge, with a mean score of 3.80. This issue, ranked first, underscores the geographical constraints faced by rural farmers, particularly those residing in remote tribal areas, where accessing financial institutions often requires considerable time and effort. The second-ranked challenge, with a mean score of 3.72, is the loss of daily wages incurred by farmers while visiting banks or credit agencies. These points to the opportunity cost of availing credit, which disproportionately affects small and marginal farmers who rely on daily earnings for sustenance. Farmers also reported a lack of awareness about loan schemes, processes, and required procedures as a major challenge, with a mean score of 3.68 (ranked third). This indicates a significant gap in financial literacy, which limits their ability to access formal credit and leverage available schemes effectively.

The complexity and time-consuming nature of the loan application process ranked fourth, with a mean score of 3.50. Many farmers expressed frustration over the cumbersome documentation and procedural requirements, which deter them from pursuing formal credit options. Delays in the sanctioning of loans, with a mean score of 3.32 (ranked fifth), further exacerbate farmers' difficulties, causing disruptions in their agricultural activities, especially during critical periods such as sowing and harvesting seasons. Other challenges include the requirement for high-value collateral, ranked sixth (mean score: 3.06), which poses a significant hurdle for resource-poor farmers. Additionally, the loan amounts sanctioned are often insufficient to meet their needs (ranked seventh, mean score: 2.91), and the repayment periods are too short to be manageable (ranked eighth, mean score: 2.91).

Farmers also reported experiencing a lack of cooperation from bank staff during the loan process, with a mean score of 2.63, ranked ninth. This indicates potential gaps in customer service and empathy from financial institutions toward rural borrowers. Ranked tenth, with a mean score of 2.48, is the issue of favoritism among bank officials, which affects the equitable distribution of

credit. Farmers perceive that this practice undermines their fair access to financial resources. Finally, the high interest rates on loans were identified as the least significant challenge, with a mean score of 1.50 (ranked eleventh). While this issue may not be as pressing as others of costless, it still poses a challenge for farmers with limited earning capacity.

These challenges directly linked with the farmer's access of agriculture credit and required targeted interventions to address these challenges. As with improving institutional infrastructure and rely on concessional credit by the farmers, their concern toward interest rate is very low but still other challenges which are associated with the access of credit are important to address like as improving the accessibility of banks and credit agencies, enhancing financial literacy, streamlining loan processes, and fostering a more cooperative approach among banking staff could significantly improve farmers' access to credit. Additionally, tailoring loan products to better suit the specific needs of tribal and non-tribal farmers in Chamba could ensure a more inclusive and effective agricultural credit system.

### **Community wise problems associated with access to agriculture credit**

Community wise problems associated with Access to agriculture credit was identified with Mann-Whitney U test which examine whether there are significant differences in how non-tribal and tribal (scheduled tribal) communities perceive challenges related to accessing agricultural credit. This test is also known as the Wilcoxon rank-sum test, which is a non-parametric statistical method that compares two independent groups. It is particularly useful when the data does not meet the assumptions of normality or when the variables are ordinal or non-continuous. The test works by ranking all data points across both groups, calculating the U statistic, and analyzing the p-value to identify any significant differences between the groups' median ranks. A p-value below a commonly used threshold (such as 0.05) indicates that the differences between the two groups are statistically significant.

This suggests that the non-tribal and tribal communities experience or perceive the challenges of accessing agricultural credit differently. The application of the Mann-Whitney U test in this study try to provides valuable insights into the unique difficulties faced by each community, allowing for a deeper understanding of community-specific problems. This analysis helps to highlight disparities and can inform targeted policy interventions to improve agricultural credit access for both tribal and non-tribal farmers.

Table 4 presents the mean ranks of challenges associated with accessing agricultural credit, grouped by tribal and non-tribal communities. It highlights how these two different communities rank these challenges differently, providing insight into the relative importance or intensity of the issues for each community. Table 5 presents Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics which shows the results of the test, which assesses whether the differences in the mean ranks from Table 4 are statistically significant. It provides p-values and test statistics for each problem, indicating the challenges where the differences between the two groups are meaningful or not.

**Table 4: Mean Ranks of Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Problems Associated with Access to Agricultural Credit**

Problem	Community	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Awareness	Non-Tribal	255	182.08	46430.50
	Scheduled Tribal	165	254.42	41979.50
Banks and Credit Agencies Location	Non-Tribal	255	198.59	50640.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	228.91	37770.00
Loan Procedure	Non-Tribal	255	203.22	51820.50
	Scheduled Tribal	165	221.75	36589.50
Delay in Loan Sanctioning	Non-Tribal	255	213.77	54511.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	205.45	33899.00
High Value of Security	Non-Tribal	255	205.94	52514.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	217.55	35896.00
Cooperation by Staff Members	Non-Tribal	255	214.86	54790.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	203.76	33620.00
Bank Officials' Favoritism	Non-Tribal	255	215.52	54958.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	202.74	33452.00

Insufficient Period of Loan	Non-Tribal	255	205.64	52439.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	218.01	35971.00
Insufficient Amount	Non-Tribal	255	197.66	50402.50
	Scheduled Tribal	165	230.35	38007.50
Loss of Wages	Non-Tribal	255	197.38	50331.00
	Scheduled Tribal	165	230.78	38079.00
Interest Rate	Non-Tribal	255	216.53	55214.50
	Scheduled Tribal	165	201.18	33195.50

Source: Field Survey 2023-24.

**Table 5: Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics for Problems Associated with Access to Agricultural Credit**

Problem	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Awareness	13790.500	46430.500	-6.333	0.000
Banks and Credit Agencies Location	18000.000	50640.000	-2.716	0.007
Loan Procedure	19180.500	51820.500	-1.642	0.101
Delay in Loan Sanctioning	20204.000	33899.000	-0.730	0.465
High Value of Security	19874.000	52514.000	-0.998	0.318
Cooperation by Staff Members	19925.000	33620.000	-0.947	0.344
Bank Officials' Favoritism	19757.000	33452.000	-1.091	0.275
Insufficient Period of Loan	19799.000	52439.000	-1.051	0.293
Insufficient Amount	17762.500	50402.500	-2.780	0.005
Loss of Wages	17691.000	50331.000	-2.905	0.004
Interest Rate	19500.500	33195.500	-1.709	0.088

a. Grouping Variable: Community

Source: Field Survey 2023-24

The results indicate a statistically significant difference in the perception of awareness-related challenges between tribal and non-tribal farmers, with a p-value of 0.000. Tribal farmers reported a significantly higher mean rank (254.42) compared to non-tribal farmers (182.08), suggesting that lack of awareness about loan schemes and processes is more pronounced among tribal communities. This highlights the need for targeted financial literacy programs to address this gap. Similarly, the location of banks and credit agencies was found to be a significant challenge

( $p = 0.007$ ), with tribal farmers (mean rank 228.91) facing greater difficulties than non-tribal farmers (mean rank 198.59). This finding underscores the importance of improving physical accessibility to financial institutions, particularly in remote tribal areas.

Other significant differences were observed for challenges related to the insufficient amount of loan sanctioned ( $p = 0.005$ ) and loss of daily wages due to visits to banks ( $p = 0.004$ ). In both cases, tribal farmers (mean ranks of 230.35 and 230.78, respectively) expressed greater dissatisfaction compared to their non-tribal counterparts (mean ranks of 197.66 and 197.38, respectively). This suggests that credit amounts often fall short of the needs of tribal farmers, and the opportunity cost of accessing credit is disproportionately higher for them.

For other challenges, such as the loan procedure, delay in loan sanctioning, high value of security, cooperation by staff members, bank officials' favoritism, insufficient loan repayment periods, and interest rates, the differences between tribal and non-tribal communities were not statistically significant ( $p$ -values  $> 0.05$ ). This indicates that both communities face these issues to a similar extent, reflecting broader systemic inefficiencies in agricultural credit delivery.

Result of the study highlight critical disparities in specific areas of agricultural credit access between tribal and non-tribal farmers, particularly in areas such as awareness, accessibility, loan amounts, and opportunity costs. Tribal communities are significantly more disadvantaged in terms of awareness, access, and financial adequacy, necessitating targeted interventions to bridge these gaps. These findings emphasize the need for community-specific interventions, including financial literacy campaigns, decentralized banking infrastructure, and tailored credit policies that address the unique needs of tribal farmers. Such measures can help bridge the gap in agricultural credit access and contribute to the financial inclusion of marginalized communities in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by tribal and non-tribal farmers in accessing agricultural credit in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. The analysis reveals significant disparities between the two communities, particularly in terms of awareness, accessibility, and the financial burden associated with credit. Tribal farmers face greater difficulties in understanding loan schemes (Mean Rank = 254.42), accessing nearby banks and credit agencies (Mean Rank = 228.91), and securing adequate loan amounts (Mean Rank = 230.35). These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve financial literacy and bank infrastructure in tribal areas, ensuring that the specific needs of tribal farmers are addressed effectively.

Additionally, while interest rates were not a major concern for either community, the study highlighted the significant burden of non-interest costs such as application fees, service charges, and the time and travel expenses incurred by farmers, especially those in remote tribal areas. With a mean value of 3.78 for the cost of time and travel, it is evident that geographical isolation exacerbates the financial strain on farmers. The Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that these challenges are more pronounced for tribal communities, with statistically significant differences in the mean ranks for issues like awareness and the location of credit facilities, reinforcing the need for policy reforms that address these logistical barriers and reduce the associated costs.

Ultimately, the results of this study call for a comprehensive approach to improve agricultural credit access in Chamba, focusing on reducing geographic and economic barriers, enhancing awareness, and tailoring financial products to the needs of marginalized communities. By addressing the unique challenges faced by tribal farmers, such as the lack of awareness, remote locations of credit agencies, and inadequate loan amounts, policy reforms can help create a more inclusive and accessible credit system. This would not only improve the economic well-being of farmers but also contribute to the broader goal of financial

inclusion in rural areas, ultimately bridging the gap between tribal and non-tribal communities in accessing agricultural credit.

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## Effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode local government

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### ABSTRACT

Poverty poses significant challenges to academic performance among school children, particularly in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. This study delved into the effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode. Employing a descriptive survey design, data was collected from junior secondary school students using Students Poverty Scale (SPS) and Student Achievement Test (SAT). Findings revealed a high level of poverty among students, with many families struggling to afford basic necessities and educational resources. Academic performance was predominantly low, with a majority of students scoring below average. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between poverty and academic performance. These results underscore the detrimental impact of poverty on students' educational outcomes. Recommendations include efforts to alleviate poverty, strengthen teacher-student relationships, create inclusive classrooms, and provide adequate school resources. Addressing poverty is crucial for improving academic performance and narrowing the achievement gap among students.

**Keywords:** *Poverty, academic performance, school children, child development.*

### Introduction

Education is a process that helps people develop their abilities, attitudes, and skills. Every child has the right to an education,

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whether it be western or traditional. As a result, education is seen by humans, other people, and the global community as a part of culture. This underscores the need for man to educate himself and his progeny in order to succeed in society. One of the things that prevents man from performing his educational tasks to the best of his abilities is poverty.

Poverty has been seen as a way of life marked by low calorie intake, lack of access to adequate health facilities, a low-quality education system, low life expectancy, unemployment, and underemployment (Ogwu, 2021). Children raised in poverty are more likely to face emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors, and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion (Brito & Noble, 2019; Jensen, 2019). As educators, we must be aware of the effects of poverty in order to put these strategies into practice and lessen the likelihood of lower academic achievement.

Children reared in poverty have numerous obstacles to overcome. Long-term barriers including persistent stressors and structural alterations in the brain that affect emotion and memory are examples of hurdles. Some difficulties are more situational, leading to emotional and interpersonal difficulties. Among the mental health problems are significant rates of depression among low-income parents and kids (Jensen, 2019). Students who have encountered emotional and social difficulties could exhibit disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Jensen, 2019). They could also lack impulse control and be impatient. Because they were raised by a caregiver who was insensitive to their needs, their behavioural reactions may be restricted. Jensen (2019) identified multiple causes for this occurrence. A considerable number of these students may have grown up with an adolescent mother. Having to work several jobs to make ends meet frequently results in parents or caregivers being overworked. As a result, parents or guardians become less understanding of their children's needs, feelings and instead impose harsher discipline. It is less common for parents or guardians who have previously struggled in school to participate in extracurricular activities or meetings with their

parents. An increase in disruptive behavior in the classroom may be the result of poor mental health brought on by a lack of parental support.

Furthermore, kids who grow up in poverty might not have learned social graces and manners (Jensen, 2019). It's possible that they are not empathetic. As a result, many pupils find it challenging to collaborate effectively with their peers in cooperative groups. Because they can't collaborate well with their peers, these kids frequently end up as unwelcome group members, which exacerbates their feelings of inadequacy and causes them to give up on a task before they can finish it. Academic achievement may suffer from poor social skills since they make classmates reject them.

Previous studies on the causes and consequences of poverty have been carried out in both industrialized and developing nations. Income inequality has been found to be crucial in poverty reduction measures, as previous studies have shown that the degree of poverty depends on the income level and the degree of inequality in income distribution (Bradshaw, 2022; Aigbokhan, 2021; Obadan, 2021; Bourguignon, 2020; Adams, 2019; Bulama, 2019; Kalwij and Verschoor, 2017; Obi, 2017).

Looking at child development from Piaget's theory (1896 – 1980), according to this theory, cognitive development in a child as to be continuous process of unfolding, but with recognized stage or level. At this presence stage of learning student should be given good life in a conducive environment. To him, cognitive development is a progressive reorganization of mental processes which can only be achieved in a through biological maturation and environment experience. It has been established that is only through interacting directly with the environment that student can be able to construct within he or herself a schematic understanding of his physical and social word. All these cannot be materialized in a poor environment where poverty ravage the land. How can a student give their best when their immediate needs are not met? It mighty be a shocking story that students went to school in Nigeria

without taken breakfast and such students is expected to be active in class (Ajayi, 2018).

The question of whether there is a causal relationship between school children's academic performance and poverty this has received less attention in Nigeria, despite the fact that numerous studies have looked at the relationship between inequality and poverty (Bourguignon, 2020; Adams, 2019; Kalwij and Verschoor, 2017; Ogbeide and Agu, 2015). Thus, in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, this study examined the effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode Local Government.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study ultimately investigated effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. The specific objectives are to determine:

- i. the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government;
- ii. the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government; and
- iii. the relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government.

### **Research questions**

- i. What is the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?
- ii. What is the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?
- iii. Is there any significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

### **Methods**

This study used a descriptive survey design as its primary research method. The population for this study is made up of junior secondary school students from Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State. Ijebu-Ode was specifically chosen for this study because it is an urban area and the researcher is acquainted with the locality. From the schools in Ijebu-Ode, ten were chosen at random. From each of the

chosen schools, which had 300 students total, thirty junior secondary school students were chosen at random. Due to the nature of the study, schools with both male and female pupils were chosen. For this study, two research instruments were used, namely: Students Poverty Scale (SPS) and Student Achievement Test (SAT).<sup>15</sup> scale statements on the SPS (Students Poverty Scale) were self-designed and were based on the Likert 4-point scale of Strongly Agree(SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Positively worded phrases receive 4, 3, 2, and 1 points on the scales (SA), (A), (D) and (SD), correspondingly.

For remarks that were phrased negatively, this was reversed. To ensure their suitability with regard to the targeted learners, the 20 item scale instrument was reviewed by peers and experts. JSS 2 students were given the test by the researcher with help from the teachers of JSS in the schools. The reliability of the system was estimated using the Kuder-Richard 21 Formular, which produced a coefficient of 0.72. The data were coded, and descriptive analysis, including frequency count, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data.

The instrument, SAT, was developed by the researcher to measure students' achievement in Mathematics, English and National Value Education and this consists of two sections. Section A sought for the background information of the students such as name, school, sex and local government. Section B consisted of thirty multiple choice items focusing on three general areas: English (10 items) National Value Education (10 items), and Mathematics (10 items). The content validity of the instrument was ensured by giving it to experts in the field of Sociology and Social Studies Education. The reliability of the instrument was ensured by trial testing it in two public schools that were not part of the study. The researcher with the assistance of the JSS 2 teachers in those schools administered the instrument on JSS II students. Meanwhile, Kuder- Richard 21 Formular was used to estimate its reliability which gave a coefficient of 0.76. The discriminating indices and average difficulty levels for each of the twenty items were computed. The

average difficulty index obtained was 0.48 which showed that the instrument was neither too difficult nor too simple. The test-retest reliability conducted on the theory aspect of the achievement test revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.72.

The correct response earned one mark while an incorrect response earned zero mark since they were multiple-choice objective type. No correction was made for guessing because sufficient time was allowed for the students to work on the questions.

Results

Table 1: Gender distribution of the students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	146	48.7
Female	154	51.3
Total	300	100.0

Table 4.1 presents the gender distribution of the students. It can be seen that 48.7% (146) of the students are males while 51.3% (154) are females.

**Research question 1:** What is the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

Table 2: Level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government

S.No.	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	My family often struggles to afford basic necessities like food and clothing.	122 40.7%	104 34.7%	61 20.3%	13 4.3%	3.12	0.88
2	I frequently worry about my family's financial situation.	119 39.7%	149 49.7%	27 9%	5 1.6%	3.28	0.69
3	I have ample money for extracurricular activities or school-related expenses.	44 14.7%	95 31.7%	85 28.3%	76 25.3%	2.36	1.02
4	I have access to the same educational resources as my wealthier classmates.	33 11%	85 28.3%	165 55%	17 5.7%	2.45	0.76
5	I sometimes skip meals due to lack of food at home.	128 42.7%	140 46.7%	24 8%	8 2.7%	3.29	0.73
6	I feel embarrassed about my family's financial status.	68 22.7%	162 54%	56 18.7%	14 4.7%	2.95	0.78

7	I disagree that my family has enough funds to cover unexpected expenses.	88 29.3%	98 32.7%	86 28.7%	28 9.3%	2.82	0.96
8	I receive adequate healthcare when needed.	31 10.3%	34 11.3%	146 48.7%	89 29.7%	2.02	0.91
9	I often experience anxiety related to financial issues.	156 52%	88 29.3%	28 9.3%	28 9.3%	3.24	0.97
10	I must work to contribute financially to my family.	85 28.3%	165 55%	16 5.3%	34 11.3%	3.00	0.89
11	My family can consistently pay bills on time.	67 22.3%	79 26.3%	103 34.3%	51 17%	2.54	1.02
12	I have the same opportunities for success as my wealthier peers.	14 4.7%	36 12%	161 53.7%	89 29.7%	1.92	0.77
13	I worry about how my family's financial struggles may impact my future.	119 39.7%	149 49.7%	27 9%	5 1.6%	3.28	0.69
14	I sometimes feel excluded because of my family's financial situation.	98 32.7%	151 50.3%	17 5.7%	34 11.3%	3.04	0.92
15	My family can easily afford school supplies and textbooks.	34 11.3%	56 18.7%	94 31.3%	116 38.7%	2.03	1.02
16	My school adequately supports students from low-income backgrounds.	115 38.3%	131 43.7%	48 16%	6 2%	3.19	0.78
17	I have experienced housing instability or homelessness.	68 22.7%	50 16.7%	86 28.7%	96 32%	2.30	1.14
18	Poverty significantly affects my academic performance.	126 42%	82 27.3%	70 23.3%	22 7.3%	3.04	0.98
19	I have equal access to technology and the internet compared to my wealthier classmates.	72 24%	68 22.7%	78 26%	82 27.3%	2.43	1.13
20	I feel comfortable seeking help when needed.	54 18%	120 40%	66 22%	60 20%	2.56	1.01
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.90</b>

**Key:** VH-Very High (4.00-3.26), H -High (3.25-2.51), L-Low (2.50-1.76), VL - Very Low (1.75-1.00)

Table 4.2 reveals the result of the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, Ogun state. It can be seen that 75.3% (226) of the students responded that their families often struggled to afford basic necessities like food and

clothing, 89.3% (268) opined that they frequently worried about their family's financial situation while 60.7 (182) of them believed that they did not have access to the same educational resources as their wealthier classmates. It can equally be seen from the table that 89.3% (268) of the students responded that they sometimes skipped meals due to lack of food at home, 83.3% (250) supported they must work to contribute financially to their families while 70% (210) of them opined that their families could not easily afford their school supplies and textbooks. Moreover, the table also reveals that 69.3% (208) of the students believed that poverty significantly affected their academic performance while 58% (174) of them responded that they felt comfortable seeking help when needed. Based on this analysis, with weighted mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) value of 2.74 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.90, it can be concluded that the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, Ogun state was high.

**Research question 2:** What is the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

**Table 4.3: Level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government**

S.No.	Marks obtained by students in the SAT	Frequency	Percent	Remark
1	1 – 14	184	61.3	Failed
2	15 – 30	116	38.7	Passed
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Key:** SAT – Students Achievement Test (Min. Score = 5, Max. Score = 21)  
 Total Marks Obtainable (n) = 30, Grand Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) = 13.217, Standard Deviation (SD) = 3.685  
 Very Low = 1 - 24%, Low = 25 - 49%, High = 50 - 74%, Very High = 75 - 100%

Table 4.3 presents the level of academic performance of students in the SAT (Mathematics, English and National Value Education) in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. With grand mean score of 13.217, standard deviation of 3.683, it can be seen that 61.3% (184) of the students scored below average marks (1 - 14) in the Students Achievement Test while remaining 38.7%

(116) scored above average marks (15 - 30) i.e. passed the test. This means that majority of the students did not perform well in the test. Hence, it can be concluded that the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State was low ( $\bar{x}$ =13.217, SD= 3.685).

**Research question 3:** Is there any significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

**Table 4.4: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government**

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	DF	r	Sig.	Remark
Poverty	300	53.692	3.352	298	0.174*	0.039	Significant
Academic Performance	300	13.217	3.685				

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.4 presents the result of the significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State ( $r=0.174$ ,  $df=298$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This implied that poverty is significantly related to the students’ academic performance in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. This means that the level of poverty among the students will determine the level of their academic performance in junior secondary schools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State.

**Discussion**

The result of the first research question in Table 4.2 revealed that the level of poverty among the school children in the local government was high. It was found that majority of the families were oftenly struggling to afford basic necessities, school supplies and textbooks for their wards due to their financial situations. As a

result many of these children had to work or support the family in way or the other. Majority of them sometimes skipped meals due to lack of food at home and did not also have access to the same educational resources as their wealthier classmates. All these will have impact on the thinking, memory, attitude and behaviour of the students. This result is in support of the findings of Brito and Noble (2019) and Jensen (2019) who in their studies reported that children raised in poverty are more apt to experience emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors, and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion.

The result of the second research question in Table 4.3 on the level of academic performance of students in the SAT (Mathematics, English and National Value Education) in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State revealed that majority of students did not perform well in the test. This poor performance of students in the test may be linked to lack of access to basic needs and educational resources that could have hitherto been of great assistance to their academic prowess. This result is tandem with the findings of Bolarin (2011) who in his study found that low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources, and numerous studies have documented the correlation between low socioeconomic status and low achievement, several strategies exist to assist teachers in closing the poverty achievement gap for students.

Moreover, from the result of the third research question as presented in Table 4.4, showed that there was a significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. This implied that poverty is significantly related to the students' academic performance. This means that the higher the level of poverty among the students, the lower the level of their academic performance and vice versa. This result is in agreement with the findings of Elumu, Zikusooka and Gibson (2023) who found that poverty of students at home is positively associated with academic performance. They also reported the variables that were found to

be significantly associated with academic performance to include feeding conditions, provision of facilities and equipment at school and home related factors. Limited poverty in form of being well equipped with all the needs does not only stop students from failure but also enhances students' brains and attention in class. On the other hand, students whose families are totally poor and do not get enough resources to facilitate their academics will lack attend and focus and which may affect their academic performance negatively.

## **Conclusion**

The study has revealed that poverty has the potentials of affecting the academic performance of students negatively. High level of poverty among students will deprive them the opportunity to have access to basic needs at home and educational resources at school. This may lead to lack of assimilation, attention, focus and concentration in the classroom and which may eventually result to poor academic performance among the students.

## **Recommendations**

In order to improve the academic performance of the students and close the gap created by poverty, the following actions should be taken. The parents should strive and work hard in order to provide the basic needs for their children. The teachers should endeavour to build strong relationships between themselves and their students. They should also create inclusive classrooms where children from both the rich and poor homes have equal opportunity. The government should intensify efforts in organize poverty reduction programmes in order to eliminate poverty among parents and should support the schools with the necessary school equipment and resources in order to improve the management of school activities thus improving the academic performance.

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## **Innovative techniques of teaching and learning of business education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the innovative techniques of teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. The study used the descriptive survey research design. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprised of fifty five (55) Business Education Lecturers in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. Data was collected through eighteen (18) item structured questions from the two research questions with a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, Very Low Extent. The questionnaire was validated by two experts in the department of Business Education and one expert from department of measurement and evaluation from Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu. Reliability coefficient 0.72 was established using Cronbach alpha. The analysis of data was done using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t- test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that innovative strategies for teaching and learning leads to more efficiency and improved outcomes. The study also revealed that most of the resources for teaching and learning business education subject are not available in secondary schools. This means that most of the resources identified for teaching of business subjects are not made available in the schools. However, it was recommended that; Curriculum planners and implementation and educational policy makers should sensitize the school and teachers on the need to put more emphasis on utilization and improvising of resources

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materials in teaching and learning of Business Education subjects. The government as a matter of policy should recruit more qualified graduate teachers to teach at junior secondary school level most especially Business studies. Adequate instructional materials should be provided for effective teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** *Innovative, strategies, teaching, learning, Business Education.*

## **Introduction**

Business education is an aspect of the total educational programme that provide the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to do well in the business world (Igboke, 2005). Okoli (2010) maintained that business educationist an important part of general education which emphasizes skills and competency acquisition for use in offices and business-related occupations. Similarly, Ibrahim (2008) states that business education encompasses knowledge, attitude and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and function effectively in their economic systems.

In the same vein, Osuala (2002) opines that it is a training system that encourages the beneficiary to acquire skills that will make him/her fit into the world of work. In support of the above, Nwanewezi (2010) describes business education as encompassing education for office occupations, business teaching, business administration and economic understanding.

In summary of the fore-going, Abdulkadir (2011) observed that one remarkable important characteristic of business education programme is that, its products can function independently as self-employed and employers of labour. To this end, the tenet of business education embraces basic education, entrepreneurship, business environment and vocational practices.

Notwithstanding the fact that some slight discrepancies exist in the definitions above, recent professional literature in business education has stressed more and more on a dual purpose of the

discipline. That is, business education as education for and about business.

Innovation is a driver of growth and well-being in the economy and society. In education, innovation has also become an imperative to bring about qualitative changes alongside the expansion of education systems. Innovation leads to more efficiency and improved outcomes in quality and equity of learning opportunities. Innovative instructional strategies engage students with different kinds of stimuli activity-based learning. Education is a light that shows mankind the right direction to surge. Modern innovative instructional strategies incorporates technology into teaching-learning methods to recreate, enrich and more realistic experience for students for a rewarding teaching experience (Akinyele, Oke & Bolarinwa, 2017).

According to Revathi, Elavarai & Sarawanan (2019) the innovative strategies in teaching and learning are as follows: ICT Teaching, Online interaction before, during and after class, Demonstration, Videos, Self-learning, Skill Communication, Group discussion, Problem solving teaching, Use digital tools and reusable learning objects, Smart board class rooms, Core qualities, Interactive approach, Critical thinking and analysis, Activity based, Cooperative teaching, Experimental approaches to class design, Project based teaching learning, Research based teaching learning.

Many researches on the availability of available resource carried out in Nigeria, in schools offering Business Education programme often revealed the presence of inadequate training facilities in the schools. They further stressed that even the few available ones are not being maintained. There are poor storage facilities for them and so they become non- functional.

The innovative technology used for teaching and learning business education is researched by Krishina (2013) and Noor (2004) are identified; Technology driven classroom, Activity based learning,

Computer based assisted instruction, Collaborative learning, The learning laboratory.

Other technology devices available for teaching and learning in Business education according to Ezenwafor (2012) include slide projectors, skillful keyboarding, Email among others. Although, these technologies are not new in many advanced countries, they are relatively few in Nigeria. While some of them are already being utilized in some schools, they are yet to be used in many of Ogun State educational institutions.

The foregoing discussion has established facts that business education subject are more of practical and should be taught in practical method and will therefore; examine the innovative technique of teaching and learning, and how it determine the academic performance of business education student of both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

### **Statement of problem**

Being a skilled-oriented subject, business education requires the use of machine and other equipment for effective teaching to take place. But the government doesn't see to the provision of necessary resources for teaching and learning business education.

Nigeria students are being more educated more in accordance with yesterday's world rather than in preparation for tomorrow's living. Emphasizing the need for the provision of instructional materials in schools, business education subject being a skilled area of study cannot be learnt by the student. To give this training, the schools must be equipped with the necessary materials on which it intends to give, but rather it appears that most school that offer business education are not adequately equipped for the instructions.

Teaching and learning situations, in terms of teaching strategy, instructions content, roles of the teachers and context of the curricular is made obvious and inevitable.

It is in light of the above, that the paper seeks to determine the innovative techniques of teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. It is this problem that this study sought to solve.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the innovative techniques of teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.
2. Ascertain the extent of utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.
2. To what extent do utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

### **Null hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect

business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent utilization of instructional materials in teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

## **Method**

The study adopted a descriptive survey. This design according to Nworgu (2015) is one in which group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered being representative of the entire group. The population used for the study was 55 business education lecturers in both Colleges & University of Education in Ogun State. The population was chosen because Business Education lecturers are in the right position to respond to innovative techniques enhancing teaching and learning of Business Education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. The entire population was used for the study due to its manageable size no sampling and sampling techniques.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire that consist of two parts. Part 1 was designed for demographic data of the respondents, while part 2 contained a total of 18 items structured into two sections (A and B) according to the research questions. Section A has ten (10) items was used in collecting data to analyses the innovative technique for pedagogical application of business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. Section B comprises of eight (8) items that was used to collect data concerning the utilization of instructional materials in teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun

State. The response options of Very High extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE).

The value of the response options the real limits of the mean was used. Therefore, any item with mean between 4.00-3.50 was regarded as Very High Extent, 3.49-2.50 High Extent, 2.49-1.50 Low Extent, 1.49-1.00 Very Low Extent. Any mean above the criterion mean of 2.50 was regarded as High Extent while any item below 2.50 was regarded as Low extent.

These items were structured to provide answers to the research question formulated for the study. The instrument was face validated by three experts. Two in business education department of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun and one person in measurement & evaluation from same university. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The instrument was divided into two sections. The sections yielded the following reliability coefficients; section A had.74, section B had.76. The grand coefficient was.74, indicating that the instrument was reliable for use in data collection. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the weighted mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to answer the research questions while standard deviation was used to check the closeness of their responses. The t-test was used to test all the null hypotheses at.05 level of significance and at the appropriate degree of freedom.

The null hypothesis was significant where the probability value was less equal to.05 significant level at appropriate degree of freedom, otherwise the null hypothesis was not significant.

### Results and presentation research question 1

**To what extent do innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.**

**Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State**

S.No.	Items on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State	Overall		Decision
		X	SD	
1	It is the determinants of assessing academic performance of students.	3.27	0.75	High Extent
2	Its success or failure of students depends to a large extent on the quality of available resources in school.	3.22	0.81	High Extent
3	It has a significant relationship with academic achievement of students.	3.24	0.79	High Extent
4	It encourages schools endowed with more resources to perform better than schools that are less endowed.	3.47	0.50	High Extent
5	It has improved ages and all forms of education when applied appropriately.	3.24	0.91	High Extent
6	It enables Business educators to be trained and retrained to enhances and improve their performance and efficiency as well as to impact knowledge.	3.27	0.80	High Extent
7	It encourages conducive classroom for effective teaching and learning.	3.43	0.70	High Extent
8	It creates more access and provision of innovative techniques has huge impact on the growth of student	3.12	0.71	High Extent
9	It enables teachers to use technology driven classroom among others to create content.	3.16	0.76	High Extent
10	It combines text, graphics, sound and video to enhance learning process.	2.94	0.88	High Extent
	<b>Cluster Mean/ SD</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>0.77</b>	High Extent

The analysis of data presented in Table 1 above shows mean rating ranging from 2.94 to and 3.47 indicating high extent. This means that the items are extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both

Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. The overall cluster mean of 3.23 further indicates that the respondents agree to the items to a high extent. The low standard deviation of .73 indicates that the respondents have similar opinion to the items as extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

## Research question 2

**To what extent do utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.**

**Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State**

S.N o.	Items on the extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State	Overall		Decision
		X	SD	
11	It helps to acquire more insight into the subject proper.	3.14	0.87	High Extent
12	It enables students to learn from the material as a firsthand material.	3.27	0.78	High Extent
13	It helps to grow student's ability to collaborate and cooperate with others.	3.20	0.75	High Extent
14	It grows the visual sensitivity of the students.	3.08	0.56	High Extent
15	It encourages the Students, support and motivate them among others.	3.12	0.79	High Extent
16	It encourages learners to explore content.	3.35	0.59	High Extent
17	It encourages student to support and inspire one another.	3.12	0.91	High Extent
18	It helps the teacher to get the attention of the students.	3.49	0.54	High Extent
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>0.75</b>	High Extent

The analysis of data presented in Table 2 above shows mean rating ranging from 3.08 to and 3.49 indicating high extent. This means that the items are extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State. The overall cluster mean of 3.20 further indicates that the business education

lecturers agree to the items to a high extent. The low standard deviation of .75 indicates that the respondents have similar opinion to the items as extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

**Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

**Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State**

Variables	N	T	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Male	17	0.301	49	0.765	0.47059	1.56472	NS
Female				34			

The result of t-test analysis in Table 3 shows that the t-value at .05 level of significant and 49 degree of freedom for the 10 items is .301 with a significant value of .765. Since the significant value of .765 is more than the .05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference regarding the 10 items on the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

**Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

**Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State**

Variables	N	T	Df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Male	17	0.651	49	0.518	1.00000	1.53685	NS
Female				34			

The result of t-test analysis in Table 4 shows that the t-value at .05 level of significant and 300 degree of freedom for the eight items is .651 with a significant value of .518. Since the significant value of .518 is more than the .05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference with respect to the eight items on the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

### Discussion of findings

The result of data analysis according to research question one indicated that extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State to a high extent. The result of the corresponding hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers on the extent innovative technique for pedagogical application affect business education subject in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

The findings of this study is in line with the results of Nazimuddin (2014) which stated that Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) is a diverse and rapidly expanding spectrum of computer technologies that assist the teaching and learning process. This is supported by Usman & Mududili (2020) which stated that the use of CAI in teaching is a relevant and functional way of providing education to learners in order to assist them develop the required capacity for the world to work.

The result of data analysis according to research question two indicated that extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State to a high extent. The result of the corresponding hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers on the extent utilization of instructional materials affect teaching and learning of business education in both Colleges & Universities of education in Ogun State.

The findings of this study is in line with the results of Kristiawan (2013), which stated that instructional materials is key to dealing with students with various abilities and diverse areas of intelligence. This teaching aid help the student to focus and understand the subject matter.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study concluded that innovative strategies for teaching and learning leads to more efficiency and improved outcomes of learning opportunities. Therefore, innovative strategies relating to computer assisted instruction teaching strategy and cooperative teaching strategy enhances the teaching and learning of business education.

The teaching of business education subject in Nigerian schools needs to be properly handled. Conclusively, it has been established that educational resources has a significant relationship with academic achievement of students. It is a welcome fact that school resources are the most potent determinant of academic achievement.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that

1. Curriculum planners and implementation and educational policy makers should sensitize the school and teachers/lecturers on the need to put more emphasis on utilization and improvising of resources materials in teaching and learning of Business Education subjects.

2. The government as a matter of policy should recruit more qualified graduate students/teachers to teach at junior secondary school level most especially Business studies.
3. Adequate instructional materials should be provided for effective teaching and learning process.
4. Criteria for instructional materials selection should be based on its suitability to function for the purpose it is designed for.

### **Suggestions for further studies**

The research for further studies could be carried out in the following area;

- Effect of the use of instructional resources on the student academic performance in Business studies at junior secondary schools' level.
- A survey of availability and utilization of resource materials in teaching and learning of Business studies in secondary schools.
- Similar research work should be conducted in other Local Government Area of the state.

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## Harmonizing heritage: Indian traditions in contemporary art practices

Nand Lal

### ABSTRACT

The history of art is the history of different types of visual perception and the different ways of looking at creation or nature by human beings. The principle of happiness derived from the arts plays the role of a mirror and it makes us realize the truth. For centuries, arts have been the best medium of communication and at the same time, art has also served to preserve the major moments of history in itself. Art existed before words and arts have made a very important contribution to know the history of civilization and culture of any Nation. There is a kind of life-giving force in the arts which has the ability to bind society and nature together. Living in society, when we feel that art has gone off its surface and when society starts expressing its inability to go along with it or accept it, so such art cannot become a part of any history or philosophy. In recent years, what is known as postmodern or contemporary art has withdrawn from its surface faster than ever before. Due to the variety of complex non-traditional means and materials to communicate with society through this art, art seems to go completely beyond its path. Whereas Indian arts have flourished for a long time by preserving various traditions and *Sanatani* culture of their society. Indian arts have made their significant contribution in various fields such as religion, knowledge, art, music, architecture and science.

**Keywords:** *Communication, Society, Postmodern, Non-traditional, Sanatani Culture.*

### Introduction

जंबूद्वीपे भारतखंडे आर्याव्रत देशांतर्गते.....  
अमुक स्थाने..... अमुक नामे..... अमुक गोत्रे..... ।

In the Indian *Sanatani* tradition, worship begins with the reading of this verse (*Shaloka*), which shows that a person living in *Jambudwip* is taking a pledge of his worship by sitting in a particular place. *Jambudwip* is used for today's Eurasia. In this

*Jambudwip*, the *Bharat-khand* is called *Aryavarta*. An important reason for the famous culture of this *Aryavarta* is its diversity which is also visible in it. The vast landmass from *Hindesia* to Central Asia has been dominated by Indian arts. The culture here has also made its mark in regions like North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Art has been a vessel of culture. The human and juicy elements pervading the various dimensions of Indian *Sanatani* culture have been manifested in its art forms. Creativity is the soul of art. Rasa or pleasure unites us from the physical to the conscious. Art highlights the diverse emotions of human beings and through them consciousness. While the root of consciousness is considered to be 'rasa', there is joy and taste, which art evokes. While Indian *Sanatani* arts have a scientific and technical basis on the one hand, on the other hand they always keep emotion and rasa as life element. To know Indian art, it is very important to know the *Vedas*, *Upavedas*, *Shastras*, *Puranas*, archaeology and ancient literature.

This virtuous land belongs to Lord Shri Ram, who is called *Maryada Suryavanshi*, with 12 kalas, and the sun also has only 12 arts. Similarly, Shri Krishna was a *Chandra Vanshi*, which is equipped with 16 kalas and we know that the moon also has 16 kalas. According to the *Upanishadas*, a person with 12 arts of Lord Rama or 16 arts of Shri Krishna is considered equivalent to God. In the *Sanatani* tradition, in which even their adorable gods are described as skilled in the arts, every art created in that tradition is superior to the one who believes in the welfare of the society.

Arts have been an integral part of culture. Arts have their own language. Whatever we all see in the society around us, we want to express it through some art or the other. Whether it is the shade of clouds in the sky or scattered colors of the sun, river, mountain or waterfall, a painter decorates it through colors. The chirping of birds, the melodious scenes of nature is decorated by a lyricist in his vocals and a dancer decorates the emotions of his mind in different postures.

One important thing is that since ancient times all arts were related to folk arts. As society became aware, the relation of arts became associated with business and the arts became person-centric. By the medieval period, the arts went under the shelter and protection of kings and were bound by classical rules. *Shastra* gave the form of a classical art to painting, music, dance and performing arts. At the same time, folk arts remained fully connected to their roots, and today only those art forms are able to develop whose roots reside in the world, whether it is music, painting, dance or acting. The harmony between classical and folk arts is their strength. With the continuous cycle of time, even though the cultures of many countries of the world such as Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian of Mesopotamian, Egypt, Greece, Iran and Rome were absorbed in the cheek of time, but the existence of Indian *Sanatani Sanskriti* is still safe and even after being mostly destroyed due to many attacks of nature and human cruelty, the stores of Indian art that remained are still famous all over the world. These arts, the carriers of *Sanatan Sanskriti*, have some of their own characteristics, due to which the flags of their fame are still waving all over the world.

### **Antiquity**

The history of Indian art is very ancient. The earliest examples of Indian painting date back to prehistoric times when man used to draw on the rocky walls of caves. The language of communication of human beings of this time was painting. The paintings of thousands of years old Bhimbetka caves are the best example of this. From prehistoric times, Indian painters had learned to make beautiful paintings of wild animals, reindeer, bear, elephant, deer, buffalo, goat, sheep and hunters and depicted them very beautifully on the rocky walls of caves.

### **Primacy of religion**

Indian arts have been religion-oriented rather than culture-oriented. In the true sense, religion has been the basis of Indian arts. Indian arts have always been animated by religious as well as spiritual feelings. For this reason, Indian art can also be called the guide of

ordinary life. Here art was not art for art's sake, but it gave importance to the realization of the Self, so that one becomes oriented towards the Absolute. Indian architecture, sculpture, music, dance, drama and painting have been propounded from the core of philosophy based on religious beliefs, ideas and traditions.

### **Artist as a *yogi* or *sadhak***

Just as a *yogi*, having attained the state of meditation or *sadhana*, realizes the expanse of inner and outer nature by sitting in one place, so the Indian painter expresses the vastness of many times and places from one place through which he brings his creation to the Earth, The sky and Hades are combined together as imagery. Unlike Western artists, he is not confined to one visible aspect or visual periphery of the scene or figure, but he has always opened the eyes of the mind and adopted the celestial vision and presented a story or event completely on the same canvas like the Creator of the universe.

### **Philosophy**

Indian arts have been a symbol of eternal truth because they have always been manifesting the spirit of *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram*. In Indian art, more primacy was given to inner and spiritual beauty along with external beauty. The Indian artist made tireless efforts to express spiritual experiences and establish philosophical truth in society. The best artist based on *Parmarth Satya* has the power to embody the Supreme Truth through the posture, posture, gesture of his work. The bronze statue of *Cholayugin Nataraja* Shiva is a very beautiful example of this. This work presents a brief representation of the principles of *Shaiva* philosophy to the entire world by incorporating the five actions of creation, state, destruction, *tirobhava* and grace in the dance of Shiva.

### **The harmony and idealism of non-human nature**

The Indian artist has always considered the conscious and unconscious world as an integral part of creation, which is visible in his works in a different form of human and natural world. The representation of human and supernatural divine powers, the coordination of man and woman, hardness and hoarseness, softness

and purity, etc., many opposing and complementary elements are found in Indian painting. In the form of Goddess Durga, the combination of womanhood, motherhood, purity, valor, and tenderness and in the form of Ganesha, Hanuman, Garuda etc. is shown the coordination of human, animal and bird. Along with this, many ornaments in the background of the paintings have been depicting natural vegetation, trees, plants, flowering leaves, etc.

### **Symbolism**

The theme is expressed or sounded by Indian arts. Over time, its basic purpose has been not merely to create beauty but to create something absolute. Indian arts have been inspired by the inspiration of religion based on the basic principles of philosophy. That is why in the arts of India, more importance was given to symbolism than grossness. For example, the swan symbolizes God, the sign of the swastika symbolizes the sense of welfare in life, the duality of religion and karma, the dynamics of time and the continuous flow of life as a symbol of the cycle. Apart from this, there are many examples, on which it appears that Indian art has been full of symbolism.

### **Traditionalism**

Indian arts have mainly developed from traditional styles. But this does not mean that the art here became static, without development, only morphological. To be based on traditions means to create a kind of discipline and orderliness. Be it music, dance, drama, painting, literature or architecture, Indian artists were immersed in the creation of works by getting inspiration from *samadhi* and meditation while studying the traditional rules of a particular proportion and style.

### **Public commitment**

Through Indian arts, the artist has always reflected the holistic life of the people. The artist made the activities occurring in the society and other contemporary topics the subject matter of his creation and fulfilled his responsibility towards the society very well. Indian artists have played a very significant role in making every subject matter obtained from nature useful to the society.

## Anonymous art

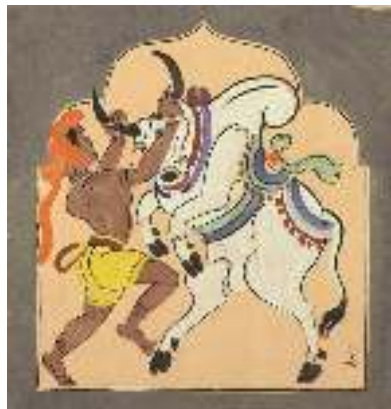
Another great feature of Indian art craftsmen is that they kept their name and identity mostly secret and gave more importance to creation than to the creator. The experience expressed by most of India's artifacts is universal and universal. That is why no one knows the name of the painters of Ajanta, the sculptors of Ellora and Elephanta, while those paintings and sculptures are appreciated all over the world.

## Modern Indian painting

When we talk about modern Indian arts, we all know what was the contribution of Bengal School of Art in the freedom movement to bring *Swaraj*. The famous leader Abanindranath Tagore, who led the 'Bengal School of Art' in the field of art, created a portrait of 'Bharat Mata' (Figure-1) which became established as the image of Mother Nation. At the same time, Sister Nivedit, inspired by the speeches of Swami Vivekananda, awakened a sense of pride in Indian science, history, art, religion and literature and launched a movement to revive Indian art with Ananda Kumar Swami and E. V. Havel to challenge the western prejudice that Indian art is influenced by Greek art. We are not unaware of the work done by the paintings of Nandlal Bose to awaken the society. He expressed the spirit of *Swadeshi* through his art.



**Fig. 1: Bharat Mata**  
**Abanindranath Tagore**



**Fig. 2: Bull Handler**  
**Nandlal Bose**

Nandlal Bose opposed foreign paper and rendered his paintings using handmade indigenous paper. Together with his proficient disciples, he prepared a series of paintings through which he worked to awaken the soul of Indian life.

In South India, Raja Ravi Varma depicted Hindu gods, *Pauranik* scenes and Indian life through paintings and the paintings were reproduced from printing presses and distributed in homes across the country in the form of posters and calendars. In this transition period, the classical art on the basis of which the arts were being created was tried to be stopped for political reasons only because many new groups had started to flourish before us and that art form has also faltered and has become almost dormant at present. From this time onwards, the subjects and mediums of art were changing suddenly, and at the same time the artist became personal and started tampering with art and culture by pretending to freedom of expression.

### **Period of independence and art**

During the period of independence, there was a stir in the field of Indian art and art had now reached the era of art churning and contemplation. In the art of this period, the orthodox tradition did not have the same place as intellectualism or logic. Traditions have been universally respected in Indian ancient art and blind imitation was not given much importance until modern times. Even before the period of independence of India, through the English education system, the arts here have been proved to be the art of tribal and backward areas, and they have been described as beyond the usefulness of that time. By the 1940s, new ideas began to flow freely in India and many artists took the new tendencies of Western art styles to realism, surrealism, totalitarian, constructivist, impressionist, expressionist and progressive tendencies in their works and Indian traditional styles began to be despised. The artists of this period showed their faith in the present and created art by absorbing the fascinating form of the present of the Western art world. Groups of artists began to form at many places and gradually Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi became the main centers which established their supremacy with independence.

When we talk about the present, we find that the expression in Indian arts is becoming psychological, symbolic and complex, which has become a big challenge for today's art lovers. There is an urgent need to understand or use symbols to understand contemporary art. Contemporary abstract art is becoming beyond the comprehension of the common man. Due to the ambiguity of the artworks, the viewer is not able to assimilate it. Contemporary art is becoming a language whose meaning is not found in the dictionary, but in order to taste it, the viewer must also have knowledge of traditional and contemporary art.

### **Indian contemporary art**

The identity of any civilization has been identified only by its art and culture. In whatever period an art is created, all the arts of that period are called contemporary art. The art that provides pleasure to man in life is truly called art. The importance of arts in Indian thought can be known by studying the Natyashastra written by Bharatamuni, where he has clearly written:

*“न तज्ज्ञानं न तच्छिल्पं, न सा विद्या न सा कला”*

*अर्थात् ऐसा कोई ज्ञान नहीं, कोई शिल्प नहीं, कोई विद्या नहीं, जो कला न हो।*

Contemporary means moving with the times. What was formerly called modern art is currently defined as contemporary art. The art of continuous new experimentation is also referred to as contemporary. If you look at the works of young artists who are currently struggling, you find that they are facing amazing complexities. The meaning of contemporaneity is different for every person. Some consider abstraction as contemporary art, some as new experiments and some as non-formalism. The arts have always been contemporary, which automatically becomes ancient with the passage of time. The connoisseurs of Indian culture also believe that contemporaneity is not an ism, nor has the arts ever been uplifted in India with the help of art ism. The concept of ism has been flourishing in western countries so that all of us have also studied it in Indian art education and moving from freedom to independence, many art colleges have been established in this

period and we have all been carrying art education based on western system.

Emerging in early 1990s, contemporary Indian Art is characterized by a rise in postmodernist practices based in performance, video, installation and digital media, in addition to traditional disciplines such as painting and sculpture. Experiments with these new mediums are often the results cross-pollination and collaborations across varied artistic fields such as film, fashion, theater and animation. The movement originated with India's economic liberalization of 1991, and saw a boom period in early 2000s.

The careers and interests of many contemporary Indian art practitioners that began in the 1990s and 2000s have been shaped by the increased presence of private institutions, rapid technological shifts of the information age and the demands of a globalised art market. Indian art received little global attention until the economic liberalization in the 1990s, which resulted in increased interactions and participation of foreign curators, collectors and art institutions in Indian art. New galleries, art fairs and artist residencies have also provided spaces for contemporary art theory to interact with the history of art. The boom period of the early 2000s saw a surge in Indian art sales to foreign collectors through Indian galleries and auction houses like Saffronart, which expanded the Indian collections of foreign institutions and boosted the careers of many living artists.

Figure 3 is a sculpture made by Bihar born, Delhi based artist Subodh Gupta. He is a painter, photographer and sculptor and his most frequently used subjects are steel cooking utensils, pots and tiffins. He creates dense compositions with a profusion of these shiny objects or more carefully composed still lives which brilliantly express their intrinsic shapes and surfaces often presented on a monumental scale.

Figure 4 is a painting made by Bombay based artist Vasudev Kamath. In this painting, Vasudev Kamath has shown Shri Krishna surrounded by monkeys. Krishna's hands and body are tied with

ropes and the monkey is giving them to the butter pot while the other monkeys are speculating while eating butter.



**Fig. 3: The Yellow Sparrows**  
**Subodh Gupta**



**Fig. 4: Krishna with Monkey**  
**Vasudev Kamath**



**Fig. 5: Origin of Saraswati**  
**Nand Lal**



**Fig. 6: Pahari Couple**  
**Nand Lal**

Figure 5 and 6 are created by Dr. Nand Lal, Assistant Professor, Himachal Pradesh University, using acrylic colors on canvas. Figure - 5 shows the origin of the Saraswati river from the snowy

Himalayas where the river flows from the mountains to reach the plains, showing the emergence of a civilisation. Based on the theme of the Indus Saraswati civilization, this painting is a beautiful example of postmodern art.

Figure 6 depicts a pahari couple with a young man wearing a pahari cap playing the flute while a young woman is depicted in her flute adoring a mesmerized goat with a contemporary theme. In the background of the painting, the artist has depicted a group of men women performing the pahari dance and playing the instruments.

## **Conclusion**

There is an urgent need today to preserve traditional arts and promote contemporary arts as they are an essential component of Indian culture and heritage. There is a need to give equal importance to traditional art along with contemporary art of any nation. Both the streams can move simultaneously otherwise a tree without roots can never stand on the ground. Traditional arts are our roots, without nurturing them, contemporary arts can never develop. Cultural and religious traditions here have largely been shaped and transferred from generation to generation due to creative forms. Traditional arts have also influenced all cultural expressions such as literature, music and dance besides helping to shape Indian creative techniques and styles. India's art often displays motifs and symbols that have deep cultural and spiritual significance. It is only spiritually refined that an artist is able to create abstract art, while the future generation is engaged in emphasizing on creating new without understanding the classical arts by considering abstract art as an easy medium of expression and a source of earning money without hard work. The arts which have been performed following the path of spirituality have always gained fame. Whether it is the ancient cave paintings found in every corner of the India or any contemporary artwork displayed in the current triennial, Biennale, National Art Exhibition, or India Art Fair, it is complete in itself only when it is accepted by the society. Bidding for art buyers and exaggerating them and selling them is like misleading the society. Whereas the true art seeker

does not create his art for the purpose of selling the artwork because the artist gives birth to any work by becoming a mother. Just as a mother loves a child born from her womb more than her life, in the same way an art seeker loves his work. He is not worried about the market whether his work will sell or not. He performs his art selflessly and when he gets any appreciation, he also sells that work at a fair price. The form of contemporary Indian painting is moving away from Indianness and based on the tradition of western creation technique. This is creating a serious problem for the future of Indian modern art. If this form of pictorial traditions continues to develop, the elements of Indian art philosophy will disappear in the future. Art will disappear from society and will be confined to intellectuals and artists only.

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## **The shifting spectrum of women's roles: bridging tradition and equality**

**Bharti Gupta**

### **ABSTRACT**

Women's roles in society have evolved significantly over the centuries, transitioning from domestic confines to influential positions in education, leadership, and public life. In ancient times, particularly during the Vedic period, women were respected and enjoyed considerable freedom, actively participating in education, philosophy, and public affairs. However, with the advent of patriarchal structures, their roles were gradually relegated to the private sphere, limiting their potential and opportunities. The industrial revolution, the spread of education, and global movements advocating for gender rights gradually allowed women to challenge these norms, leading to their active participation in diverse fields such as business, politics, health, and science. Today, women continue to make substantial contributions to societal, cultural, and economic progress. Feminist movements and global campaigns for gender equality have been instrumental in driving legal reforms, including voting rights, workplace protections, and equal pay. Despite these milestones, significant challenges remain. Gender inequality is evident in persistent wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership positions, and cultural prejudices, particularly in rural and conservative communities. Societal attitudes and systemic biases continue to limit women's opportunities, underscoring the need for ongoing efforts toward gender parity. The path to achieving gender equality highlights the importance of education, awareness campaigns, and legal rights in empowering women. By adopting intersectional approaches that consider race, class, and cultural backgrounds, the movement for gender equality can better address the complexities of modern society. Drawing lessons from history, including the equitable principles of the Vedic era, can inspire new strategies to dismantle systemic barriers. Women's achievements in leadership, entrepreneurship, and social reform exemplify their resilience and emphasize the importance of collective action and sustained advocacy for a more inclusive and equitable future.

**Keywords:** *Women's Roles, Gender Equality, Feminist Movements, Social Reform, Education, Legal Rights, Wage Gaps, Empowerment.*

In recent times, the roles and status of women have experienced significant transformations, influenced by shifting cultural, social, and economic factors. From ancient times, when women were active participants in societal and intellectual endeavours, to periods where patriarchal systems confined them to domestic responsibilities, their journey reflects both progress and persistent challenges. In India, the Vedic period stands out as a golden age for women, marked by their respect in society and active engagement in education, leadership, and public life. However, as patriarchal norms became entrenched, women's autonomy and opportunities diminished, restricting their contributions to broader societal development. The industrial revolution, advancements in education, and the emergence of feminist movements heralded a turning point in redefining women's roles. Women began making strides in fields such as science, politics, and business, challenging traditional norms and advocating for equal rights. Despite these achievements, ongoing issues such as wage disparities, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and systemic biases underscore the need for continued efforts to achieve gender equality.

The evolving roles of women through history, drawing lessons from the Vedic period and analyzing the influence of global feminist movements. It also explores the current challenges and opportunities in advancing gender equality, offering insights into fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for all. Women have played a central role in shaping societies throughout history, yet their status and opportunities have often been determined by prevailing cultural, social, and economic systems. From being revered as vital contributors to societal progress to being relegated to restrictive domestic roles, the journey of women reflects the evolution of human civilization itself. During the Vedic period in India, women were afforded considerable respect and opportunities for education, leadership, and active participation in public life (Sharma, 2015: 72).

However, over time, patriarchal norms confined women to domestic roles, leading to a decline in their status and participation in public spheres. The industrial revolution and the spread of education catalysed significant changes, allowing women to challenge traditional roles and contribute actively to fields like science, business, and politics. Feminist movements further advocated for women's rights, leading to legal reforms such as suffrage and workplace protections. Despite these advancements, women today continue to face challenges such as wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership, and systemic biases, particularly in conservative societies. By drawing lessons from the Vedic period and combining them with modern tools like education and legal rights, this study underscores the need for sustained efforts to achieve gender equality and build an inclusive future (Adams, 2017: 134). women's roles have evolved over time and how various factors such as education, legal rights, and awareness campaigns have contributed to this change. Despite women's contributions, they still encounter many social and cultural challenges that need to be addressed to achieve true equality in society.

### **Traditional boundaries and the Vedic period**

Historically, the role of women has often been traditional and constrained by societal norms. Across various ancient civilizations, women were primarily relegated to household duties, child-rearing, and caregiving roles, with limited opportunities for education and public participation. In Indian society, Greek civilization, and ancient Rome, women's roles were generally confined to the domestic sphere. For instance, in Greek civilization, women were largely confined to the home, while in Rome, although some women held property rights, they were excluded from political participation (Kumar, 2008: 88).

However, notable exceptions existed in certain societies where women played active roles in religious, educational, and social spheres. In ancient Egypt, for example, women enjoyed legal and economic rights equivalent to those of men. Similarly, in medieval India, queens such as Rani Durgavati and Ahilyabai Holkar

actively participated in politics and governance. Samurai women in Japan also contributed to warfare and security, exemplifying their strength and resilience (Brown, 2005: 102).

The Vedic period in India, often regarded as a golden age for women, stands out as a significant historical precedent for gender equality. During this era, women were respected and actively participated in education, religious ceremonies, and intellectual pursuits. They enjoyed considerable autonomy and were revered as scholars, philosophers, and leaders. Prominent figures such as Gargi and Maitreyi exemplify the intellectual stature and contributions of women during this time. The Vedic ideals of equality and empowerment provided a foundation for women's active involvement in societal and cultural progress.

Over time, however, the entrenchment of patriarchal norms eroded the status of women, confining them to domestic roles and limiting their public presence. By examining the historical and Vedic perspectives, it becomes evident that women's potential has long been influenced by the prevailing cultural and societal values, highlighting the need to draw lessons from such eras of progress to address contemporary challenges.

### **The industrial revolution and the struggle for women's rights**

The industrial revolution and the spread of education provided new opportunities for women. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the industrial revolution allowed women to become economically independent. Women began working in factories and gradually gained economic freedom. At the same time, recognizing the importance of education, many societies emphasized women's education. Women started to receive education, which inspired them to fight for social and political rights (Smith & Johnson, 2010: 45). In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, women began to organize themselves to fight for their rights. Movements for women's rights in Europe and America, such as the suffrage movement, proved to be milestones in securing women's political rights. Women demanded not only the right to vote but also equal education, employment opportunities, and

property rights. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which was the first organized assembly on women's rights in America, symbolizes the beginning of this struggle (Taylor, 2015: 33). It is noteworthy that the spread of education played a crucial role in making women self-reliant. Women began contributing to literature, science, politics, and social reforms. By the mid-20th century, women began to occupy significant positions globally. This change began in the 19th century when women started fighting for education and rights. Today, this struggle continues, but the efforts made in history have greatly contributed to changing the status of women (Harper, 2018: 142).

### **Role of women in the contemporary times**

In contemporary society, women's roles have expanded significantly, reflecting both their evolving status and the progress made toward gender equality. Women today are no longer confined to traditional domestic responsibilities; they are key contributors across a variety of sectors, including education, healthcare, science, technology, business, and politics. This broadening of roles is exemplified by women who have risen to leadership positions, both in their countries and on the global stage. For instance, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern are prime examples of women who have broken political barriers, showing that women can lead at the highest levels of governance. Additionally, women like Marie Curie, Malala Yousafzai, and Oprah Winfrey continue to make groundbreaking contributions in science, education, and media, respectively, highlighting the increasing recognition of women's potential in fields once dominated by men.

However, despite these remarkable strides, the full realization of gender equality remains an ongoing struggle. Women's participation, though significant, is often still marked by disparities in comparison to their male counterparts. Structural barriers, including gender stereotypes, unequal pay, and limited access to opportunities in certain regions, continue to hinder women from achieving their fullest potential. For instance, while women make up a large portion of the global workforce, they still face

substantial wage gaps, often earning less than men for the same work. Furthermore, women are underrepresented in leadership positions across industries, including in business, academia, and government. Studies have consistently shown that women continue to experience discrimination and bias in the workplace, which limits their advancement and recognition (Adams, 2017: 123).

Moreover, while legal frameworks in many countries now provide protections for women's rights, these laws often remain inadequately enforced. There is also a significant need for comprehensive policies that support women's professional achievements and ensure their rights are not only recognized but actively protected. As a result, it is clear that while women's roles in society have evolved dramatically, there is still much work to be done to ensure equal opportunities, pay, and respect for women across all sectors of life. These challenges underscore the importance of continued advocacy, policy reform, and societal awareness to fully harness the potential of women in society.

### **Social and professional challenges**

Women face numerous challenges in their social and professional lives. The most prominent challenges include gender inequality, wage gaps, and discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, women often confront various cultural and social pressures that hinder their freedom and development. For instance, traditional family roles and responsibilities frequently divert women from their career goals, making it difficult for them to maintain a work-life balance. Furthermore, in many sectors, there is a lack of adequate educational and training opportunities for women, which obstructs their professional development. Women may also feel uncomfortable raising their voices in the workplace, resulting in their ideas and contributions being overlooked. As a result, their presence in leadership roles is diminished, which not only impacts their personal growth but also negatively affects the overall progress of organizations (Kumar, 2008: 93).

## **I) Wage inequality**

Wage inequality remains one of the most significant challenges women face in the modern workplace. Despite having the same qualifications and experience, women often receive lower pay than their male counterparts for performing identical tasks. This disparity not only affects women's economic independence but also exacerbates their vulnerability, especially in societies where women are already at an economic disadvantage. Research shows that on average, women earn approximately 20% less than men globally, which leads to a cycle of financial insecurity, undermines women's social mobility, and hinders their empowerment (Jackson, 2019: 67). This inequality also perpetuates broader societal issues such as poverty, with women being disproportionately affected by financial instability, especially in single-parent households. Closing the gender pay gap is essential for ensuring that women can achieve equal economic opportunities and security, contributing to a more equitable society overall.

## **II) Discrimination in the workplace**

Discrimination in the workplace remains a pervasive problem for women, where they are often subjected to biases that undermine their professional growth and potential. Women frequently face situations where their ideas are dismissed, or they are excluded from key decision-making roles, reinforcing traditional gender roles that marginalize their contributions. Many women also experience the challenge of balancing work and home responsibilities, with societal expectations placing undue pressure on them to manage both, which may hinder their career advancement. Furthermore, sexual harassment in the workplace is a critical issue that not only affects women's mental health but also their ability to fully engage and excel in their jobs (Thompson, 2021: 89). Such discriminatory practices negatively impact women's self-esteem, professional confidence, and work performance, ultimately affecting workplace dynamics and organizational outcomes. Addressing this requires stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, greater workplace

protections, and the creation of environments that allow women to thrive professionally without fear of bias or harassment.

### **III) Gender inequality**

Gender inequality continues to persist across various aspects of life, from education to employment and political participation. In many regions, women are denied the same opportunities as men, which limits their personal and professional growth. Globally, women still have lower literacy rates compared to men, and this educational disparity contributes to wider gender inequalities in the workforce and in leadership roles. Women are also underrepresented in political offices, which means their voices and perspectives are often overlooked in decision-making processes. This inequality has far-reaching effects on women's health, economic prospects, and societal status, further entrenching gender stereotypes and perpetuating unequal treatment. As a result, women continue to face challenges in advancing their careers and achieving equality in their communities. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions such as improving girls' education, promoting women's participation in politics, and ensuring that laws provide equal access to opportunities across all sectors (Jackson, 2019: 67).

### **IV) Gender discrimination and bias in the workplace**

Gender discrimination and bias in the workplace remain significant barriers to women's career advancement. Even with equal qualifications and experience, women are often passed over for promotions and leadership roles simply because of their gender. This is particularly evident in leadership positions, where cultural perceptions and traditional gender roles lead to the assumption that women are less capable of making tough decisions or leading teams. Women are also often denied equal pay for equal work, and their contributions are frequently overlooked or undervalued compared to their male colleagues (Thompson, 2021: 89).

This discriminatory environment not only affects women's careers but also their mental health and self-esteem. The lack of opportunities for professional growth and the constant

undermining of their work can cause women to feel disempowered and disengaged. In order to foster an inclusive workplace, it is crucial to implement policies that encourage gender equality, provide training to reduce biases, and ensure women's equal participation in leadership and decision-making roles. By fostering an inclusive culture, organizations can help eliminate these barriers, allowing women to thrive based on their skills and contributions, ultimately benefiting the organization and society at large (Gupta, 2019: 76).

Addressing these issues in the workplace is crucial to achieving true gender equality, as it not only impacts the women directly involved but also the broader economic and social fabric of society. Women's leadership and participation are vital for creating more innovative, productive, and inclusive communities. Therefore, organizations must actively work towards creating environments where women have equal opportunities to succeed and lead, ensuring that their talents and potential are fully realized.

### **Women's rights and legal reforms**

In recent decades, significant strides have been made globally toward promoting women's rights, with numerous social and legal reforms designed to address gender inequality and empower women. These reforms reflect a growing recognition of the need to create more inclusive and equitable societies. Key reforms include policies that focus on ensuring access to quality education, comprehensive health services, and support for work-life balance, enabling women to participate more fully in all aspects of life. For instance, in India, special education schemes, legal provisions for women's safety, and financial assistance programs have been implemented to provide women with better opportunities for a prosperous life. Additionally, many countries have enacted laws for women's reservations in political and legislative bodies and gender equality in the workplace, which are essential to ensure women's active participation and representation in public life (Harper, 2018: 143). These initiatives mark a shift towards creating a more just and equal world for women.

## **Women's rights and legal reforms**

### **I) Right to education**

One of the most significant legal reforms to promote women's rights has been the emphasis on ensuring access to education for girls and women. Education is a key factor in empowering women and enabling them to improve their socio-economic status. In many countries, laws have been introduced to make education compulsory for girls, offering scholarships and subsidies to encourage families to send their daughters to school. For instance, India's Right to Education Act (2009) guarantees free education to children, including girls, up to the age of 14. This reform has drastically improved the literacy rate among women, thereby opening doors for their participation in higher education and the workforce (Sharma, 2020: 112).

### **II) Women's reservation and political participation**

Legal reforms focused on increasing women's representation in politics have been vital for achieving gender equality in governance. Many countries have introduced affirmative action policies, such as women's reservations in legislative bodies, to ensure that women have a voice in decision-making processes. India's Reservation for Women in Local Government policy, which mandates a certain percentage of seats for women in Panchayats and municipal bodies, is one such reform that has led to a significant increase in women's participation in politics. These policies aim to rectify the underrepresentation of women in political leadership roles (Singh, 2019: 87).

### **III) Workplace equality and anti-discrimination laws**

Workplace discrimination remains a major issue, and various legal reforms have been introduced to ensure women's equal treatment in the workforce. Laws prohibiting gender discrimination in hiring, promotions, and pay have been implemented across many countries. For example, the Equal Pay Act in the United States mandates that men and women be paid equally for the same work. Similarly, India's Equal Remuneration Act (1976) aims to eliminate pay disparities based on gender and ensure women are

paid fairly for their work. These laws help address wage gaps and promote equal opportunities for women in the workplace (Jackson, 2019: 55).

#### **IV) Protection from gender-based violence**

Another critical area where legal reforms have played a crucial role is protecting women from violence. Laws targeting domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking have been enacted in many countries to safeguard women's physical and psychological well-being. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) in India, for instance, provides women with legal recourse against domestic violence, offering them protection orders, right to residence, and other forms of legal aid. Similarly, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013) aims to create safe working environments for women (Thompson, 2021: 90).

#### **V) Reproductive rights and health**

Reproductive rights and access to health services have been central to the movement for women's rights. Legal reforms related to reproductive health allow women the autonomy to make decisions about their bodies, such as the right to access birth control, abortion, and prenatal care. In many countries, laws ensuring reproductive healthcare services, including maternal health services, have significantly reduced maternal mortality rates. For example, the National Population Policy in India emphasizes family planning and maternal health programs that give women the freedom to choose when and how many children to have, promoting healthier families and communities (Harper, 2018: 143). These legal reforms collectively aim to ensure that women have equal rights, opportunities, and protections, helping to bridge the gender gap and empower women across the globe.

In conclusion, the roles of women have changed significantly throughout history, moving from positions of respect and empowerment in ancient civilizations, like the Vedic period, to facing ongoing challenges in modern society. Despite progress, issues such as wage inequality, workplace discrimination, and

gender-based violence persist. Legal reforms and increased participation in various sectors have improved women's rights, but there is still work to be done to achieve true gender equality. Continued efforts are necessary to address these challenges and create a more inclusive and equitable future for all women. Despite the significant strides made in recent decades, including legal reforms and increased participation in various sectors, women continue to confront persistent issues like wage inequality, workplace discrimination, and gender-based violence. These challenges, rooted in deep-seated cultural and structural inequalities, highlight the need for sustained efforts toward gender equality. The historical context of women's roles, particularly in societies where they once held leadership and intellectual positions, offers valuable lessons for contemporary movements aimed at achieving gender parity. Legal reforms such as education initiatives, reservations, and gender equality laws have significantly improved women's rights and opportunities. However, for these changes to translate into lasting social transformation, there must be a continuous focus on addressing systemic biases, ensuring equal access to opportunities, and fostering an inclusive society. Ultimately, achieving gender equality requires a multifaceted approach, combining education, legal advocacy, social awareness, and policy reforms. It is only by dismantling the remaining barriers and ensuring that women are truly empowered in all spheres of life that we can create a future where equality and opportunity are not just ideals, but a reality for all women. This study emphasizes the importance of continued effort and commitment from all sectors of society to address these challenges and ensure an inclusive, fair, and just world for future generations.

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## Prophetic voices: dystopian reflections in Paul Lynch's 'Prophet Song'

Pankaj Bala Srivastava

### ABSTRACT

In the modern global landscape, democracies face challenges like political polarization, erosion of civil liberties, and misinformation. Dystopian literature critically reflects these threats, unlike sixteenth-century utopian fantasies that envisioned ideal societies. By depicting authoritarianism, social inequality, and environmental degradation, dystopian narratives prompt us to confront contemporary issues, fostering critical thought and inspiring action. This paper examines Lynch's *'Prophet Song'*, a 2023 Booker Prize-winning novel. It explores Lynch's critique of authoritarianism, surveillance, and societal decay, drawing parallels to real-world issues. Through Lynch's portrayal of a society on the brink of collapse, the study highlights commentary on the erosion of democratic values, the consequences of political instability, and the resilience of the human spirit. In dystopian literature, *'Prophet Song'* resonates as a prophetic voice, urging us to envision a better future.

**Keywords:** *Utopian Fiction, Dystopian Literature, Prophetic Voices, Democratic Values, Authoritarianism.*

### Introduction

Utopian and dystopian fiction belong to subgenres of speculative literature, including science fiction, which delve into the intricacies of social and political frameworks. The term "utopia" echoes the Greek roots "outopos" (meaning "no place") and "eutopos" (signifying "good place"). Sir Thomas More used this word in 1516 through his work "Utopia," which envisioned an ideal society. Long before Sir Thomas More unveiled his vision of a perfect society in the fictional land of utopia, humankind had, for centuries, sought an ideal community guided by the diverse teachings of their religions and cultural traditions.

The book *Utopia* was an ironic critique of British society's corrupt social structure and religious beliefs at that time. The utopian world that More created was a well-organized, rational, and balanced society. There was no poverty and hunger, everyone was educated, and the society was a democratic structure. Different religions were worshipped in the same churches run by the same priests, all of whom had the highest moral and religious level in a utopian society. From an economic perspective, social welfare was more important than personal interests (More, 2016, pp. 38-70).

On the contrary, dystopia does not have a work like utopia to discuss its features. Defining dystopia is more complicated than utopia because no specific work discusses actual dystopian features. Dystopia might be seen as negating utopian features. Literary dystopias are conceived societies wherein the most profound needs of human nature are either undermined, distorted, or rendered wholly unachievable. The term "dystopia" was first introduced by John Stuart Mill in 1868, and Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines it as a fictitious realm wherein inhabitants endure dehumanized and frequently fearful existences. Amidst the throes of the Cold War, writers began to contemplate the aftermath of a cataclysmic event and the ensuing state of human existence. They endeavour to capture attention by concentrating their narratives on environmental calamities and the subsequent ecological downfall.

Paul Lynch's "Prophet Song" delves into how dystopian literature, with its imaginative and speculative nature, illuminates urgent societal issues and fosters critical reflection on our future trajectory. The title "Prophetic Voices" suggests that Lynch's narrative acts as a forewarning, drawing parallels between the depicted dystopian society and current global concerns such as authoritarianism, surveillance, societal division, and the erosion of democratic values. These "reflections" underscore the role of dystopian fiction as a mirror to our reality, highlighting the potential dangers and ethical dilemmas posed by prevailing political and social ideologies. This research scrutinizes how Lynch's novel offers profound insights into contemporary

anxieties, challenging readers to contemplate the implications of current trends and envision a more conscientious path forward. Through Lynch's vivid portrayal, "Prophet Song" is a critical commentary on the fragility of freedom and the enduring human spirit amidst looming threats.

### **Review of the dystopian literature**

George Orwell's book '*1984*' exemplifies dystopian fiction, portraying a future marred by societal decay, vast inequities, and the failings of human nature. Totalitarianism pervades, fostering conflict and despair. Unlike utopian novels, which envisage human perfectibility, '*1984*' suggests humanity's worsening trajectory if power's corruption remains unchecked. Characters endure wars, surveillance, and oppression in a decaying London, reflecting the innate corruption and repression of human nature. Orwell, influenced by World War II's aftermath and the rise of fascism, offers a grim warning of future calamities.

In George Orwell's '*1984*', Winston Smith, an inhabitant of Oceania, endures life under a totalitarian regime. His home, Airstrip One—formerly Great Britain—is ruled by the omnipresent Big Brother, enforcing Ingsoc (English Socialism). The Party's unchallenged rule places the Inner Party as elite and the Outer Party, to which Winston belongs, beneath them. Beyond this structure exist the proles, impoverished non-Party members ignored mainly by the regime. Winston toils in the Ministry of Truth, altering historical records to align with the Party's narrative. The ministries—Love, Peace, and Plenty—serve ironic purposes, with the Ministry of Love infamous for enforcing loyalty through surveillance and torture. Despite outward conformity, Winston yearns for truth, privacy, and freedom—perilous desires in a society where "thoughtcrimes" are severely punished. He begins a secret diary, recording his true feelings and memories. His life changes when he meets Julia, a fellow Party member who secretly despises the regime. Their illicit affair defies the Party's control over personal relationships. They dream of freedom but face imminent danger. An enigmatic Inner Party member, O'Brien seemingly supports their hope for resistance. However, O'Brien is

revealed as a loyal Party agent. Under his interrogation, Winston is tortured, leading to his betrayal of Julia.

After his release, Winston is a hollow shell, stripped of his rebellious spirit. He resumes a mundane existence, drowning his sorrows in Victory Gin at the Chestnut Tree Café. His transformation is complete as he gazes into Big Brother's eyes, feeling a twisted love and loyalty for the tyrant he once despised. Thus, the novel concludes with Winston's tragic acceptance of the Party's dominion, reflecting on the perils of absolute power and the fragility of human freedom.

Aldous Huxley's '*Brave New World*' remains an enthralling and provocative work of dystopian literature since its debut in 1932. *This novel* presents a dystopian future where technological advancements, genetic engineering, and social conditioning dominate society. The story follows Bernard Marx, an Alpha Plus intellectual alienated from his peers, and his interaction with John, a "savage" from a reservation beyond the World State. Their journey through the contrasting realms of a controlled society and an untamed reservation reveals the stark dichotomy between the synthetic happiness of the World State and the imperfect but natural existence of the savages. This ideological conflict provokes a profound interrogation of the morality and ramifications of a society founded on conditioning and uniformity.

Huxley introduces characters such as Lenina Crowne, a Beta Plus epitomizing the shallow pursuit of pleasure, and Mustapha Mond, a World Controller embodying the ruling class's authority and power. The novel explores enduring themes: a society reliant on technology and scientific advancements manipulates individuals through genetic engineering and conditioning, raising ethical concerns about forsaking individuality for social stability. The narrative critiques consumerism and the dehumanization resulting from the relentless pursuit of material goods. Characters like Bernard and John grapple with the desire for independence and authentic experiences in a society that suppresses individuality. The World State's use of psychological conditioning and propaganda maintains control, stifling critical thought and

challenging the status quo. The tension between societal stability and personal fulfilment, the regulation of sexuality, and the suppression of intellectual and artistic pursuits underscore the importance of literature, art, and critical thinking in fostering genuine human connection and personal growth. *It* remains a timeless cautionary tale, warning against sacrificing individuality, critical thought, and human connection for superficial pleasure and societal conformity.

*'The Giver'*, a novel penned by the American author Lois Lowry in 1993, unveils a young adult dystopian tale set within a society initially cloaked in the guise of utopia. As the narrative unfolds, this seemingly perfect world is gradually revealed to be a dystopian reality. This is a seminal work in the young adult dystopian genre. Set within a meticulously controlled society that masquerades as a utopia, the novel follows the journey of a young boy named Jonas. In this community, emotions are suppressed, memories of the past are erased, and individuality is sacrificed for sameness and stability.

Jonas is chosen to assume the esteemed role of Receiver of Memory, the singular custodian of the community's collective remembrances, encompassing the delight and sorrow inherent in the human condition. Under the tutelage of the current Receiver, *The Giver*, Jonas becomes aware of the depth and complexity of life beyond the controlled confines of his society. As he absorbs these memories, Jonas grapples with the moral and ethical implications of his community's practices, leading him to question the actual cost of their imposed harmony.

Through exploring themes such as control, conformity, and the suppression of emotions and memories, *'The Giver'* presents a thought-provoking critique of pursuing a superficially perfect society at the expense of human freedom and authenticity. The novel underscores the dangers of sacrificing individuality and the richness of human experience for the illusion of a conflict-free world.

Ray Bradbury's *'Fahrenheit 451'* presents a stark dystopian vision of the future, where the written word is outlawed, and firemen are entrusted with reducing any discovered volumes to ashes. At the heart of this narrative is Guy Montag, a dedicated fireman who finds satisfaction in the flames that consume knowledge. His world begins to unravel upon meeting Clarisse, a young woman whose inquisitive nature and appreciation for the simple beauties of life stir up something dormant within him. This encounter, coupled with the illicit allure of the books he is meant to destroy, ignites a profound internal revolution.

Montag's journey from a blind enforcer of censorship to a fervent seeker of truth is marked by revelations and dangers. He grapples with the stark realization of the vacuous existence imposed by a regime that equates ignorance with bliss, numbing its populace with shallow pleasures and constant distractions. The society depicted is one where critical thinking and individualism are sacrificed at the altar of uniformity and control. As Montag's disenchantment grows, he finds solace and purpose among a covert cadre of intellectual dissidents, each committed to memorizing and safeguarding the literary treasures of humanity. Through their shared quest to preserve the essence of human thought and culture, Bradbury eloquently condemns the perils of censorship and the erosion of free will. *'Fahrenheit 451'* is more than a mere tale of rebellion; it is a poignant commentary on the value of literature and the enduring power of ideas. It serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of freedom and the enduring necessity of intellectual independence, making it an enduring masterpiece of dystopian literature.

Hannah Arendt's profound works, *'The Origins of Totalitarianism'* and *'Eichmann in Jerusalem'*, offer a penetrating exploration of totalitarian regimes' characteristics and internal mechanisms. By meticulously examining Arendt's dissection of totalitarianism's systemic and ideological foundations, we understand the dystopian landscapes depicted in literature. These imagined realms often reflect our potential descent into analogous forms of despotism. Hence, it is vital to grasp the implications of these parallels. A

thorough study of Arendt's scholarship equips us with the insights necessary to navigate the intricate nature of totalitarianism and its various manifestations.

Lisa Newgard embarked upon an academic study into the realm of chaotic existence as depicted in dystopian narratives. Her scholarly treatise, *'Life of Hope: Dystopian Literature for Young Adults'*, extensively examined 12 prominent works in the dystopian genre. These novels include Suzanne Collins's *"The Hunger Games,"* Susan Beth Pfeffer's *"Life As We Knew It,"* Scott Westerfeld's *"Uglies,"* Catherine Fisher's *"Incarceron,"* Emma Clayton's *"The Roar,"* Pam Bachorz's *"Candor,"* Patrick Ness's *"The Knife of Never Letting Go,"* Allegra Goodman's *"The Other Side of the Island,"* Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams's *"Tunnels,"* Eoin Colfer's *"The Supernaturalist,"* T. Fisher Unwin's *"Unwind,"* and M.T. Anderson's *"Feed."*

Through her meticulous review, Newgard discerned several recurrent motifs woven into the fabric of these narratives. Foremost among these were the protagonist's resilience, survival, governmental control, social conformity, and love between the protagonist and other young adult characters, common issues in these dystopian novels.

Her scholarly inquiry reveals a notable trend: save for *"Feed,"* each novel showcases the protagonist's resilience. Confronted with various forms of adversity, these central figures steadfastly overcame their trials. This theme is most vividly portrayed in *"The Knife of Never Letting Go,"* where Todd, the protagonist, repeatedly encounters fresh obstacles just as he believes he has found safety or succeeded. Todd, along with Viola, faces relentless pursuit by an army intent on their destruction. Throughout the narrative, Todd endures profound losses, including a close friend, a loyal dog, and a father figure. The departure of his father, who sacrifices himself for Todd's sake, plunges Todd into deep despair. Nevertheless, Todd's fortitude and determination remain unwavering as he navigates the perils.

Upon thorough examination, Lisa Newgard discovered that the theme of survival was prominently featured in nine out of the twelve novels under scrutiny. The protagonists' endeavours for survival differed significantly across these works. Some narratives, such as *The Hunger Games*, *The Knife of Never Letting Go*, and *Unwind*, vividly portray daily battles for survival. In contrast, in *Candor*, Oscar devised a systematic approach by listening to custom-made tapes to shield himself from the town's pervasive indoctrination messages.

Lisa Newgard revealed that in a similar vein to the government's manipulation of the populace in *Candor*, six additional novels explored the theme of governmental dominance. Across these narratives, the central characters harboured deep-seated reservations about the government's equity and tirelessly endeavoured to oppose it. This resistance took various forms: from outright physical combat, exemplified by Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, to covert efforts aimed at aiding others in escaping, akin to Oscar's actions in *Candor*. *The Other Side of the Island* depicted an extreme manifestation of governmental control. In the isolated community of Island 365, not only were beliefs dictated by the authority, but even the weather patterns were meticulously regulated, underscoring the extent of societal manipulation and dominance.

In numerous societies, strict rules and regulations dictate societal conduct. Lisa Newgard's investigation reveals that nine scrutinized novels feature communities characterized by rigid social norms, some of which would be deemed unacceptable by contemporary standards. In *Unwind*, for instance, three adolescents face the grim fate of being 'unwound'—a process that terminates their existence while preserving their bodily organs for others. In contrast, *Incarceron* portrays a different form of societal conformity, set against a backdrop rich with futuristic technologies not yet conceived during its era. The juxtaposition of advanced technology within a socio-political framework reminiscent of the 18th century introduces layers of complexity to daily existence for its inhabitants.

Lisa Newgard found that romantic entanglements frequently intertwine with the narratives of dystopian novels. Ten of the examined works prominently feature a romantic liaison involving their protagonists. In *Uglies*, Tally's quest to reunite with Shay leads her away from familiar Uglyville to the mysterious settlement of Smoke, a journey fraught with peril and self-discovery. Similarly, in *Feed*, Titus embarks on a risky endeavour to protect Violet, whom he meets under extraordinary circumstances on the moon. Their relationship unfolds amidst adolescent emotions, depicting the poignant complexities of young love and its inevitable trials and tribulations.

### **Objectives of the study**

Despite dystopian fiction's popularity, there's limited analysis of these narratives' reflections on modern democratic complexities. Lynch's novel, with its authoritarianism and social decay themes, offers profound insights, yet their real-world resonance remains underexplored. The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To examine the dystopian themes in Paul Lynch's "Prophet Song," including authoritarianism, surveillance, social inequality, and environmental degradation.
- To situate "Prophet Song" within the broader context of dystopian literature, comparing it with other notable works to identify unique and shared motifs and narrative techniques.
- To investigate how the novel mirrors and critiques contemporary societal and political issues, drawing parallels between its fictional world and real-world events and trends.
- To evaluate the impact of the novel on perceptions of current democratic systems and societal challenges, focusing on its ability to raise awareness, foster critical thinking, and inspire change.
- To delve into the ethical and moral dilemmas presented by the novel, especially those about safeguarding democratic principles and human rights amidst the rise of authoritarian tendencies.

## Research methodology and design

The present study is rooted in a qualitative approach, employing a diverse and comprehensive research methodology to investigate the themes, significance, and impact of dystopian elements in Paul Lynch's "Prophet Song." This research design integrates several pivotal components to analyze the novel thoroughly. Initially, an extensive literature review shall be conducted to position "Prophet Song" within the broader landscape of dystopian literature. This review will draw from a plethora of sources, including academic journals, books, articles, and preceding research, focusing on both historical and contemporary works. This analysis will pay particular attention to authoritarianism, surveillance, social inequality, and environmental degradation. Character analysis will form a crucial segment of the methodology. The protagonist, Eilish Stack, and other significant characters will be examined in depth to comprehend their development, motivations, and roles in articulating the novel's dystopian themes. A comparative analysis will elucidate connections between "Prophet Song" and other eminent dystopian works, examining themes, narrative techniques, character development, and socio-political commentary. This will underscore the novel's distinctive contributions to the genre and its pertinence in contemporary discourse. The culmination of these various analyses will be synthesized and interpreted to formulate comprehensive conclusions.

## Discussion

Paul Lynch, an acclaimed Irish author, is known for his evocative storytelling and lyrical prose. Lynch has garnered international recognition for his novels, which often explore themes of displacement, identity, and the human spirit's resilience. His works, including *Red Sky in Morning*, *The Black Snow*, and *Grace*, have been praised for their profound emotional impact and vivid, atmospheric settings. In 2023, his novel *Prophet Song* was awarded the esteemed Booker Prize, solidifying his reputation as a preeminent voice in modern literature.

The narrative of *Prophet Song* extends beyond mere portrayals of brutality, anguish, and the stifling of dissent. It delves deeply into the harrowing odyssey of abandoning one's native land and confronting the precarious existence of a refugee. Lynch masterfully explores a society on the verge of collapse, set against rising political turbulence and despotism. Through a narrative imbued with rich symbolism and profound themes, Lynch follows characters caught in the maelstrom of their crumbling world, shedding light on the enduring resilience of the human spirit amidst the grip of tyranny.

The title of this dystopian novel, "*Prophet Song*", is rich with symbolism, encapsulating the novel's themes of forewarning, truth, resistance, and the enduring power of the human spirit. It suggests that the story is both a prophetic warning and an expressive act of resistance, meant to resonate deeply with readers and provoke thought about the real-world implications of political and social issues.

### **Symbolism of "Prophet"**

A prophet foresees and warns about future events, often calling for societal change. In the novel, "Prophet" is a cautionary vision of a potential future marred by authoritarianism and social decay. Characters who resist the regime, such as Larry and Eilish, embody modern-day prophets, striving to reveal truths obscured by propaganda and fear. Their persecution mirrors the trials faced by historical prophets, emphasizing their sacrifices.

### **Symbolism of 'Song'**

A "Song" expresses emotions, ideas, and resistance. It represents the voices of the oppressed, highlighting the importance of communication and truth. Songs create solidarity and shared struggle, and their enduring nature suggests that the novel's themes will leave a lasting impact, serving as a reminder of the warnings and messages within.

By merging "prophet" and "song," the title conveys a potent warning through art. Lynch's narrative cautions against the erosion of democratic freedoms and totalitarianism's rise. Amidst

dystopian despair, the “song” symbolizes hope, inspiring resistance and embodying the human spirit’s resilience for truth and justice.

In the above context of the interpretation, Eilish Stack’s journey can be seen as embodying the spirit of a “*Prophet Song*.” Her struggles, sacrifices, and acts of resistance are a testament to the human capacity for resilience and truth-telling in the face of overwhelming oppression. The characters’ experiences in the novel collectively form a “song” of resistance against the authoritarian regime. Their stories, struggles, and small acts of defiance contribute to a larger narrative that warns and inspires.

The novel commences with a knock upon the door in the obscurity of night. The story revolves around Eilish Stack, a devoted mother striving to keep her family intact following the arrest of her husband, Larry, who has been apprehended for his role as a labour union organizer. Amidst the disintegration of society, she resolutely endeavours to safeguard her children and secure Larry’s release. Her journey is fraught with darkness, violence, and distress, yet it resonates profoundly with the present state of global politics, rendering it a poignant and pertinent narrative.

Prophet Song (PS) is set in an atmosphere where human actions have profoundly transformed the natural environment, creating a barren and desolate terrain. Lynch employs the protagonist, Eilish, to convey the stark and oppressive ambience, depicting polluted environs and the deterioration of nature. As Eilish states:

“There is nothing to see outside but a lone gull pearled in blue light on a chimney top, a gauze of fine rain... what sounds like in the sky like some all-consuming fire chewing wood in its mouth.” (PS, 2023, p. 182)

Lynch meticulously portrays dilapidated cities and polluted atmospheres to underscore the degradation of the environment and its profound effects on human existence. The setting itself becomes an integral character within the narrative. Throughout the novel, he paints a picture of desolate landscapes, marked by scorched earth and tainted skies, as exemplified by his words:

“The garden was wet and dark; everything hung in damp suspension, the trees blowing to the cold” (p. 27).

This vivid imagery powerfully conveys the environmental devastation of rampant industrial activity and relentless exploitation. The heavens are now veiled in a pall of smog. Through Eilish’s eyes, the dystopian facets of “*Prophet Song*” come into sharp focus. “The natural world is banished and distrusted” (p. 2), she observes, remarking upon nature’s fragility. Lynch vividly illustrates the contamination of water sources, painting scenes where characters encounter polluted rivers and streams. He writes:

“...a fragment of corroded piping coming loose into the mains, the water growing fouled by rust and lead contaminant” (p. 67).

In Chapter 3, rusty, toxic water flows from a tap, rendering it undrinkable. Eilish beholds a river tainted with oil, with dead fish adrift on its surface, a stark reminder of the environmental havoc wrought by human indifference. Literary compositions hold great significance in mirroring societal truths and oppressive governments. During a dialogue between Larry and Eilish, the pervasive shadow of totalitarian oversight is laid bare as Eilish uncovers that her phone has been secretly monitored and is tapped.

“She looks at the phone and reaches back into the call, following her voice into Larry’s phone; the signal has to be relayed to reach Larry’s mobile; it is picked up and relayed through a network transmitter. Suddenly, she hears her voice as though she were listening to herself in another room” (p. 14).

The passage mentioned above illustrates the authoritative nature of the regime’s pervasive surveillance machinery, encroaching upon the privacy and liberty of individuals. This prompts profound inquiries regarding the government’s obligation to uphold the privacy rights of its citizenry. The state employs many surveillance techniques to incessantly observe its populace, ranging from

cameras on every street to compulsory tracking devices embedded within citizen identification cards.

“A soldier standing at the corner bends to his knee and readies his weapons... gloved her hand, asking her to stop. He says this street is closed for now; no pedestrians are allowed.... Look, she says, I live at number 47; I have a child to take home for lunch... The officer does not follow her pointing finger but asks for her ID” (pp. 186-187).

A further paramount theme within “Prophet Song” is the gradual erosion of personal freedom, which Lynch masterfully utilizes to lay bare the insidious mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes dismantle the independence of their citizenry. Within the novel, characters find themselves compelled to submit to the overbearing mandates of a totalitarian authority, consequently surrendering their autonomy and distinctiveness. This oppressive force systematically curtails their liberties, leaving them with a mere semblance of choice amidst a suffocating atmosphere of control and subjugation. Lynch’s portrayal serves as a poignant exploration of how such regimes strip away the essence of individuality and self-determination, reducing human lives to mere cogs in the machinery of despotism.

Eilish finds herself trapped in a world dominated by an unyielding authoritarian regime, where fear and oppression permeate every aspect of existence. Her fervent yearning for freedom is profoundly complicated by the regime’s pervasive control, leaving her concept of liberty so warped that she scarcely comprehends its true essence. This inner turmoil is poignantly articulated when Eilish reflects, “I can see now that what I thought of as freedom was just struggle, and there was no freedom all along” (p. 135). Her words encapsulate the harrowing realization that her perception of freedom has been a mere illusion, a constant struggle masked as autonomy, perpetually manipulated by the iron grip of the authoritarian state. Lynch deftly portrays this internal conflict, illustrating how the relentless pressures of an oppressive regime can distort and erode one’s intrinsic understanding of freedom and self-determination.

In this novel, the regime is characterized by a central leadership wielding immense power, supported by a cadre of officials who meticulously implement draconian policies from the top down. False allegations become insidious tools for repression and manipulation, inflicting profound suffering upon the populace. Larry Stack becomes a tragic victim of such machinations, unjustly identified as a dissident aligned with the rebels. The regime's accusation is chillingly explicit:

“An allegation had been received... it is an allegation that concerns you directly... your behaviour looks like the conduct of someone inciting hatred against the state, someone showing discord and unrest.” (pp. 10-11).

Larry's plight vividly illustrates the regime's reliance on baseless accusations to quash dissent and maintain an iron grip on society. He is subjected to arbitrary arrest, relentless interrogation, and severe persecution, emblematic of the broader injustice and brutality that typify totalitarian regimes. Yet, amidst this stark portrayal of tyranny, Larry's ordeal also highlights the resilience and indomitable spirit of those who refuse to be silenced. His courage in the face of systemic oppression is a poignant notice of the enduring human capacity to resist and defy totalitarianism, even when confronted with seemingly insurmountable odds. Lynch's narrative, through Larry's harrowing experiences, underscores both the peril and the profound bravery inherent in the struggle against totalitarian rule.

Lynch vividly portrays the regime's control over communication, from radio broadcasts to news channels, ensuring truth remains hidden and the populace ignorant. This manipulation is vital for maintaining power. In a poignant scene after violent gunshots and bombings, Eilish desperately seeks updates, only to find silence. “She turns on the radio and waits for the world news; there is no news about what is happening” (p. 222). This moment starkly illustrates the regime's suppression of reality, effectively erasing truth from public consciousness. Beyond censorship, Lynch explores the regime's use of misinformation to entrench their authority. By spreading falsehoods, they create confusion and

uncertainty, leaving citizens unable to discern reality from propaganda. This deliberate obfuscation disorients and demoralizes the populace, undermining resistance by eroding trust in information sources.

By the novel's denouement, Ireland has descended into an unrecognizable, war-ravaged wasteland, a transformation rendered strikingly natural by Lynch's masterful prose. The shift occurs without abrupt transitions, evoking a sense of inexorable decay. Despite the unconventional narrative style—marked by the absence of paragraph breaks and dialogue quotations—Lynch captivates with his seamless storytelling. Eilish's defining trait, her unwavering resolve to remain in her homeland, undergoes a poignant shift as she resolves to flee. This decision propels the plot into a sudden, rapid progression, underscoring the urgency and gravity of her plight.

## Conclusion

In "Prophet Song," Paul Lynch intricately intertwines dystopian themes and profound symbolism, crafting a narrative that compellingly echoes contemporary societal dilemmas. Through the pervasive motifs of surveillance, propaganda, and authoritarian rule, Lynch critiques the erosion of individual liberties and the dehumanizing effects of unchecked power. The title "Prophet Song" is a potent symbol, encapsulating the novel's dual purpose as a prophetic warning and an anthem of resistance against oppression.

The title "Prophet Song" evokes foresight and truth-telling, warning of authoritarian governance's dire consequences. Characters like Eilish Stack embody modern-day prophets, confronting tyranny and exposing injustice despite peril. "Song" symbolizes resilience and collective expression, uniting and inspiring dissent against oppression. Together, these elements highlight the enduring human spirit amidst tyranny.

"Prophet Song" is a poignant literary masterpiece that goes beyond its dystopian backdrop, providing enduring reflections on power, resistance, and unwavering hope. Lynch's narrative compels us to

confront unsettling truths about the precariousness of democratic ideals and the urgent need for vigilance in defending personal freedoms. Lynch's opus serves as a resonant summons, a mirror reflecting both our capacity for cruelty and our resilience, compelling us to ponder the limits of our humanity.

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## Aesthetics of illusion: an analysis of *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar*

Neha Soi

### ABSTRACT

Film, like most other forms of media, works on creating an illusion of reality. The story is depicted in a manner to not only convey the sequence of events, but to offer a perspective to the viewers. The narrative is styled to ensure a privileged viewpoint and it is followed seamlessly to ensure viewer attention. Further, the orchestration of this perspective rests on selective visuality: some details are accentuated and revealed, while others are purportedly hidden to create a semblance of reality and credibility. The technical aspects of the *mise-en-scene*, and the processes that enable the craft are particularly hidden to create a phantasmagoria that can have the desired affect on the viewers. However, in Wes Anderson's 2023 film *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar*, these technical processes are not only shown, but also accentuated. Even the narrative is handed over from character to character, ostensibly offering many perspectives to the viewer. This paper is designed to probe the narrative and illusive aesthetics of this film to underscore the alternate illusion of reality that the film offers. The paper also highlights the hypernarrative and the hyperillusive aspects in this cinematic experience.

**Keywords:** *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar*, narrative technique, film form, phantasmagoria, hypernarrative.

Medium is the message...[;] the “content” of any medium is always another medium.

– Marshall McLuhan, 1994: 8

In her 1992 essay on Benjamin's landmark thesis on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, Susan Buck-Morss describes the phantasmagoria<sup>1</sup> that conceals reality in its overemphasis and creates an alternate version of it. In talking of art, particularly performing art, Buck-Morss argues that the orchestra in Wagner's opera was hidden from the view of the

audience to enhance an aesthetic affect and cause an alternate reality to take shape. She explains, “[a]t Bayreuth the orchestra – the means of production of the musical effects is hidden from the public by constructing the pit below the audience’s line of vision” (25), to create an illusion of wholeness that can offer a sense of credibility to the performance and make it seem real. This perceptual field of illusion offers a predesigned visual to the audience and mediates the images to produce a desired affect in them. The illusion of reality, in its appeal to the viewers, becomes a simulation of the real and creates a mediated aesthetics. This play of aesthetics between the illusion and the reality becomes a fertile field of analysis in the area of technologically produced works of art,<sup>2</sup> such as film. Meaning in film is predicated as much on what is revealed as on what is hidden from view. For the phantasmagoria of film to cause affect, the audio-visual is highly mediated to control what is to be made accessible to the viewer. Reality as affect is mediated through an aesthetics of illusion.

While discussing the ‘truth of the image,’ Kolker emphasizes that through Computer-generated images (CGI) or visualizing through the lens, film is artificial. With Bazin and the idea of the *objectif*, the mediation of reality through the lens, even at the level of the camera obscura, becomes an artificial phenomenon: “made by art” (Kolker, 2015: 20). The *media*-tion, that is an essential facet of film, renders it at once susceptible to the perspective that is privileged in the narrative, and herein lies the pleasure of illusion. Inasmuch as film offers a perspective privileged by the media employed in it, it triggers an analysis into these media and a deconstruction of the narrative through its visualization. Narrative in film is not only about the perspective of the auteur but also about the technique of visualization that is multi-mediatic and overlapping. If McLuhan’s idea quoted above it to be taken in this regard, every media carries within it other mediatic forms which inform the content and meaning then comes to be located in the play between these media. The film form, in particular offers an ample scope for phantasmagoria with its multimediality in form, content and technique. This paper is designed to analyze the narrative space of the film *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar*

(Anderson, 2023), and unravel the narrative technique employed in the film which engages the viewer in a carnival of visualities. The paper will offer a brief introduction to the film and its narrative technique, while simultaneously underscoring the carnival of illusion, aesthetics and meaning in the text.

An Indian Paintbrush and American Empirical collaborative production, *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar* offers a crossover modern parable bringing orientalist morality together with an avarice driven by western mercantilism in an attempt to offer a possible redemption. Based on Roald Dahl's 1977 short story by the same title, the 40-minute film is about the spiritual and moral transformation that comes about in the character of Henry Sugar, a rich and lonely man given to gambling and indifferent to scruples. The name Henry Sugar is disclaimed in the film as a pseudonym taken to protect the identity of this rich man. Sugar (played by Benedict Cumberbatch) reads of how Imdad Khan (Ben Kingsley), a member of a travelling circus in India, acquired the skill to see without his eyes from a Great Yogi (Richard Ayoade), in a book written by an Indian doctor Z Z Chatterjee (Dev Patel), and emulates his meditative practice to perfect the skill with the intention to win at gambling and augment his wealth. However, the experience of Imdad Khan, an essentially oriental character with his vagabond existence, his mysterious skills and his connections with the spiritual, transform the self-centered westerner Sugar and he mysteriously feels the urge to disburse his winnings among people in the street. When his sudden burst of philanthropy causes a chaos in the street, he is advised by a policeman to give the money to a charity. He then asks his accountant John Winston (also played by Dev Patel) to establish places of charity like orphanages, hospitals etc and funnel his winnings to these places. He goes on to take several disguises and travels to various casinos always keeping his winnings limited to an amount that does not invite scrutiny, and thereby funds his philanthropic ventures. Upon his death, his story is conveyed to Dahl (Ralph Fiennes), who is the primary narrator of the film.

The film offers a layered narrative of a story told by Imdad Khan to Dr Z Z Chatterjee, who writes of it in a book that is read by the protagonist Henry Sugar, whose assistant, John Winston, in turn tells the story to Roald Dahl, who narrates the story to the viewer in the film. Interestingly, sitting at the sixth remove from the first narrative, the viewer gets a first-hand view of every level of the narration through first person accounts of each of these layers. There are two prominent stylistic features that are observable about the narrative. First, the film offers direct narrative space in the first person to almost all the characters. Starting from Dahl, the narrative is taken over by Sugar, followed by Dr Chatterjee (and his fellow doctors), Imdad Khan, once again Henry Sugar (and the policeman) and finally Dahl again. Second, the phantasmagoria of the film seems to be created not by veiling but revealing the technique of the visual. Unlike the aesthetics of film which are created by hiding elements of technique like the orchestra in Wagner's opera, the film shows techniques of makeup, costume, lighting and illusion to the viewer thereby undercutting the phantasmagoria. These two aspects of the narrative style create what can be called a hypernarrative in the film, which offers an alternate aesthetics and illusion.

Narratives function as privileged perceptions creating a perspective for the viewer and obliterating all other possible viewpoints. Russian formalists Victor Shklovsky and Vladimir Propp defined the terms *fabula* and *syuzhet* as the raw material of a story and how a story is narrated respectively. In fiction or in film, the narrative is conveyed through the perspective of a privileged eye that offers a perception to the reader/viewer. In the film under study, the narrative is arranged in a manner that the writer Roald Dahl seems to hand over the reins of storytelling to the characters and then retrieves the control of the story eventually. Further at every level of narration, the characters empathically seem to stress that they are conveying the tale honestly and faithfully.

Dahl begins his account with a list of things he needs before he starts writing:

I like to make sure I have everything around me that I'm going to need. Um...cigarettes of course. Some coffee, chocolates. And always make sure I have a sharp pencil before I start. I have six pencils, and then I like to clean my writing board.

This clinical account of detached writing is followed by the story which begins with an introduction to Henry Sugar:

Henry Sugar was 41 years old, unmarried and rich. He was rich because he had a rich father, who was now dead. He was unmarried because *he was too selfish to share any of his money with a wife*. He was 6'2" tall, and *not perhaps as handsome as he thought he was.... Men like Henry Sugar can be found drifting like seaweed all over the world. They are not particularly bad men, but they are not good men either....* Henry Sugar was one of those [who bet on anything], *and not at all above cheating, by the way.* (my emphasis)

The ostensibly objective account of Henry Sugar is tempered with portions of value judgement and interjection on the part of the writer, as emphasised above. The straight-faced narrative with its painted sets and minimal camera movement creates an environment of unbiased reportage but the message is nevertheless opinionated and ideological.

When Dahl's narrative is handed off to Henry Sugar in a change of scene from Dahl's Cispay House to the stately countryside house of Sir William W., he refers to himself in the third person, and continues in the same vein of condescension about himself as Dahl did when he cast him as a spoilt, rich man. Henry says of himself, "He drifted through the house, aimless. Then finally mooched into the library." The tone continues to be that of disdain under the garb of disinterestedness, till Sugar begins to read from Chatterjee's account of "the man who sees without his eyes." The narrative is then passed on to Dr Z Z Chatterjee at the Lords and Ladies Hospital in Calcutta on 2 December 1935, who speaks in the first person, but with the continued air of detachment and stoicism.

Imdad Khan enters the narrative at this point and his words are given to us in the direct form. Imdad Khan announces that he can see without using his eyes and asks the doctors to bandage his eyes thoroughly so that his audience does not suspect him of cheating at his performance in the circus that evening. The narrator, Dr Chatterjee establishes Khan's credibility based on his age, his greying moustache and his confidence and confesses that his curiosity was piqued. It is interesting to note that the doctors not only bandage his eyes, but also put glue and kneaded flour on them to establish that there is no illusion in the performance. Imdad Khan's performance of cycling in the street with his eyes glued shut by the doctors, is seen by the viewers of the film along with the narrator Dr Chatterjee (and Dr Marshall to corroborate his observation). Khan's claim to an honest performance and the doctors' thoroughness in bandaging his eyes go on to stress the objectivity of the narrative and offer a visual assurance to the audience that no illusion, but only reality is being offered to them. Imdad Khan's intriguing story that is clinically vouched for by the doctors, provides as a parallel for the illusion of reality that the film is creating for the viewer through its hypernarrative.

Further the doctor says to Imdad Khan, "I am not a writer by profession. But if you tell me how you developed this power of being able to see without your eyes, I'll take it down as faithfully as I can." He says to the audience then, "I have a shorthand for taking down medical histories. I believe I got everything Imdad said to me, word for word. I give it to you now, exactly as he spoke it." This remark by the doctor once again asserts the objectivity and faithfulness of his account, creating an illusion of credibility and reality.

The narrative is now taken over by Imdad Khan in the first person, who begins his account from his birth in Kashmir in 1873, his attraction to a conjurer and his joining a travelling circus and sojourning all through the country with them. He then tells of a Yogi that he heard of who could levitate in his prayers, and decided to meet him. He tells of his eventful journey to the forest to meet the Yogi and then describes how he saw the Yogi begin his

prayers and levitate for 46 minutes 15 inches above his prayer mat. The details recounted by Imdad Khan in terms of the time the Yogi prayed for, or how long he levitated for, or the visible proof of where he was hit by the Yogi on the shin upon being discovered, are all offered very clearly and emphatically to stress the credibility of the story and create a willing suspension of disbelief.

The stoic and clinical manner of acting with actors facing the camera directly and minimal perspective shots in the film further accentuate the illusion of objectivity in the film. The *syuzhet* then seems to claim a clear congruence with the *fabula* and disclaims any privileging of perspective. Melodrama is minimized in a plot that unfurls rather swiftly leaving no time or space for accentuated performances. A rather poker-faced description seems to disguise what is in fact a dramatized parable.

The essential discourse about oriental mysticism, the exotica of a travelling circus, the fallibility of the human exemplified by the momentary violence on the part of the Yogi and his immediate remorse and penitence all create a backdrop that is at once believable and seemingly realistic. That the action is set around the turn of the twentieth century further accentuates the credibility of the story in its congruence with the existing orientalist ideology of that time. To make it palatable to the twenty-first century viewer, Dahl, and Anderson, introduce a conduit to narrate Imdad Khan's story in the form of two doctors in a colonially funded hospital, one Indian and one British. The story of Imdad Khan is further accessed by the western viewer through the experience of Henry Sugar, who not only reads of it but emulates it, succeeds by it and evolves through it. The corroboration of eastern mysticism by western experience makes the account more believable.

Further, the *mise-en-scene* of the film creates a phantasmagoria that offers an illusion that is unquestionable despite its evident intrigue. Film works on creating an illusion of reality. The frame essentially works to create a space of vision that focuses on the privileged visualisation while actively obscuring the extraneous and the technical to control the perception of the viewer and offer a controlled vision of reality to them. Following Godard's view, it

can be observed that film offers a fantasy even in the context of documentaries or actualities, in that the visualization offered is not real but selective and privileged (*La Chinoise*, 1967).<sup>3</sup> Rather than triggering an imagination in entirety, film offers a visualized imagination which evokes a sensibility of reality and truth in its resemblance to the lived reality of human beings in the world. Kolker suggests:

[F]ilms from all over the world are constructed on a principle of radical self-effacement, rendering their form invisible .... This is made possible through a set of conventions and assumptions by means of which the viewer will accept the illusion of transparency and see the film as an unmediated, ongoing whole, a story played out in front of her eyes. Form and structure, the artifice of the image, and the fragmentary nature of screen acting and editing will all melt away and merge together in apparent wholeness. (47)

This illusion of unmediated presentation is what leads to the affect of cinema. The formal conventions are hidden from view and the screen is presented as a window into reality causing the much significant willing suspension of disbelief.

The phantasmagoria of film usually depends upon obliterating the technical and the mechanical. The dark theatre room (a necessity for Edison's kinetoscope, but a purported blinding in the current times) ensures a limited visual for the viewer. The inclusion of the technical would then predictably obfuscate the perceived reality and challenge the affect. However, in underscoring the technical and mechanical and ensuring its visibility in excess of the *mise-en-scene*, this film creates a hypernarrative that ensures the objectivity of the narrator and therefore ironically adds to the affect of illusion of reality.

In *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar* the hypernarrative elements not only remain visible but also occupy the field of vision to accentuate the story. In fact, very often they also create diversions and interruptions which makes them a part of the

primary action and places them in complete visibility. This lack of the backstage renders the narrative an aura of openness and reality making it seem like anticinema. The *mise-en-scene* which is supposed to augment the illusion of reality now reveals it's working and bares itself to the audience in all its errors and *faux pas* and forms a part of the cinematic narrative. It is in this excess of visibility, that the film creates not an illusion but a hyperillusion that is premised on revealing rather than hiding. The excessive elements of visibility offer an additional scope for the narrative creating what can be called a hypernarrative space, which ostensibly tells beyond the narrative and thereby informs the narrative.

The purported intimacy of Roald Dahl right at the outset in stating his prerequisites for writing is undercut by the background appearance of a hand drawing a curtain away causing more light into the room. The small and simple hut, which seems to have been Dahl's abode for three decades, supposably in isolation, is clearly illuminated by an unseen presence that causes to offer the missing fill light in the opening scene. In a scene where Imdad Khan begins to talk about his youth and his encounter with the Yogi, the makeup is done in front the camera. While the eye brows, wig and accessories are changed immediately with a pit-crew efficiency, the moustache remains unchanged as he narrates his journey to the yurt of the Yogi. He gestures rather agitatedly for the moustache to be changed and then leaves the frame to make the required change, with his voice taking a distant echo. Further on, the scene showing the levitating Yogi, shows him placing a painted stool under himself to give the illusion of a gap between himself and the prayer mat. Even when he descends from the perceived height, he stands up and places the stool away. Further in the film, when Imdad Khan begins his meditative practice to perfect the skill of being able to see without his eyes by focussing on the face of his dead brother, the backdrop is physically altered in front of the camera without any cuts.

It is also interesting to note that this traditional back stage action is performed by the other actors in the film. Not only are the same

actors playing many roles in the narrative, they are also performing tasks such as make up, set arrangement, etc. Benedict Cumberbatch plays the role of Henry Sugar as well as a make-up assist. Ben Kingsley plays Imdad Khan as well as the Dealer in a casino. Ralph Fiennes plays the role of Dahl along with the Policeman. Dr Chatterjee and John Winston are both played by Dev Patel, and Richard Ayoade plays the Great Yogi as well as Dr Marshall. This duplicity of the actors makes their roles seem ephemeral and challenge the technique of craft in offering a lack of stability and affiliation between the characters and the viewers. Interestingly, the lack of stability between actors and characters further universalizes the story and renders it realistic. Insofar as actors play multiple roles, across the scope of time, space and character, the story becomes more relatable and credible.

In its lack of hiding the stagecraft to create an illusion of reality, ironically, a hyperillusive cinematic form is offered which creates an illusion of reality in showing more than what is expected. It is almost as if the backstage elements are made accessible to the viewer creating a hypernarrative that offers an illusion of reality by accentuating the narrative with its ancillary details of craft. The aesthetics of this hyperillusive technique permeate the fourth wall of cinema and invite the viewer on the stage where all stagecraft is visible too. However, the illusion still ensures only partial visibility. The framing of the set is always static and the camera offers only an eye-level shot, with actors moving across the frame rather than the camera following them. Painted two-dimensional sets and backdrops which are sled out to create alternate backdrops (with the sound effect of a sliding frame) add to the theatre-like affect of the film and bring the actors in greater proximity to the viewers. The distance caused by the screen is undercut through these effects which add to the multimediality of the film. Actors face the camera to deliver their dialogue and present their action with a stoicism that borders on the machinic. This makes the film transcend the form of the film to that of theatre and further to the backstage.

In *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar* narrative technique, layered narrative, multiple perspectives, theatrical presentation in 2-d sets and backdrop frames, presentation of illusions through painted sets, and actors playing multiple parts diffuse the idea of identity and perspective. While the simple looking frame design and sets offer a semblance of straightforward and unambiguous signification, the multiple voices, perspectives and characters played by actors complicate the narrative and layer it in an unending loop of signification. Not only is Henry Sugar a pseudonym and so simultaneously very near but not accessible, the other characters too, in their constant claims to have reproduced accounts verbatim, raise questions about credibility and perception.

The film offers a technique of narrative that challenges the established form of concealment to create phantasmagoria. In its controlled excess of visibility, the film creates a hypernarrative field of vision which offers an alternate aesthetics and illusion of reality. *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar* then becomes a hyperillusive cinematic text that conceals through revelation and creates an aesthetics of multimediality in its form.

### Notes

1. Phantasmagoria refers to the use of light and shadows to create visuals which seem dreamlike. While there is a semblance of reality in the produced images, they are illusionary. The term which was earlier used for illusions created for horror theatre in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has found place in the area of photography and film too.
2. Buck-Morss calls phantasmagoria “technoaesthetics” (22).
3. Godard, in his 1967 film *La Chinoise*, conveys this idea through a character.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### Understanding global civility: an analysis of 'Constructal Law' in Michael Takac's Vision

A Review Essay by Harish K. Thakur

'Constructal Law' (CL), is a principle that attempts to explain how patterns and designs arise to improve the efficiency of energy, matter, or information movement. The principle is applicable to a wide range of systems, including those that are natural, biological, and humans-made. The constructal law is the statement proclaiming the existence and the time direction of the evolution of configuration. It is far more general than 'maximum entropy production'. It is not a statement of optimality (min, max), end design or destiny. No flow system is destined to end up in a certain configuration at long times (Bejan & Lorente, 2004). From river networks and animal mobility to technological and cultural systems, these designs cover a wide range of topics. The Constructal Law, proposed by Adrian Bejan in 1996, asserts that the configuration of natural systems can be explained by the flow of materials, energy, and information shaping their evolution. [optimization is not guaranteed] It is mostly utilized in thermodynamics and physics, illustrating how design arises in natural systems in the evolution of configuration. Its significance encompasses human affairs, governance, and conflicts, providing a framework for analysing systemic behaviours in social and political spheres.

In the social sciences, enough literature exists that use optima to infer social, demographic, and economic dynamic. The book *Global Civility: Physical Constructal Law* (2024) presents an innovative and interdisciplinary approach to enhancing human civility by applying the physical constructal law. The author Michael T. Takac examines the interrelation of natural systems and how this concept could be used to enhance ethical conduct and harmony among human groups. The book is inspired by the CL theory forwarded by Adrian Bejan, a professor at Duke University.

## **The core concepts of CL**

Flow Systems, Design Evolution and Universality are the three key concepts associated with CL theory. ‘Flow Systems’ are the systems where material, energy, or information moves through defined pathways (e.g., rivers, blood vessels, tree system, transportation networks, power dynamics such as centralisation and decentralisation through different governance models). Design Evolution signifies the adaptation and emergence of configurations that reduce resistance and enhance flow efficiency over time. Universality means the law applies across scales, from microscopic systems (e.g., capillaries) to macroscopic phenomena (e.g., economies).

## **The evolution of CL**

It is possible to trace the beginnings and development of CL through the emergence of its interdisciplinary approach. The constructal law originated from the field of thermodynamics, specifically the second law, which has the authority to regulate entropy. As part of his efforts to reconcile entropy with order, Bejan attempted to provide an explanation not only for the dissipation of energy but also for the creation of structured patterns in nature (Bejan, 1996). The initial applications concentrated on physical systems, such as river basins and atmospheric currents, and attempted to explain how these systems spontaneously change their topologies in order to improve flow. For instance, river networks develop throughout time in order to reduce the amount of barrier to water flow while simultaneously increasing the amount of access to sources of precipitation (Bejan & Lorente, 2010). Bejan demonstrated how biological structures, such as lungs and circulatory systems, adhere to the same criteria in order to improve flow (Bejan, 2000). This allowed him to extend the domain of the law to include living organisms. In accordance with the constructal principle, the circulatory and respiratory systems of the body have developed designs that improve the movement of oxygen and nutrients.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the application of CL to human-made systems was already underway. Bejan provided an illustration of how urban designs, transportation networks, and communication systems evolve in a manner that is comparable to that of natural systems. According to Bejan and Zane (2012), these applications connected the field of CL to the fields of engineering, economics, and even governance. More recently, CL has been positioned as a unifying principle, connecting the physical sciences to social and behavioural sciences. This has resulted in a broadening of its philosophical and interdisciplinary scope. It seems to imply that the search for more efficient flows is also a driving force behind human evolution, cultural growth, and societal shifts.

### **CL and human systems**

The Constructal Law offers insight into the development of governance systems, economic frameworks, and social networks within human communities. Governance and political institutions can be regarded as “flow systems” intended to regulate resources and information. This theory posits that systems adjust to facilitate the effective allocation of power, resources, and decision-making. For instance in the hierarchical and decentralized governance structures mirror flow patterns. Centralized systems prioritize efficiency at scale, while decentralized systems adapt to localized needs, balancing the trade-offs between robustness and flexibility (Bejan & Zane, 2012). Similarly the supply chains, trade networks, and financial systems evolve based on flow principles. The rise of globalization illustrates this, where economies improvement for resource distribution on a global scale (Bejan, 2016). According to Freire and de Andre (2018) CL even applies to institutions, being state of mind entities. The main flows of an organization are credit and information. Of course, organizations engaged in production of goods also need physical assets. But the exchange of any physical material or good involves credit and information. Institutions evolving in the sense of improving those flows make organizations grow powerful. Institutional entrepreneurship in the sense of constraining credit and information flows withers an organization.

In addition, CL also offers insights into the mechanics of conflict through its application. Blockages or inefficiencies in the flow of society resources are frequently the root cause of wars and disputes. Among the examples are, competition over access to resources such as water or energy is akin to natural flow systems that are attempting to overcome obstacles. Territorial conflicts are a manifestation of this competition. The nations that are engaged in geopolitical rivalries are flow systems that are competing for dominance in trade, technology, and influence. The power dynamics of these nations are determined by the efficiency of both their internal and external flows. It is possible to understand social movements as efforts to unclog societal pathways, addressing injustices that restrict the flow of opportunities and resources. Civil unrest is a form of social unrest.

### **Michael T. Takac's addition to the CL theory**

*Global Civility* by M. Takac is a ground-breaking work that provides a new and innovative interdisciplinary solution to the problem of elevating humanity to new levels of civility through the implementation of the physical constructal law. In this book, the author explores the interconnection of natural systems and how this notion might be extended to increase ethical behaviour and harmony among human communities. The book draws inspiration from the well-known constructal theory that was presented by Adrian Bejan, a professor at Duke University. The volume has nine chapters ranging from CL to morality, economics, social system, and rule of law making their interrelationships to be understood, quite interesting and complex at the same time.

Language is an essential instrument for communication that has undergone continuous evolution. Its evolution and precision in communication may definitely help in applying natural physical laws in social and political domains. According to Takac, ultimately, the physical rules of nature can also be perceived as a distinct language. They provide a framework of principles that regulate the functioning of the cosmos, and through scientific inquiry, we have succeeded in elucidating and modelling these

laws. Utilizing mathematical language and the scientific method, we have explored the universe's mysteries and made remarkable discoveries (p. 9).

“Global Civility” is a novel approach to addressing difficult problems in a world that is currently experiencing a variety of challenges, including cultural conflicts, environmental degradation, and social instability. This approach is based on the application of a scientific notion. This book finds fascinating connections between the development of peaceful human interactions and the evolution of natural flows by exploring a variety of disciplines, historical situations, and philosophical perspectives. In addition, it also includes a discussion on how adopting the ideas of constructal theory might result in economic models that are more sustainable, governance systems that are more efficient, and social frameworks that are more inclusive.

In the introductory chapter Michael Takac exemplifies the image:

Imagine a physical law in nature with the potential to reduce warfare, invasions, and political instability that have plagued humanity throughout the ages. There are patterns within the social domain that mirror the signature of the latest discovered law in thermodynamics. These patterns suggest the existence of fundamental principles governing the behaviour of social systems, similar to how physical laws regulate the universe. This physical law, known as the constructal law, maintains a relatively interesting principle linking social systems to the physical realm, and its utilization has the potential to profoundly transform society. It could offer a shared framework for comprehending social evolution and empower us to develop more effective policies and interventions to tackle societal challenges such as poverty, opportunity, and conflict. Moreover, the simplicity of this law enables readers of this book to test it and enhance their own standard of living (13).

In the ‘Philosophy’ section of the ‘Introduction’ chapter, Takac considers philosophy as an important course to be introduced in every institution of higher learning. Everyone has their own philosophy, and there is always room for more wisdom. Philosophy encompasses various branches, one of which is the philosophy of language. The “language of calculation” in relation to mathematics is also a branch of philosophy, as it involves axioms and rules. Even a theory that is solely based on mathematical principles can be considered a form of philosophy. Many scientists may not realize the philosophical aspect of their theoretical work prior to scientific verification (p. 14).

To be suppositional, the potential of discovering a connection that integrates the physical and social realms, could be a connection capable of revolutionizing our quality of life. A link exists in the form of the physical CL which establishes a framework for comprehending the flow patterns in natural systems, yielding significant insights into the evolution of life, energy, and matter. The ramifications of CL transcend beyond the physical realm, infiltrating the social fabric of human existence in both revolutionary and transformative manners. The physical rules of the universe constitute a unifying element among diverse human cultures, faiths, and philosophies. Irrespective of belief systems or worldviews, these rules remain immutable and steadfast, forming the fundamental basis of existence. Historically, the ethical implementation of these physical principles has led to progress in various domains, including medicine, technology, and engineering, greatly enhancing the quality of life for numerous individuals globally. Nonetheless, the physical Constructal Law presents an even more significant opportunity: the capacity to reveal the concealed relationships between physical principles and the societal frameworks that regulate human existence.

This book invites readers to embark on a captivating journey through the corridors of knowledge, where a tantalizing mystery awaits discovery. It challenges the curious to delve into the depths of human understanding and explore a pattern that is both ubiquitous and elusive. This common pattern—intuitively

recognized yet seldom articulated—resonates across history and contemporary discourse, manifesting in natural systems, human behaviour, and social constructs. Its full significance, however, remains shrouded, waiting for the brave and inquisitive to unveil its secrets. Also serving as a concept book, it encourages ongoing research into the evolution and applications of CL.

In the chapter “The Natural Law” Takac relies on Thomas Jefferson’s concept of “unalienable Rights” [“Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness (positive feedback)”] as innate to all forms of life, from single-cell organisms to complex animals and humans. These bio-primitives, or innate rights, are based on the axiomatic logic that life must have freedom within its domain in the pursuit of survival; otherwise, there is no life.... this principle can be applied to human societies and the evolution of ethical and moral systems. In order for society to evolve and progress, there should be some dynamic striving for balance between opposing forces such as individual freedom and social responsibility, innovation and tradition, and tolerance and justice...from a biological perspective, we can see these rights as a reflection of the basic needs of all living things (pp.30-34). In the chapter “Constructal Law,” Takac demonstrates a one-to-one mapping between the Constructal Law and the axiom of innate rights—or life’s bio-primitives—based on the principle of symmetry. (p. 42)

At its core, the book posits that the Constructal Law - a principle governing the flow configurations that evolve to facilitate movement - has profound implications for understanding not only physical systems but also social systems. This perspective offers a radical yet intellectually grounded way to view evolution as a unifying force that transcends traditional boundaries. By examining the interplay between the physical and social domains through the lens of CL, readers are invited to see patterns where they may have previously perceived chaos and to discern order in complexity.

The volume also explores multidimensional nature of CL. The journey begins with the philosophy of natural law and transitions into the physical realm, guided by the fundamentals of CL as it

applies to the natural world: how rivers carve their paths, how trees branch, and how life forms modify their structures to improve energy flow towards its currents. From there, the narrative seamlessly transitions into the social domain, revealing how these same principles manifest in human systems such as governance, education, and economics. The parallels drawn between the physical and social realms are both striking and thought-provoking, challenging readers to rethink long-held assumptions about the nature of evolution and progress. In the realm of social systems, the book offers ground-breaking insights into the dynamics of human behaviour and societal evolution. From the meticulous study of dendritic patterns in nature to the philosophical implications of CL for human values and ethics, the narrative is both intellectually rigorous and deeply engaging. It explores how CL underpins the flow of ideas, the development of cultures, and the progression of governance structures—not globalism, which represents an entirely different concept. For instance, the book examines how information flows within societies, drawing parallels between neural networks in the brain and communication networks in human communities. This analogy highlights the universality of CL as a principle that transcends the boundaries of biology, physics, and sociology, offering a unifying framework for understanding the complexities of life.

The implications of these insights are far-reaching, extending to areas as diverse as education, environmental sustainability, and governance. By applying the principles of CL to these domains, the book suggests innovative approaches to addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our time. For example, it explores how fostering greater alignment between natural flow patterns and human-designed systems can lead to more sustainable and equitable solutions. This vision of harmony between the physical and social realms is both aspirational and achievable, providing a roadmap for a future where progress is guided by the pedagogic currents of nature. As readers progress through the book, they are introduced to a series of revelations that challenge conventional thinking and inspire a paradigm shift in understanding. The

exploration of CL as a unifying principle opens new vistas of knowledge, pushing the boundaries of perception and inviting readers to embrace a more holistic view of evolution. This journey of intellectual enlightenment is not merely an academic exercise but a call to action—an invitation to join the ranks of those who dare to challenge the status quo and envision a future where humanity thrives in harmony with the physical laws of the universe.

The volume also succeeds in balancing the scientific rigor with accessibility. While the concepts explored are profound and complex, the author's clear and engaging prose makes them accessible to a wide audience. Whether you are a scientist, a philosopher, or simply someone with a curiosity about the world, this book offers insights that will resonate and inspire. The narrative is enriched with vivid examples and thought-provoking analogies, bringing abstract concepts to life and making the exploration of CL an immersive and rewarding experience. Besides, science, medicine, food, and agriculture which have progressed astonishingly in the last two centuries, technology has profoundly transformed the globe by facilitating the unrestricted interchange of ideas. The emergence of the internet facilitates effortless access to information, the interchange of ideas, and connections with individuals who possess both similar and unique interests. The worldwide internet has transformed social dynamics, enabling unprecedented communication and collaboration. While humanity awaits the ethical maturity of AI in modelling consciousness—or something resembling it—we can begin the journey toward global civility at the individual level. This can be achieved through the ethical application of the physical Constructal Law in our social interactions, both online and offline. By fostering civility within our families, neighbourhoods, classrooms, social groups, and workplaces, we contribute to a collective pursuit of happiness and a more harmonious society.

Beyond its intellectual appeal, the book possesses a deeply humanistic dimension. By emphasizing the ethical implications of CL and its potential to shape human values, it underscores the vital

role of civility and cooperation in the evolution of societies. The narrative challenges readers to reflect on how the principles of CL can be applied to foster greater understanding, empathy, and collaboration across cultural and ideological divides. This vision of global civility, grounded in the universal language of physical laws, is both timely and transformative. It offers a beacon of hope in an increasingly complex and interconnected world, inspiring a profound shift in perspective as readers explore the far-reaching implications of the physical Constructal Law across various domains.

This exploration resonates uniquely with each reader, subtly transforming their worldview. Subconsciously, you’ll begin to see the social domain through the lens of nature’s omnipotent forces. This newfound perspective is poised to positively influence your life, shaping your interactions with others and contributing meaningfully to the broader path toward global civility. Starting from the matrix of the physical laws of nature to Artificial Intelligence, this book is not just a journey of discovery but an invitation to engage with the mysteries of existence in a profound and meaningful way. It offers a fresh perspective on the interconnectedness of the physical and social domains, challenging readers to rethink their assumptions and embrace a more holistic understanding of evolution. With its blend of scientific insight, philosophical depth, and humanistic vision, the book is a must-read for anyone seeking to expand their horizons and explore the limitless possibilities of human knowledge. Whether you are a seasoned scholar or a curious novice, this book will leave you inspired, enlightened, and eager to explore the fascinating world through the lens of the Constructal Law - so powerful and elegant, so ancient and vast, yet so simple and profound -guiding the flow of evolution across all domains and shaping its implications for humanity. By harnessing the power of advanced algorithms and machine learning towards consciousness, we may find new ways to analyse complex data, predict outcomes, and improve systems, in part through the ethical application of the physical constructal law. And on the horizon is a new “language of calculation,” not one

with only mathematical symbols but a calculated language in all its forms: linguistic, art, music, poetry, and so on, guiding humanity while changing the way we understand and interact with the world and humanity. Through generations, this concerted effort will propel us toward the zenith of “Global Civility,” where the essence of deterministic freedom blooms anew, transcending boundaries and guiding humanity to unprecedented heights. Hence, the solution is at hand. Will humanity take the “red pill,” or the “blue pill”? (pp. 217-219).

### **The questions before CL**

However, while the CL focuses on efficiency and access in physical and flow systems, it lacks prescriptive power for resolving normative questions of right and wrong. “When analysing the constructal applications in detail, we have found that there are significant problems, which show clearly that the constructal theory is questionable” (Cheng, 2019). It does not address social issues and subjective dimensions of morality, such as empathy, justice, and ethical reasoning, which cannot be reduced to flow optimization. For instance, every single religion is created by humans. Every one of those ‘truths’ is created by humans. The consequent moral code is therefore entirely dependent on the principles of each religion, separately, not likely to be always compatible... CL does not change this state of affairs. Whatever ‘flow’ you think should happen; it may very well not happen as you expect. Conflicts, driven by power dynamics, cultural differences, or ideological clashes, cannot be solely explained or resolved by flow optimization patterns... About ethical codes what it claims is naturally and universally moral, part of our universal ‘unalienable rights’, in contrast the claim of others is sinful and depraved (Manfredi, 2024). The law also fails to address the subjective dimension of human values, such as freedom, equity, or dignity, which are tied to human ideals and philosophical traditions. “A value could be objective, and thus beyond mere human opinion, yet not universal. It may be that moral values have evolved for their survival value, being instilled by evolution, and are thus objective, not being derived from human opinion or

knowledge” (Thakur, 2024). Analogical overreach risks overgeneralization, as it may oversimplify human agency and ethical considerations. Although, the Constructal Law offers profound insights into the evolution of physical and social systems but is inherently limited in its ability to grapple with normative questions of morality, human conflict, and values. Reason being, the moral code will redirect that ‘flow’. It is difficult to find uniform patterns universally in human nature, behaviours and cultures. While universal morality may smoothen the conflicting zones of thought it doesn’t provide solid solutions like constructal laws do in physics (Thakur, 2024).

## Conclusions

There is a risk of oversimplification when applying a physical principle to complicated human systems, which is known as reductionism. It is improbable to model human affairs using a mechanistic approach since they involve cultural, ethical, and psychological components. The constructivist legal theory does not inherently provide normative solutions, despite the fact that it describes systemic behaviours. The Constructal Law does not prescribe an ‘ideal governance structure’, rather it evaluates existing structures as a function of civility. When it comes to matters of ethics, the justification of governance or policy decisions solely based on flow efficiency has the potential to marginalize equality and justice issues, particularly in societies that are diverse. For the purpose of comprehending the development and dynamics of human systems, CL provides a convincing framework. Providing a scientific foundation for the analysis of systemic behaviours, it places an emphasis on the significance of flow efficiency in governance, economics, and conflicts. However, in order to avoid deterministic traps, its use needs to take into account the ethical and complicated aspects of human affairs. As a conceptual instrument, it contributes to the enrichment of multidisciplinary conversation; yet, in order to address issues that are relevant to the real world, its practical efficacy requires careful calibration. Therefore, philosophy feels indebted to A. Bejan, and other CL theorists especially Michael T. Takac for approaching the

human questions so rationally, scientifically and more importantly so sensibly.

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**William Dalrymple: *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World*.  
Bloomsbury, 2024**

**Anjali Verma**

*The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World* by William Dalrymple is a new addition in his scholarly acumen beyond his previous works majorly on Mughals to East India Company through *White Mughals* (2002) and *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857* (2006), *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (2019) that told a story what happened after early medieval period up to colonial era in Indian history. *The Golden Road* has tried to complete the circle in opposite direction by going to ancient world history and bringing India back into the centre through Buddhism and Maritime trade.

Divided into ten chapters, excluding Introduction that works as Preface, book seems to be majorly divided into two tangents: religion and economy with Buddhism and maritime trade activities of south India as main themes throughout. Taking fancy from Greek and Chinese travellers, initial pages open up on Indosphere, the term coined by the American linguist James Matisoff. The very first chapter titled as *The Gale of Stillness* remains focused on the development of Buddhism from its origin to spread through various sources and interpretations. Ashoka appears as zealous leader committed to spread Buddhism to farthest corner of his reach or he knew. Kanishka on the other hand remains overshadowed by the economy of south India when it comes to Mahayana.

Next two chapters are devoted to economic deal of various commodities of export to different countries through trading ports of south, port cities, merchants, and guilds. It speaks about how it connected the world to India or vice-versa culturally besides economy. It also emphasis how the fancy for gold in India

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remained a historical truth from ancient past. It never leaves the sight/references of monasteries that runs parallel with narratives on monks, kings and Nalanda. To the destruction of Nalanda, Dalrymple, takes it a processual case from Brahmanical jealousy leading finally to Turks.

Tracing the journey of Buddhism from India to China and its influence on Empress Wu provides interesting insight into Chinese patriarchal and religious court world. On Taoism and Confucianism, Dalrymple parallel take forms an interesting triangle in Chinese philosophical debates. His examination of rising Pallava power under kings Mahendravarman and Narasimhavarman and the rise of cities like Mamallapuram, Nagapattinam and Kanchipuram (re-rise) along with fall of Western Roman Empire actually seems to be connecting in backdrop of the downfall of cities in northern India during feudal age along with declining trade and cities worldwide.

Coming to half way of *The Golden Road*, on the one hand Dalrymple speaks about the religious and economic developments in India, (majorly south of India), simultaneously hinted that aspects like caste hierarchy and status of women in Indian context could not exert any influence on society and history of South East Asia. He rather refuted the claim that all Indian knowledge system travelled through brahmins only in the light of new DNA evidences study on Angkor Borei. Both, his chapters '*The Diaspora of the Gods*' and '*He Who is protected by the Sun*' has presented varied dimensions of travel of religious faith in South East Asian.

While discussing how these developments affected religious and somewhere political landscapes of Southeast Asia from Java, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar to Vietnam, William has given greater admiration to architectural marvels of Hinduism than political imperialism that travelled through Chola father-son duo, Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola. He speaks about 240 temples of Prambanan in Java depicting stories of *Ramayana*. He throws light

on arrival of Pashupats and influence of Shaiva in Cambodia as well showing travel of Shaiva influence. The epoch of Chola polity and its territorial expansion has been highlighted with the fact of the challenge posed by kings of Srivijaya to Chola and Khmers alliance that had much to do with Chinese polity.

*'The Treasure of the Books of Wisdom'* takes us to inventions, discoveries, scientific minds and Indian ideas of wisdom through Aryabhata, Brahmgupta. It lands this journey to the Arab world with huge time gap which seems a void actually. 664 CE Dalrymple claimed to be the moment that Indosphere reached peak of its influence through its main champions who remained unsung heroes; massacred monks and vanished merchants and their grandeur. It seems that the scholars of Nalanda migrated from ancient past of Buddhism to modern Christians in Oxford and Cambridge through Indo-Arabic numerals. Numbers also travelled through *Aryabhattiyam* to *The Book of Calculation*.

Only in the final pages does Dalrymple acknowledged the debates about Indian history that seems to be a hurried attempt actually or at least needed a detail argument. Also, maritime route's significance has been pointed out by several historians working on maritime history of India in past as well. Rather somewhere seems to be lost in Xuan Zang's travels in search on Buddhist philosophical narratives than Chinese trade. The *Golden Road's* last ten pages seem to be a hint of Dalrymple's next work that can be fulfilling the gap from Delhi Sultanate to Mughals and their decline where the circle with *White Mughals* seems to be completed. Next hundred pages are dedicated to Notes, followed by next hundred with extensive bibliography, more than hundred people on acknowledgement list and finally index.

Thus, a 479 comprehensive page study stretched for almost a millennium and a half, Dalrymple has painted a historical canvass amalgamating several factors of religion, polity and economy in Indian and South-east Asian context. While recounting the flourishing trade between ancient India (especially south) and the Roman Empire (with reference of Pliny the Elder's cry for India as

“the sink of the world’s most precious metal”), he does not forget to mention the famous Battle of Alexandria in 30BC, which paved a way to put a control over the Red Sea by Romans. Also his lucid narratives dealing with extravagant Indian trade of exotic spices, gemstones, cotton, elephant tusks, tortoise shells and several other items that were shipped straight from the south Indian coast to the Italian mainland via Egypt present a vivid picture of travelling convoys and ships. He persuasively argues that maritime trade route from India preceded the overland Silk Road connecting China, Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea by several centuries but on Kushan and Indo-Bactrian trade, his argument and page limit does not refute the route map created on silk route but surely presents just a qualifying research on German term *Seidenstrabe*, the silk road (popularized in 1877 by Ferdinand von Richthofen). It needed more expansion of the theme to bring Silk of China on the Roads/sea leading through India.

The story-telling in *The Golden Road* on religion and economy that runs parallel to the story of stretched influence through art, music, technology, astronomy, dance, literature, mathematics and architecture successfully captures the attention of the reader. Book keeps reminding us time and again about ‘Indosphere’ the influencing zones of Indian culture, religion and economy beyond boundaries. This sphere of influence, touching more than half of the world’s population, reached from the Red Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. Its narratives from past to present creates a vivid picture of a world deeply intertwined with Indian commodities, Buddhism, Hinduism, philosophy, and architectural principles. But question still remains whether India was a champion of the world or at least South-east Asia in terms of religious and economic influence?

This book serves as a testimony to the travel of religion, economy of commodities, and power of cultural diffusion that transcended in architecture and language. Even the challenge to silk route which this book offers in limited scope through its source based arguments certainly provides readers a delightful fresh perspectives on civilizations, might and fight, and presence in the

economy. It is a meticulously researched work based upon varied sources and certainly speaks louder than previous works available on India's presence in the ancient World. In *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World*, the involvement of thinking, connecting the dots through source-based study and presenting a vivid picture of ancient Indian from past to almost early medieval period seems to be a successful attempt taken by Dalrymple that he could do in best possible way of narrating a story differently and bringing world back to India.

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