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SPECIAL ISSUE:

CITIZENSHIP UNDER VECTORS OF DISCRIMINATION

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Foreword

It gives us immense pleasure to introduce the special issue of the School of Public Policy and Governance entitled Citizenship under Vectors of Discrimination.

This issue foregrounds the experience of adverse citizenship faced by marginalized and discriminated groups such as ethnic and racial minorities, women, and the stateless Rohingyas settled in Hyderabad. Under the overarching theme ‘Citizenship under Vectors of Discrimination’, it surveys interrelated questions of inequality, entitlements, violence, group identity and connectedly the ‘politics of difference’. Preferring a historical trajectory, it determines how institutions have fared in implementing mechanisms for the democratic inclusion of traditionally disadvantaged groups. Imbricating theoretical with empirical insights, this special issue focuses on how the marginalized have fared in seeking their entitlements.

This issue continues to endorse its professed aim of promoting democratization of knowledge generation and dissemination by giving an opportunity to budding policy students and professionals from diverse backgrounds to disseminate their research findings. The overall aim is to facilitate exchange of ideas and promote high quality and original research.

We hope that the readers will be as enriched by this issue as we were in editing it.

Student Editors
A Perpetrator Narrative on Domestic Violence: Case Study of Rohingya Masculinities in Refugee Camps

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The overabundant literature on gender-based sexual violence mostly emphasizes on the women’s narrative but the perpetrator narrative remains elusive. The following study tries to capture that ever-elusive perpetrator narrative on gender-based sexual violence. It does so by looking at gender violence through the lens of masculinity. The researcher during the entirety of the study tries to delineate possible masculinities among Rohingya men and expends his energies on the most noxious types. Like ideas, gender roles are abstractions with limited spatiotemporal understandings. Masculinity or manhood has cultural and durational meanings. The researcher tries to understand these markers of masculinity using the qualitative tools at his dispense. The research subjects are “Rohingya men”, who have settled in Balapur, Hyderabad. The Rohingyas are stateless refugees who due to an incessant humanitarian crisis have fled Myanmar, the crisis is on-going and there are still several thousand who are dying while crossing perilous borders. The subject statelessness has not received the necessary attention it should. The idea still remains confounding even after it has been six decades since the conception of instruments for statelessness. The dearth of literature is a cause of concern. The research is an attempt to add new information to an almost non-existent literature on statelessness. The study aspires to establish possible links between statelessness and the toxicity exuded by the research subjects. The research is optimistic and fancies that the field findings would be used for longitudinal and comparative studies in future.

Keywords: Rohingya, masculinities, sexual violence, statelessness

Gender based sexual violence is an everyday reality for women across the globe. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 3,27,394 cases of crimes against women were reported across all India in the year 2015. Out of these 1,13,403 cases were registered under the crime head “cruelty by husband or relatives”(National Crime Records Bureau, 2015). The numbers given by the NCRB does not exhaust this violent crime. According to the National Coalition against Domestic Violence, domestic violence is one of the most chronically underreported crimes. Gender-based sexual violence is a subject which is undergoing intense study.
There is an overabundance of literature on gender-based sexual violence but most of the information is about women and the cruelty directed towards them. Most of the work on gender-based sexual violence is inundated with women’s narrative and very less attention is given to the men’s side of the argument. The perpetrator narrative on gender violence remains elusive. The excessive literature on domestic violence and sexual abuse neglects the men’s narrative on these issues. This research captures the perpetrator narrative using masculinity as a lens. The research subjects are the long persecuted Rohingya men. Rohingyas are stateless refugees from Myanmar. They are being persecuted by the Buddhists and the government for ethnic and religious reasons. Another important problem is the almost non-existent literature on “statelessness”. Statelessness as a subject is so little understood that the 1954 UN convention on the status of stateless people does not recognize “de facto” statelessness. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are around 10 million stateless people around the globe as of 2016 and out of which 1.5 million are Rohingyas, that is, one out of every seven stateless people are Rohingyas. This limited information and understanding on the subject of “statelessness” forced the researcher for requisite action. Therefore, the foremost reason for taking Rohingya men as research subjects is to add on whatever information available to the non-existent literature on statelessness.

The paper comprises of three sections. The first section deals with the existing literature required to do this study. It gives a detailed account of the humanitarian crisis endured by the Rohingyas; it also deals with the complex subject of “statelessness”. Further, the section deals with gender and hegemonic masculinity. The researcher uses scholarly articles and reliable sources to make an argument. The next section is about field findings. All the findings from the field are listed in this section most of them are personal accounts of the research subjects. The section also analyzes the findings; it tries to substantiate some claims which are in consonance with the existing literature and also tries to add on to the literature by giving some new information. The next section concludes the thesis; it tries to reiterate some interesting facts exposed by the field. It also restates some of the accomplished objectives of the research.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to measure and record the extent of prevalence of gender-based sexual violence and is to also report the men’s narrative on gender violence. Even though there has been a lot of research on gender violence, there is almost none pertaining men’s perspective. To capture the prevalence of gender-based sexual violence in Rohingya refugee camps at Balapur, Hyderabad is the main objective of the research. The novelty of this research lies in the fact that it tries to capture the ever elusive “perpetrator narrative”. The study looks at gender based sexual violence through the lens of masculinity. The researcher tries to delineate existing masculinities among Rohingya men. Like ideas, gender roles have spatiotemporal understandings. Masculinity or manhood has cultural and durational meanings. The researcher tries to understand these markers
of masculinity using the qualitative tools at his dispense. Out of the existing masculinities, the researcher expends his energies on the most noxious types by critically analyzing the “male thought process” that perpetuates patriarchal conditions which place restrictions and constraints on a woman’s body and autonomy.

The subjects of the research are the “Rohingya men”, who have settled in Balapur, Hyderabad. Rohingyas are stateless refugees who due to a humanitarian crisis have fled from Myanmar, the crisis is on-going and there are still several thousands who are crossing into neighboring countries like India and Bangladesh or taking perilous journeys through boats to reach Malaysia and Thailand. Even though the condition affects an enormous 10 million population this lack of attention to the subject is disturbing. The researcher apart from the primary objectives of capturing the extent of violence, understanding sexual abuse and gender violence through male perspective and adding onto the literature on statelessness, also tries to appropriate the acquired information accordingly to establish possible links between statelessness and the toxicity exuded by Rohingya men onto powerless recipients, mainly women and children. Moreover, establishing a correlation between statelessness and gender violence would help in gathering information about the uniqueness of abuse and the specificity of violence among Rohingyas in the Balapur refugee camps because specificity would tell something about the cultural understanding of violence.

The literature which the researcher relies is on statelessness and hegemonic masculinity. The literature on hegemonic masculinity dose not repudiates the existence of “positive” behavior on the part of men, that is, the behavior that serves the interests and desires of women. In fact, it is difficult to see how hegemony will be relevant at all if the only attributes of the dominant group were violence and aggression. Such attributes could be translated into domination but not hegemony; an idea that embeds certain notions of consent and participation by the subaltern groups. On that note, the researcher is more interested in questions of domination and control which are manifested through absolute coercion. So, for the intended purpose the researcher is limiting himself to the questions of violence and the masculinity responsible for strong arm tactics. The researcher deals with the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the following sections.

The qualitative research uses advanced tools like semi-structural in-depth interviews to record anecdotal descriptions on gender violence and sexual abuse. The study took place in Balapur, Hyderabad for 32 days in collaboration with non-governmental organization, Save the Children. The sample used was representative of the population. All the 112 respondents did have unique experiences to share. The information gathered ranged from basic to specific. Out of the 112 respondents’ 30 percent of them said they were staying in Hyderabad for more than three years. None of the respondents reported anything about caste-like affiliations in their communities. Secondary education among the respondents was rare. Most of the respondents reported of
incomplete primary education. Some of them were versed in Quran. The reason for staying in Hyderabad was common among the respondents, most of them echoed that Hyderabad is Muslim friendly and they had relatives in Hyderabad. The questionnaire used by the researcher contained sections on trafficking, under age marriage and violence from locales, which gave some interesting insights on domestic violence. Out of the 112 respondents’ 73 percent of them said yes when asked, “Is it okay to occasionally slap your wife?” Interestingly few of the respondents abstained from answering the question for reasons unknown. The research shows that the violence perpetrated is normalized beyond socially acceptable limits. Not only is the intensity of violence worrisome but the nonchalant attitude with which the violence is meted out is something to be pondered upon.

**Literature Review**

**Rohingya: The nowhere people**

The former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in 2015, warned of a deepening humanitarian crisis involving the Rohingyas of Myanmar (Mahmood, Wroe, Fuller, & Leaning, 2016). Rohingyas have had a tumultuous past. Since Burma’s first military coup in 1962 Rohingyas have been facing a constant threat to life and liberty. The Southeast Asian nation of Myanmar\(^1\) includes Rakhine state which was known as Arakan till 1989, it shares border with Bangladesh in north and Bay of Bengal in west (Mahmood et al., 2016). Two major populations reside here Rakhine and Rohingyas. Rakhine people are a culturally and linguistically distinct group and have lived in Arakan for centuries; they are 4 percent of Myanmar population and follow Buddhism like most people in Myanmar. Rohingyas on the other hand are a linguistically, culturally, and religiously distinct group who have also lived in Arakan for centuries. They are Muslims by faith and are 2 percent of the Myanmar population. They speak the native Rohingya language.

The fact that Rohingyas are living in Arakan from centuries is contested by the Myanmar government. There are legitimate\(^2\) sources supporting Rohingyas claim of belonging. The Myanmar government repudiates these historical facts, they rely on sources which say that Rohingyas are farm laborers brought in by the British from Bengal (now Bangladesh) during the colonial rule. The first census of Burma was done in the year 1872 by British authorities and by 1931 statisticians had classified the population of Burma into 15 indigenous races and 135 sub races which notably did not refer to Rohingyas (Mahmood et al., 2016). For few years after Burma’s independence\(^3\), the Rohingya issue was ensconced in government files but after the coup d’état in 1962 civil and political rights of Rohingyas declined steadily. In 1978, military operations purging illegal immigrants caused 200,000 Rohingyas to flee Myanmar and settle in themselves as “Rooringa” meaning natives of Arakan (Rovingaw).

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\(^1\) In the year 1989 Burma was renamed to Myanmar.
\(^2\) A 1799 report by a Scottish physician Francis Buchanan, who spent 15 years in the region, recognizes a Muslim community who self identifies

\(^3\) Burma got independence in the year 1948.
Bangladesh (Fortify Rights, 2014). In 1982, the military government enacted a new citizenship law which required people from non-major races show proof for their ancestral residency in Burma 160 years earlier (Mahmood et al., 2016). Consequently, most Rohingyas were classified as illegal Bengali immigrants by the state (Mahmood et al., 2016). An even larger exodus of Rohingyas to neighboring Bangladesh occurred during 1991-1992, more than 260,000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar fearing persecution (Wijnroks et al., 1993).

The government of the Myanmar refuses to recognize the term Rohingya, referring to this community as Bengalis or Bangladeshis (Mahmood et al., 2016). The UN considers this position as a violation of Myanmar’s obligation to allow minorities the right to self-identify themselves on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, and religious characteristics (Lee, 2015). In June 2012, fresh spell of violence erupted between Rakhine and Rohingya residents of the Rakhine state, following the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman by Rohingya men. A few days after the incident hundreds of Rakhines surrounded a bus carrying Muslim passengers and beat ten of them to death (Smith, 2013). After this, the military took over the situation; however, these authorities joined hands with the Rakhines in killing and looting Rohingyas. International observers noted an apparent failure of authorities to respond accordingly to protect human rights of Muslims; this could be possibly construed as collusion between the perpetrators and authorities (Smith, 2013). In October 2013 Myanmar government developed a plan for Rakhine state expressing concern over “increasing Bengali population”; as a consequence Myanmar parliament passed a series of race and religious related laws in early 2015 that extended Rakhines’ anti-Rohingya stance to the entire nation. These laws included limits on the number of children, frequency of births, and inter religious marriages (Mahmood et al., 2016).

More than 300,000 Rohingyas live outside Myanmar. Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and Malaysia host most of the Rohingyas who have fled Myanmar (Mahmood et al., 2016). None of the countries is a signatory of the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees.

Technically, after the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law stripped Rohingyas of their rightful citizenship this group was rendered stateless. According to Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone has a right to nationality and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change her nationality” (United Nations, 2015). Myanmar’s move disputes Article 15 of UDHR. Three out of every four Rohingyas outside Myanmar have not received refugee status protection from the UNHCR, rendering them vulnerable to abuse by state authority.

The 1.5 million Rohingyas worldwide are considered stateless. According to UN, every seventh stateless person is a Rohingya. Moreover, the literature suggests that Rohingyas are not stateless but are stateless refugees. They did not only lose citizenship under the

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4 Total stateless population across the world is estimated to be around 10 million by UN.
operation of law but have also fled persecution in Myanmar which qualifies them to identify as stateless refugees. Basically, statelessness and citizenship are both mutually exclusive and the basic rights of human beings required to lead a dignified life are bundled in with citizenship. The ubiquity of nation states has thrown light on nationality. Since the birth of nations, nationality has always been debated and what makes it more contentious is its “legality”. Law ascribes nationality to people but mere residency does not guarantee nationality, acquiring nationality requires following a due process. Legality renders people stateless. The question of nationality is closely linked with rights in fact nationality and rights are woven together intricately, they are mutually inclusive so, if one goes the other follows suit. This link makes violation of rights easy hence the question, “Is statelessness a conduit through which basic human rights is violated?” (Walker, 1981). Statelessness is a problem because many states only allow their “nationals” to exercise full civil, political, economic, and social rights within their territories hence statelessness renders people nameless; a blank space in a labeled world. By the virtue of being human one is entitled to have some minimum basic rights but the law of the land does not allow one to have rights unless she is a national. A human being is transmogrified into an empty vessel. Whether or not one possesses nationality, it should have no bearing on whether one enjoys all of her human rights but still in many cases international support is a problem (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006).

There could be enumerable reasons for statelessness like law, war, succession of territories etc. One such reason recognized by the UN draft convention on the elimination of future statelessness “statelessness is a product of friction between states” (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006). Nationality precedes rights, so nationality is the right to have rights. Apart from the contradictory nature of laws which obfuscate the definition of nationality; law is the state’s prerogative which leaves no room for individual liberty to grow. With no authority to regulate state’s autonomy, the state crushing individual rights becomes a common sight, which is exactly what is happening with Rohingyas. Moreover, states often talk along the lines of national security and it uses citizenship as a tool to keep threats at bay. The instruments of state like constitution, presidential decree, or a citizenship act can confer nationality to a person. The law of the land also plays a major role in doing so.

Basically, citizenship is of two types: jus soli and jus sanguinis. Citizenship acquired by the place of birth is called jus soli and citizenship acquired through descent is called jus sanguinis. Apart from these basic forms citizenship can also be acquired through naturalization and assimilation (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2005). Most of the countries follow a mixture of jus soli and jus sanguinis citizenships but there are countries like India which follow the jus sanguinis principle. The rationale behind jus sanguinis is of ethno nationalism and is driven by xenophobia (Roy, 2010). There are also many obvious gaps in citizenship laws which deny people citizenship rendering them stateless. And this kind of

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5 Read citizenship
statelessness is called “de jure” statelessness, that is, statelessness under the operation of law. Another group of people who are citizens of that country and due to varied reasons their rights, benefits, protection, assistance everything are withheld by the state they are de facto stateless (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006). People who have rejected citizenship on their own accord also come under de facto statelessness. The 1954 convention on the status of statelessness only recognizes de jure statelessness (United Nations, 2015).

The 1951 convention on refugees defines refugees as nationals fleeing their countries due to persecution or fear of persecution; they are unable or “unwilling” to avail themselves of the protection of the country of their nationality (UNHCR, 2010). Stateless people on the other hand have no nationality to start with; they are unable to invoke any protection. The only thing same to both the groups is the nature of precariousness and due to this similarity, the confusion arises. The convention relating to the status of refugees 1951 and the status of stateless people 1954 tries to eliminate this confusion. Both the refugee and the stateless conventions define clearly what the terms refugee and stateless mean. These distinctions help one to distinguish the problem one is dealing with; it gives a distinct label for the unlabeled (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006).

The 1954 convention states that statelessness ends when one acquires nationality. It also explicitly states the rights and responsibilities of the stateless. All fundamental human rights like prohibition against torture and the principle of non-discrimination are there in the 1954 convention. Some of the responsibilities of the stateless are as follows, every stateless person has to conform to the law of the land in which he is residing. Stateless persons should be conferred that many rights as enjoyed by the aliens or the foreigners like freedom of movement, housing, employment, freedom of education (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005). The convention stipulates that the state shall issue identity cards (IDs) to the stateless people (unless public order argues otherwise); though IDs do not guarantee nationality (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005). Stateless persons are not to be expelled from the residing country except on the grounds of national security and public order. The refugee convention indicates that non-refoulment is generally accepted as a principle. While these conventions do address certain specificities they also have their own limitations.

For a stateless to claim any legal corrective he needs an attribute but statelessness is the lack of an attribute, so would “lack” be considered as an attribute? (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006) Statelessness and citizenship are part of a same grid and the burden of calling one a citizen and the other a stateless falls on the competent authority, that is, the state according to international law (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006). While doing so everything gets tangled up, for example some states do consider people as citizens but they do not give any rights to them hence those people should not be labeled rather they should remain as “in-betweeners” whose status of nationality is intermediate. Doing so would add “rightlessness” as a vulnerability to their itinerary of problems (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005). The
international law requires the state party to declare non-citizens or stateless, so that the stateless can access the minimum of human rights. The state on the other hand is likely to lose nothing in following suit. The stateless suffer more than the refugees because at least the refugees have the option to return to their countries on the other hand the stateless have no such option. The host nation offers the refugees some rights and the stateless have to become refugees in order to avail those rights (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005).

The need for a region-specific convention for south Asia is urgent. The situation of statelessness as refugees could be mitigated through assimilation and acculturation. There is an evident xenophobia attached to the question of refugees and statelessness among the general public (McBrien, 2005). The fear of threat from the “other” serves as the basis for this difference of opinion. The role of language (the language of the host nation) comes out as an important category in the process of acculturation and assimilation. The literature till now on nation has only one commonality that is “territorial contiguity” and there is an urgent need to move beyond this conception of nation rather nation should be looked as an ever evolving organism (Van Schendel, 2002).

South Asia is a collective of contradictions. These new countries which condensed into modern nation states did so in contradiction with the idea of modernity (Singh, 2010). Each state tried to consolidate itself into a homogenous entity on some lines be it communal or lingual. In doing so, it left behind who did not fit into that narrow bracket of community (Singh, 2010). The commonality among these modern nation states was that none of them were the signatories of the UN convention on stateless and refugees (Singh, 2010). The particular defense they used for not ratifying these conventions was that they were “too Euro-centric in their approach” (Singh, 2010). These nations also took the national security line as a defense against ratification. However, statistics show that most South Asian countries have dealt the refugee question more humanely as opposed to the West. Formal decrees are still to be signed by most of these south Asian nations (Murshid, 2013).

India has been one of the unique cases among these south Asian nations. Partition has scarred the nation, its impacts still echo in the subcontinent. The Radcliffe Boundary commission was supposed to divide the country on the lines of religion; the decision fell on the majority. The commission did a hasty job; it took six weeks to divide a nation of 300 million, which was united for centuries. As a result, a number of communities either side of India and Pakistan were rendered stateless. This division on the basis of religion also lead to the rise of Hindu nationalism which identified Muslims as the “other”; their loyalty was suspected and they were often referred as refugees from Pakistan (Murshid, 2013). Refugees since then have played an important role politically; they have also been an important vote bank in many areas.

The South Asian experiment is a very peculiar one to understand host-refugee relations because of its socio-political and economic conditions (Murshid, 2013). The Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh are one such community who are facing the brunt of partition. They
have been displaced from the Chittagong hill tract region of Bangladesh because of construction of dams and eventually settled in Arunachal Pradesh after a brief stint in Assam. When the Chakmas settled, Arunachal Pradesh was not formed, the population was also very sparse (Chaudhury & Das, 2015). The central government thought that sending the displaced Chakmas to Arunachal Pradesh might boost the local economy as they will make the land cultivable. However, after the formation of Arunachal Pradesh in 1987, the local population and especially the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) saw the Chakmas as a threat to their jobs (Chaudhury & Das, 2015). Nothing much yielded from the Indira-Mujib treaty of 1972. The center did decide to grant citizenship to them but the Arunachal Pradesh government opposed this move. Meanwhile, the Chakma population also started escalating which means that all present day Chakmas were born in India. Indian citizenship act section 5 invokes clause of citizenship by birth but most of these new born were not given citizenship (Chaudhury & Das, 2015). The Chakmas are facing the ire of the local people and the local government. Yet, the plight of Chakmas still continues. They are still stateless, not recognized by the Indian state nor does the Bangladeshi state seem to care much about them.

Gender-based sexual violence is an everyday reality for women across the globe. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), approximately three lakh cases of crimes against women were reported across all India in the year 2015, out of which more than one lakh cases were registered under the crime head “cruelty by husband or relatives” (National Crime Records Bureau, 2015). There is no denying the fact that sexual violence is a proliferating menace in the society but mere acknowledgement of its existence only identifies it rather than understanding it. Moreover, the literature on sexual abuse is inundated with women’s narrative; there is an immediate necessity to understand the causal factors for gender based sexual violence hence the perpetrator narrative becomes important. There is need to understand that gender is performed (Butler, 1990). Neither masculinity nor femininity is a physiological cause rather it is a culturally acquired social category. Gender identity is not a manifestation of an intrinsic essence but rather the product of actions and behavior, that is, performance (Butler, 1990).

The contemporary understanding of gender as a spectrum moves away from the traditional understanding of gender binaries. The modern understanding states that gender is a continuum, where each element of the continuum is discrete. Masculinity is largely a “homosocial” experience; performed for and judged by other men and hegemonic masculinity is an extreme variant of that performance (Kimmel, 2008). The concept of hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell, & Dowsett, 1982). Later the concept was found in discussions of the making of masculinities and the experience of men’s bodies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005); and in a debate over the role of men in Australian labor politics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The Australian high school project provided an empirical evidence of multiple
hierarchies in gender. Thus conceived was the concept of multiple masculinities. This idea of multiple masculinities disputed and undermined the traditional theory of male sex role. The idea of a hierarchy of masculinities was a product of homosexual men’s experience with violence and prejudice from straight men. The concept of homophobia originated in 1970 and was attributed to conventional male role (Morin & Garfinkle, 1978). Over time, hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice that allowed men’s incessant dominance over women; this pattern of practice is a move away from biological determinism of gender roles. This argument repudiates the Freudian argument of biological determinism and reinforces Butler’s argument of performative gender.

Hegemonic masculinity is distinct from other masculinities mainly the subordinate ones. Hegemonic masculinity embodied the epitome of manhood, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it and it also legitimated the global subordination of women to men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity has had influence in criminology; all data reflects that men commit more crime than women. 90 percent of killers in US are male (Garbarino, 2015). The concept of hegemonic masculinities has helped theorizing a relationship between masculinities and variety of crimes. The concept serves as a framework for further research on men and masculinities, replacing the sex role theory and categorical models of patriarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity censures subordinate groups through various overt and covert mechanisms. Hegemonic masculinity rebukes subordinate groups conspicuously by name calling and legitimizing abuse. Other mechanism of hegemony operates through invisibility by removing a dominant form of masculinity from the possibility of censure (Brown, 1999).

Toxic masculinity – an aggressive variant of hegemony – is a specific model of masculinity geared towards dominance and control. “The term toxic masculinity comes from the work of sociologists and psychologists working in the early 1990s, looking at different aspects of men’s relationship with their fathers and representation of masculinity and not as it is thought in reference to feminism per se” (Haider, 2016).

Toxic masculinity requires men to aggressively compete and dominate others these same proclivities foster resistance to psychotherapy among men (Kupers, 1993). Men might exude toxicity because of many reasons. Emasculation and the “fear” of being emasculated are one of the foremost reasons for men to control and dominate. Most of the acts of violence are provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected, and ridiculed. The term toxic masculinity is useful in discussions about gender and forms of masculinity because it delineates those aspects of hegemonic masculinity that are socially destructive, such as misogyny, homophobia, greed, and violent domination; and those that are culturally accepted and valued (Kupers, 1993).

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6 Biological determinism of gender roles: The behaviours, attitudes, and activities of male and female are a result of their anatomy. Women and men are psychologically disposed to do certain things.
According to Criminologist Candice Batton, men are more likely than women to “develop negative attributions of blame that are external,” which translate into anger and hostility toward others (as cited in Hamblin, 2016). Women, though, are more likely to blame some failing of their own, “directing anger inwardly into guilt and depression”. Men either react violently or they are made to use aggression when usurped from the hierarchically privileged positions. Hegemonic masculinity demands power and control which insecure men compensate with accessories like guns and automobiles, a psychological drama about men’s fears of emasculation.

Masculinity is malleable, in many ways learnable and un-learnable. The discussion would be relegated by condemning masculinity broadly. Hence, the idea is not a sweeping indictment of men but an admission that masculinity can be toxic at times (as cited in Hamblin, 2016). Another common theme is that men and boys have become increasingly confused about their identities and roles in society.

“It is been an almost universal rule of civilization that whereas girls became women simply by reaching physical maturity, boys had to pass a test. They needed to demonstrate courage, physical prowess, or mastery of the necessary skills. The goal was to prove their competence as protectors of women and children; this was always their primary social role. Today, however, with women moving ahead in an advanced economy, provider husbands and fathers are now optional, and the character qualities men had needed to play their role—fortitude, stoicism, courage, fidelity—are obsolete and even a little embarrassing.” (Hymowitz, 2012)

Findings and Analysis

Many Men: Understanding Masculinities among Rohingya Men

“From the time, I have become a refugee my manhood has halved, I have no house of my own, no place for agriculture without these I am just half a man” said Hamza a respondent (stateless Rohingya refugee).

“According to Islam if you are sitting at home and a woman is earning then that is haram. One who earns and spends on 10 people, only he is a real man” said Yousuf another respondent with pride.

The understanding of being a man is different for both the respondents’; one measures masculinity with respect to wealth and social status, and the other gauges masculinity by the ability to feed one’s family. Masculinity or manhood has cultural and durational meanings. Hamza’s stripped masculinity and Yousuf’s empowered manhood are completely discrete. This finding is consistent with the literature as both Hamza and Yousuf exhibit distinct masculinities which in turn support Butler’s argument that “gender is performative”. There is no biological or psychological core to the outward display of masculinities, the performance or the role portrayed itself is gender. “My life would end but I will not hit a woman” said Abu Kalam contrary to the conventional understanding of men being violent and aggressive. The field was home to a spectrum of gender roles.
The researcher tries to identify different conceptions of masculinities among Rohingya men and expends his energy on masculinities which are geared by control and domination. The questionnaire used by the researcher is framed in such a way that it captures machismo or the virulent manhood those which are toxic and spew violence. The questionnaire tries to ask uncomfortable questions of domination and control including different sections on domestic violence, trafficking, and multiple marriages. The researcher gives much focus on domestic violence to understand the subjects’ (Rohingya men) use of force on powerless recipients, which are the Rohingya women. The objective of the researcher is to get the perpetrator narrative on domestic violence and use those anecdotal evidences to analyze and understand the existing masculinities. Due to the nature of the research objectives the researcher uses other sections of the questionnaire as a trope to build conversation only to get at the question of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The researcher also tries to look at the effect of statelessness on the manhood of Rohingya men.

Life in the camps is tough; most of the camps have tarpaulin walls and asbestos roofs. They become unbearably hot in summers and water leaks from the roof during monsoon.

“During those torrential rains in Hyderabad our camp was flooded then helping hand foundation came they helped us clear the water. They brought cement, sand, and other things to clear the water” said Fareed when asked about life during rains in the camps.

“How would you know our problems? You people are living, we are merely surviving” said a despondent Rohingya man.

“I lost my 13-year-old son in 2012 on Cuttack railway station” said Abdul.

“If you see our children they are more malnourished than a Hindustani child” says Idriz.

“My son is 3 years old he has typhoid and I have no money for the treatment, what should I do?” asks a father.

“I do not have ration, I ask neighbors for food, some give some do not. I have a 17-year-old son, he cannot walk and he is mentally unstable. The Buddhists forces tortured him and made him like this” said Sultan Mohammed a concerned father.

An endless litany of complaints waits in these refugee camps for a solution. Out of the 112 respondents the researcher spoke to, 30 percent of them were staying in Hyderabad for more than 3 years (Figure 1). None of the respondents said anything about the caste-like affiliation in their communities. Secondary education among the respondents was rare. Most of the respondents reported of incomplete primary education. Some of them were versed in Quran; there were also fragmented anomalies like a respondent with a physics degree. The reason for staying in Hyderabad was common among the respondents, most of them echoed that “Hyderabad is Muslim-friendly” and they had relatives in Hyderabad.
The researcher was informed that the UNHCR card is the sole legally valid identification card for Rohingya. “Apart from the UNHCR card” the respondents added, “the blue paper given prior to the UNHCR card is also acceptable but not always”. Most of the respondents the researcher spoke to worked as wage laborer, some also worked as drivers and few had their own retail shops.

Arie Kruglanski, an American social psychologist says, “The most primal act a human being can take to ameliorate self-loathing is showing one's power over other human beings” (as cited in Hamblin, 2016). Free market society governs the world, in a society driven by competition, self-loathing could be a possible consequence of unequal distribution of power and as a result man are compelled to control and dominate wherever they are allowed to. The familial sphere is a perfect setting to understand the dynamics of masculinity. This familial confine is capable of fostering toxicity in men because in this limited space men might assume power over the weaker sex and could try to dominate and control in overt and covert ways. The questionnaire grapples with this idea of familial sphere. The researcher captured responses on domestic violence.

**How is a Woman Understood?**

The researcher asked the respondents few questions about women; he thought it would be necessary to understand the subjects thought process before dealing with the sensitive topic of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The researcher posed few generic questions like, what do Rohingya men think about women and their roles in general. The question evoked some disturbing responses from the respondents. One of the respondents when asked the question said, “A woman is like a dog if you beat her she will cry but when you show her ‘roti’ she will come to you” lot of other respondents also sang in this same tune of enslavement. Md. Idriz another respondent though speaks positively about women refutes gender theorists, he claims women are biologically programmed to be care givers, “But women are more sensitive than men god made them that way. Once men start earning a living they do not care about anything they will even kick their parents out but not women, they will not do anything like that”. This response was in consonance with the Freudian idea of biological determinism, where gender is a causal response to one’s physiology.

Rehmat Ali, one of the respondents’ spoke about patriarchy and the existing world order.

![Figure 1. Duration of stay by the respondents in Hyderabad](image_url)
“See this is a man’s world, you have to agree that I being a husband possess more power than my wife. This is the natural world order maybe even Islam says so. Now due to dowry and other things we cannot exercise that power over women as she would say ‘I brought 20000 with me when we got married’ then you automatically become her servant.”

The allusion to a man’s world and accepting the given order as natural by the respondent poses a threat to half of the population of the world. The respondent assumed that women were born servile and their only destiny is serving men in her life. He relied on religion for his response; the fact that religious texts, or an inaccurate interpretation of religious texts, are used to “unite” dissenters is evident from the response. Often, religion and afterlife are invoked to suppress fomenters and reprimand those who go astray. The respondent assumed that women is an object which can be owned and in his response, he referred to the changing times where due to fiscal reasons like dowry and other things the assumed and accepted legitimacy of ownership is being questioned. He also fears of losing that collective agreement on ownership on women and their bodies. Most of the respondents had certain parameters for a woman and if she did not obey those set rules she is deemed immoral. Arif one of the respondents said, “My second wife, she talks more than me that is not appropriate. She is not righteous at all.”

Enumerable ways to Dominate

The researcher’s intervention in the field revealed that unruly anger seemed to be one of the triggers for domestic feuds among the respondents. Virulent masculinity demands men to be aggressive and most of the respondents met those demands.

“You know men, right? They are hot heads even if they beat their women they do not do out of animosity and after the temperature is normal the fight is resolved” says Noor Alam when asked about anger.

Some of the respondents talked about their anger coping mechanisms “I count backwards whenever I am angry” said one of the respondents, the other said “I just walk out whenever there is a fight”.

One of the respondents didn’t fit in the bracket of virulent machismo

“You do not hit my wife or for that matter any women because I think violence finds its way back to the one who starts” said Abu Kalam shunning violence.

However, most of the times anger found expression in physical violence.

“One time I hit her so hard that I broke her leg and her back got badly hurt. The fault was hers why didn’t she open the door in time when I was knocking” said Saleem when the researcher asked about situations of domestic violence going out of hand.

The intensity with which violence is meted out by the respondents is worrisome.

Bilal in Balapur: A Report on the Banality of Violence

While capturing domestic violence the researcher paid attention to the triteness
of violence. The researcher noted that the violence perpetrated was normalized beyond socially acceptable limits. Not only is the intensity of violence which is worrisome but the nonchalant attitude with which the violence is meted out is something to be pondered upon.

“Fighting and all is common, it happens every other day. I give her one or two and the matter is settled then and there” says Bilal.

Lot of other respondents sang in the tune of Bilal, they said beating their wives is inconsequential and nothing to be worried about.

“See, you slap her once or twice she is hurt, you just go and say sorry all that anger and resentment flies away it is that simple” says Rehamat Ali.

Almost all of the respondents meted out physical violence with such tediousness as if they were running a quotidian errand (Figure 2). Like Rehamat and Bilal most of the respondents do not understand the inviolability of the physical body; either they do not have the concept of private space and bodily integrity or they simply do not care about it. This infringement of bodily integrity is not culturally specific to Rohingya men in fact this is more of a universal phenomenon.

“I do not beat my wife too much, only a little” said Abu.

Similar to the viewpoint of Abu many respondents thought that the frequency of beating is a concern rather than the beating itself.

“If I hit my wife she gets hurt, so whose money gets spend on her treatment? Mine, right? This much hard-earned money why would I want to spend on my wife’s medical bills. We fight but not too much” said Noor Tahir rejecting domestic violence for different reasons all together.

Noor’s lack of concern about her wife’s health is distressing but not unfamiliar. Many feminist scholars claim that women across the globe are treated as second grade citizens. This response only makes that claim stronger.

The researcher’s questions “Is an occasional slap fine in a conjugal relationship and do you slap your wife occasionally?” garnered interesting responses. Out of the 112 respondents 73 percent (Figure 2) of them said yes and the remaining said no, few of the respondents didn’t answer the question suspecting the intention of the researcher and his objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is an occasional slap fine in a marital relationship?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27% yes</td>
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<td>73% no</td>
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*Figure 2. Physical violence in conjugal relationships of the respondents’ household*

As Rohingyas have suffered a humanitarian crisis, there might be a possibility that the standards of violence for
them are completely different. This does not mean that violence among Rohingya families is any less. Some proponents of non-violence say that there is no such thing as more or less violence; it is either there or not. However, there is no denying the fact that there exists the intensity of violence. And there might be a possibility that for the research subjects a slap or two might not even mean anything because they might be working with different reference frames altogether.

“In Burma, Rohingya men lead a perilous life especially the young men. Every night the military comes and takes a roll call if you miss that then you are sent to prison for 10 years or you might also get killed” said Sultan.

This up close and personal encounter with violence might have had an effect on how men perceive violence. There is a strong possibility that the state of being stateless has contributed a fair share in developing a specific type of manhood among Rohingyas. This cold monotonous approach of physical violence could be the result of witnessing persecution on daily basis but the researcher needs more data to comment further on it. The questionnaire also tries to identify other covert forms in which violence gets manifested. Restriction on women’s mobility or autonomy was one such marker of violence. The researcher noted that culturally Rohingya women were more conservative and Rohingya men preferred women to be that way.

When asked about the contrast in Rohingya women post migration one of the respondents said proudly, “Here women go out but in Burma never. In Burma, a woman will die of hunger but she will not step out of her house without wearing a burqa”.

“In Burma women wear burqa and carry an umbrella with them, here women let alone umbrella they do not even wear burqa. Here the environment is like that and our women are being influenced by it” said Zuber one of the respondents with disgust.

The argument of Indian women corrupting Rohingya women got some support from the respondents. “Our women are getting influenced by the local women here, seeing these Indian women greed (lalach) is welling up in them. Going to market alone and other things are not acceptable” said Alqas. Most of the respondents preferred Burma over India when talked about women. The respondents confided in the researcher that there is a high possibility that Rohingya women might go astray here in India.

“Say a woman goes out to buy veggies, and then the seller sees her; she also sees him they laugh and talk. This behavior is not acceptable she is only supposed to talk with her husband. She will have to answer the angels on the judgment day”, said Khadir.

Like Khadir many respondents shared this notion about women to be akin to property. One of the respondents even went to great lengths in stating the destiny of a woman,

“A woman has only three things do to in her life 1) to make food and do daily household chores 2) to look after children 3) and to do namaz (Prayer) regularly and nothing else”.

Almost all of the respondents said in unison that religious dictums established the prevailing gender roles.
“In Islam our Nabi (The Prophet) said that women should not go out and work. But people do not have Deen or Ilm (knowledge) that is why they go out” says Zuber.

Usually gender roles get reinforced using penalties like ostracizing the offender which are put in place by the society. However, the Rohingya community uses different punitive measures like instilling dread by tweaking religious texts and invoking after life.

“If I do not listen to the words of our nabi I will burn after life” said Alqas when asked about the consequences of not conforming to religious injunctions.

Figure 3. Wives of Rohingya men going out to buy groceries

Almost 95 percent of the respondents said no when asked about their wives going out and buying groceries (figure-3).

The question about a working woman was avoided by most of the respondents. The idea itself was discomforting for them as most of them said, “A working woman is haram, and it is forbidden in Islam”. Few respondents did put life over rules; one such respondent said,

“A widow can work if she has no other means of sustenance because you have a greater duty towards your body than following religious dictums”.

Only widows had that collective approval for work but a widow is ranked lowest in the hierarchy. Hegemonic masculinity looks every other notion of gender in relation to itself. Women in relationships accept patriarchy and as a result the benevolent patron gives them some agency. However, widows do not have that recourse, “A woman with no husband is an unclaimed (lawaris) object” said one respondent with visible contempt.

During the narratives, almost all the respondents blamed the victim; they said women called this beating upon themselves.

Rehmat Ali, a respondent said “Women provoke us! They do not make good food, they do not put salt, and they do not listen to us all these leads to fighting”.

Most of the respondents after a hard day’s work just want to relax on their beds even a minor disruption can get on their nerves and they explode into violent outbursts.

“I come home tired and I ask for food, if she does not give food when I ask her to, then phatt (sound of slapping), if she does not give water when I ask her to then phatt (sound of slapping)” says SamsulHaq.
Almost all the respondents said in unison that they make sure their women are protected from the male gaze.

“We do not let women go out alone that is haram, our women if seen by other men is not acceptable for us and why should they go are we men dead or what?” said Md. Idriz.

The idea of haram or sin was central to the question of women’s autonomy.

“If my wife is talking outside with other men is a sin (adultery), which is why I do not send my wife out for work even though our state of penury is unbearable” said Hussain.

Other possible reasons for domestic feuds

The reasons for hitting women were as absurd and silly as they could be.

“Arre, she threw the tiffin box over me so I hit her with the belt” said one of the respondents when asked about reasons for beating his wife.

Most of the narrators revealed that money and fighting have a strong negative correlation. The respondents revealed that money happened to be one of the foremost reasons for fighting respondents

“I think correction is necessary women tend to go haywire sometimes but we seldom fight you see money and fighting are mutually exclusive” says Idriz explaining the inverse relation between money and domestic feuds.

Another respondent said, “I think about the money required to pay to a doctor before picking up a fight with my wife, (laughing) that is why I seldom fight”.

However, few of the respondents said otherwise, “Poor men fight more with their wives because they do not have money” said sultan rejecting the inverse relationship between money and family feuds. Tahir another respondent also said something in similar lines.

“Fights happen due to limited working opportunities. My wife asks me for ration. She says ‘why are you not going to work? We are running out of ration’, but she doesn’t know the fact that jobs are limited. I am not going for a job because I do not have one. This irritates me, we usually fight over this”

The researcher in his questionnaire included the question of “age at marriage” with questions of personal information to find possible linkages between age at marriage and masculinity. The questionnaire mapped the prevalence of underage marriage among Rohingya men which was not much (Figure 4). About 93 percent of the respondents got married above the legal age of marriage. No substantial links were found between manhood and early marriage but the questions elicited few responses on masculinity which did not belong to the realm of virulent manhood. Apart from the control freaks and dominators there were other types of masculinities to be found among men one such understanding of masculinity comes from Younus.

“For men life is about money and for women it is about marriage” says Younus.

This statement becomes interesting for it tells Rohingya men’s material understanding of masculinity and
femininity, something which could be only measured through things and events.

![Age at Marriage](image)

*Figure 4. Age of marriage among Rohingya men.*

Only 5 respondents out of the 112 had more than one wife and different respondents had different understanding of polygamy. Fights were more frequent and intense in these families.

“My wife always fights with me; she is not righteous at all, that is the reason I married another woman” said Arif on his reason for second marriage.

Not only the husband and wives but the wives fought among themselves for varied reasons “Both of them fight with each other every day” said Ayub.

“When I said about my second marriage, the first wife said “even I have potential suitors, even I can marry again”. How would a husband feel after listening to that?” said Arif.

Men’s privilege can be seen in the above statement. Here one can see the sheer hypocrisy in that man’s statement, if a woman marries for the same reasons as a man then she is depraved but it is all right for men to do so.

Most of the respondents had a unique class-based understanding of polygamy. They said that polygamy is for the privileged and not for the masses. The maulanas also accord with the class view but they said there are provisions for polygamy in Islam.

“One husband can have 4 wives anything more than that is haram. But out of the 4 wives if one dies he can marry another. But polygamy is not a financially viable option it is practiced only by the affluent sections” said one of the maulanas during a FGD.

**Conclusion**

As discussed above in the findings section, domestic violence is widespread in the refugee camps of Balapur. Not only is the prevalent worrisome but the intensity and the frequency of the violence is distressing. The field revealed that the men have normalized violence beyond socially acceptable limits. More than 73 percent of the respondents said indifferently that they beat their wives. The banality with which the violence is meted out on women is something of interest for the researcher. The respondents alleviated violence by normalizing it and it is possible that the receiver accepted the violence. Gender theorists could speculate a number of reasons for this “mitigation of violence by the men”. There is a strong possibility that the research subjects, the Rohingya men might have felt emasculated by the long
continuing persecution by the Burmese. Statelessness might have been the possible trigger for this suppressed anger. As gender theorists say, emasculation is a man’s worst nightmare and a man would want to reclaim his masculinity at any cost. So, there might be a possibility that the research subjects only to reclaim their lost abstraction of manhood does so by beating their wives black and blue. And the easier way to do is possibly through consent. Gender theorists could speculate the findings in terms of Hegemonic masculinity and the literature also points in that direction.

References


A Battle of the Wills: “Marzi”, “Majboori”, and a Negative Approach to “Izzat” in the Life of a Rohingya Woman

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Humiliation, torture and exploitation of women are as old as the history of family life. Women had to labor under the yoke of injustice, inequality and abuse. This paper aims to shed light on the similar experiences of the humiliation and violence faced by the women of the Rohingya community in Hyderabad. In the name of protecting women’s honor they have been mistreated within their own community. Rohingya women like any other women especially in India are confined within the four walls of their houses. In order to maintain peace within the community the problems of women are never discussed, which shows the amount of respect given to Rohingya women. These acts of violence and deliberate humiliation serve to intimidate and deny the autonomy of the woman, rendering them helpless. The paper begins with a cursory look at literature on humiliation and then situates it in the field findings across broad themes of trafficking, child marriage, mobility, domestic violence and multiple marriages. To analyze the social conditions of the Rohingya community, interviews were conducted and perspectives of both males and females have been recorded. The paper also seeks to provide a way forward in order to empower and ameliorate the suffering of Rohingya Women.

Keywords: Rohingya women, humiliation, autonomy, trafficking, domestic violence, fear.

The definition of humiliation that Dr. Lindner has developed and used in her work is as follows: Humiliation means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity. To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel you should expect. Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down, or holding to the ground. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, and made helpless. People react in different ways when they
feel that they are unduly humiliated. (Lindner, 2002)

The definition developed by Dr. Lindner is important as it recognizes the role of humiliation in dehumanizing an individual, beyond the realm of just physical violence. When a person is denied autonomy and the ability to self-regulate and make their own decisions, they are rendered helpless and is a clear attack, and disregard of their dignity and honor. This process of humiliation is often shared on the basis of racial identity, and even gender. Here, the humiliation is not only individual, but also corporate, and affects the members of the group.

One of the most striking features of the Rohingya community is their strong sense of identity. They have been quick to correct the researcher when addressed as Burmese, or asked if they spoke Burmese; they are proud Rohingyas who speak the Rohingya language. Many of the respondents were landlords and businessmen in Burma, but had to leave it all behind when they fled to India, and now work as daily wage laborers.

In contrast, the Somali community is divided among themselves into different clans. Members of a clan have a shared identity, and are willing to help one another, but not members from other clans. The dominant clans do not necessarily invite the smaller clans for community meetings, or inform them of opportunities that arise. This prejudice has survived the long journey from Somalia, and continues to thrive in Hyderabad.

As we could not interview a representative population of Somalis, the focus of the findings will primarily be on the Rohingya population, and will include a section on the Somalis as an appendix to this paper.

One of the defining characteristics of the life of a Rohingya woman is humiliation. Dr. Evelin Lindner, defines humiliation as "the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity. One of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless." (Lindner, 2002)

Through this research, the findings seek to draw out and encapsulate the different forms of humiliation a Rohingya woman faces, owing to the double vulnerability of not just being a woman, but also a Stateless individual in an unfamiliar country. The woman is usually subject to the “marzi” of her husband, or her closest male relative if unmarried, and her individuality and autonomy is denied, causing her to be unavoidably dependent on the male, thereby carrying the greater burden of responsibility in the relationship. “marzi”, or will, is the privilege of the male- father, brother, husband- and he yields it to exert his dominance over the female- daughter, sister, wife, subjecting her to a life of humiliation and degradation of her dignity, and often rendering her helpless.

**Major Issues related to Rohingya women**

**Trafficking**

Crossing the border can be a perilous journey, and in such instances, “dalals” play effective middlemen in helping families
safely cross into Bangladesh, and subsequently, India. 71% of the respondents admitted to using the help of a “dalal” to cross over into India, with the average fee paid being between 6,000-10,000 INR. These “dalals” are usually men who have crossed the border a few times, and can make their way around the wired fences in the dark.

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These “dalals”, are however, also responsible for the trafficking of women and children across borders. Many of the respondents admitted to hearing about trafficking, especially the respondents who had spent some time in Jammu. Usually, parents with financial difficulties send their daughters through “dalals” and ask them to get married in India as they cannot afford to get them married in Burma. The “dalals” then take them to places like Jammu & Kashmir, where they are sold to older Indian men (often widowers) in marriage for 20,000-30,000 INR.

Alternatively, when crossing the border, some families cannot afford the fee the “dalal” demands, and so they sell their young daughters to the “dalal” as fee to earn free passage across the border, into India. The girls are then sold to be sex workers in “red light areas” like Bombay and Goa. There have also been cases of young boys going missing in trains, usually, when they get off at a station to buy water or food.

**Child Marriage**

Early marriage is an accepted practice among the Rohingyas. Of the 122 married respondents, 109 were married at, or under, the age of 18. As observed during the research, 15 and 16 are favorable ages to be married. By 18, the daughter must be married or it is a shame to the family. As one respondent pointed out that, “In our country, once a girl turns 18/19, she is old. Even if you were to pay an old man to marry such a girl, she will not be able to find a husband. When they are 14, 15 they are at a good age and can have many children. It is not good for a young girl to remain in her father’s home.”

The respondents provided reasons for early marriages that take place in Myanmar as well as in India. In both countries, the woman is treated as someone sans autonomy and is often forced into marriage without her consent.
Marriage as Protection from State Violence

In Myanmar, the Buddhist soldiers take away girls who have attained puberty as captive and subject them to all forms of sexual abuse, including rape. These girls are often found dead in nearby rivers or ditches once the soldiers have had their way with them. Because of this, the parents get them married off as soon as they hit puberty, to protect them from the Buddhist soldiers.

Interestingly, the government in Burma passed a law banning marriage before the age of 18 in 1993, with consequences of strict punishment. The community has been able to get around this rule in multiple ways including getting a “laakh token” by paying the government a hefty bribe. This document adds years to the girl’s age, ensuring her legal age is shown to be 18 for her to be allowed to marry. As an alternative, poorer families sneak into Bangladesh and get their daughters married without any legal hassle there.

The government in Myanmar strictly regulates the personal lives of the Rohingya. The Rohingyas must seek their permission before getting married, as well as sign a document stating the exact number of children the couple intends on having, with a specified amount to be paid for each child, and dire consequences if they have any more children than the stipulated number.

Marriage out of “Majboori”

In India, on the other hand, they are living a hand-to-mouth existence, and a young girl is another mouth to feed at home, causing a strain on the finances. There is also a cultural discomfort regarding living in the same space as a young girl who is not your wife. Besides the societal pressures of having an unmarried daughter of marriageable age living at home, fathers feel uncomfortable sleeping in the same room as their young daughters, and are fearful of what could happen if they have male guests staying with them. A woman’s honor is her most prized possession, and therefore, even the implication of the possibility of her honor being compromised is sufficient to tarnish her image in the society and affect her chances at a marriage. Therefore, they prefer to marry them off, before they are “seen” by other men and “un pe buri nazgar lag jayegi” (Evil eye).

Figure 2. Respondent who paid dowry

One of the respondent when asked about early marriage, defended their argument by saying that, “I came to India with my sister. I rented a small house for my family, there was no room for her. She cannot work and has no income, naturally nobody will give her a room for free, so I had to get her married—“majboori se kiya” (By compulsion).

Another responded added that, “I live in a small room- me, my wife, children and jawan ladki (young daughter). How can I
keep her like this? Her brother and I sleep in the same room! What if I have guests- a brother visits- I cannot turn them away. So, I got her married early.”

The woman is therefore, handed over from her father’s house to her husband’s house through marriage with the aim of protecting her honor and ensuring her a respectable life. She is made to feel helpless in the determination of her own future and course of life.

Marriages in both Myanmar and India, generally include an exchange between the families of the bride and groom as dowry. The groom usually gifts the bride gold, while the bride gifts him things for the home, including, household appliances, cots, motorcycles, clothes, etc.

**Domestic Violence**

Two three slaps from your husband on a regular basis seems to be a consistent feature of marriage for a Rohingya woman. Around 73% of the respondents admitted to being beaten by their husbands when they get angry. Among a list of instances that would incite violence from a husband are- if the children are crying, if food is not cooked in time, if food is not tasty, if the wife is not at home when the husband returns from work, if the wife answers back, if the wife makes a mistake or does something wrong such as…does not listen to her husband or do as he say.

As pointed out in the literature, through domestic violence women are humiliated by their husbands by being stripped of their dignity, and the violence meted out is often a way to exercise their power over their wives and exert control in the relationship.

The male and female respondents supported the idea behind domestic violence—correcting the wife—and felt it was necessary action. The men believe that women must be made to understand as they are not as smart as men. The women, believing that it was something they had to stoically tolerate—their husbands went out, worked hard to provide for the family, and returned home to them (as opposed to the arms of another woman) and so a few occasional slaps were nothing. *Figure 3. Response to Domestic Violence*

Men explained the need for violence, “Men are smarter than women. Women do not understand things as quickly. They have to be made to understand, and so 2-3 slaps are required.”. A woman who has an opinion is not appreciated. As one husband pointed out- “I say 1, she says 2. I say 3, she says 4. So naturally, I should slap her. We beat them to scare them, not to hurt them.”

Women have got the message and added “if we sit quiet, they will not hit us. If we open our mouths, there will be a fight.”
“Khamosh rehna”, “chup chaap baithna” (Keep Quiet) were some of the recurring terms used by the female respondents when them, “to talk to outsiders, not to stay out late—all this is for our good. If we disobey, they will have to beat us.”

One of the respondent further explained that, “Our husbands go out every day, work hard, earn money to provide for us, and return to us every night. What is 2-3 slaps in comparison? How can we complain about such a thing?” The violence has been so easily accepted and internalized by both male and females.

By denying the woman an opinion, she is being denied her voice and her right to exercise her freedoms. Dr. Lindner points out that by being “forced into passivity”, “made helpless”, women are humiliated in marriage relationships. Culturally, by creating this dependence on the husband for protection, provision, and respectability through marriage, the woman has had to give up her autonomy and her own “marzi”. It is her husband’s will that dictates her life.

As a woman do not go out and interact with the local population much, the hegemony over language is held by the male and this undoubtedly determines the reporting of cases of domestic violence. All interactions with local law enforcing institutions, as well as doctors will have to be in the local language, often excluding the Rohingya women from access to such spaces as they do not speak any Indian language.

In cases where the woman gets hurt, the husband himself takes her to a doctor for treatment. If it’s a Rohingya doctor he will tell the doctor it was because he beat his recounting episodes of their husband’s anger, and coping mechanisms they had adopted to escape the violence, According to wife, but if it’s an Indian doctor, they usually say that she had a fall while working. As the wife cannot speak Hindi, she cannot even contradict with what the husband is saying to the Indian doctor even if she wanted to have a viewpoint.

However, it is important to consider the likelihood of a Rohingya woman reporting such an instance of violence even if she could make such a complaint. As one respondent pointed out, “It is not good for a wife to speak ill for her husband to a stranger.” So, I would never complain to anyone.”

Therefore, despite the obvious language barriers in reporting instances of violence, there are also cultural barriers associated with a wife’s undying devotion to her husband which ensures she always has his best at mind that necessitates glossing over cases of violence against her in the best interest of her husband and children. The woman, here, does not have an individual existence apart from her husband and children.

Community intervention

It is not an uncommon practice in domestic quarrels. The neighbors often come and talk to the husband to calm him down and resolve the conflict. These interventions are not seen as interference because of the close-knit nature of the community—they look out for one another. As one respondent said, “We have left our home country and come to this foreign land. If we go to the police and tell them our
husbands beat us, they will think bad of us. The community will get a bad name. So, the wife apologizes, and nobody goes to the police.

the police to complain because they were afraid of them, and felt that the police would not do much, which would cause them to fall into deeper trouble with their husbands. “We have to think about our children. Who will look after them?”

A husband who happened to be sitting in one of the interviews interrupted at this stage in the interview to say, "Think about it- if she goes to the police and I get arrested, I will have to pay maybe INR 5000, and get out—that is money cut out of the household income. I would not be able to work the days I am in prison. Who will give them money for food? Really, whose loss will it be if she goes to the police?”

Again, the husband here seems confident in his wife’s complete dependence on him and in the definite gender roles that seem to have been cast in stone. The husband as a provider holds the power in the relationship, and a woman who tries to assert her rights is ultimately bringing harm to herself. This also highlights what the literature points out, that “the women in violent relationships are victims of systematic terrorism; that is, they experience multiple forms of abuse and control at the hands of their partners”. And therefore, instilling fear in them with threat of abandonment to prevent them from reporting to the police is just another form of violence.

Another husband points out that, “She cannot even go out of the house. Where will she go to the police? It’s foolish to go. We may fight for one or two days, but

Figure 4. Respondents who admitted to community intervention in their domestic fights.

Fifty percent of the respondents admitted to community intervention in times of domestic unrest. This community intervention is a kind of self-governing law enforcement. The community leaders intervene and in a way, prevent the woman from seeking redressal through a formal legal system. Here again, the woman has denied her right to access the law, but is pacified and made to submit not just to the will of her husband, but the dominant will of the community to keep the peace. The focus is shifted from the violence and humiliation the woman has faced, to the need to maintain the peace within the community there by, once again, denying the individuality and dignity of the woman.

**Reporting to Police**

The police are identified with fear. Many respondents said they would not go to
by the third day peace will return, So, why go to the police?”

**Fear of Repercussions of Reporting, and Police Counselling**

This sentiment seemed to come out quite strongly during the interviews. The respondents fear their husband’s reactions to finding out that they had dared to report to the police. One respondent admitted that she had considered to approach the police, “I have thought of going, but so many complaints have gone and the police have not done anything. So, my life must go on. If the police do not do anything, my husband will find out and beat the life out of me- so I never go to the police”.

Similarly, another respondent said “If I go to the police he will leave me and marry another woman. What will happen to my children? Who will look after them?”

Interestingly, when we spoke to the local police inspector, he admitted to getting reports of domestic violence from the camp, but had not made any arrests. While explaining, he said, “They come directly to us when there are cases of domestic violence. We explain to them that if we make an arrest, they will have to pay bail to get the husband out. Eventually it’s the money they do not have. They have to live here, so they need to make an effort to live in peace. We give them counseling, make the husband apologies and send them home.”

This minimalist response may also be a deterrent to women reaching out to the police as it will only bring them more harm. One husband made it very clear to the researcher, “The day she goes to the police, is the day, I leave her and this house.” Such threats incite fear in the women and they choose to bear the brunt of their husband’s wrath then approach the police and face a life of further humiliation as an abandoned wife.

There is also the understanding that these are personal matters and sharing them or speaking ill of their husband to a stranger is not a good thing, so it is better for them, and for the sake of their children, to not go to the police. In South Asia, the husband is almost deified, and therefore, speaking ill of him, or an act of disrespect towards him such as reporting to the police, would be akin to sacrilege, thereby, invoking the wrath of her husband.

Espousing this sentiment, one respondent said that she would rather “die at her husband’s hands and go to heaven, than go to the police”.

**Violence from Local Community**

The violence from the local community is limited to the children being teased by repetition of sentences like, “Burma wale Burma wale” on their way to school. Children from a particular camp were facing trouble from local men, who would follow them and catcall at the girls on their way to school. So, one of the mothers has chosen to accompany them to school and pick them up when they finish to avoid any untoward incident.

Many of the women do not really go out and therefore, have not had a chance to
interact with the local community. These restrictions on mobility also serve as “protection” from such cases of violence, and are issued in such tones to the women.

**Mobility**

The mobility of a woman is restricted in Myanmar as well as in India although the reasoning behind this restriction circumstantially differs. In Myanmar, once a girl turns 7-8, she is not allowed to go out as the Buddhists should not be aware that there is a young girl at home. She is then married off as soon as she hits puberty, and she then becomes the property of her husband; dow not allow her to go out as he cannot tolerate other men looking at her. It is therefore, the male’s “marzi” which determines the extent and nature of the woman’s mobility.

Many of the husbands who sat during the interviews with their wives, an exercise that could not be avoided and certainly influenced many responses, said that there are men at the vegetable mandis, and since they go out to work, they know how men can be, and they do not want such men laying eyes on their wives. Here, the fear seems to be primarily of the Indian men, who seem to pose a threat to the dignity and honor of the Rohingya women. During our research, we heard reports of Rohingya men being cheated of money by many Indian men, and this distrust could be translated into a general wariness of the intentions of India men.

Women concede that since they do not speak the language, they are not able to interact with the community outside, so they prefer not to go out. Also, since their husbands buy everything they need, there is no need for them to go out. Here again, we see the hegemony of language with the men that further ensures their dependence on them, and restricts the woman’s mobility and autonomy.

Around 50% of the respondents admitted to going out alone, said they took their children with them. There seems to be a message that is being sent across by them that a woman with children is somehow “off-limits”, and their children therefore, act as protection for them in the public space. Almost as if the presence of a child would appeal to the humanity of a potential perpetrator, and the woman would be left alone.

![Figure 5. Respondent on Mobility, are they allowed or not?](image)

The ability of the woman to use her free will, or make her own decisions is curtailed within the community. She is stripped off her autonomy as she is made to seek man’s permission for all her actions. When she gets married, it is her parents who
decide the person she should marry and once she is married she needs her husband’s permission to go outside. She is often not permitted to go out and work, or interact with the local community. She is denied an education as her role is limited to household care. And even in cases of polygamy, it is the husband’s “marzi” to get a second wife. Therefore, these restrictions on mobility are part of a much larger restrictive culture on the autonomy and agency of the woman.

Cultural gender practices are also at play in the question of mobility. The Rohingya men believe that Indian women have far more freedom— they can go out alone, get an education, and are more assertive. This could also be a direct reference to the researchers- educated Indian women, who are at odds with their cultural understanding of the role of a woman. They believe that if their women are exposed to such a culture, it will have a negative effect on them.

In a focus group discussion (FGD) held with men, they voiced that, “According to Burmese law, women are not allowed to go outside at all. In extreme and unavoidable circumstances, the woman must wear a burkha and go out” and “According to Islam, a man must earn and bring the food home, while the woman’s job is to stay at home to cook, clean, and look after the children. She has no need to go out”.

**Multiple marriages**

Marriage is considered as an institution that brings respectability to a woman, and ensures that the needs of the man are taken care of so he can go out and do real work to earn a living. Almost all marriages are arranged by the parents of the bride and groom in consultation with the local mullah. The roles within the marriage are clearly defined. It is the man’s responsibility to go out and earn a living to provide for his family. The woman needs to take care of her husband by ensuring his clothes are washed, his meals are cooked, the house is clean, caring for the children, etc.

While this is not a common practice, it is an accepted one among the communities. According to the tenets of Islam, as pointed out by multiple male respondents who sat in on interviews of their wives, if the man is financially able to provide for more than one wife, he may marry as many as 4 wives in his lifetime. If a man isn’t getting along with his first wife, or if she is not giving him children, he remarries. If a man has been married to a woman for many years and she’s given him children—she’s now become “old” and “used”, so he married a younger woman to satisfy his needs.

When the first wife does not give him peace, does not cook properly for him, then he will naturally remarry. “Unki marzi haina.” (As they like). Sometimes, the husband travels alone from Burma to India. In such cases, he keeps a second wife in India to meet his needs. As one respondent explained, “His wife refused to come with him from Burma, so he came to India alone and started working here. But when a man lives alone, who will cook him food, wash his clothes, keep the house clean? The man cannot do all that. So, eventually he needs to get a second wife in India, to look after him.”
The second wives are often helpless orphans, or abandoned women, and as the man is seen as the “protector” in this community, multiple marriages are often also explained as the man protecting a helpless woman by providing her a life of dignity as a wife. As one male respondent justified, “If a woman is helpless (besahara), she is at risk—anything could happen to her. Nobody cares for such women. Men marry such women to protect them - how is that wrong?”

This practice has built a sense of insecurity and fear among the women. They have no control over the actions of their husband. It is all his “marzi”. If they, as wives, are unable to satisfy him, he will turn away and marry another woman. Therefore, they carry a greater sense of duty in the marriage—cooking, cleaning, washing, etc., all to ensure the husband is satisfied and would not leave them for another woman.

If a husband gets a second wife, the predominant belief is that it was because the first wife was lacking. “It is the wife’s fault. If she does not listen to her husband, does not look after the home, naturally her husband will look to another woman to meet his needs.”

From the responses, it is evident that the onus is on the woman to live up to the culturally created standards of a “good wife”, and meet every need of her husband, to ensure he would not remarry. And even if she does, it is ultimately the husband’s “marzi” that decides whether she will be victim of polygamy.

**Conclusion**

The Rohingyas, as a stateless community, continue to face multiple vulnerabilities in the form of unequal treatment, discrimination, and humiliation. As seen from the responses elicited in this research, the Rohingya women are subject to humiliation from within and without. They are treated as beings’ sans autonomy and agency, and are denied a voice as a method of rendering them helpless. From cradle to grave the women is subservient and dependent on the male for the protection and approval.

The way forward to improve the condition of Rohingya women could be along these lines. First, adopting such changes in the domestic legal framework aimed at reducing statelessness, and most importantly, prevent further instances of statelessness. Second, collaborating with neighboring states to acknowledge this phenomenon as an international crisis, and deal with it accordingly. Third, Identifying the Stateless person. Fourth, organize meetings with men and women of the community to speak against violence. Often, such meetings are held among women and men separately. A joint meeting will help create dialogue with both parties’ present and communicating. Fifth, to have meetings with female police personnel inside the camps to resolve some of the fears among the women.

Questions of violence and humiliation have no easy solutions, but engaging in discussion and challenging cultural norms that perpetuate such humiliation is a good place to start with.
References


Problems and Issues of Stateless people in North-East India

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Since the colonial period, the Northeast has received a continuous flow of migrants from neighboring countries. The large waves of refugees and migrants besides causing demographical change has caused displacement of indigenous population from their ancestral land. When indigenous people realize the danger to their existence, they begin to express their grievances through mass protest and social movement and only then the displacement draws public attention. In addition, there is a huge competition between the local people and migrant communities in terms of economy and this leads to ethnic discord and xenophobia mind-set, often leading to serious ethnic conflict among them. India is also a member of civilized community of nations and has around 65,000 Chakmas and Hajongs refugees who are primarily stateless in the north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh apart from some sporadic groups of Bengali Muslims in various pockets of northeast India. Mizoram has around 43,528 Chakmas as per 2011 census. The problems created by refugees and migrants is one of the major cause of concern in Northeast India.

Keywords: stateless, refugee, migrants, north east India, Chakma

Statelessness is an important issue in different parts of the world in the contemporary period. Around the globe, the population of stateless citizen is large in number but the exact numbers are still unknown as many countries do not want to share the figure of stateless population. The stateless people due to the fear of persecution, prefer to remain stateless. (Malischewski & Sarker, 2014). According to United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHCR), there are 15 million people who are stateless in the world (Dobbs, 2007). The situation of stateless population is very complicated in terms of humanitarian grounds and implementation of legal protection. The situation of stateless is still unabated even after many efforts being made by different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and world organizations to solve the problem of the statelessness. Inadequate resources of poorer countries, especially South Asian countries, exacerbate the situation. Unlike other scholars, Myron Weiner referred statelessness as rejected people and he denoted that these rejected people were being discriminated and their identity was not accepted by the laws of state. In many South Asian countries, rejected people are
often dumped on the neighboring country with the expectation that because of their ethnic proximity with some other groups they will be accepted. This is how the stateless population have spawned in many South Asian regions (Chakma, 2016). Many factors are involved regarding the issue of statelessness in South Asian countries. Among these factors, colonialism played an important role because of the demarcation of boundaries based on colonial interests encouraged migration from one area to another. In addition, the unstable government and failure of nation building led to create massive migration and refugees’ problem in a country. Thus, the migrant and stateless population are not only suffering but has also brought many problems to the host countries.

India is one of the largest recipients of migrants and refugees, among South Asian countries particularly the North-Eastern region, as it is the most favorable region for migrants and refugees’ due to porous border and geographical factor. To host huge number of stateless population in a poor and multi-ethnic state of North-Eastern is nothing less than a burden. Consequently, stateless population in North East India brought multiple problems such as increase in ethnic strife, demographic changes, increasing competition in employment and environmental issues.

Thus, the current article tries to analyze the problems and issues of stateless people in the North-Eastern region by using empirical methods of analysis. The first part of the paper would examine the concept of statelessness and the factors responsible for it. The second part will shed light on migrant, refugee and stateless people in North East and the subsequent part will investigate the role of Indian government towards the issues of statelessness in North-East India. The research paper is based collectively on various secondary data such as scholarly articles, books, government documents, etc.

**Who are Stateless?**

The definition of a stateless person in international law is found in the 1954 Convention of UNHRC, Article 1(1). According to UNHRC definition, a stateless person is a “person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law” (“Ending Statelessness,” n.d.). This definition is now widely in use to categorize stateless in many countries. Thus, stateless persons are those who do not belong to any nationality and do not legally recognize their nationality. Nationality and recognition of a citizen is very important for an individual to get benefits and protection from the state. In case of stateless people, along with the lost of recognition of nationality, they have also lost their political rights such as traveling freely, proper education, right to work and access to proper medical care (Persoob, 2013). Thus, unlike legal citizen stateless people cannot claim privileges and enjoy benefits from the state.

There are two types of Stateless i.e. de jure stateless and de facto stateless. In the 1954 Convention of UNHRC on Status of Stateless Persons, it was deliberated that de jure statelessness occurs when there is no recognized state to which a person may claim nationality and citizenship (Milbrant,
On the other hand, persons who have legitimate claims to citizenship but cannot prove it or whose government refuse to give effect to their nationality are called de facto stateless (Persoob, 2013). Thus, a stateless person is one who is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the government of his country of nationality or former nationality.

**Causes of Statelessness**

There are multiple reasons that contribute towards the causes of emergence of stateless people. Some of them are as follows:

**War and internal conflict.** In the situation of war and internal conflicts, cases of human rights violation and torturing among the innocent people is common. Therefore, many people of the war zone flee to other neighboring countries to avoid torture and for the safety of their life. For instance, during the time of Second World War, mass migration of refugees took place from the war zone area but those refugees could not be accepted as a citizen to the host countries and they become stateless. Similarly, internal conflict also instigated the issue of stateless. For example, during the period of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) operation, the Sri-Lankan Tamil population fled to India to avoid oppression and secure safety of life for themselves. After the end of civil war many refugees’ due to their past experiences of humiliation and torture did not return. The Sri-Lanka Deputy High Commission in Chennai also stated that the number of applications received from Sri-Lanka nationals for citizenship by registration is very few. Meanwhile, the government of India modified citizenship Act in 1986, as per the Assam Accord with effect from 1 July 1987, therefore, a Sri-Lanka Tamil born in India cannot claim Indian citizenship by birth if his/her parents are not a citizen at the time of his/her born. Thus, those who do not want to return to Sri-Lanka became automatically stateless (Chari, Joseph & Chandran, 2003).

Statelessness is instigated because of negligence of the government towards the welfare of the minorities and their oppression. Even in the context of Myanmar, after the government of Myanmar fall into military regime, there were many human right violations among the minority population. More importantly, the military ruler completely neglected the welfare of the people thus, forcing people into extreme poverty. The scarcity of basic commodities led to a large wave of migration in the neighboring countries like India and particularly in the North-East State of India looking for better economic opportunities.

“The Burmese government refuses to give citizenship to children born outside the country or to Burmese parents who left illegally or fled persecution. Children born in Thailand of Burmese descent do not have birth certificates and the parents do not have citizenship papers. They are neither recognized by the Burmese government nor wanted by the Thai government. They consist of roughly 2 million Burmese migrant workers and 150,000 Burmese refugees effectively stateless as a result of not having citizenship documentation.” (International Observatory on Statelessness, n.d.).
Thus, the migrants automatically lost their citizenship as they eventually lost contact to their actual countries and even the host countries could not provide citizenship.

Colonialism. During the colonial period, the British exported many people from their home land to other areas to work as laborer’s. After the end of British domination, the local people did not accept the non-native people as their citizens. For instance, the Tamil in Sri-Lanka were brought by the British from India to work at the plantation of Sri-Lanka more than 200 centuries ago. After independence, the Sri-Lanka government enacted the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 and the Indian and Pakistan Resident Act. No. 3 of 1949 which made many Tamilian stateless (Banerjee, Chaudhary & Ghosh, 2016). Same was the case of Nepalese in India or Indian in Burma. In addition, the colonial government demarcated the boundary based on the colonial interest thus some minor ethnic areas were put under the umbrella of the major community against their wishes, consequently the chauvinism of the major community was not bearable to minor community. Therefore, to avoid torturing and suppression, they migrated to neighboring countries and subsequently they become stateless as they were not recognized by the host country as well as their parent country.

Laws and policies. Every country has separate laws and the criteria to acquire a citizenship based on the country. If these laws are not carefully written and correctly applied, some people can be excluded and left stateless. In addition, when a child is born outside his/her country they can get a setback if that country recognizes nationality based on birth and does not allow a parent to pass on nationality through family relations

Apart from the above-mentioned criteria, there are other problems like who can pass and who cannot pass on their nationality. According to UNHRC, there are 27 countries in the world which do not permit women to pass on their nationality and at the same time some countries make criteria based on race and ethnicities thus showing discriminatory nature towards the stateless person.

Historical Root of Migrants and Refugees in North East India

North Eastern region was the destination for migrants during the colonial period. The British used Gorkhali as army to suppress the tribal rebellion and to protect the colonial interest. Similarly, the British used Chakma to defeat the area of the tribal people. The Tamil people and other Indians were exported to Sri-Lanka and Africa for labor work, the British imported many outsiders to Assam as laborer and took their assistance when the British started agricultural and tea plantation in the Assam plain area. Many of these people remained in India even after the British left India. Thus, it is confirmed that migration in the North-East region started during the colonial period. When the British left India, there were many migrants particularly in North-East region, who came and settled there. These migrants were not accepted as native people by the locals.

During the British period, the entire North-East region was under the Assam administrative province other than Sikkim
and the two princely states of Manipur and Tripura. Currently, there are eight states including Sikkim. Many of the territories of the North-East region is hemmed in by international boundary; there is no geographical connection with the mainland India except the corridor of the so-called “Chicken neck” which goes around 22 km width through Siliguri. Possibly due to geographical reasons, the North-East region is a favorable destination for the economic migrants and refugees and ecological victims from the neighboring countries of Nepal and Bangladesh and China, Nagas and Burmese from Myanmar (Nath, 2005). According to the study of experts, there are around 12 to 17 million of illegal migrants from Bangladesh alone have moved in India. Most of the illegal migrants are settled in North India. Thus, it means that the migrants in India are the creation of sub-nation, the size of Australia with in India. (Singh, 2010).

As mentioned above, the Nepalese started migration to North-East India during the colonial period. Chakraborty & Chakraborty argued that it was considered that the treaty of Sugauli (1816) was the beginning of opening of Chakma for the penetration of the North-East India but the actual movement was the Treaty of Yandaboo when the British opened the door of army for the Nepalese. Thus, Gorkhali soldiers were used in the Sylhet Operation in 1817 and this is the first direct contact of Nepalese and Assamese. Thus, Gorkhas were recruited as soldiers by the British as a mean to defeat the North East tribal people. The Gorkhas played an important role in the process of the British expansion in North-East India through the Shillong Plateau, Manipur, Nagas, Lushai and CTH (Banerjee, Chaudhary & Ghosh, 2016). Apart from this, the British used the Gorkhali as laborer, to clear forest, lumbering, settlements and tea plantation. These Gorkhalis are scattered in different states of North-East India such as Assam, Manipur, Mizoram Nagaland, besides others at Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. After independence both India and Nepal government signed a treaty of friendship in 1950 which was revised in 1956. The Tripartite Delhi Agreement encouraged migration in North-East India as this treaty gave them permission to engage in business, acquired property, settle, seek employment and move freely any part of India (Nath, 2005).

When the British started tea plantation in Assam’s plain area and they discovered oil there, they needed a large number of work force thus it is easier to imagine that the economic transformation in Assam encouraged migration and this migration had been increasing till the twentieth century. The migration in Assam can be classified into two distinct phases. Firstly, the workers for Assam’s tea plantations, who came from present day Bihar and Orissa and Oppressed peasants from East Bengal. The large wave of migration of tribal from Jharkhand region (Bihar and Orissa) significantly changed the demographic composition in Assam. Because of massive migration, Assam province was the fastest growing in term of population under British India province. It was estimated that the population of the tea-garden employees in 1921 was 1.3 Million that was one-sixth of Assam’s total
Another important migrant group of the North-East region is the tribes of Chakma. Chakmas considered Chittagong Hill tracts as their original homeland. Previously, the Mughal ruler influenced that region later it was reflected that they were governed by their own king of Chakma. It was believed that Chakmas migrated from Myanmar in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century and at the present territory of Chittagong Hill Track (CHT) and they lived there independently without any external interference for the next two hundred years. Though, after the intervention of Mughal ruler in the region of CHT, Chakma functioned as autonomous entity as the Mughal ruler did not directly interfere into the political affairs of Chakma kingdom. After the battle of Plassey, the British dominated the region of Chakma but still protected the political autonomy of Chakma that they enjoyed earlier (Chakma, 2014).

Before the British penetrated into these regions, it is believed that there was no clear-cut boundary between North East Lushai Hills and the Chakma territory. Therefore, Lushai often raided the Chakma people and treat them as their slave. Although at the later stage, when the British government defeated Chakma they used them as an important tool to defeat the Lushai people. The boundary between the Lushai Hills and Chakma drawn only in 1900 after the British dominated the Lushai Hill in 1891 (Singh, 2010). After a few decades of the domination of the Lushai Hills, the British passed Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act in 1873. As per this regulation, the Lushai Hills and some of the tribal areas in Assam could not contact by the outsiders except only few people whom the British government gave permission as they were used as coolies and laborer. Therefore, though Lushai Hills and CHT were in territorial proximity, they could not have a chance to contact each other. Even in 1911 census, only around 302 Chakma were available in Lushai Hills as the only coolies of the British. Thus, during this time as it might be the rule and regulation of the British, the people of the tribal region were not mixed with the native people.

During the time of partition in 1947, as it was revealed from their memorandum, the Chakma leaders wanted the area of Chakma to be incorporated under India. According to Chakma leaders, the area of CHT is the only non-Muslim and tribal area in Bengal and they perceived that the they would be very vulnerable in Eastern Bengal where there is an overwhelming Muslim majority (Banerjee, Chaudhary & Ghosh, 2014). Apart from this, it was assumed that the Chakmas are Buddhist by faith and it is religious proximity to India that they wanted to include their territory under India. Despite much effort by the leaders of Chakma to be under India, the area of Chakma was kept under the East Bengal as it may be due to geographical reason. Now, they become minority among the Bengali Muslim country and this is the beginning of one of the root cause of Chakmas current issues.

Although the demand of Chakma failed when India attained independence in 1947 a few Chakmas were living in Mizoram and Tripura and they were recognized as citizen of India (Singh, 2010).
During this period, no friction was heard between Chakma and the local people. The problem of Chakma and the local people started when a massive Chakma migration in India took place in 1964 and 1971 due to the construction Kaptai Dam and liberation of Bangladesh respectively. Thus, a large wave of migration of the Chakma in the North-East region led to rise in apprehension of the local people and complicated the multi-ethnic North-East region.

Apart from all these, Chinese, Naga and Burmese in Myanmar were also other large ethnic migrants in North-East India. It is very difficult to assess the overall population of Myanmar refugees in India. By 1996, there were 4000 Chinese people in India (Ghosh, 2016). The overall population of refugees from Myanmar in India might be more than 10,000. According to the analysis of the researcher of this article, many of the migrants from Myanmar are coming in search for better opportunities and are called as economic migrants. Myanmar’s migrant and the local people in North-East India had similar kinship and therefore, they did not face much problem unlike other migrants in North-East India while adjusting within the milieu. In addition, many migrants from Myanmar come for temporary period and do not stay permanently. The local people do not bother much about the Myanmar migrants as they are less populous and they do not have any claim from the local government.

Role of Central Government of Statelessness and Problems in North East India

As previously mentioned migration in the North-East region took place during the period of British rule. Though the boundaries were clearly demarcated after India attained independence, it was obviously the government of India that did not enough pay attention towards migration issue in North-East region as it was clearly revealed from the rapidly increasing migration after India achieved independence. When the anti-foreigner movement aroused in Assam in 1971 and broke out violence due to influx of foreigner in Assam, Government of India was compelled to take necessary steps to lessen the migration issues in the region but they were failed in doing so. After independence in 1951, India and Nepal signed The Friendship Treaty. According to this treaty, the Nepali citizens could enjoy certain privileges just like other citizens of India except the voting right (Bhattrai, 2007). It is deliberated that as Nepal is poor and lack in resources than India, therefore, they can enjoy the privileges provided by the Government of India. This was the major reason behind the influx of Nepali being swollen in India particularly in the North-East region because of geographical proximity. With the huge influx of migrants in northeast India from the surrounding region, the multi-ethnic and diversity of North-East India got more complex than earlier. In this context, the state government and central government do not carry out its responsibility and even the Chakma issue in
Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram remained stagnant. As mentioned above, the British passed Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act 1873 to implement the rules of administration among the tribal people in Assam. According to this Act, no outsiders could contact the tribal area without first asking permission from the colonial government. As a matter of fact, this was the protection of the colonial business because the tribal people often invaded the neighboring British colonial territory and created trouble for the British. When India achieved independence from the British, this rule was inherited for the administrative system of some North-East tribal areas. Ironically, this rule is used now as the protection for the tribal people from the people living outside their area. It is to be noted that despite the existence of Inner Line Regulation (ILP) in this tribal region, the government of India received many outsiders and provided shelter to them in the ILP area in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. There are some important reasons behind such steps taken by India. Just before two years when Chakma refugees’ influx in North-East India, the Sino-Indo border war broke out in 1962. The fact is that Arunachal Pradesh is claimed by both India and China due to which it was believed that to prove Arunachal Pradesh as its territory at the international level, India needed supporters from the territory of Arunachal Pradesh. In addition, Chakmas follow Buddhism by faith, therefore, it was believed that the two communities may not have any problem in intermingling as a result. The government of Assam insisted the Chakma people not to displace in Mizoram to avoid ethnic conflict in the future. The shelter provided by the central government of India is vehemently criticized by the local people of Arunachal Pradesh and they said that the central government did not take any consensus while taking certain related steps (Singh, 2010). Deepak K Singh also argued that it was a historic mistake to provide shelter of Chakma refugees by the central government (Singh, 2010).

Similarly, the issue of Chakma and Mizo community is present in Mizoram. Mizoram is one of the favorable destinations for Bangladesh migrants and it is no exception for Chakma people as it might be the location of Mizoram which is at the proximity of the CHT therefore it is very convenient and the first door for refugees to step into India. In 1964, the Chakma refugees’ incursion took place in North-East region. A few years later, Mizoram was declared as disturbed area because the Mizo National Front (MNF) declared independence from India. In 1971, Bangladesh Liberation broke out. Thus, more people of Chakma refugees entered Mizoram to protect the safety of their life. It is perceivable that between 1964 and 1972, there was a high influx of Chakma refugees in Mizoram. In 1971, the Government of India passed the North-Eastern Re-Organization Act to upgrade the Mizo Hills District Council into Union Territory. Simultaneously, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was also promoted to Autonomous District Council (ADC), along with these two ADC, Chakma ADC established in Mizoram in 1972 (Singh, 1989). As it was mentioned, Mizoram was undergoing
insurgency movement during that time; therefore, the government of India used Chakma ADC as its propaganda to weaken the MNF movement thus, they provided separate Autonomy inside the territory of Mizoram. Even the former MNF underground leaders and ex-Chief Minister of Mizoram asserted in an interview that the government of India provided Chakma, an Autonomous District Council in the territory of Mizoram to weaken and divert the MNF movement. The act of kindness by the Government of India towards Mizo people came as a surprise. Nevertheless, many territories of the NE region have issues with the Indian government. Therefore, the government of India used different method to tackle their issue.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Census</th>
<th>Growth of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>5088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>15,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>19,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>22,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>39,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Source: www.thenortheasttoday.com*

The above census figure is the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) memorandum submitted to BJP president Amit Shah when he was coming to North-East states. The growth rate of Chakma population is skyrocketing; therefore, the Mizo people believe that there is something wrong with the Chakma population. It is assumed that normal human beings cannot bear that many children in the short span of a year and it is only possible if there are huge number of intruders from Bangladesh. Therefore, the Mizo people are very disappointed and keenly support the deportation of illegal immigrants.

At present illegal migration is an important issue in the North-East region. Even the government of India acknowledged such problems in North-East India due to illegal immigrants. Therefore; government is constructing border fence between the border of North-East India and Bangladesh. Even in the last election of Lok Sabha in 2014 and the state Member of Legislative Assembly election in Assam a few years back, deportation of illegal immigrant was one of the important election manifesto for the North-East particularly in Assam.
North East India and the Problems and Issues of Statelessness

The composition of the population of North-East India is very diverse (Rao, 1975). The region of North East India can be called as the homeland of the tribal people because of large number of tribal people in the region. Even among tribes, there exist immense diversities. These tribes are divided and sub-divided into numerous clans. Each tribes or clans has its own distinctive character. (Rao, 1975). Apart from the racial diversity, there is also linguistic diversity. The total number of mother tongues in India is 1652. In the North East alone there are 420 language and dialect excluding Darjeeling (Rao, 1975). Because of this, there are a Lot of ethnic issue in the region.

Based on ethnic groups, they have settlements in different areas and regions in isolated places in small groups. It has been observed that these groups do not mix up with the larger ethnic groups from a foreign land as they fear their cultural and identity lost. But due to geographical reason of the region, many refugees and migrants of stateless flocked from outside the countries. This massive increase of population led to the change of the demography of the region and added to the sensitivity of the region. Several demographic alterations based on ethnic lines have resulted the root cause of insurgency in the region. For instance, the native people of Tripura became a minority in their own land. Hence, they fight back with arms against the outsiders that usurped tribal homelands. In addition, the United Liberation Font of Assam (ULFA) militant group, one of the most terror group in Assam is also originated because of the large influx of Bangladesh people in Assam (Saikia, 2005). Similar situation could be seen in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, where due to ethnic differences there is conflict among the local people and migrants stateless. Well, the migrants and refugees are originally stateless, but after the long period of time, they have been given citizenship due to the vote bank politics. After they got recognition, they are emboldened and known to claim their right as a citizen of India and this created further problems in the North-East region. Even in the present scenario, the ethnic fighting between these stateless refugees and migrants is still going on in many parts of North-East region. In short, these stateless people took the path of violence and spoiled the peace and tranquility of the region.

The growing population of stateless people not only brought violence in the region but also increase high demand of land resources. This increase in demand of land led to higher competition within the community which in turn results in potential conflict. Of course, many parts of the North-East regions are still practicing traditional method of agriculture, slash and burning tree. This kind of shifting cultivation damages forest and require more land to practice this kind of traditional method. Thus, the underdeveloped stateless community added to the additional demand of land due to their dependence on agriculture, cattle rearing, lumbering and other forest products for living. Even in case of Arunachal Pradesh, the growing population of Chakma spilled over into adjacent land forest and grasslands for
housing and farming belonging to other tribal groups. In addition, the intrusion of migrants and stateless led to damage of flora and fauna rapidly in different areas of North-East India. Therefore, this led to the degradation of the ecological balance of the region (Kamduk, 2016).

The massive influx of refugees and stateless can also influence the politics of the North-East region because politics and migration go hand in glove (Ghosh, 2016). As it was mentioned earlier, North-East India is multi-plural therefore, the region is very sensitive unlike other region and the inclusion of another community in such situation prompt to disintegrate the region. The Stateless migrants can also affect the politics of the host society by their direct or indirect involvement in everyday affairs (Kamduk, 2016). For instance, during the research after interacting with the local people it was revealed that there is many Chakma population in one constituency of Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) in Mizoram. Even though the local population is larger than the Chakma population, only Chakma is elected in that constituency during every election as there is a party division among the local people and unity among the Chakma. It means that Chakma in that MLA constituency are the deciding factor. Therefore, Arunachal Pradesh is completely against the acknowledgement of citizenship of Chakma because Chakma are the majority in some district and as soon as Chakma are given the right to vote some constituencies of MLA are tacitly reserve for the Chakma. Apart from these, the stateless migrants strongly underpin of communal and ethnic sentiment which complicates local politics (Kamduk, 2016). Because of Bangladesh migrants, Asom Gan Parishad also emerged in Assam against the migrants. Recently even in Manipur states there is a demand for Inner Line Permit to control the large influx of migrants in Manipur, such demands were initially made in Meghalaya and Assam state (Kamduk, 2016). Thus, migrants and stateless refugees not only effect the politics of North-East region but also instigates xenophobia and create a gap between mainland India and the people of North-East India. Consequently, it can also harm the national integrity of India.

There is no proper study which states that there is any relation among stateless migrants, drugs and arms trafficking in North-East India but based on his research findings the author assumes that stateless refugees and migrants are the reason of increasing drug addiction, drugs trafficking and arms smuggling in some areas in North-East India. For instance, the data reveals that, every day in the local daily newspaper in Mizoram, the local police arrest traffickers. These traffickers are most of the time linked with the Myanmar migrants and refugees. Thus, it can be inferred that the stateless migrants and
refugees undermine the maintenance of law and order in North-East India.

Although North-East has a substantial pool of natural resources, the utilization of them has not been carried out efficiently, leading to poor economic growth of the region. Thus, many states in the region are dependent on central funding, and these migrants and stateless people add additional burden on the state government. Even in the case of livelihood, there are no private big industries like other parts of India thus, job opportunities are very less in the domain of skilled as well as non-skilled employment. The increased population due to large number of refugees and migrants leads to high rise in demand for employment, in turn leading to competition between the local and new community. In addition, the migrants and refugees also reduce the average human development index of the region. For example, the literacy rate of Mizoram in every district is more than 84%. Lawngtlai district has the lowest literacy of 65% which is lower than the national average (See table 2).

Table 2
Mizoram District Wise Literacy Rate Based on 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aizawl</td>
<td>97.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champhai</td>
<td>95.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolosib</td>
<td>93.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawngtlai</td>
<td>65.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunglei</td>
<td>88.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamit</td>
<td>84.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saiha</td>
<td>90.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serchhip</td>
<td>97.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Source: www.census2011.co.in*

**Conclusion**

British government encouraged the migration in the North-East region during the colonial period. After independence, North-East India was incorporated into the Indian Union and simultaneously a rapid increase in migration was noted. There may be several reasons for such increase in the population of immigrants and refugees in North-East India for example geographical factors, ethnic proximity with neighboring countries, failure of government policies of neighboring countries, lack of attention towards the migration issue by the central government. The concerned state government refused to recognize migrants and refugees under its ambit aiding them to become stateless. Meanwhile, these migrants and refugees are still residing in North East India and it will not be wrong to assume that migrations from neighboring countries are
continuously flowing because of the oppression made by their government. Thus, these migrants and refugees have brought many problems for the local people, violence also breaks out because of many migrants in the region. It can be safely assumed that stateless migrants and refugees damage the tranquility of the region. Meanwhile, the situation of migrants and refugees in these areas is very pathetic. It must be noted that these stateless population had faced uncountable hardships in one way or the other. Therefore, it is important to cautiously handle the issue of statelessness of migrants and refugees without violating their human rights.

References


Tribes and Gender: The Question of Empowerment in the Autonomous District Councils in Manipur

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Inclusion of minority groups and women within the political process has been two dominant themes within the political and social discourse in independent India. Manipur being a state with a substantial tribal population, representation and empowerment of tribal’s within the state became an imperative. In line with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which institutes tribal autonomy in cultural and social affairs under the Autonomous District Councils and Regional Councils in the erstwhile Assam, the Manipur Government also instituted the Autonomous District Councils (ADC’s) in hill/tribal districts under the “The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971”. Despite these efforts, due to vague provisions and limitations particularly in legislative and judicial powers, discontentment is on the rise among the tribal population resulting in mobilization for greater autonomy including full-fledged statehood. Moreover, the provision does not cater to the problem of inclusion of women in the local decentralization scheme, putting women empowerment at the back seat. This gives rise to two problems with the ADC’s. This study intends to argue how the consideration of these two exigencies in the institutionalization of ADCs could substantially lead to the inclusion and empowerment of tribes in general and women in particular democratic process.

Key Words: Manipur, Autonomy, Autonomous District Council, Empowerment, Tribes, Women
North-East India consists of eight states: Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. The state of Manipur borders Myanmar, Mizoram, Assam and Nagaland. It comprises of 9 districts: Churachandpur, Chandel, Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Senapati and Thoubal. The state is inhabited by two major groups: the valley Meitei and the hill tribes. A substantial population of Meitei Muslims and migrants are also present. Manipur has 36 recognized tribes who belong to the Naga and the Zo ethnic groups. It has an area of 16,579 square km and according to the 2011 census, a population of 2,855,794. Out of this the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population is 1,167,422, forming about 40.87% of the total population of Manipur. The 5 hilly districts of Churachandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul have a high concentration of tribal population.

The hills tribes function under their traditional chieftainship. They are administered by their own chieftains in accordance with the traditional customs, which varies from tribe to tribe and sometimes even within a tribe. The hills continued to be under a separate system of administration under the British. On the eve of Manipur statehood, the need for tribal self-governance, culminated in the “Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971”. The Act was driven by and formulated in accordance with the Sixth Schedule which was the instrument of autonomy for tribal areas in the neighboring state of Assam. Elections were held in 1973 and for the first time, Autonomous District Councils (ADC’s) were instituted in the hill districts of Manipur. (Kshetri, 2006).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>S.T.</th>
<th>S.T. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>237,399</td>
<td>3,287</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>140,651</td>
<td>134,626</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>274,143</td>
<td>254,787</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>517,992</td>
<td>24,161</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>144,182</td>
<td>128,280</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>422,168</td>
<td>1,808</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>479,148</td>
<td>419,210</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>456,113</td>
<td>27,656</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>183,998</td>
<td>173,606</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Source: www.census2011.co.in

Autonomy

In multinational states, autonomy has its merit in the recognition and protection of distinct identities. The “politics of difference” offers an alternative to the “politics of universalism” . It is where differentiated rights for distinct groups play a significant part in politics, as opposed to the
equalization of rights, status and entitlements that were widely accepted (Taylor, 1994). Politics of recognition holds that differences are to be recognized and cherished as one’s own uniqueness. These policies are often embedded into the legal-constitutional structure of the state to give minorities certain forms of legal autonomy and differentiated rights, in addition to recognition (Nielsen, 2013). Autonomy, in its territorial and non-territorial form is a political arrangement instrumental in the accommodation of cultural diversity and ethnic conflict resolution. Ghai (2008) defines autonomy as “a device to allow ethnic or other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them, while allowing the larger entity to exercise those powers which covers common interests”. According to Lapidotth (1997), “autonomy is a means for diffusion of powers in order to preserve the unity of the state while respecting the diversity of its population”. In any case, autonomy envisages a form of internal self-rule for minorities, especially in areas which are of special concern to them.

Multinational states have instituted different forms autonomy for its minorities; Quebecois in Canada, Catalonia in Spain, Saami in Finland and so on. In India, although tribes are bestowed with citizenship and enjoy civil, political and economic rights, their specificities necessitated the exploration of social, cultural and ecological dimensions of citizenship. In independent India, the need for inclusion led to the Fifth Schedule, which allows for tribal autonomy in parts of India except the Northeast. It also resulted in the Sixth Schedule which is the basis for the formation of Autonomous District Council’s for tribes in the Northeast (Oomen, 2014, p. 85). The Sixth Schedule, through the institution of Autonomous District Councils, provides wide ranging legislative, executive and judicial powers for tribes to manage their own affairs.

**Autonomous District Council’s (ADC) In Manipur**

From the time of Nehru, a recurring issue was as to how the tribes in India should be governed (Sharma, 2014, p. 6-8). Nehru’s policies were represented by Verrier Elwin, who sought to integrate tribes into the national state as distinct communities with the opportunity for political autonomy (Stuligross, 1999, p. 500-501). The Sixth Schedule has its origin in the North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee which is a sub-committee of the Constitution Drafting Committee. It was headed by A.V. Thakkar and Gopinath Bordoloi. The Committee travelled extensively all over the Northeast and met local leaders and concluded by recommending substantial autonomy at the district level in tribal areas. The Committee recommendations were incorporated into the Sixth Schedule on September 7, 1949. (Singh, 2008, p. 1101-1103; Stuligross, 1999, p. 501-503).

The Autonomous District Council in Manipur was established under the pattern of the Sixth Schedule. The unique history and nature of the hill areas of Manipur and its population necessitates the formation of a
common self-government institution in the hills. The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 established 6 Autonomous District Councils (hereafter ADC) in the hill districts and limited the strength of elected members to 18 (excluding a maximum of 3 nominated members) with a five year term. It lays down the rules for qualifications, staffing, criteria for membership and chairmanship, and procedures to be followed. The administrator is empowered by the Act to reduce or increase the area of existing autonomous district councils as well as to nominate and disqualify members. The Act also requires the Council to furnish a copy of the proceedings of council meetings to the Deputy Commissioner (hereafter DC). It also sets conditions under which the DC can prohibit the doing of any Act and supersede the Council. The Act grants some administrative and financial powers but no legislative and executive powers.

Elections were boycotted from the late 1980’s due to demand for more autonomy and no elections were held for a period of over 20 years. The Act was amended three times, in the year 1975, 2000 and 2008, with minor changes. The last two amendments were attempts to revive the ADC’s. From the year 2010, fresh elections were held in accordance with The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils (Third Amendment) Act, 2008. The new amendment does not do away with the basic structures of the original Act, but simply introduces minor changes of subtraction and addition. The membership was increased from 18 to 24. The Act does not provide reservation for women. The main power and functions as possessed by the ADCs under the 2008 amendment are briefly listed under.

**Executive Power**

The ADCs are entrusted to look after 25 items including government property, road, bridges, primary schools, medical dispensaries, markets and fairs, soil, water supply and sanitation, animal husbandry and veterinary, relief works, ferries, land use and transfer, non-reserve forest, cultivation, fisheries, co-operatives, sports and youth affairs, adult and non-formal education, horticulture and floriculture, rural housing and rural development, small scale industries, non-conventional energy sources, and library and cultural activities. In addition, the Governor, in consultation with the Hill Area Committee can entrust more items to the ADC.

**Legislative Power.**

The ADCs do not have any legislative power. However, they can recommend legislation to the Manipur Government on certain issues like appointment and succession of chiefs, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce and social customs of the tribes.

**Judicial Power.**

The Act grants no judicial power. The District Court decides on cases arising thereof (Section 17 and 18).

**Financial Power.**

The Act grants the right to levy taxes on professions, trades, callings and employments, taxes on animals, vehicles
(other than mechanically propelled vehicles) and boats, taxes on entry of goods into a market for sale there in and tolls on passengers and goods carried in ferries, taxes for the maintenance of schools, dispensatories or roads and any other tax falling under List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution which the Legislature of the Union territory of Manipur may, by law, empower the District Council to levy. The District Council can also fix and levy school fees and fees for the use of, or benefits derived from, any of the works done or services rendered for the dispensation of its duties regarding the list of administrative competence.

**The Paradox of Empowerment**

The Autonomous District Council in Manipur is not autonomous in the true sense of the term. It has no legislative and judicial power. It rather qualifies as a form of administrative devolution. Three main problems can be identified with the current institution of ADC. They are discussed below.

The Act grants no concrete legislative power. The ADC’s can only make recommendations to the government in the areas of appointment or succession of chiefs, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, and social customs. The legislative power rather rests on the state legislature. This legislative power is an important component for social change, development and autonomy. Inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, and social customs are crucial areas fundamental to bringing social and gender equity.

The ADC’s are made dependent on grant-in-aid from the state government. Therefore, ironically the state government becomes an important stakeholder in the functioning of the ADC’s. This goes against the very premise on which autonomy is sought to be built.

The ADCs do not have judicial powers to decide on cases. Due to legislative and judicial deficiencies, the tribal court decides cases in accordance with traditions and customs. The ADC’s thus failing to posit a way forward from tradition, which is sometimes non-egalitarian and suppressive, especially for women.

Despite the electoral mandate, the current institutionalization of ADC’s is seen by the people as developments that “…could seriously jeopardize the rights of the rights of the tribal people who would be at the mercy of deputy commissioner who had overwhelming power over the district council…” (Bhatia, 2010, p. 42). The ADC is empowered by the Act to have the final say in matters of bye-law, budget, recommendations, supersession’s of the ADC’s, and so on. It is well known how deputy commissioners could be transferred and posted around at the whims of the ruling government. Fears are allied to what the government would do to infringe on the little (if any) autonomy there is. The ADC’s are made dependent on the district administration and state government.

The utter failure of the limited arrangement led to a surge in demand for the extension of the Sixth Schedule to the hill areas. A series of popular demands in different forms have arisen right after The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act,
1971 came into force. The ADC’s themselves and the Hill Areas Committee (HAC), a platform for the 19 MLAs from the reserved constituencies, were the first to demand the extension of the Sixth Schedule. The members of the ADC’s were also active in the demand until they were dissolved in May, 1989. After this, the tribal student body, All Tribal Student Union Manipur (ATSUM), and the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee were instrumental in the demand for the same. (Kshetri, 2006, p. 22-25). The demand for Sixth Schedule garnered strength and elections were boycotted for more than 20 years, from the late 1980’s until the ADC’s were revived. Fresh elections were held in 2010 with much anticipation. However, the amendment of 2008 did not provide any substantial or structural changes. No degree of autonomy was added and the power of the ADC’s remained the same. Among other minor changes, the amendment simply increased the membership from 18 to 24 and added 9 items to the list of the ADC. The new functions that were inserted in the 2008 amendment are rural housing scheme, fisheries, adult & non formal education, non-conventional energy sources, cultural activities, sports and youth affairs, horticulture and floriculture, village and cottage industries, small scale industries and library (Riamei, 2016, p. 25).

The United Naga Council, spearheading the autonomy movements among the Naga people, is in talk with the Government of India (GoI) for an “Alternative Arrangement” covering the Naga inhabited areas. Among the Zo, due to ideological differences, the political goal came in two forms. The Zo armed groups under the aegis of the Kuki National Organization (KNO) demanded a separate Kuki state, “Zalengam” to be carved out of the present Manipur, covering all the Zo inhabited areas. The others under the umbrella of United People’s Front (UPF) demanded an “Autonomous Hill State” based on Article 244A. Both signed Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement and entered into political negotiation with the GoI and Government of Manipur (GoM) from 2008 (Haokip, 2015, p. 22-23; S. Haokip, 2016, p. 30-32; Ngaihte, 2013, p. 21; Zou, 2012).

The limited autonomy for tribes also has its bearing on tribal women. The ADC’s, which is supposed to be the modern democratic tribal self-government institution, is powerless to take on the issue of gender equity and social justice. When the Panchayati Raj Institution provides for 33% reservation of seats in its rural and urban institutions, the case of tribal women remains otherwise. With no reservation in place, the total woman elected to the revived ADC 2010 election comes to a mere three members.

The Case for Women Empowerment

Minority groups are recognized and given privileges to as a group. This does not take into account the huge disparities and inequalities that may have existed within the group. Moreover, in a group (say tribes in Manipur), membership is not voluntary and is mostly by virtue of speaking the same language, having the same customs and traditional practices, belonging to the same
ethnic group, and so on. In a multicultural polity, while seeking group recognition, it should be remembered that there are traditions where women are given lower ranks and statuses. Minority cultures are often non-liberal and patriarchal and hence women could end up victims within their own culture. The possibility is that group rights remain a bane for women if issues of intra-group social equity, empowerment and justice are left out.

In India, due to persisting patriarchy in varying degrees and forms, women have been constantly at a disadvantage, be it in the economic sphere or representation in politics. They are also victims of domestic, structural and symbolic violence. Subordination is also a result of customs and religion, which are rarely questioned due to the tight grip of patriarchal values and norms (Oomen, 2014, p. 159-190). The Northeast tribes, as egalitarian as they may seem, also keep a lower social status for women, which in the first place is evident from the societal locutions reserved for women. (Buongpui, 2013, pp. 74-75, Zehol, 2003, pp. 301-302) Apart from the patriarchal nature of the tribal society of Manipur, gendered roles, legal and societal norms, and customs limit public space for women as representatives and decision makers. At the same time they also limit women’s access to land ownership, status, property, marriage, divorce and inheritance, leaving them with little or no rights in these matters. As such, the lives of women gets reduced to “bearer of children” and are confined to the household (Haokip, 2014, p. 7). Political and religious spaces also remain a monopoly of men, in which entry of women are restricted by the tradition of gendered roles. In the case of tribal women in the Northeast, Buongpui (2013) argues that, “As political, social and cultural institutions are by and large controlled by men, gender inequalities and subordination of women continues to exist. In the name of preserving traditional customs and tribal identities, very often individual and gender choices get foreclosed and women are relegated to the lower status” (p.79).

Thus, the need for women empowerment needs to be given special attention even though tribal women may already possess group rights and privileges. The Oxford dictionary defines “empowerment” as “Authority or power given to someone to do something”. Empowering women would mean not only giving equal opportunity but also enabling them to access those opportunities.

**Conclusion**

Women’s “interests and identity themselves are formed within structural, political and cultural contexts” and has a clear connection with the state, the degree of autonomy and relation with other movements (Ray and Korteweg, 1999, p. 52-65). In the current scenario, in the absence of a genuine autonomous institution for the tribal people, women’s movement appears to a great extent to be subsumed under the larger group interest. Women have taken an indispensable role in civil society, both in times of conflict and peace. Tribal women’s organizations like Naga Mothers’ Association, Zeliangrong Women’s Union, Zomi Mothers’ Association, Kuki Women’s
Union, etc. are instrumental in campaigning for women and children’s rights. However, their role is not limited to the social issues alone. For instance, take the example of the infamous incident in Churachandpur district where nine people were killed and several people protesting against “the three bills” of the state government were wounded by the state police. The women’s group, All Tribal Women Union (ATWU), has been actively mobilizing the public for justice for the victims while putting pressure for autonomy for the tribal’s on the central government (Haokip, 2016, p. 41-42).

Territorial integrity has become a central political theme in Manipur, especially after the Indo-Naga ceasefire (Das, 2013, p. 28-29; Haokip, 2016, p. 39-40). It is a platform on which political parties are trying to garner support. Autonomy is the most probable solution if Manipur is adamant on maintaining its territorial integrity. However, autonomy in itself is seldom enough. The internal social relations and dynamics must also be taken into account. The current institutionalization of autonomy is insufficient for the needs of the tribes and blind to the needs of the women.

The argument for autonomy is not to say that Manipur is free from inter-ethnic conflicts. The current scenario is characterized by conflicting territorial claims in demands for autonomy and contesting identity among the tribes (Haokip, 2016, p. 33-10; Das, 2013, p. 27-31). It is not to over emphasize the merits of autonomy as a cure all solution. Notwithstanding the possible conflict inducing capacity of autonomy, Cornell (2002) opines that the success depends very much on “contextual requirements and conditions that will allow autonomy to be designed and implemented properly” (Ganguly, 2012, p. 156-159). Cooperation between governments, negotiated and consented arrangement, institutional structure and tradition of democracy, dispute settlement mechanism, a clear division of power, and an atmosphere of goodwill are factors likely to determine the outcome of autonomy (Ghai, 2000, p. 14-25; Lapidoth, 1997, p. 199-201). For autonomy to work in Manipur, it must empower not only tribes as a whole but women too. The consideration of these two exigencies in the institutionalization of ADC’s could substantially lead to the inclusion and empowerment of tribes in general and women in particular, in the democratic process. As of now, it can be concluded that in management of its diversities and representation of the modern against the tradition, genuine autonomy has not yet been given a trial in Manipur.

Notes
1. The government of Manipur recently created 7 new districts out of the existing districts on December 9, 2016 which brings the total to 16. This move has led to widespread protest from segments of tribal population because of the alleged lack of consultation. For the purpose of this paper, the districts will be taken as they were before the creation of the new districts.
2. “Zo” is used here to refer to the Chin-Kuki-Lushai tribes.
http://www.census2011.co.in/scheduled-tribes.php


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ommentary/manipur-and-its-demand-internal-autonomy.html


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Exclusion of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups: A Case Study of Maharashtra

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Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are the most backward and deprived among Scheduled Tribes. Even though certain development schemes were started for their upliftment, these groups are still lagging in education, health, infrastructure, connectivity, and other basic amenities as compared to Scheduled Tribes. The defining characteristic of PVTGs is that they reside in forest and hilly areas, their population is declining or stagnant, with low literacy rate, pre-agricultural technology and socio-economic backwardness (Annual Report, 2015-16). According to the Census 2001, the total population of Maharashtra is 112 million and the tribal population is 10.5 million, representing about 9.4% of the state, spread in around 15 districts of Maharashtra. As per the TRTI Bench Mark Survey (2001), there are 1783 villages in the Tribal Sub Plan areas of Maharashtra where the PVTGs reside. There are 45 tribal communities residing in Maharashtra, out of which there are three Particularly Vulnerable Tribes in Maharashtra; Madia Gond, Kolam and Katkari. These reside in the hilly and forest areas of Gadchiroli, Yavatamal, Chandrapur, Thane, and Raigad district respectively. In Maharashtra, it was found that the percentage of PVTGs as a proportion of the total Scheduled Tribal population had decreased, along with the literacy rate. According to the TRTI Bench Mark Survey (2001), 9.29 percent of the population were PVTGs in 1961, and by 1991 it had decreased to 5.92 percent. This paper intends to examine the utilization of government welfare schemes and programs for PVTGs in Maharashtra and infers that the impact of government welfare schemes and programs on the development of PVTGs is very low.

Keywords: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, exclusion, isolation, tribal development, social status.
which constituted around 8.2 percent of the country’s population. The total population of Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) among the Scheduled Tribes in India is 2.59 million. Out of these, their population is the highest in Orissa (7,30,309), followed by Maharashtra (4,08,668). In total, there are 75 PVTGs in 18 states and one union territory of India, out of which, maximum 13 PVTGs reside in Orissa, 12 reside in Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana), 9 in Bihar & Jharkhand, 7 in Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, and 3 in Maharashtra. The characteristics of these communities are that they reside in hilly and forest areas, have a low level of literacy rate, the traditional agriculture techniques are used and their population rate is declining or stagnant. The PVTGs have a high child mortality rate, high malnutrition especially in child and women due to hunger, starvation, lack of health facilities in their villages, low educational status, and a high drop-out ratio and low level of socio economic status. Most of the households own dilapidated and “kaccha” houses with a deficiency of drinking water. Their economy depends on forest and agriculture.

From many years the socio-economic condition of Scheduled Tribe is not improving and moreover there are some tribal communities among Schedule tribes which are socially and economically most backward. The concept of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) came in the fifth-five-year plan (1974-78). Later they were grouped into particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs). These groups were created by the Central Government for the development of the most backward Scheduled Tribes (poorest among poor). These groups were created based on their backwardness such as, Pre-Agriculture level of technology, Low levels of literacy and Stagnant or diminishing population.

There is a special agenda in the twelfth five-year plan for the development of Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs. The Ministry of Tribal Affair provided some guidelines for the development of PVTGs. Following are the objectives which can aid PVTGs in India. First, there is a need to pay Special attention to PVTGs with a small population, whose population is stagnant or declining. Second, the benchmark of development of each PVTGs is to be fixed and a time schedule is to be prepared for reaching the target. Third, avail the maximum benefits of other schemes of state/center and dovetailing support from various development plans. Fourth, focus on health, income generation, education and skill development, housing, road connectivity, providing land to landless, development of land and social security around the PVTGs area. Fifth, conservation cum development (CCD) plans to specify an in-built mechanism for monitoring the implementation of PVTGs fund at various level.

This paper focuses on PVTGs and their social exclusion in Maharashtra, the socio-economic status of PVTGs, and the
impact of government welfare schemes and programs on the development of PVTGs.

**PVTGs in Maharashtra**

Under the central government criteria of PVTGs, there are 75 particularly vulnerable tribes in India. Out of these 3 tribal communities of Maharashtra, namely, Katkari, Kolam and Madia Gond come under PVTGs. The PVTGs of Maharashtra resides in small villages near the forest or hilly area which comes under the Tribal Sub-Plan areas of Maharashtra.

**Katkari.**

This tribal community has been residing in Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Nasik, Pune and other districts. More than 75 percent of the Katkaris resides in small villages near the hilly and forest area of Thane and Raigad district (Socio-Economic Issues Facing Katakaris, 2014). The growth rate of population of these tribes has been decreasing. TRTI Bench Mark Survey (2001) mentioned that as per the Census 1991, the population of these communities in 1961 was 1,35,839 and this increased to 2,02,203 in 1991. More than 75% of the Katakaris reside in Thane and Raigad districts. These districts are closest to Mumbai which is the capital of Maharashtra and is also known as the economic capital of India. Katkari tribes are found to be most backward and deprived with a high illiteracy rate and low health status among all PVTGs in Maharashtra.

The culture of these tribes is like other tribes and Hindus, and they celebrate Holi, Pola, Pitra Amavasa. On the day of Holi festival, they drink alcohol (both men and women) along with singing and dancing. The Katkari consider the monkey their forefather, who helped Lord Rama to bring Sita from Ravan (Gare &Aphale, 1982). They believe in Rama and other Hindu Gods. These tribes are divided in two sub tribes, Dhor-Katkari and Son Katkari. Dhor-Katkaris considered to be more inferior as compared to Son-Katkari and other tribes.

**Madia Gond.**

This is the most backward and deprived among other sub-tribes of Gond. There are more than 50 Sub-tribes under the Gond Tribes. In the PVTGs criteria, only Madia Gond fulfills the requirement. Madia Gond reside in the hilly and forested areas of Bhamragad, Etapalli, Aheri, Chamorshi and Sironcha tehsils of Gadchiroli district. As per the Census 1991, the population of Madia Gond was 42,720 in 1961 and saw an increase to 83,437 in 1991 (Bench Mark Survey 1996-97, 2001). These tribes have low literacy rate, low health status and low-income sources. They also have high child mortality rate and high malnutrition as compared with other tribes in Maharashtra. Their economy depends on forest production and forest labor. They have small pieces of land but the agriculture production is less
due to lack of cultivation knowledge and new technology.

There are two sub tribes under the Madia Gond, big (Bada) Madia and small (Chhota) Madia. The Gond Tribes in Maharashtra are perceived to be in lower rung of the social hierarchy as compared with other communities (Singh, 2004). Madia tribes have their own culture, in their festivals and marriage ceremonies they sing songs and dance together, while only unmarried girls are involved to do the latter. Their traditional dance is Karma, Demsa and Dandari, which is famous in Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts. Hislop, a British officer has stated that, ‘Gond is little darker and below the average in their complexion than the generality of Hindus. They are a class of cultivators who are honest, cheerful, hardy and simple. The Madias are talented dancers and are cheerful and hospitable. They are always ready to work and not lazy cultivator like the Gonds. The Gonds have their own traditional panchayat and committees for the settlement of tribal disputes and offences. The members of the panchayat are selected by the general consent, the office is not hereditary’ (Gare & Aphale, 1982). Gotul-Ghar is an interesting and important part of the Maria Gond’s life. The Gotul-Ghar is the big house where youth and maidens live together with the permission of society. They live together for the selection of their life partner.

Kolam.

This is another tribe of Maharashtra which comes under PVTGs. Kolam speak their Kolami dialect which is more related to the Gond language. They speak Marathi outside and reside in Gondwana region, especially Chandrapur, Yavatmal and Nanded district of Maharashtra. As per the Census 1971, the total population of this tribe in Maharashtra is 56,061. Out of these, 49,775 reside in Yavatmal, 3,626 in Nanded and 2,556 in Chandrapur district. Kolam is not a sub-tribe of Gond yet there are good relations between Gonds and Kolam Tribes. The culture of Gond and Kolam tribes is related with each other. The surnames as well as Gods of both the tribes are found to be similar. Kolam takes water and food from Raj-Gond in daily life and festival and vice versa. However, at the time of birth and death, they do not accept food and water from each other. Kolam tribes are good at playing musical instruments, they perform as musicians in the villages of their area. According to Grierson, Kolam may relate to Nike Gonds of Chandrapur district because the head of Kolam village is known as Nik and other cultural festivals are also related with each other (Gare & Aphale, 1982). Traditionally their business is manufacturing of baskets, mats and other household products from bamboo strips. They sell these productions in the nearest market and villages as a means of livelihood.

PVTGs and Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is an inescapable aspect in India. There is discrimination
according to caste, class, race, ethnicity and religion. Tribal communities are also a part of Indian society but have received discriminatory treatment for ages (Singh, 1982). In these tribal communities, there is further discrimination. The Adivasi community in India is not the same everywhere, there is economic and social disparity across regions. They can further be classified into the rich, the middle, and the poor (Savyasaachi, 2012). In a similar vein, the PVTGs in Maharashtra have been socially and economically excluded by other tribes and communities. The Katkari communities are known as a backward class with low level of social status among tribes of their region (TRTI Bench Mark Survey, 2001). There is no “Roti-Beti Vyavhar” between Katkari and other communities. All superior tribes do not accept food and water from Katkari tribes, which is reflective of their socio-economic discrimination. Katkari tribes live near the (outside of) village in “Wadi” (Aphale, 1982). In the primary survey, it was found that 45 percent Katkari are discriminated by Non-Katakaris, 15.5 percent discriminated by employers, and 22.6 percent discriminated by government officers and Non-Katakaris (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2014). Some research studies show that the Adivasis are considered inferior to Katkari in their stronghold areas (Heredia & Srivastava, 1994; Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2014). Upper caste communities consider Katkari as a primitive and drunken society (Buckles & Khedekar, 2013; Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2014). These studies show the widespread discrimination of PVTGs in their areas.

Migration of PVTGs in Maharashtra

The concept of Migration is related with change in place for various purposes such as education, employment, marriage etc. As per census 2001, there is high-level internal migration in India with the highest migration in Maharashtra state (23.8 Lakh) followed by Delhi (17.6 Lakh). In Maharashtra, high-level seasonal migration among Schedules Caste and Scheduled Tribes can be traced, especially in PVTGs. They migrate in search of employment opportunities in other areas. Migration in Katkari tribes is much more elevated in comparison to that of Madia Gond and Kolam Tribes. It is found that PVTGs migrate mostly during the summer season, with the migration having a huge impact on their educational and health status. It is also noted that they are exploited by contractors’ due to illiteracy and innumeracy. To tackle such problems, it is necessary to provide proper employment along with proper health and educational facilities in their areas.
The various indicators of human development such as education, health, income and other factors for PVTGs are worse as compared to other communities. There is a huge developmental gap between these groups and general categories.

**Educational Status of PVTGs.**

Education is one of the prominent factor in human development. A highly educated society has the capacity to show a higher socio-economic development. For the educational development of Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs, states as well as central government began many schemes such as fellowship for scheduled tribe students, hostel for children, and Ashram schools for tribes. Maharashtra government is running residential Ashram schools in hilly and remote areas of the state, where scheduled tribes are most backward. It is found that the educational status of PVTGs is very low. Many people of these communities are not capable for counting numbers till 20 (Deshpande, 1981). As per Census 1991, the general literacy rate of Maharashtra is 64.87%, Scheduled Tribes literacy rate is 36.77% and Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) literacy rate is 25.02%. It is found that the literacy rate of PVTGs is extremely low as compared to the general literacy rate. Among all the other PVTGs, Katkari literacy rate is the lowest. The educational status of PVTGs women is the worst among all of the tribes - Katkari (10.79 %), Madia Gond (19.09 %), Kolam (27.83%) while the total literacy rate is 52.2% for women in Maharashtra. The literacy rate of Katkari improved to only 21% in 2009. The Katkari male and female literacy rate is found to be less than 40% and less than 18%, respectively in Maharashtra (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2014). As per Census 2011, the literacy rate of Bhamaragad tehsil of Gadchiroli district, where large number of Madia Gond reside is only 44.16%, whereas, the literacy rate of the district is 66.03 % and state literacy rate
is 82.34%. This shows that Madia Gond is lagging in education compared to other communities.

As per TRTI report, there are very few educational institutes working in PVTGs villages. Number of degree holders in this groups are less than one percent. As per this report out of 1,70,055 only 110 people hold a degree. Even though there are some colleges in the tribal sub plan areas of Maharashtra which are run by the government, they display no significant benefit. (Kulkami 1980). In Maharashtra, there 9% of the PVTGs villages have less than 1% literacy rate and 40% villages have more than 25% literacy rate. Bucklet and Khedekar’s (2013) primary research study on Katkari reported that there were only two hamlets in three Talukas having a primary school and only 11% Anganwadis were there in Katkari hamlet. The percentage of students who received higher education beyond 10th standard has not increased. The TISS study reports that out of 70 hamlets 59 did not have education up to 10th Std. This shows lack of educational facilities in Katkari villages as major reasons for their backwardness (Refer to Table-2).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. no.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>76.56</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>64.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>49.08</td>
<td>24.03</td>
<td>36.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PVTGs</td>
<td>31.97</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>25.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Katkari</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>10.79</td>
<td>16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>Madia Gond</td>
<td>30.19</td>
<td>16.09</td>
<td>23.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>Kolam</td>
<td>45.19</td>
<td>27.83</td>
<td>36.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ST= Schedule tribe, PVTGs= Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

Why is the Educational Status of PVTGs Low? There are only few Educational Institutes, Government Ashram Schools and Aided Ashram Schools working in PVTGs Villages. Major reasons behind inadequate economic and educational development of Schedule Tribes in tribal sub plan areas are improper infrastructural and educational facilities, lack of performance by Anganwadi workers, language barrier in educational institutes, lack of tribal teachers and migration along with food and residential problems in Ashram school. Due to all these issues, the number of enrolled students negligible in schools and colleges and the number of dropouts are more.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. no.</th>
<th>Educational Institutes</th>
<th>Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2014)</th>
<th>TRTI Bench Mark Survey (2001)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Katkari</td>
<td>Madia Gond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Balwadi/ANGANWADI</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>UP TO 4TH STD.</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>UP TO 7TH STD.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>UP TO 10TH STD.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>UP TO JUNIOR COLLEGE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Health Status of PVTGs.** Health is one of the major indicators of human development. It is the responsibility of the government to provide good health facilities for deprived and backward communities who are not capable for having a private health facility due to the lack of education and income sources. The health status of women and children in India, especially PVTGs and Scheduled Tribes is worse. It is found that the Child Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate, and Malnutrition are higher in these tribes in Maharashtra. SEARCH research study shows that neonatal mortality rate, neonatal Death, prenatal mortality rate is higher in Gadchiroli district where Madia tribes reside (Bang, Reddy & Deshmukh 2002). There are various schemes and programs for providing health facilities to Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs, especially children and women, but it is found that a very small percent of PVTGs have a health facility. There are only 28% villages which are having health facilities in Tribal Sub Plan areas of Maharashtra where a large population of PVTGs are resided. Only one-third (32%) women among the Scheduled Tribe can avail Institutional delivery, while two-third (66%) is availed by the rest. The Scheduled Tribes are unable to avail health facilities due to the non-availability of health centers near the tribal villages and lack of transportation (TISS, 2015).

*Why is the Health Status of PVTGs poor?* There are various causes for the weak and poor health status of PVTGs such as low-income level, low literacy rate, unclean water and open defecation, lack of transportation, communication and development facilities. Simultaneously some cultural causes are also responsible for their low health status. For example, such as Cow is socially banned in Madia Gond, hence they do not have milk or milk products. Madia Gond smoke Bidi and Chutta which
is made by hand (Singh 2004). The PVTGs suffer from water-borne diseases, nutritional deficiency and anemia, Malaria, TB, Leprosy, Pneumonia, Skin Diseases are also some common diseases that can be observed especially in children and women, due to unclean drinking water and lack of nutritional food. They are not able to have nutritional food due to banned hunting and forest production as per the Forest Act (1972). They thus have a low level of nutrition in their diet and sometime starve due to poverty and unemployment (Radhakrishna, 2009). There are 26.76 % villages and 29.76% hamlets which have insufficient drinking water in the Tribal Sub Plan areas of Maharashtra (TRTI, 2001). All these factors are responsible for the poor health status of PVTGs.

Table 4
Health Facility Available in Sub Plan Area of Maharashtra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. no</th>
<th>Sub Plan Area</th>
<th>No. of Villages included in the Bench Mark Survey</th>
<th>No. of Villages where any one type of health facility available</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T.S.P.</td>
<td>1473</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A.T.S.P.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M.A.D.A.</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mini M.A.D.A.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1743</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Source; TRTI, Bench Mark Survey 1996-97(2001)

Household Status of PVTGs. Food, clothing and shelter are primary amenities required by all. In India, there are many people who are living in dilapidated house. Many PVTGs in India are living in dilapidated huts or kaccha houses as shown in table 5.
Table 5
*Type of PVTGs houses in Maharashtra*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Type of Houses</th>
<th>No. of Household</th>
<th>% With Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hut (kaccha house)</td>
<td>11470</td>
<td>27.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hut with Manglore Tiles (kaccha house)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hut with Manglore Tiles</td>
<td>23556</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pacca House with Manglore Tiles</td>
<td>6006</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pacca House with Tin Sheets</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R.C.C</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42395</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Income Resources of PVTGs.**

Income sources of a family are very essential for good health and skilled education. Income sources can lead to inequality for instance. Those who have permanent and high-income sources will have higher stability in comparison to those who have low income. It is found that the PVTGs do not have high-level and permanent income sources, and they are mostly dependent on the agriculture and forest labor. Some tribes are found to sell Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) such as firewood, fruits, mahua, bamboo and some vegetables, but due to the reducing forest area and the Forest Act they are having problems (see table 6). There are very few PVTGs depending on the service sector and industrial sectors. From table 7 it can be observed that Katkari tribes have experienced an increase in land size (up to one hectare) from 47% to 70%, and a decrease in land size (up to 2 hectares) from 38% to 26% during the years 2001 to 2014.
Table 6
Subsidiary Occupations of PVTGs in Maharashtra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Type of occupation</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Katkari (%)</th>
<th>Madia Gond (%)</th>
<th>Kolam (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agriculture Labor</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>19.93</td>
<td>61.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agriculture Labor</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>78.33</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Forest labor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Small Scale Industry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 7
Agriculture Land Size among Katkari

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Up to 1 hectar</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Up to 2 hectares</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More than 2 hectares</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tribal Developmental Schemes and Programs for PVTGs and STs

As per the Indian Constitution, Government of India is responsible for the development of backward communities such as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. Central and state governments have started various departments for the fund allocation and implementation of government schemes and programs for the development of Scheduled Tribes, especially PVTGs.

Central Assistant Schemes for Tribal Development

Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-plan. This plan started in the form of 100 percent assistance by the government of India in 1977-78. Under this scheme, grants to Scheduled Tribes for the development of agriculture, horticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry, and co-operation are provided. The assistance of these are divided in a two-fold strategy of socio-economic
development and protection from exploitation through legal and administrative measures.

**Central Assistance under Article 275(1) of Constitution of India.** Under this scheme a hundred percent grant is being provided by the central government to the state government. Various skill and infrastructure development program were to be carried out in their areas to bridge the gap between schedule Tribes and other population.

**Central Assistance for Conservation-cum Development of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs).** This scheme was launched from 1998-99 for the development and empowerment of primitive tribal groups under the category of Scheduled Tribe. The PVTGs are small and have not attained any significant level of social and economic progress, generally inhabiting remote localities with poor infrastructure and administrative support. In India, 75 out of 573 such tribal groups in 18 states and one union territory has been identified and categorized as Primitive Tribal Groups.

**Schemes of Grant-In Aid to Voluntary Organizations Working for the Welfare of Scheduled Tribes.**

**Schemes for Economic Empowerment of PVTGs and STs.** There are many schemes and programs being implemented for the economic empowerment of these communities by the central and state government. According to the Twelfth Five Year Plan, more than one-fifth of the Scheduled Tribes were dependent upon the agriculture and forest sectors. Hence there were many schemes and programs started by various government departments such as National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), Market Development of Tribal Products, Grant-in-aid to State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations, and Vocational Training Center in Tribal Areas.

**State Government Schemes for Tribal Development.** Under the state government there are many schemes and programs which are being implemented for the development of Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs. The Integrated Tribal Development Project is generally in the contiguous areas of the size of tehsil or block in which more than 50% Scheduled Tribe population resides. Under the ITDP many schemes are implemented in Tribal sub plan areas such as the Nucleus Budget Scheme, Schemes of Economic Income, Employment Registration for Scheduled Tribes and other departmental schemes.

**New Schemes for the Primitive Tribes in Maharashtra (1979).** PVTGs in Maharashtra reside in forest area where huge natural resources are available. These natural resources can help them to gain employment opportunities, in turn contributing to their development. The government must recognize such opportunities and aid them by providing forest education and training departments around their locality.
The economic development of PVTGs, Tribal Research & Training Institute (TRTI) Pune, recommended that in the Tribal Sub-Plan area there should initiation of various schemes with the help of forest department, such as, Plantation of Trees in Owned Lands of Tribe’s, Housing the tribal family by forest department, Pig Rearing by Adivasis and Production center in straw covers making organization in tribal areas of thane district.

**PESA (1996) for PVTGs Development.** Article 244(1) which is explained in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution lays down responsibility of the governor of state for the development of Scheduled Tribes of their states for the protection and preservation of traditional culture of Schedule tribes. There were no special rights to panchayat about protection and preservation of their area, hence, Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) came in 1996 on the recommendation of Bhuria Committee Report in 1995 to provide rights to panchayat which can in turn provide rights to Gram Sabha. This act modified and extended part IX of the constitution to the scheduled V areas of nine states such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, and Rajasthan in India which is implementing PESA act (Deo, 2014). There are 59 Talukas in 13 districts of Maharashtra which come under Scheduled Areas, where Maharashtra government enacted rules and regulations of PESA in March 2014. This act mostly defines villages, Gram Sabha rules and responsibilities and power of the Gram Sabha. This act provided autonomous power to the Gram Sabha to protect and preserve their traditional culture and natural resources in their areas. Without consulting the Gram Sabha, no single person or institution can acquire natural resources from tribal areas such as land, wood, water and mines. Gram Sabha can recommend the name of beneficiaries for the benefit of government schemes.

**Forest Right Act (2007) for PVTGs Development.** The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act came in 2006 and thereafter, the Forest Right Act was enacted by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Central Government of India in 2007 which focused on the development of PVTGs and Scheduled Tribes. There were no security and legal rights to Scheduled Tribes who were totally dependent upon forest production and land. This act provided the right to have minor forest production and land for their livelihood. This act became more helpful in their economic empowerment.

**Impact of Government Schemes and Programs on PVTGs Development in Maharashtra**

**Government Schemes for PVTGs Development.** As PVTGs are primarily involved in agriculture and allied sectors there is a need for increase in development allocation. According to TRTI Bench Mark Survey (2001) it was found that mainly General Education (60%) and Nucleus Budget (55%) receive benefits while other sectors remain neglected. Only 8% of the PVTGs benefited from agriculture and allied sector schemes despite their importance. The irrigation, industries, labor welfare, and
Tribal Research & Training Institute (TRTI) did not receive any allocation. In the light of such a situation there is a need for appropriate targeting of economic activities in which the PVTGs are mainly involved so that development goals are achieved rapidly (Gare, 1980).

**Why PVTGs Are Low Benefited from Tribal Development Schemes?** There are several schemes and programs being implemented for the development of Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs but they have failed to reach their intended beneficiaries due to shortcomings in policy implementation. There are several problematic areas identified, inadequate infrastructure being one of the major problems in policy implementation. There is a need for transportation to reach the settlements of PVTGs villages. Apart from these many PVTGs do not have access to food security schemes, Antodaya schemes, Anganwadis, educational schemes and mid-day meal schemes due to their location. The tribes reside in forest and hilly areas, there are villages which are not connected with roads. Hence there is no transportation facilities in these areas. They have to walk into the forest without their being roads, cross rivers without bridges for the sake of receiving health and education facilities (Khera, 2008).

It is found that only 65% families get benefitted from the government scheme (TRTI Bench Mark Survey, 2001). In this study, the reasons for receiving no benefits were also identified. There are various causes for not being able to benefit by the schemes- 80% of the families were not aware of government schemes due to a lack of knowledge about schemes, 12% of the families could not comply with document requirements and 6 percent had other reasons. It shows that information dissemination among the tribal areas should be an inbuilt part of the policy implementation as shown in the table 9.
Table 8
Government Schemes Benefited PVTGs Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>No. of Families</th>
<th>PVTGs Total Benefited Families (%)</th>
<th>Katkari (%)</th>
<th>Madia Gond (%)</th>
<th>Kolam (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agriculture and allied services</td>
<td>2169</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>6717</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industries</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>16635</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Labor welfare</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tribal development. def, general schemes</td>
<td>4124</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nucleus Budget</td>
<td>15375</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T.R.T.I.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tribal development corporation</td>
<td>3694</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9  
*Household Benefited /None Benefited by Developmental Schemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Katkari (%)</th>
<th>Madia Gond (%)</th>
<th>Kolam (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Benefited family</td>
<td>27738</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-benefited families</td>
<td>14657</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for not benefiting

i) No knowledge about scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Katkari (%)</th>
<th>Madia Gond (%)</th>
<th>Kolam (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No knowledge about scheme</td>
<td>11960</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance of documents</td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathy of implementing officer</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapable of raising amount to qualify for availing loan</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defaultor</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay in receiving the scheme</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


_Problems of Economic Development of PVTGs._ Kulkarni (1980) stated that the current socio-economic status shows that the tribal development schemes and programs have not benefited tribal communities in Maharashtra. There is a need to start schemes on major and minor irrigation, dairy farming and other programs related to agriculture and education in the Tribal Sub Plan areas of Maharashtra. The economic development depends on health, education and income sources. But it is
found that the health and educational status of the PVTGs in Maharashtra are a reason for concern and they do not have any permanent income sources. Most of the Katkaris, Kolams and Madia Gonds depend on the forest production, forest labor, agriculture and agriculture labor. They have land but they have low agriculture production due to the lack of irrigation and new technologies. The Kolam tribes are mostly cultivators and land laborers but their traditional occupation is forest production. According to TRTI Bench Mark Survey 2001, most of the tribal people depend on the agricultural sector and only 40 percent Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups have ownership of land while 55 percent are agricultural laborers. Aggregate annual income of these groups is 7000 rupees but their income from traditional sectors is very low, and very few households are engaged in service and business sectors. They receive higher aggregate income compared to the agricultural and allied sectors. PVTGs do not have access to formal banking channels, and more than 50 percent Katkaris take loan from contractors or money lenders. They end up paying a higher interest rate as compared to bank & credit societies (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2014). Very few Katakaris, Kolams and Madia Gonds take loans from banks and credit societies due to lack of knowledge and the distance from their place. For the development of PVTGs there is a need to provide some facilities for getting loans from bank and credit societies.

Conclusion

It is seen that education, health, housing, and the income status of the Katkari, Madia Gond, and Kolam of Maharashtra is worse as compare to other. The Katkari tribes are the most deprived among Madia Gond and Kolam. The PVTGs have not benefitted much from the implementation of government welfare schemes and programs. Despite many initiatives these tribes have a low level of literacy rate, lower health status, lower housing and economic conditions and lack of basic amenities as compared to other Scheduled Tribes. It was found that there is high-level of seasonal migration in PVTGs, especially Katkari communities. There is a need to provide more job opportunities for them. It was also found that the PVTGs are exploited by other communities’ due to the low level of educational status, high innumeracy and lack of awareness of government welfare schemes and programs. Around 35 percent of the families did not receive any benefits of tribal development schemes and programs. Hence there is a need to introduce appropriate policy changes with efficient implementation. There is also a need to provide information about schemes and documentation proof so that people can come forward and avail benefits of government policies. Providing sufficient funds is the most important measure to be taken for proper and timely implementation of government schemes and programs.
References


Immigration and Border Politics: Seeing the ‘Other’ in Assam

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With the growing concern of the question of granting citizenship rights to a subset of the immigrants to the state of Assam, it becomes pertinent to dwell on the construction of such a category as the “illegal” among the Muslims from the state of Bangladesh, all the while contrasting their presence and existence with their Hindu counterparts. In such a charged scenario, this paper attempts to chart a trajectory of exclusion, the roots of which can be traced back in history to the negligent colonial policies of labor migration practiced in a labor-deficit state. The transformation in the post-independence phase, when the debate went beyond its economic underpinnings to acquire an ‘imposed’ political discourse forms the crux of this paper.

Keywords: immigration, border politics, citizenship, exclusion, statelessness

On the morning of 19th September 2016, several Muslims of suspected Bangladeshi origin were forcefully evicted from their houses in the Bandar Dubi, and Deosursang village of the Nagaon district in Assam. Denying them even the basic compensation necessary for resettlement and rehabilitation, the state government accused them of illegally encroaching upon the expanding area of the Kaziranga National Park. The eviction was carried out based on the judgment of the Gauhati High Court in the Kaziranga National Park vs. the Union of India and Others, 2015. In this judgment, the court opined that the residents had encroached upon protected land and thereby were to be removed from their place of residence in a timely manner. In the ensuing scuffle, both the national parties- the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) - that had promised to help their respective voter base were absent, and the Akhil Gogoi led Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) was powerless to prevent the death of two people, a sixteen-year-old girl and a twenty-five-year-old man.

The incident represented the completion of a full circle of the process of othering that has been going on in Assam since the signing of the Assam Accord of 1985 and the emergence of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) as the ruling party. Despite changes in the structure of the government over time, the top-down process of the construction of a forced “other” has continued unabated. Hussain (2006) states as to how the

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1To buttress the fact of a top-down approach being susceptible to manipulation by ideologically motivated forces, the judgment was based on a PIL filed by a BJP legislator Mrinal Satkia in 2012.
Kaziranga Park was declared as a national park only in 1974, and has witnessed eight additions of land since, leading to a rise in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the creation of a fear psychosis of minoritization among the Assamese elites. He attributes this to a loss in the traditional dwelling areas of immigrants, the chars or riverine beds that have seen massive erosion and landslides because of which, “… the people displaced due to river-bank erosion cannot go back to their land. Because, their land has become a part of river's new/extended bed” (Hussain, 2006, p. 179).

The resultant phenomenon of the fear of minoritization is most evident in Assam, an aspect that has been at the forefront of the policies of the post-2015 state government. In this respect, the questions of morality and border politics have been put on the backburner, allowing the politics of flawed and manipulative statistics to take the center stage. Juxtaposing the decline of any morally driven policy with that of the rise of a modern state exercising its sovereign right over the construction and preservation of the national or state interest is a debate that frames the broad contours of this work.

The structure of this paper is divided across three, overlapping though succeeding, sections. The first delineates the emergence of the politics of immigration in the period of British rule and as to how the core questions were chiefly of an economic criterion. This is directly intertwined with the emergence of the indigenous Assamese category through the politics of the Line System. The second part of the political twist deals with the entry of this debate in the political arena, which is argued to be a result of an imposition from above by the elites of the Assamese society rather than the end process of any mass mobilization from below. Here, the Assam Accord of 1985 is merely seen as existing in continuity instead of marking a radical point of departure in the illegal immigration discourse. The third section will look into the policies of immigration in Assam, where the idea of statelessness of the Muslim immigrants is seen as a direct result of state policies. The backdrop of this section will be the case for establishing an open or closed border solution to the illegal immigration discourse, specifically to deal with the porous India-Bangladesh border. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 too is analyzed here as a product of the continuous process of seeing the other, leading to a perpetuation of the status-quo mindset among the policy makers and more importantly, the general populace on whom these distorted lenses are experimented upon.

What and Whose Nationalism?

One of the most enduring problems of analyzing the emergence of Assamese sub-nationalism is the lack of an analytical starting ground to begin to tackle the issue. If we proceed along the lenses of indigeneity and attempt to construct a historical analysis around it as the central core, the applicability of so-called mainstream theories to understand the politics of the sons of the soil debate is somewhat inevitable. Anderson (1983) lays down one of the persistent frameworks of the idea of nationalism, by terming it as imagined because “… the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). While Anderson talked of his conception of nationalism in the context of
new world colonies, he borrowed from Gellner (1964) by terming it as an invention of the idea of the nation where no one existed. In the case of Assam, it is the aspect of ethnic nationalism that comes to the forefront, as the notion of an Assamese itself escapes any rigid categorization. By extending Anderson’s work, it is an imagined “other” in the sense of manipulation and misreading of statistical data to present a warped depiction of the inherently heterogeneous Assamese community. But what is this community of the Assamese? Here again, Anderson (1983) defines it as “… a deep, horizontal comradeship… fraternity that makes it possible… for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such imaginings” (p. 7). However, this willingness to die during the phase of the Assam Agitation was gradually transformed to a willingness to persecute the (imagined) Muslims from Bangladesh. Hussain (1993) talks of the imagination of the stereotypical Muslim that continues to haunt the Assamese middle class— that of a bearded, lungi and skull cap wearing miyah² and their willingness to classify anyone along these lines based on such preconceived notions.

Though Gupta (1997) differs from his starting point of differentiating the emergence of nationalism and nation-state in India from that of the West, he concurs with Anderson with respect to the “linguistic, nativist and regional” (Gupta, 1997, p. 230) basis for the idea of a community and a state. It is precisely this nativist strand that he picks up with respect to Assam, which falls under the second category of the “three great occasions in India’s short history after independence” (Gupta, 1997, p. 230). He sees the roots of the sons of the soil³ debate within this framework, where the natives began to push for greater representation in the economic considerations of the state. While Assam was yet undivided at this point⁴, the genesis of conflict was already sown in the linguistic movements in the state from the nineteenth century onwards.

In such nativist movements, the enemy always lies within the territorially defined boundaries of the state, with the role of the center/the state machinery assuming centrality, because “… nativist movements acknowledge that it is only through the machinery at the Centre that their grievances can be redressed… if the center at all becomes the enemy it is not a generic one, and the hostility shown towards it occurs on the rebound” (Gupta, 1997, p. 235). The alliance between the elites and the state is what forms the crux of this debate, as “Minoritizing, or ethicizing, politics is a tool which the center is resorting to increasingly” (Gupta, 1997, p. 239).

On his part, Weiner (1978) too be an extension of the debate of Assamese sub-nationalism imposed from above, as he notes the decay in the political institutions from the

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²The term is used in a colloquial sense to denote any Muslim based on their appearance by the factors noted above, though the roots of its origin lie in the usage of respect and humility. See the Urdu word ‘Miyan’ as reference to mister, one’s husband, or even God- Allah miyan.

³Though Gupta (1997) does not explicitly use this phrase, his overarching emphasis on the economic factors fall in line with the work of Weiner (1978; 1997) on ethnic conflict and migration in India.

⁴The states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram were cut off from the erstwhile state of Assam during the 1960s and 70s; post the Indo-China War of 1962. Prior to independence, there existed the Assam Province with its capital at Shillong, created by the colonial British in 1911 by partitioning the then existing Bengal Province.
eighties and the nineties of the twentieth century in India, due to rising altercations of an ethnic and minority characteristic. He talks of an “Indianization of minorities” (Weiner, 1978) that is prevalent in the mainstream consciousness, predominantly a Hindu way of living in terms of holidays, historical past, heroes, events and an attachment to the soil of India.

Weiner (1978), does not see the construction of other as a unique phenomenon; rather, he attributes the numerical minority of the Assamese in Guahati and along the river Brahmaputra (where the immigrants from Bangladesh were settled post the Line Boundary Agreement of 1916) as invariably leading to increasing movements of a nativist kind. An extremely useful insight though emerges in his work, that of a minority being “… defined as a category by the observed rather than the observers” (Weiner, 1991, p. 243). This self-definition by the community itself is methodologically paradoxical, as it leaves the door open for social negotiations in the future, wherein any community can claim to be a minority on its own terms and with reference to a multitude of vantage points. Assam, on the other hand, succeeded in avoiding this trap as the idea of the other was constructed with reference to the notion of the Assamese, though that very notion itself is open to contestation⁵. Thus, the debate on nationalism and ethnic minoritization in Assam presents a deeper problem that what Weiner would have envisaged.

Hussain (2016) presents an interesting point of departure here of seeing this fluid identity of the Assamese as a nationality rather than as an ethnic identity. Assamese nationalism is multi-racial, though the common denominator is the Assamese language. He also points out two inherent flaws in this construction. First, the immigrants too have picked up a degree of fluidity in speaking the Assamese language and the script over time. And secondly, the claim of the Bodo community as the original inhabitants of the region of Assam is also negated as the race is itself of Tibetan origin.

Kaviraj (2010) in his historical analysis of the emergence of the idea of nationalism in the Indian subcontinent, puts in place a similar picture to Hussain (1993; 2016) in terms of the regional linguistic identities being subsumed under the framework of national identities as a “second order” (Kaviraj, 2010, p. 326). This led to the collapse of the state apparatus in the post-independence period, when these internal contradictions of multiple linguistic identities started to pile up. This multiplicity of claimants to garner economic benefits to meet their own narrow community goals led to the “resurgence of new forms of Indian nationalism” (Kaviraj, 2010, p. 330). In Assam, the post Accord phase saw this very phenomenon occur, when the newly formed AGP was given a mandate for two entire terms to carry out its political agenda of implementing the workings of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act of 1983.

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⁵Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the then AGP chief, defined the idea of the Assamese thus- “All tribes and nationalities and Indian citizens who are permanent residents of Assam within the geographical boundaries of the State, whose mother tongue is either Assamese or any of the indigenous tribal languages and have been engaging themselves in the development and progress of the State and have become stakeholders in the promotion of Assamese language, literature or tribal languages, literature and culture will be considered Assamese”.

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Beyond Labor: The ‘Political’ Starts to rear its head

The signing of the Assam Accord on 15th August 1985 was a historic moment marking a formal agreement between the leaders of the movement and the Government of India headed by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The agreement was a result of a concerted struggle by the leaders of the movement against the perceived rising number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

As the Memorandum of Settlement states 1st January 1966 as the cut of date for detecting and removing foreigners and allowed citizenship for all person coming to Assam from specified territory. It further stated that all persons who came to Assam before 1st January 1966 are inclusive and up to 24th March 1971 shall be given notice and who came on or after 25th March shall be detected, deleted ad expelled in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1939. All the foreigners detected will get their names deleted from the Electoral Rolls. Such persons will be required to register themselves before the Registration Officers of the respective districts in accordance with the provisions of the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 and the Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1939.

One of the core issues of the struggle was a revision of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), 1951. This was pushed as a mode to weed out the immigrants who had entered the country post 1966. However, what the signatories failed to note was that basis of the NRC Data was the 1951 Census of India, that contained an inherent criticism regarding the very process in which it was carried out. One of the foremost criticisms flowed from the policy of collecting information from village officials through ill trained enumerators. The most glaring drawback was the categorization of individuals according to household that left the fray completely open to misrepresentation or even underrepresentation of all the members of a particular household (Das, 2015).

To complicate the situation further, the personal biases of the tabulation officers also crept into the succeeding NRC as well. Roy Choudhary (1981) notes as to how the names and places of birth of 558,833 people were recorded as East Bengal in the Census, paving the way for their inclusion in the NRC Data subsequently. An interesting point of analysis is given by Kar (2013) in terms of how statistics are manipulated by those at the apex of the power-knowledge nexus for narrow electoral gains. Kar gives the figures for the rise in the Muslim population in the Brahmaputra valley from 1911 to 1931; with the over-reliance on manipulated numbers continuing in the post-independence scenario as well. Upon the release of the data of the NRC, the AASU was quick to put forth these (discrepant) data in the public domain, moving away from a fight against the general

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6The official signatories of the agreement were the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU), the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), the Central and the State Governments. The AASU itself was a constituent of a larger conglomerate of the AAGSP, the Assam Sahitya Sabha, the Jatayubadi Dal, the Young Lawyers’ Forum and other similar institutions.

7For details, see nrcassam.nic.in/what-nrc.html.

8 He points out that the numbers were 365,540 in 1911, rising to 594,981 in 1921 and to 953,299 in 1931. These numbers denote a rise in their overall percentage in the total population too, from 9% (1921), to 19% (1931) and to 23% (1941).
problem of illegal immigration, towards on focused on targeting merely the Muslim ‘other’ among the Bangladeshi immigrants.

A precursor to this agitation lay in the passage of the Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunals Act (IMDT) of 1983, which faced criticism from several quarters regarding the process of identification of illegal immigrants. Unlike the existing Foreigner’s Act of 1946, the IMDT Act shifted the burden of proving one’s citizenship status to the hands of the accuser rather than the accused. In a move that reflected the political pressure that went into the framing of the Act, it was struck down later by the Supreme Court in 2005 based on a petition filed by the then leader of the AGP itself, the incumbent Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Sarabananda Sonowal. This radical turn in its tactics shows in no uncertain terms the complete failure in the detection and deportation of a subset of the total illegal immigrants to the state. Roy and Singh (2009) see this terrain as a pitched battle on two fronts, both within the state itself as well as between differing interpretations of the state and the Centre.

As pertains to the manipulation of statistics itself, Agrawal and Kumar (2016) have come up with an insight into the flipside of the issue, that of the pitfalls of under-reporting data, perhaps hinting at the inevitability of manipulation itself. Borrowing from the works of Janus (2013), the authors contend that the process of misreporting by either party is a natural occurrence in a political backdrop; failure to do so placing them on the receiving end of the scale.

As they state, “A community is worse off if it does not over-report its population while others do. There are two reasons for this. First, it unfairly loses share in public expenditure on development and electoral seats that are distributed based on population. Second, the chances of fresh census are bleak when all others have over-reported their headcounts because the majority would prefer the new status quo. However, over-reporting population is costly because officials have to be bribed or forced to manipulate records. Moreover, there is a threat of subsequent detection and punishment by state authorities and more than that a threat of conflict with communities that are denied their fair share due to manipulation. The latter is reflected in the large number of objections to census-linked delimitation of electoral constituencies filed in courts. When all communities over-report their headcounts, each incurs the cost of manipulation to maintain its population share […] they still risk detection by state authorities and conflict with rival communities” (Agarwal & Kumar, 2016, p. 6).

This bypassing of existing legal frameworks as in the case of the Foreigner’s Act of 1946 was not a one-off too. The Nehru-Liaqat Agreement of 1950 was also shown the door by the IMDT Act. This agreement gave the people already driven out the legal right to return to their earlier place of occupation in order to dispose of their property in a proper manner, as shown by Boruah (1980). To go with this, the Gauhati High Court, in its 1971 judgment, has also struck down the status of NRC as evidence in a court of law.

But what about the political economy of labor that framed the background of agitations in the post-independence period?

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Bhattacharyya (2001) puts the figures at fifteen lakh Bangladeshi immigrants (both Hindus and Muslims) in Assam in 2001, with the total immigration population being forty lakhs, as per the 2001 Census.
Kar (2013) and Upadhyay (2005) construct a historical process of migration in Assam because of the paucity of manual labor in the state, together with the existence of a rich and conducive climate for agriculture. For them, the Line System of 1920\(^{10}\) presents a critical point of study. They argue that it is but a continuation of the process of Black Migration\(^{11}\) in Assam from the nineteenth century onwards. Kar (2013) sees it as a product of the migration policies followed by the British colonial state. Das (2016) delves into this phenomenon in detail, showing the emergence of one of the first systems of formal contract law in the form of the Workmen’s Breach of Contract Act 1859, a product of an unholy alliance between the British government and the exploitative planters. It allowed the planters a free hand in formulating welfare measure for the laborer, in terms of punitive action for missing work and setting up a bare minimum wage standard.

Even though slavery was abolished in British colonies in 1834, this new system, for Das (2016), represents “a veiled system of indentured\(^{12}\) labor”. Under this, the laborer was on a contract for a fixed tenure, usually of a period around four to five years, after which they were free to return, a sharp deviation from the lifetime of commitments without the recourse to any formal law under slavery. Due to the near impossibility of travelling back long distances to return home, together with the guarantee of at least a basic minimum wage under the 1859 Act kept the laborer entwined in the vicious circle of debt throughout their lives.

However, the idea of the eminent domain of the state starts to rear its head in a more concrete manner only in the beginning of the twentieth century, in the concrete field of land reforms. In the context of the Line System, the steady influx of immigrants from Bangladesh\(^{13}\) did not pose a concern to the general masses of society, as they were too disorganized and feeble. Also, the ryoṭ sabhas\(^{14}\) were themselves opposed to any demarcation of lands for natives and outsiders, because these very laborers fed into their constant need for agricultural labor. The colonial state in this regard took upon itself the prerogative of setting out well-defined territories for particular communities, an extension of the inherent Weberian logic, as well as the mantle of the state as the eminent domain. This process of state-led land allocation continued to influence the lives of the people of the state post-independence too.

\(^{10}\)Started in 1920, the British demarcated three distinct categories of land to aid the process of settlement of the laborer- firstly, those areas where the immigrants could not settle, secondly, those areas the immigrants could settle, and most importantly, the third area[s] where a line was to be drawn to settle the natives and the immigrants on either side respectively, with little chance of cross-border porosity.

\(^{11}\)This refers to the influx of Adivasi migrant laborer from the now-existing states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, to work in the tea gardens of Assam. They majorly settled in the areas known as chars- the upland regions of the river Brahmaputra.

\(^{12}\)Indentured migration refers to economically induced migration, together with coercive contractual obligations.

\(^{13}\)Note that in the pre-NRC days, the question of ‘illegality’ of immigration in Assam did not find reference in any legal document as such. This was because of two main factors- legality being defined only by a Weberian model of a modern state as having the “…monopoly… within a given territory” (Weber, 1919) and its absence in India, together with the process being a top-down imposition rather than a bottom-up assertion by the masses. For a detailed exposition on the same, see Das (2015).

\(^{14}\)Agglomerations of peasant groups in colonial Assam, that served as the decision-making units at the grass root levels.
In fact, the state did not limit its role to the economic dimensions that characterized it starting point in the case of Assam, but continued to feed purely the interests of the elites of the society, culminating in the conclusion of the Assam Accord of 1985.

Open And/or Closed Border Systems

What about the aspect of taking a more humanitarian stand and debating on the issue of having closed or open borders, to hinder and aid the free flow of immigrants respectively? Arendt’s (1962) notion of the right to have rights could perhaps be a good position to articulate from. Her notion flows from her personal experiences of the horrors of the two World Wars and the failure of any international organizations or treaties to address the conditions of the statelessness that emerged among those forcibly ejected from national territories.Taken together with Benhabib’s reading of Kant into Arendt in terms of the moral worth of every human being as “… transcending all cultural, linguistic and religious affiliations and distinctions that distinguish us from each other” (Benhabib, 2004, p. 58). She traces this cosmopolitan right in the form of a dual argument- a form of a sovereign privilege for Kant and a universal human right for Arendt. However, she argues that since Kant’s categorical imperative is sourced from an act of beneficence of the part of the sovereign, it cannot be applicable on a universal basis, which is precisely the point of introduction of Arendt’s (pessimistic) idea of a world government to ensure notions of “… justice and equality for all15” (Benhabib, 2004, p. 61) irrespective of national borders.

At the very outset, the question of open versus closed borders entails a moral and an ethical dilemma, since the state is the sole authority within its defined territorial presence, an aspect that is dealt with in no uncertain terms as flowing from a Weberian16 notion of the nation-state. Modern scholars like Rawls (1993), Walzer (1983) and Macedo (2007) begin with this assumption as a given concept, thereby arriving at a more direct but rather simplistic understanding on the issue of national borders. On the other hand, in the context of diminishing importance given to the traditional Westphalian model of the state as the sole reservoir of rights, Carens (1995) and Benhabib (2004) seek to take a more nuanced position given this aspect of preponderant state sovereignty and seek to extend it to a dimension beyond mere state control over (its own) territory and citizens. Perhaps the way out of this dilemma consists in taking Bosniak’s (2006) argument on citizenship as the starting point- as it being “… hard on the outside and soft on the inside” (p.4).

Together with van Schendel’s (2002) idea of non-contiguous geographical ‘enclaves’, this vantage point allows a scholar the legroom necessary for analyzing the apparent malleability and permeability of national borders, thereby bringing into the

15 Emphasis added by the author.

16 For Weber (1919), the state is the “... human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”. The correlation of monopoly and legitimacy within a geographical territory is what frames the backdrop of this debate. As an extension, Arendt (1962) details the aftermath of the wars in terms of its humanitarian impact thus- “What is unprecedented is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one. Suddenly, there was no place on earth where migrants could go without the severest restrictions, no country where they would be assimilated, no territory where they could have found a new community of their own” (Arendt, 1962, p. 293).
debate Arendt’s conceptualization of the “right to have rights”, where humanity itself rather than a bounded nation-state is seen as the guarantor of (human) rights as discussed above in brief detail.

But what about a (hypothetical) situation where the defined boundaries of the state pale in the face of questions of immigration that are framed in the context of claims of citizenship? Walzer (1983) seeks to negate this starting point by arguing that membership in a political community itself is the primary good, as borrowed from a Rawlsian Original Position standpoint, where the members choose those principles of justice that work towards the benefit of the least well off of that very society itself. Thus, for both of them as well as for Macedo (2007), questions of distributive justice are addressed only within and inside this bounded space.

Walzer (1983) makes a fundamental distinction of naturalization acting merely as a guarantor of employment rather than invoking questions of rights per se. This differentiation is also to be found in Macedo’s work on US Immigration Policies post the 1960s, though dealt with only in an indirect manner. Macedo (2007) advocates the adoption of a civic rather than a cosmopolitan idea of justice, as the concern for him lies in addressing relative instead of absolute poverty levels of the Americans themselves, given that those citizens at the bottom of the pile would be worse off if immigrants from outside were to enter (gaining citizenship notwithstanding) and invariably take up the low-wage jobs at even lower incomes.

While Walzer likens the sovereign right of a state to include and exclude to that of a club17, Carens (1995) talks of the redundancy of non-granting of citizenship to immigrants even within a territorial nation-state. Thus, Carens seeks to go beyond the distinction of citizens and residents (and citizenship and nationality consequently) in Brubaker (1992). For him, even the theoretical underpinnings of three vastly contrasting approaches—libertarianism of Robert Nozick, liberal individualism of Rawls and Utilitarianism of Bentham and others—would put forth a case for open rather than closed borders, as “… each [of them] treats the [moral worth of the] individual as prior to the community” (Carens, 1995, p. 252). From a Nozickian view, the state has no right of interference between two individuals in their private dealings, an aspect that extends to any contract between private citizens and non-citizens are alike. From the Rawlsian vantage point, the applicability of the Difference Principle can be enlarged to include immigrants inside this category as well, thereby pushing a case for a borderless idea. However, this collapses the idea of an entity called the nation-state itself, an aspect that does not receive due attention from Carens and which takes us back to Arendt’s (1962) environment of the nation presiding over the state.

As regards utilitarianism, Carens argues that if the overarching principle is merely one of maximizing pleasure over pain, the very act of immigrants being able to secure any social and economic security benefits that they would not have been able to attain elsewhere, is another case for going beyond the idea of a territorially conjoined citizenship. This once again lead us to an idea that comes from Rawls, as the fundamental assumption of the Original Position is to do away with those “… natural contingencies that are arbitrary from a moral point of view” (Carens, 1995, p. 261). Taking Walzer’s argument that immigrants once admitted based on the sole prerogative of the sovereign state must be also entitled to receive the varied benefits of citizenship, Carens points out this notion constitutes a dilemma of justice rather than mere aid, the latter being permissible for a nation-state

17In contrast to neighborhoods which lack an enduring moral and political culture necessary to sustain the ‘shared culture’ of a larger political community, and families that are merely the moral life of a political community and therefore do not go beyond simplistic ethnic ties.
to undertake according to Walzer. Also, the idea of formal closure is again questioned when we talk of membership in unregulated cities rather than neighborhoods (Carens, 1995, p. 266).

Borders in South Asia and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Van Schendel (2007) further puts forward the assumed reality of defined borders with the reality of the existence of enclaves in South Asia, along with the outliers of erstwhile Soviet Union and Western Europe. In enclaves, citizenship questions fade to the background and issues of lived experiences emerge. Here, the historical tensions between nation-states make life a precarious existence. To counter this in the context of the porous India-Pakistan and the India-Bangladesh borders, the nation-states came up with a two-step process—“first to regulate the right of passage and then to eliminate the problem by exchanging the enclaves” (Schendel, 2007, p. 123).

The introduction of passport and visa controls by India and Pakistan in 1952 further complicated the entire process for the residents of these enclaves, as they could not get access to any legal documentation without physically bypassing the territorial limits of their respective states, leading to the emergence of trans territorial identities in the light of the weak and intermittent presence of these newly emerged states. The emergence of enclave identities did not fit in with any existing definitions of citizens, as this had both a negative and positive articulation. As pertains to the former, their identities were framed due to constant betrayal and exclusion by the state powers; and on a positive flipside, they also referred to ideas of a shared identity and culture as their defining characteristics. This positive aspect of a shared culture is used by both Walzer (1983) and Macedo (2007) as being one of the core constituents of membership within the same community, as they argue that disruption of the same through extension to non-members would have catastrophic consequences on the general life of the community due to declining trust relationships.

As Van Schendel (2007) puts it succinctly, “But here along the lines of the enclaves we have encountered forms of identity that straddle, obfuscate, and deny national identities and cut across the bipolar historiographical constructions. Such crosscutting identities—which highlight the arbitrariness and violence of discourses of nationhood, citizenship and sovereignty, may not be restricted to un-administered enclaves.” (p. 144)

Sadiq (2009) talks of the “networks of complicity” (p. 57) that characterize these border areas, in sharp contrast to the statist project of making only the citizens visible from above. He articulates the ingenuity of a bottom-up approach, where the (illegal) immigrants acquire fake documentary evidence to make the state aware of their existence post their entry into a nation-state. As these networks expand, initially on lines of ethnicity, family and kinship ties, and later with the congruence of state officials and agents, they lead to a blurring of lines between a citizen and a non-citizen. In such a scenario, the lines of borders and membership within them granted by a nation-state become irrelevant, though the urge and necessity to exist as a citizen becomes predominant. This causes both an inward and outward pull on the questions of citizenship itself, simultaneously bypassing the related border question in order to only arrive at that very juncture in the first place. The roles of the
state authorities are thus transformed (and collapsed) in the process. Those officials in charge of regulating the exclusionary process themselves become embroiled in a veiled process of manipulated inclusion. As Sadiq aptly puts it, “… [in a situation where] illegal immigrants have become a political force\(^\text{18}\), state complicity has become pervasive—paving the path to citizenship” (p. 64).

What is the point of the statist act of granting citizenship to only the members within its territory then? Does it go beyond a mere just allocation of resources, material, social and otherwise? If so, then the process of receiving them are contingent on one being able to provide the necessary documents to avail of the same. This brings us to perhaps the most important category of “undocumented natives” (Sadiq, 2009). An analysis of their plight, whether willing or unwilling and deemed to be unnecessary, reveals the continued relevance of citizenship rights in today’s world.

The debate on the legitimacy of the Constitutional Amendment aside, the question that arises is again one of one the face political manipulation from the incumbent right-wing governments, both at the center and the state of Assam. As the language of the bill introduced in the Lok Sabha to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 states,

“If persons belonging to minority communities, namely, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who have been exempted by the Central Government by or under clause (c) of sub-section (2) of section 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 or from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 or any order made there under, shall not be treated as illegal migrants for the purposes of this Act” (p. 2).

By implicit analysis, it becomes clearly evident that the only significant category to be excluded from the ambit of the Bill is that of the Muslim from the above-mentioned three states. Such explicit actions by the political elites of the society returns us to the beginning of the debate and around which this work is structured around— the restructuring of the society along the political whims of those in control of the statist decision-making apparatus. A recent survey carried out by the Economic Times found overwhelming opposition to this act by the government, where people opposed illegal immigration as a separate category, distinct from its underlying religious connotations. The process was notable for the complete reversal of the political consciousness of the masses from the time of the introduction of the Line System in 1926. Here, the debate saw a paradigm shift from one that welcomed immigration into the state, to one that by and large opposed the same. The only constant in the entirety of the transformation is that the aspect of the religious existed solely in the backdrop, and it is only with the entry of the elites in the political arena that solely this aspect is concentrated on by bringing it to the foreground.

**Conclusion**

Perhaps the only definite conclusion that we may arrive at regarding borders, immigration and citizenship is that it is historically contingent on the emergence of

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\(^{18}\) About the emergence of vote banks among the illegal immigrants, that cut across political considerations.
the nation-state itself, as Brubaker (1992) talks in the context of a civic and an ethnic notion of citizenship that emerged in France and German respectively. The pessimism of Arendt (1962) and Benhabib (2004) in terms of the formation of any international human rights regime/system to grant the basic human right that one possesses by being a human being seems the best bet to take away from this interrogation. Macedo (2007) also rightly points out the fact that if a country were to adopt a cosmopolitan notion of justice, it would necessitate keeping borders open and free, which in turn would lead to the worsening of the already deprived within the state’s territory, towards whom they have a special moral obligation that does not arise in the context of non-citizens. This dilemma can only be resolved through keeping regulated (and by extension, fenced) borders, all the while practicing principles of fair dealing and non-exploitation, having special obligations to redress and rectify historical oppression of other countries, and to have a sense of general humanitarian duty “… to respond to gross and systemic violations of human rights” (Macedo, 2007, p.76). Any attempt to delineate the complex web of interrelations between citizenship, territory and immigration would need to keep the ground realities of sovereign states as the backdrop, without which the project will be either a limited success or a total failure.

Immigration, at the end of it all, remains a political project having an ethical and moral undertone. Unless the state becomes a facilitator of the voices of the oppressed rather than reducing them to Sadiq’s (2009) description of pawns in the larger electoral vote-bank politics, the debate on immigration will continue to remain one grounded on charged religious sentiments, showing the inescapability of escaping the statist processes

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The Maoist insurgency has been an epidemic haunting the conflict Tata Institute of Social Sciences zones of India for about five decades causing huge number of causalities annually from both sides. The Naxalites control territory throughout the states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh. Claiming to fight for the improved land rights of the neglected agricultural labourers and the poor they follow a strategy of rural rebellion similar to a protracted people’s war against the government. It has thus become imperative for the government to inculcate the dual needs of developing these areas and providing peace in the affected area. The government in an attempt to do so announced the Surrender and Rehabilitation policy for the Left wing extremists under which provisions were made to oversee peaceful surrender and rehabilitation programmes for the Maoists by providing them with incentives such as monetary benefits, land, housing, vocational training etc. Thereby tempting them to surrender arms and lead a dignified life.

The statistics after the implementation of the Rehabilitation Policy boast of an increase in the number of surrendered and rehabilitated which was in stark contrast to what was actually happening in reality. The state failed to provide the surrendered with any means of sustainable livelihood or opportunity to do the same. They remain stigmatized from the society which views them as “terrorists”. They lead a life in extreme poverty and constant fear of being captured by the Maoists.

*Keywords:* Maoist, Surrender and Rehabilitation, Gadchiroli, Conflict
“If I will work again for the police then Maoist will kill me, risking my life as well as of my family. So I thought it was better to maintain a distance from the police and Maoist. I know the police department is tracking us, but I am helpless. Recently for the Lok Sabha elections the police kept us in a police van in front of the polling booth to watch Maoist. Police never understood our problems; they always used our people. They do not know how the risk and fears that we face. This is the situation we are facing here after the surrendering.”

-Rakesh, age 32, surrendered in 2010.¹

Low intensive armed conflict between Maoist insurgents and the Indian state force has been unfolding for over more than five decades in the conflict zones of India. This struggle has now reached an advanced stage after the Naxalbari phase which started as a social movement but has metamorphosed into a revolutionary movement haunting India since 1980s. These insurgent groups, called the “Maoist insurgents”, “Naxals” or “Left wing extremists”, got their name from the Naxalbari village²,

¹ Names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants of the study.

² Naxalbari village falls under Siliguri sub division of the Darjeeling district, location is strategic, northern tip of the state has only a slender and vulnerable connection with the rest of India, through the Naxalbari neck. The neck is sandwich between Nepal on the west, and East Pakistan on the east. Between Naxalbari and Nepal flows the Mechi River, which in winter can be crossed on foot. The strategic passion of the Naxalbari coupled with the Darjeeling district in West Bengal, where the movement’s first spark burnt in May 1967 in response to a variety of socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions. The location factors, which had impacts in West Bengal and undivided Andhra Pradesh, as well as many other parts of Indian states, included the land tenure system, failure of land reform legislation as well as failure of the government agriculture policy (Banerjee, 1980; Dasgupta, 1974; Routledge, 1997). The Expert committee appointed by the Planning Commission, Government of India (2008) highlighted inequalities accompanying India’s growth as one of the main causes of the conflict. The report also underlined that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few was indicative of a large alienated mass of rural population who felt disconnected and agitated with the Indian polity and governance structures. Theoretically it aimed at the implementation of an agrarian, peasant based guerilla struggle in rural areas with the specific intention of destroying the existing power structures in India.

Maoism is a radical ideology drawing from the political ideas of Mao and classical Marxism to charge the political campaign to address critical social economic issues and respond prevailing agrarian problems, which has been carefully, and systematically capitalized by the Maoist ideologues in the CPI (M) in that area, it helped peasants to launched violent agitation against the state.
to the failures of India’s development strategies. Naxalbari spark provided the opportunity for Charu Mazumdar to put his theories on armed struggle into practice. Their programs and activities were based on the ideas of Mao-Ze-Dong, broadly translated by Mazumdar, citing its fundamentals as the “the physical annihilation of class enemies”. They argued against the participation in parliamentary democracy and against mass organization in favor of armed struggle (Dasgupta, 1974; Harriss, 2011). “Naxalbari” as the first testing ground of the theory of area wise seizure of political power, also described as a “struggle not for land or crops but for the seizure of political power” (Rabindra, 1988; Singh, 1995). Since the death of Charu Mazumdar in July 1972, the Maoist movement has witnessed innumerable splits and mergers. Soon the Naxalbari movement became an epidemic in India.

Presently, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Maoist movement has spread to 223 districts in India which comes under the surveillance of around 2000 police stations across the country. As violence continues to take a toll on the state force and the masses in the areas in which they are operating, the Maoist movement has been branded as the “single biggest internal security threat to India”, as declared by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India based on the report of the intelligence bureau (Subramanian, 2010). This statement was declared by the MHA two weeks after the worst Maoist attack, where 76 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) men were killed in an ambush in the Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh state. Later, this organization was declared a ‘terrorist organization’ by the Indian government under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. In fact, the MHA has claimed that between 2011 and 2016 about 1658 civilians and 667 security personnel have been killed by the Maoist in different parts of the country. Among this, the majority of the

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3 Mao idea about revolution: ‘If there is to be revolution there must be a revolutionary party’.  
4 See, librarian January 1970: Who was the class enemy? According to the Charu Mazumdar in his paper, the list of victims of maoist attacks in the countryside included, besides landlords, rich peasants, moneylenders and police informers as well as land lords agents, who were mostly persons drawn from the poorer strata of the village community.  
5 Selected works of Charu Mazumdar: One Year of Naxalbari Struggle, Published by Liberation, June 1968, also available https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mazumdar/1968/06/x02.html  
6 http://mha.nic.in/naxal  
civilians are tribal people, often branded as ‘police informers’. This poses a critical need for the government to reconcile the dual aims of reducing conflict and fostering development in the lagging regions. The Government of India has thus, adopted a holistic (Developmental and Para-military) approach that combined these twin objectives to secure peace in this region.

This paper aims to discuss the surrender and rehabilitation policy, through the experiences of lower rank surrendered cadres of the Communist Party of India (M) in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. This paper narrates largely the experiences of the surrendered Maoists using in-depth case studies to explore the implication of the surrender policy, and role of state. In addition, this paper cites opinions and options of other actors such as police personnel, local journalists, advocates and local people. Available primary and secondary literature points out that the surrender policy has failed to win the hearts of the Maoists and it also confused those who are willing to surrender. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section briefly touches upon the origin and history of the Maoist movement. The second section briefly discusses the intricacies of the Surrender policy; also exposing the ground realities in Left wing extremist areas. The third section of the paper dwells on to the surrender policy and its implementation through the lens of surrendered cadres in Gadchiroli district. The last section of the paper evaluates the results of the Surrender Policy.

Salient features of the Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy
The Ministry of home Affairs (MHA) introduced the Surrender cum Rehabilitation policy in 2004 for Kashmiri youths who sought to leave the separatist and terror groups and regain entry into the mainstream. Later in 2005 the same policy was adopted for Left Wing Extremists (LWE) and ethnic violence afflicted regions in Central and North-East India. This policy has been framed keeping in mind the specific geographical and social landscape to help those insurgents who want to abjure violence, surrender and seek peaceful lives. The scheme aims at providing gainful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to the surrendered LWEs so that they are encouraged to join the mainstream and not return to the folds of the Maoist Movement.

This policy made for a peaceful solution to the violence perpetrated by extremist groups for peace and development, especially in disturbed regions. The government believes that “a good and effective surrender and rehabilitation policy would definitely encourage many Maoist cadres to shun violence and surrender before the authorities. Therefore, it is absolutely

9 See, MHA Website: http://mha.nic.in/naxal_new
necessary for each state to formulate one”. This policy is part of a multi-pronged conflict management and resolution strategy and is required to be implemented along with firm action by police against those who followed the path of violence (MHA, 2017).

In November 2013, as per the revised guidelines issued by the Government of India, Maoists who accepted conditions of surrender were eligible for cash rewards, 2.5 to 20 lakh rupees. Each surrendered Maoist shall be imparted vocational training of his choice, gainful employment and a monthly stipend of Rs 4000 shall be provided for three years. The reward was based on their position in the movement. Additionally, the policy ensured monetary incentives, housing, health facility and education to the surrendered Maoist. It should be noted that, these were only guidelines and each state government is free to frame its own surrender and rehabilitation policy. To deal with this decade old problem, Government of India in interaction with the state governments concerned, concluded that integrated approach aimed at relatively affected states would yield result.

Following are the broad objectives of the policy:

- To wean away the misguided youth and hard-core Naxalites who have strayed into the fold of Naxal movement and now find themselves trapped into that net.
- To ensure that the Naxalites who surrender do not find it attractive to join the Naxal movement again.

**Response from the Maoists**

India has no national policy for rehabilitation for surrendered; it changed over time. (Ramana, 2013). Government of India, adopted holistic approach to deal with this but failed to maintain peace and security in conflict regions. The State was mostly concerned with the development, ignoring the socio-economic problems of conflicted regions. The Government’s main concern was to increase the statistics and thus ignored the core problems of the insurgents. The reasons for surrender might be health problems, unwanted experiences, and internal conflicts (disillusionment) which forced them, especially the low ranking cadres, to leave the movement and join mainstream. The State has the
responsibility to provide security and employment to the surrendered and to ensure that they do not go back to the folds of the Maoist movement.

Since launching the policy, a good number of Maoists have surrendered to the state. Across the country, from 2007 to December 2016, a total of 5015 Maoists surrendered in India (see table no. 1). Since 2005, as per Media reports, 502 Maoists have surrendered in Maharashtra, out of which 482 are only from the Gadchiroli district. These were due to the efforts taken by the police department under the “Navjeevan’ scheme, in which police reached out to the villages, talked to the relatives of the Maoists and solved their problems. These efforts by the government have appealed to the Maoist to give up the path of violence and to re-join the mainstream. As a result, a number of Maoists have surrendered to the state, for a peaceful and dignified life. These are the positive impacts of the policy where Maoist is surrendering to the state.

Table No. 1
All India Naxalite Surrender, 2007-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of surrendered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi

Ground realities after launching S&R policy

Scholarly articles and both national and internal media points out that the surrender and rehabilitation policy has failed to maintain peace in “red corridor”\(^\text{14}\). (Abbas, 2013; Ramana, 2013; Zade, 2013). Scholar like Mirza (2009) points, “the major failure of the surrender policy has been its inefficacy in restoring peace in the region. This has happened due to several inadequacies and loopholes in the policy as well as the manipulations that have occurred relating to the political use of the surrendered insurgents.”\(^\text{15}\) Ramana (2013), pointed out the failure of Surrender and Rehabilitation policy in the North-eastern region due to inefficiency in restoring peace to the region, also owing to other loopholes in the policy. Zade, (2013) in his field study in Gadchorli district of Maharashtra,

\(^{13}\) Also see; http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/LEFT%20WE_151216.pdf

\(^{14}\) It is an administrative terminology as the Red Corridor, under this region the Maoist activities spread across following states, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Utter Pradesh, West Bengal and some northern part of Tamil Nadu etc.

\(^{15}\) Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, Research Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
found that after the surrender none of the promises were fulfilled by the state and that the surrender policy has been a failure in the district. A journalist on telephonic discussion noted, “Government is largely concerned with increasing the surrendered statistics, but not with the basic problems of Maoist areas. Government picks up innocent youths in name of surrender for achieving targets”.

Several local and international media highlighted the loopholes dwelled into how it failed and discussed the fake encounter and surrender cases resulting in the failure of the surrender policy in the disturbed regions. In case of Kashmir, local media highlighted issue of surrender militant, according to which, “Most of the analysts are of the opinion that government’s ‘new surrender and rehabilitation policy’ for Kashmiri’s who are in PaK has totally failed because not only a few Kashmiri youth have returned from PaK, but also the returnees are now cursing their decision of believing the state government.” (Abbas, 2013).

One of the surrendered Maoist leaders who is currently an elected Member of the Parliament remarked, “I am telling people not to pick up the gun, but unless the centre frames a surrender and rehabilitation policy they will continue to be cheated by their respective state government” (Das, 2014). In the state of Orissa, Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy (S&R) adopted in 2005 hardly invoked any response from the Maoists. The State promised a lot of welfare measures and security, media highlighted that, “More than forty Naxals have surrendered so far in the state. But not a single of them has got the promised benefits…..police source say that there are several cadres in the Naxals camp especially women who are allegedly exploited and are willing to surrender. But if the fate of the Naxals who have already surrendered in not very encouraging the rest might hardly find any motivation to do the same.”

In case of S&R policy in most disturbed states like that of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh it was mostly fake surrender, fake arrests and fake encounter cases that were observed by the media, as well as individual writers, which resulted in the failure of the Surrender policy in the left wing extremist areas (Subramaniam, 2015; Sunder, 2016). In 2015 in Chhattisgarh, a total of 26 Maoists surrendered to the police as reported

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16 Discussion with the local journalist through phone in Gadchiroli in January 2015. He is working for Lokmat newspaper.

17 Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PaK)

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by the media, the mass detentions were followed by “mass surrenders”, police claimed that Maoist and their supporters had surrendered voluntarily, but villagers accounts suggests that many of the surrendered Maoists were ordinary villagers. Recently in Jharkhand, the police often conducted fake encounters for ensuring medals, awards and promotions for them. Activist like Dungdung (2013), argued that the security forces have been organizing these fake encounters in the forest with the intention of frightening the villagers so that they stop supporting the Maoists. It has been observed that, in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa, innocent tribal youth were picked up by the paramilitary forces for surrender to bolster national statistics. However they are neither Maoist nor their sympathisers but are just common people (Dungdung, 2013; Indian indianexpress, 2014).

As a result, owing to the conflict between state and Maoists, a number of civilians, Maoist cadres and police personnel have sacrificed their lives.

See table no.2 illustrates that in the violence between security forces and Maoists, approximately an equal number (677 and 647) of police personnel and Maoist cadres were killed. These people mostly came from the lower strata in the caste hierarchy, working in the battlefield from both sides. Somewhere it has observed that the surrendered Maoist’s were used as “Naxal guide” or “informer”, because they held good knowledge of their locations and their activities. As a result, Surrender policy failed to maintain peace in the red corridor. Government statistics might have increased but the lives of the surrendered Maoists have been vulnerable on both sides.


19 http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/StatisLWEDec312016_31012017.PDF


21 In Maharashtra, Gadchiroli district the surrendered Maoist was shot dead by the Maoists. He surrendered 10 years ago, after the surrender he worked as a ‘Naxal guide’ for the police department. (Indian Express;, 2014),http://epaper.lokmat.com/epapermain.aspx?queryed=27&eddate=02/10/2015
Table No. 2

*Left wing extremist violence from 2011 to 2016*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of incidents</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>1136</td>
<td>1091</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>1048</td>
<td>7539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians killed</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security forces killed</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounters with police</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>1462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWE cadres killed in encounter</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWE cadres arrested</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1397</td>
<td>1696</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>10532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWE cadres surrendered</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>1442</td>
<td>3809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

**Ground Realities in Gadchiroli district after the implementation of the policy**

In August 2005, the Government of Maharashtra launched “Surrender and Rehabilitation policy” especially in Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, and Gondiya districts. Since the implementation of the policy in Gadchiroli district, there was a statistical increase in the number of surrendered cadres. According to the media reports in the last 10 years, a total of 502 Maoists surrendered in Maharashtra, out of these 482 hailed from the Gadchiroli district. The State propagated a lot of promises to bring back these Maoists into the mainstream by allocating huge finances. It might seem to be a positive indicator boasting statistics in Maoists affected areas but it hides a hollow and more brutal reality, ignoring the basic problems of the surrendered Maoist’s. Discussions with police officers in the headquarter of Gadchiroli district regarding implementation of policy revealed,

“After launching the policy many of Maoist’s are surrendering; this is a positive indicator for the police department of Gadchiroli district. We are allocating them plots, housing, Taxi, auto, grocery shop etc., as an effect many families get benefited under the policy”.  

Responding to the police officer’s statement, Rakesh, who was a low ranking cadre and has worked for more than 10 years with the movement rejected the police officer’s statement, said,

“I will bring more than 100 surrendered Maoist families from the XYZ place you can ask anyone, how many surrendered family got taxi, auto, shops and all, none of these families got any of these so called benefits. Government gave us false promises.”

Government gave many promises to these surrendered including attractive

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22 Formal discussion with a police officer in Gadchiroli district in December 2014.

23 Interview conducted by researcher in December 2014 in Gadchiroli district.
monetary rewards, housing, vocational training and many more, as per the policy norm. Therefore, many of the Maoists surrendered their weapons to the state. However this was a far cry from reality. Promises which were given by the state were on the paper but not in reality. So far, the developmental approach has not yet reached the surrendered homes. State may be spending huge amounts to achieve the target but it fails to address the real problems of the surrendered cadres. Surrendered Maoists got only reward amounts in their bank accounts, sympathisers received Rs. 60,000 and for dalam commanders up to 4 lakh rupees. The amount was based on their position in the movement. Apart from that the respective departments did not provide any kind of support such as a vocational training, monthly stipend and housing as per the guidelines. Here Atul, (age 35 years) a surrendered Maoist from Gadchiroli district who has worked for more than 10 years with the movement, said

“When I surrendered to the police department, they gave me lots of promises to such as a house, land, money and other welfare facilities. Still I am waiting to get something as they promised, but I have lost my hope. Not only me, but there are many families who got these assurances from the department but only received money and not any other kind of assistance or support from the department. There are hardly 10-12 families who got houses that were allocated by the Nagar panchayat”.

Kalpana (28 years old) narrated her experience before the rehabilitation; she worked 13 years with the movement in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.

“Me and my husband, we stayed 9 months in police camp after the surrender, the department did not provide any kind of help, including vocational training and monthly stipend. Sometime police constables tortured me; you were involved in ambush in so and so place, particular encounters etc. They asked me so many things about the incidents. Sometimes I felt very insecure and helpless. Before leaving the police camp they handed me over 2 lakh rupees in cheque, as the reward money, which I was to deposit on my bank account. Apart from this, they didn’t give me anything; they only provided us with ‘surrender certificate’ as my identity proof. After few days, they asked me to search for a rented room of my own now that I received the money. We left the police camp and settled here on the illegal forestland without any security.”

Due to the shortfalls in the implementations of the policy, there are a number of surrendered Maoists doubting their decisions and might consider re-joining the movement.

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24 Interview conducted in Gadchiroli district December 2014.

25 Interview conducted in Gadchiroli district, October 2014.
They received only a small amount of money and a surrender certificate. However, money never solved their problems. After leaving the police camp (rehabilitation), half of the amount was used for searching for new rented rooms and basic amenities. Doors are shut from both sides once a person surrenders i.e. State and Maoists. They are not allowed in their native villages owing to security concerns. In this situation they have to stay in a secure place or near the police camp which they cannot afford. As a result they take up work as an unskilled laborer. A noticeable observation is that, they do not have any other supporting documents (such as Caste/domicile certificates) for applying to the government’s schemes as surrender certificate is not an appropriate document for applying to those schemes. They only have Aadhar card and voter card and a very few have ration cards. Since the surrender, the lives of cadres are trapped from both sides; police use their knowledge for countering Maoists, while the Maoists torture and kill the families of the surrendered. While the surrendered expected support from the state, the state ignored their basic problems. For the surrendered life can be very difficult. Once a person is handed over to the state they are not allowed to go outside the prescribed boundaries without the permission of the department. Being unskilled and left to fend on their own, they lead a meagre livelihood.

Rehabilitation is only on the paper

As per the guidelines, the state is responsible for the rehabilitation of the surrendered to secure places for their security. Compulsory housing and plots were promised. In 2012 the land which was allotted to the surrendered was outside the main town and was devoid of any security and basic amenities. However, it is acknowledged that those who surrendered more than 10 years ago got houses from the gram panchayat or the nagar panchayat. The surrendered were restricted entry in their own village and they lost everything including family, relatives, and land since their surrender. The Government is unable to provide for rehabilitation as a result of which the surrendered families take refuge in rented rooms while some construct huts outside the town on illegal land. Most importantly the stigma of being a Maoist has far reaching consequences which will be dealt in detail in the next section.

Quoting Manesh who surrendered in 2010, “After the rehabilitation state has allocated forest land for us for 18 months, without any supportive documents. After which we constructed house with little space. If forest department circulate order then we are forced to leave this place. If this happens, I do not know where I should go. When Baba Amte captured the forestland in Bhamragad, the forest department does not have any problem,

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26 Police using few of surrenders as Naxal guide, increase double risk from the both sides.

27 Said by Rakesh during the interview, at Gadchiroli in December, 2014
but when it comes to giving us land, they have a problem. We cannot go to our villages because of the threat from the Maoist. We are just living here illegally. They can kick us out any time they wish.”

Summing up the narration from Kalpana there was no such thing as Rehabilitation. They had to manage on their own in spite of the promises by the government. Therefore, some of the remaining insurgents/Maoists have either gone underground or have re-established contacts with their former colleagues.

Maoist stigma operating in daily life:

This is the most essential and important part of the study which addresses life after the surrender. From the time of the surrender, the surrendered are to live under the surveillance of the police department. According to police personnel, “If we don’t maintain relation with the surrendered insurgents then they might run away from the place”. The police department offers them job as SPOs. However, surrendered insurgents do not take up the offer because of risks involved. Recently in Gadchiroli and Chhattisgarh, surrendered insurgents were killed by Maoist for working as a “Naxal informer”. The question of “identity” surfaces after their surrender. Since many don’t have the appropriate documents, they are not eligible for any of the government schemes.

In this situation the surrendered are excluded from the social network. The stigma of “being a Maoist” lingers. The spouse of a surrendered remarked, “People behave like we are criminals in the workplace. Our kids are even stigmatized in the school”. In contrast is the response of a local person who said, “These people killed innocent tribal’s and opposed development. Now they surrendered and stay here illegally, they are criminals”. Their life is stigmatized; they lose their sense of identity and are insecure in their own village. The stigma operates as an attribute of discrimination in everyday life in work place, in government offices and even in private spheres.

Sate provides money as reward for the surrendered, but fails to provide them with an alternate livelihood after their surrender as a part of the rehabilitation process, including vocational training.

28 Interview conducted in October, 2014 in Gadchiroli district.
29 Formal discussion with police personal in January 2015 at Gadchiroli district.
31 Formal discussion with the participant wife, also discussed with his kid during the fieldwork in 2015.
32 Formal discussion with the local villagers during the fieldwork in Gadchiroli district, in 2015.
They hardly find alternate livelihood sources for them, which they can pursue with dignity and self-respect. Presently the surrendered, work in construction sites or in farms as low paid laborers. Few among them are associated with the police department and works as gardeners, SPO’s etc. The situation of women is far more vulnerable after the surrender as they have to manage both their household and work as laborers. They lead their lives in extreme poverty. The surrendered left the Maoist movement in the hope of a better life after surrender but their hardships have no answers.

Conclusion

Scholars like Mirza, (2009); Ramana, (2013); Sunder, (2016) and various media have pointed out the government’s policy of Surrender and Rehabilitation has been a failure as it failed to provide for the basic requirements for the surrendered though the government champions the increased statistics. While a very miniscule portion of the Surrendered did get to taste the real fruits of the policy a large section of the surrendered still remain devoid of any means to a sustainable livelihood and are facing threats from both the Maoists and the State. They are stripped off of their right to lead a just and dignified life and lead a meagre life in chronic poverty and hardship.

The findings of the research, observations and interaction with the actors involved and from the available secondary literature can be summed up from the words of a surrendered, “Surrender Policy has failed in Gadchiroli district”.

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Lived Experiences of Women Sarpanch and ex-Sarpanch Under Panchayati Raj: A Study in Hapur District of Uttar Pradesh

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Under the 73rd Amendment that was brought in 1992, 33% of seats were compulsorily reserved for women, SC, ST and OBC candidates in Panchayati Raj institutions, be it at the Gram Sabha level or Zilla Panchayat level. This Amendment was a huge step taken, as earlier the performances and presence of women in the political sphere was almost negligible. Because of the reservation provision and compulsion, at least at the Panchayat level, which is decentralized and grass root level of panchayat, women were guaranteed political space. Both social and political spheres are interconnected, especially in village level which is more of a closed community, hence traditional social positions also play an important role in political participation. This research paper focuses on the reasons as to why women despite being elected as leaders do not exercise their powers and how the dynamics of household as well as public and political space play a role in women working in the ‘male dominated political arena’. The social constraints faced by women in rural areas consist of lack of mobility outside household sphere and lack of decision making both within and outside the household sphere. The social value of women, especially in rural areas is confined to area between four walls of the house. This kind of political representation which requires women to come out and take decisions not only for themselves, but also for the others, can be considered as an amendment that challenges the basic social practices. Hence it is important to study the impact of political participation of women in the social order which was traditionally denied to them.

Key Words: panchayati raj; sarpanch; political arena; women; social mobility
Method and Methodology

The research is of qualitative nature as it looks at the socio-political situation in the villages that may increase or disrupt the display of leadership and participation in politics of women. A quantitative survey for this issue will not be justifiable as the personal experiences are neither empirical nor quantifiable data. Therefore a qualitative research, based more on open ended as well as exploratory questions, which can give voice to the informants, has been adopted. The point of view of the informant is of utmost importance in this survey as the entire research is based on their participation or non-participation and various other aspects.

The research methodology that is used in this survey is phenomenological analysis. Under this method, the life experiences shared by the informant are given importance and their work and lives are given voices without any interpretations of the interviewer. This type of methodology is best suited for research that is based on the experiences of the participants similar to the current study. The data was collected through structured interviews. The responses were recorded using a cell phone and transcribed as it is.

The informants or participants in this survey were women sarpanchs and ex-sarpanchs of the panchayat area in the district of Hapur. Since the primary language in the area is Hindi, all the participants belong to this particular language group and the interviews were conducted in Hindi language only. Women in villages, as many of the studies suggest, are lowest in the hierarchy. It was interesting to see their point of view regarding their leadership and the opportunity that is constitutionally provided to them. The sampling method that was used in this survey was the purposive or the criterion based sampling. It is because given the subject of the research and the field area, also with the time constraint of just one month for the entire survey; purposive samplings serve the purpose most conveniently.

The mode of data collection was structured interview mode, in which the questions were asked according to the responses provided by the informants, but at the same time, based on the certain themes related to the topic. To make the voices of the selected sample of the informants visible to other people this method of interviewing is the best as it not only gives them a voice, but also provides an insight of what they think about the system and the paradigms that they live in. This is important because this kind of insights can hardly be derived by simple observations or reading articles.

Fifteen women sarpanchs and ex-sarpanchs of various villages of Hapur district were interviewed. Out of which, three participants were from Schedule caste (SC) community, two from OBC, three were OBC (Jat) (according to state list), five were Rajput’s and two participants were Brahmins. Hence in total, eight participants were from the lower castes and seven from the upper castes; with their class varying in accordance with the caste structure that they belonged to. This can be said that give an
almost equitable representation of the castes. Five out of the fifteen participants were not elected when the seat was reserved for women, but 3 out of those five stood for the elections when the seat was reserved for SC/OBCs respectively. Out of the interviewed participants six were sarpanchs currently and nine were sarpanchs in the past.

Post structural feminist framework has been used for the analysis of the data. The motive behind this was to analyze not just the present conditions of the women sarpanchs but also to look into the underlying factors that affect the choices that are made by these participants. How deeply are the prime patriarchal idea interwoven into the minds of the participants is also explored. Also looked into is the meanings and possibilities which drives them to form their knowledge base and work in the way they do resulting in the choices they made.

**Literature Review**

After almost two decades of the amendment, the scenario today has visible changes; at least the quantitative aspect is more or less fulfilled. Decentralized spheres are more important because it is better connected with the common mass. As per Gandhi Siga (2014) “Decentralization of power to the Panchayat is seen as a means of empowering people and involving them in the decision making process. Local governments being closer to the people can be more responsive to local needs and can make better use of resources.” (ibid, p. 225). As per the report by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2008), there are a total number of approximately 12 lakh women representatives at various levels of gram panchayats in India. In the year of 2013, this figure as per the report of the Panchayati Raj Institutions under the eleventh schedule, increased to approximately 14 lakh showing a remarkable increment in the political participation of women, at least at the grass root level. This emergence of more and more women is taken as an indicator of women’s empowerment, specifically political empowerment, at least by several political parties. But is this number actually an indicator of actual political upliftment and leadership in women? Or are there other factors that play a role in diminishing as well as enhancing their political status?

Women continue to be the lowest in this hierarchy and hence are mostly controlled. Other social aspects such as caste, class, religion and even geographical region play a very important role in deciding the degree of this control. As per Bidyut Mohanti (1995) “women do not possess social as well as economic power because of several factors; this affects their political participation as all these three factors are very much interlinked” According to Sudha Pai (1998), Anand Inbanathan (2012) and V. Vijayalakshmi & B. K. Chandrashekhar (2002) the social constraints that women face are not only in the public sphere but are stretched to the private sphere as well. Given the condition that all the three articles are based in three different years, depicts that not much has changed. The responsibilities of completing all the household chores as well as taking care of the children lie solely on women. This along with an internal hierarchy of the household sphere restricts mobility of
the women. Also the participation of women in the public sphere is considered against traditional values. As Joti Sekhon (2006) has stated in her article, “However, effective participation was limited by barriers rooted in patriarchal social structures and norms about a woman's proper place and appropriate behavior in society.” Also mentioned in a study done by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2008) and E. Bryld (2001) was that women have to take permission for going out or taking part in any kind of panchayat meeting, it is considered as “disrespectful” if a woman displays leadership qualities and takes the charge of the meeting. With so many restrictions it becomes more and more difficult for women to come forward, even as an elected member and freely claim the position that is given to her by the law post amendment and elections. The participation level of women in the meetings of the gram sabha largely depends upon the wishes, attitude and support of her husband and in-laws. M. D. Babu (2002), in his research on the gram sabhas in Andhra Pradesh stated that the women, even though are knowledgeable regarding functioning of Gram sabha and powers of a sarpanch, hardly attend any panchayat meetings. Even if they are the elected representative, they work in women’s forum but attending gram sabha with men is avoided by them.

As per the studies done by G. K. Lieten (1996), Sudha Pai (1998) and Sujoy Dutta (2012) in the state of Uttar Pradesh, women stand for elections because of the reservation of the seat. These women are generally the ones whose husbands were sarpanchs earlier. Even if they stand for the elections, it’s their husbands who rule and work originally. So women standing up for the election are just a medium for men to regain their position and power through their wives. This is not just the case in Uttar Pradesh. The studies done by V. Vijayalakshmi (2005) in Tamil Nadu, Anand Inbanathan and N. Sivanna (2010) in Karnataka, D. K. Sarkar (2012) in West Bengal, Anupma Kaushik, Artatrina Gochhayat (2013) in Odisha and Gayatri Shaktawat (2010) in Rajasthan, all depict the same factor; that even though women are the elected representatives, their husbands are the ones who actually do all the work to the extent that villagers call the husbands sarpanch rather than their wives. As per the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2008), “women rather than being personally motivated for contesting the elections are generally forced by their family members or even the community to stand and contest.”

According to the research done by Pamela Singla (2007), the biggest hurdle that stops women from taking both political and social decisions is lack of personal income. Their economic dependency makes them socially as well as politically dependent on the male members of the family. Hence the power that is bestowed upon them is also passed along to those male members. Most of the women are either unaware of the power of a sarpanch and/or they are not paid heed to in the gram sabha meetings when they speak. At times they are simply not allowed to speak in the sabha. Also, they are sometimes shy or intimidated to ask questions regarding anything or give suggestions in the sabha in front of male members or other bureaucrats because they have been deprived of social contacts for so long (Ministry of Panchayati
73rd Amendment has indeed played a very important role in change in the rural political scenario, even though there still are several hurdles in the way of women and there is still very long way to go. The change in the political arena is seemingly impossible without a change in the social as well as economic arena as all these three are interconnected. And so is the literacy quotient where again, women are lagging behind because of the leaky hierarchical educational pipeline system. Until and unless there are some very solid changes in the three spheres, the political power that is vested in the women will remain to be just a de jure representation and they will remain as proxy heads for their husbands or other male relatives.

**Role in Decision Making**

It has been mentioned in the literature review that women, in order to access the power and authority associated with a sarpanch, have to face lots of hurdles and social constraints. Also, at the same time in order to access that power in many cases they, have to bargain a lot with the existing patriarchal structure. The choices that a woman makes at that point are very much influenced by the socio-cultural condition that she is living in. Even when a group of women live in the same area, the force that they put in to acquire the power as well as to utilize that power in the manner they want may differ immensely. Factors like age and position within the household irrespective of the caste also play a huge role in the kind of bargain a woman does and the position she obtains being a sarpanch of a village.

When asked about their inspiration behind standing for the elections the response that was given by almost everyone was that people of the village supported them and hence they became sarpanch, though few of the participants also mentioned the fact that their husbands were sarpanch before them and since the seat was reserved that time, so they stood in the elections as per the wishes of the villagers to fill in the position that was earlier presided by their husband or other family members. Some of them clearly mentioned the fact that they were not at all interested in politics but, either their husbands or family members or people of the village asked them repeatedly or even forced them to stand for the elections. These participants, who responded so, stood up for the elections without any political aspiration rather to fulfill the demands and also the aspiration of the others. To quote one of them:

“See we used to live in Delhi earlier in Kalyanpuri, the seat came for an SC they called us back to the village and they all said that this time you should become a sarpanch, this is why I stood for elections and became a sarpanch otherwise I am not at all interested…... After becoming sarpanch, we have been defamed, someone is saying we have brought four plots, post becoming sarpanch, without any reason we are being defamed. Nobody allows a poor man to eat or do anything. Only powerful dictatorial people can use power and can do something post becoming sarpanch, nobody allows poor to do anything.”

This shows a very different kind of aspiration for political power, just because the seat came for SC candidate, the
participant and her entire family was asked to come back from Delhi to stand for elections, she won the elections with support of the villagers and then she is blaming the same villagers for defaming her entire family, this is a representation of how until today in that village the people from lower caste are thought of as the people constantly inferior to the dominant others and hence can be used as a puppet to fulfill the political aspirations of the dominant others. When they take a stand for themselves and work on their own the defamation follows. Also, even though that participant is a sarpanch her other identities are completely covered by the caste identity that she carries, not only by the people of the village but by the participant herself. Similar kind of statements were also made by other participants from the lower caste displaying how they identify their position based on their caste within the social structure, but at the same time when a chance is given to them by, change in their position or in their political structure, despite the odds they acquire that position for working as they want and not choosing to walk in someone else’s shoes. However, it should be noted that participants who identity as a woman plays negligible role in their choice of acquiring political power, they have identified caste as a social constraint and have worked together with entire household to overcome it but are perfectly comfortable with the constraint that gender puts on them within the structure of their household or in the society.

One more fact that came out was that the participant’s who were old and also widowed within the powerful family of the village are the ones who faced no obstacles in openly aspiring political power within social arena. The knowledge of having an upper hand in social structure changes one’s perception about the power one can behold. Like one of the participant said;

“I was interested in politics; nobody asked me to stand for the elections, I myself went and filled the form on my name. But yes, all the people supported me. During my time I was elected without any opposition. But everyone supported and I wanted to be.”

This participant was an old woman from a dominant caste of the village and also a widow; there were a few like her, all of them having social privilege, as it is not considered as catastrophically if they aspire for power. So when one barrier is not present in their path overcoming the second one does not become very difficult, but at the same time their age and position within the household play a very significant role.

Panchayat meetings is the activity where most of the decisions take place, hence evaluation women sarpanchs and ex-sarpanchs participation and say in these meetings are very important in the final analysis of how all those factors that have been mentioned above play a role in decision taking aspiration of the participants. Despite whatever was mentioned by the participants above, a considerable number of them stated that they never attended any panchayat meetings. Now the factor that one has to keep in mind is that all those participants both sarpanch and ex-sarpanch at the time when they are/were in power, were about 30-45 years of age. The reason why this point is necessary is because this is the age group when the patriarchal controls over mobility of women are very high; also as everything
within the household is considered as responsibility of the women hence taking out time for social sphere becomes almost impossible. This can be seen as the reason why the concept of proxy head has come by, the women denied public participation, their husbands taking up all the social fronts and this is a highly acceptable social custom. Only after a time when they next generation comes under them or in conditions were their mother-in-laws are very supportive, can these women actually perform something in the public arena.

Amongst the participants who attended the meetings, few of them, mentioned the fact that they spoke very less due to the ‘purdah’ observed by them and the social norms of non acceptance of women speaking openly in front of other men, but nevertheless they said that even then they attended all the meetings and spoke whenever they were asked things. This represents the second type of bargains that women make with patriarchy. So when they are allowed to overcome the first hurdle and are allowed the access of the public sphere, they use all the opportunities to be there and observe and it does not matter how much do they have to bargain with the patriarchal structure for having that access. Not participating seems to be like a very low price paid for the admission in the outer world.

Majority of the participants responded very positively regarding their participation in the meetings. However, here were a very few participants who admitted that her husband or in-laws never attended any meetings on her behalf or took any decisions instead of her, she lived in a nuclear family and her husband used to live in the city due to his job. This represents when there are no forces of patriarchy in immediate surroundings then, the knowledge of availing more options open up and then women can actually work in the very same socio-political structure as acceptance is more willingly provided to them. Rest, of the participants mentioned that they attended the meetings and even took suggestions from the people regarding the issue, but at the same time they also mentioned the fact that their husbands; most commonly referred to as ‘pradhanji’ (male sarpanch); conducted most of the meetings. Still, they had a say in decisions and they availed it as much as they could given the social structure. So it can be seen that there are various levels of bargaining and attainment of power, but these differ in accordance with the social and cultural conditions.

One fact that the majority of the participants mentioned in their interviews was the fact that decision making was not an individual activity rather a collective activity based on group discussions. So it’s not just the sarpanch, but all the elected ward members who take decisions collectively. As mentioned by one of the participants, “somebody agreed, somebody disagreed” so its most of the time a group discussion with final decision power in the hands of a sarpanch. But as already analyzed above, even when the decisions are taken collectively the actual contribution of a woman sarpanch depends upon the level of options that are available to them and how they work in accordance with those choices. Only one participant (ex-sarpanch) stated that all the decisions were taken by her husband
and the others used to merely sign the registers and at the same time she too had almost no say in the decision making aspect of the meetings. But this was the case of 1995-2000, post that most of the participants who attended the meetings said that they were asked about their opinions, even if not in the public sphere but in the private sphere.

**Changes Brought About by Them**

The election of the woman as a sarpanch is just the first hurdle that is crossed. To measure the actual changes in the political dynamics the work that is done by them for the development of the village has to be taken into account. Being a sarpanch is a denotation of huge political as well as social power in the village and to ensure woman sarpanchs access to leadership, her claim over that power through the works that she does play a very important role. But there is a structural bias in both societal norms and also in the laws that were formulated initially. When formulating the laws or even modifying the existing laws which are based on these structural biases (the root of which is already restrictive), the blame of not availing the privileges or not performing the duties handed down to them cannot be placed on the people for whom these changes are brought about. As even as the spectrum of choices has widened the tools that are necessary to avail those choices are still very limited.

When asked about the quantity and quality of work that were done by them a significant number of the participants had absolutely no idea about the kind of work was done in the village during their tenure. Also in case of ex sarpanchs who were sarpanch more than 10 years ago, replied that they did not remember anything as it was long back when they were sarpanch and then asked me to consult their husbands regarding the same. This confirms that the ideology of women being proxy heads does exist in the society. But at the same time the participants who chose to act like a proxy head either have no knowledge about the work done and about the different paths in which the work are carried out by the sarpanch and hence they cannot participate in it or else they are aware but, they bargain and follow the social protocol that is followed in the village according to which the freedom of mobility has been restricted/ is limited for women as the public sphere is considered as that of men.

Most of the respondents mentioned the kinds of works that are carried out in the village which mostly comprised of construction of *khadanja* (a brick street), drains, toilets, rebuilding the walls of the local government school and marriage ceremonial places and sanctioning pensions. Only one of the participants mentioned the government policy of Indira Awaas Yojana under which the constructed houses for the poor homeless people of the village who did not have a house nor had kuccha house earlier. She also mentioned the fact that the parents of the young army men from her village who martyred in the Kargil war of 1999 were given compensation by the village panchayat, mentioning the fact that the previous sarpanch during whose tenure Kargil war actually took place did nothing for the family “despite being a man”. She wants to raise the point that men are apathetic. Which when analyzed ironically confirms with Judith Butler’s criticism of the Cartesian
theory of dualism, in which she mentions, since mental reasoning is always ranked over emotions, the women who have always been subdued are cast off as emotional beings and hence are reconfirmed as secondary underneath men being primary beings. Though here she mentioned ex-sarpanchs lack of emotional concern and support as unsuitable and inappropriate, which completely overturns the whole debate of reasoning over the emotions debate as in this case, though the participant can be taken as an emotional being she claims an upper hand over a male ex-sarpanch due to it.

Pensions be it old age or widow pension, has been considered as an important and in most cases the only work done for the women by most of the sarpanch. This indicates that economic help to have the minimum of what is supposed to be the most vulnerable position for women is the only government policy that is carried out. If we examine this is the light of post structural feminist theory then, this can be analyzed as structural bias according to which the change in policies and laws are not able to bring about a significant change in social gender structure because the roots of these laws and policies are patriarchal and hence biased towards women. The reason for equating the provision of pensions with structural bias is that since the government policy of provision of pension for widows and old aged women who belong to certain class of the society, which is being carried out by all the aforementioned sarpanch, is a good policy which gives them a monetary support when it is needed the most. At the same time the root of the policy lies in the firm hold of patriarchy over laws where women are provided help only when they are vulnerable, instead of promotion of such policies and practices which will stop women from being vulnerable in the very first place, especially in a close knit village society. When the woman is not seen as vulnerable or oppressed enough, those same policies are deemed as not applicable on her. As per experience of one of the ex-sarpanch, “There was no such thing as women oriented work. Currently they even cut down my pension saying that you have four sons will you not get food at the house? There is no need for pension.” She is a widow of age 63 from OBC background and was a sarpanch from 2000-2005. When it was observed that she has four sons it was assumed that she will not need pension as all her sons earn and can feed her, her pension was cut off. So this selective application of policy according to the assumed vulnerable status is another example of structural bias in implementation of the policy in village society.

Scenario in Private Sphere

There are many changes (through laws and policies) that are brought about to incorporate more and more women in the mainstream patriarchal power dynamics, to empower women, be it bringing more policies regarding education or providing employment or reservation in panchayat elections. But all of these policies leave out one very important factor that empowerment has direct linkages with the social and cultural environment one lives in. As per study done by Patricia Jeffery and Roger Jeffery (1994), in the field of education of women and its implication in women’s empowerment, they came out with the fact
that due to the existing social norms and the responsibilities that a woman is, because of her gender, expected to fulfill in her daily life, education has actually not played any role in bringing about the empowerment that it was supposed to bring. Even when the woman is educated the social expectations that she has to fulfill leaves very less choices in front of her. So the whole agenda has many repercussions and to actually empower women especially, in rural areas, a lot more than just coming up with new policies has to be done. Nevertheless, making new policies is the first step for empowerment but, a lot many steps are also required after that for real empowerment.

Power, be it within the household sphere or outside in the public sphere, has always been the domain of men in most of the cases. Though caste and class do play a very important role in deciding the power relationship in the public sphere, but within the household sphere that relationship is more defined, where the male member of the family gradually assumes the position of decision maker as well as that of the head of the family. In a village society especially when one is older the power one retains within the household increases tremendously. So when the woman grows older she retains more power within the household over her daughters and daughters-in-law, at least in comparison with the younger women within the same household. Also at the same time the older women retain more respect and hence power within the public society as well. It was observed during the interviews too, that the older participants were more responsive and critical during their answers in comparison to the younger participants who seemed more cautious with their replies and their responses were more measured.

The responses were positive when being asked about the relationship that existed between the households. Everybody said that they were very happy with their family and they had respect. Though the responses that older participants, i.e., who were 50 or above in the age gave were a bit different from the responses given by the comparatively younger participants. Where the former said that they are respected a lot in their family, the element of respect was completely missing from the latter ones. Concluding that the age of the person has a lot to do with the status one retains within the family and also in the society. On one hand the older participants actually command the family, take decisions for their daughters and daughter-in-laws at least, for the younger participants this same dimension is somewhat missing. Among the younger ones too those who are living in a nuclear family commands respect within their household but the same is not the case with the younger participants in a joint family. As one of the participants responded, “We respect our elder’s it’s never the other way round”. So age gives a validity to earn respect within the family.

Also another point that was raised by most of the older participants, especially who had daughters-in-law, as that they were the ones who took all the decisions regarding their daughter in laws. As one of the participants commented,

“Yes, I take decision, all the decisions are taken by me and I distribute everything equally in the family, look at my Daughter-in-law, she has grown old now but she has
never worn anything that I do not approve of. She wears everything of my choice, she respects me a lot.” Age has not only given credibility to her to decide everything about everyone also it was considered as a gesture of respect on her Daughter in law’s part that she blindly follow whatever her mother in law asked her to do. Empowerment is not only about choices one has how developed one is, in the context of women in rural areas respect that one has within the family and also the society commands a very important part in their feeling of empowerment. This is important also because most of the old aged women are respected only by the other women in their family as in the outer social sphere the space is limited and men have acquired all dominant positions. At the same time for the women who are subordinate have even fewer mediums to gain such respect hence, they serve the older women and the acknowledgement is taken as a form of respect by them. In this way the women’s lives are controlled even within the household sphere.

All the women said that they received complete support from all their family members. When asked about the support and help they received in the panchayat related works, all of them mentioned the fact that their husbands or sons or their other male in-law members helped them. At the same time when asked them about the support and help they received in their household chores everyone responded that either they themselves did the work and then went to attend the meetings or their daughters and Daughter-in-law’s helped them in the household chores or did all the household chores. There was not even a single respondent who said that her male relatives helped in household chores or female relatives helped in panchayat jobs. This again re-establishes the fact that the gender roles are so finely defined that no matter in which position one is in, gender is solely responsible for the duties that you have to complete and those are very clearly demarcated. Thus, in order to bring about the empowerment within the household sphere the social definitions of gender and everything that is associated with it has to undergo a paradigm shift, only then the empowerment as we understand it can be completely felt and accepted in the society, rural society to be precise.

All the participants with a minute exception said that they completely supported their daughters and daughter-in-law’s if they wanted to work in politics ever. Some were even very enthusiastic over the fact that the younger generation which has freedom more than them can bring about better changes, especially given the condition that each and every one of them is either educated or is getting educated. Most of them, especially the younger participants stated the fact that they will completely help their daughter in laws and daughters in case they want to be a sarpanch, probably acknowledging the fact that a change in the hierarchy can come if they try, even if that change is just minute intra gender one, within the household. One of the participant however mentioned, “They will stand in elections and become sarpanch in their houses (after they are married) why will they stand in elections here.” So where there is liberation for daughters-in-law but for daughter the same decision is to be taken by
their in laws in “their homes” as the house of parents is not considered as the house of daughter. As mentioned earlier the younger participants are ready to change the structure a bit but, the older ones (the statement was made by a participant 55 year old) are more deeply rooted in the patriarchal structure and hence the idea of change becomes more improbable for them than it is for the younger participants.

**Conclusion**

At one glance the findings of this research are re-establishing all the facts that have already been stated by the scholars and researchers in the literature. However, when we review all those facts with the lens of post-structuralist feminism an entirely new explanation for the result comes up. The societal and cultural norms, which are set up by patriarchal structures, are rooted deeply in day to day behavior of humans since centuries. Women are the direct and biggest victims of the patriarchal society which forbids them to grow and prosper at every level. But at the same time, manifestations and implications of these norms are not always oppressive, at least in the most direct form. Sometimes after considering all the other possible choices, women choose not to step forward as many a times challenging the prevalent patriarchal norms lead to increased oppression. The structure of society is rigid and that rigidity increases in the rural area and at the same time breaking away from this structure is not a very easy job. After gathering several meanings and possibilities to survive everyone forms a knowledge base of their own and then they bargain with patriarchy in their own ways. The staunchness of the patriarchal structure, however, limits these meanings and possibilities to a minimum for most of the women.

If we look at the experiences of the participants, mostly the participants who lived in joint families and at the same time also belonged to higher caste and class were the ones, who demonstrated the idea of being a proxy head the most regardless of their age and educational background. It can be taken as their own way to bargain with the strict and staunch patriarchal structure that exists within the family as well as outside the paradigm of household, in the public spaces. It is not the fault of any woman that the structure of society, especially the rural one is so rigid that they are left with very few choices in their lives. When working with limited available choices, it is kind of obvious why most of the participants choose to give up or not exercise the powers that are bestowed upon them. One has to choose from standing up raising their voices and claiming what is rightfully theirs and the idea of respect within the society and sense of protection that is provided to them when they give up all those powers. Standing up for their rights is also not at all an easy job, as the platform, the public space where they can stand and protest is again all dominated by the men. So when the choice is between the image of ideal/good woman the one who follows all the norms set up by the patriarchal society and “the bad woman” who revolts against the very structure and ask questions and exercise her own power, most of the women generally choose the former one because it forms their base of respect that
they receive in return of following everything superimposed upon them.

By limiting the choices available for the women to bare minimum, the patriarchal structure has thrived for so long. The participants, who lived in nuclear families with their husbands working in the cities or some other places, exercised more power and worked more as the immediate representation of patriarchal structure was absent and that gave them more space to avail their leadership and also public space. At the same time these were the respondents who stated the fact that politics is not meant for women and they lost they respect that they had within the household sphere by stepping out and working in the male dominated public sphere. So even when it appears that the choices have increased still the inbuilt structure is very much the same and the positions within that structure are still very much the same. The participants have internalized the hegemony of the patriarchal structure as the best possible choice available to them. So when they are forced by the same system to break the rules which have been internalized by them for so long, they themselves do not feel comfortable and stand against it. With so much of internalizations of hegemony in such a staunch and rigid structure, it is hardly a surprise that women actually do not come forward to challenge the patriarchy and take the power which is rightfully theirs.

References


Older Women: Problems and Beyond

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During the last decade feminist and gerontology discourses have started acknowledging that experiences and issues of older women are different from their male counterparts as well as from the younger females. But then, the focus of these discourses has always been more on the issues of problems of old women. These studies constantly try to demonstrate that older women are disadvantaged in a variety of ways in relation to old men. They are always portrayed as poorer and sicker; someone who lack proper access to medical and relief facilities and so on. This, however, is a very one dimensional way of looking at the older women. By critically analyzing the tendency of locating older women only in terms of problems or disadvantages, this paper argues for a more balanced understanding of older women, in which the perception of older women is less reliant on men as a relational category and which recognizes the sense of happiness and satisfaction and some other experiences that women undergoes as they grow older.

Keywords: Fashion; disaster situations; double jeopardy; health facilities; income; popular culture; male model; malestream.
It has almost become a maxim to state that the present-day world values women less than men and the aged less than the young. There is however, little consensus about the combined effects of being both female and old. One reason for this could be the lack of adequate work on the intersections of gender and old age. While social gerontology failed to recognize the relevance of gender to aging, feminist discourses of the 1980’s and the 1990’s, on the other hand, were preoccupied with the issues of women in the reproductive period – the problems of inequality that confronted younger women in comparison to men, whether in schools, workplaces, or families. Although, during this period, feminist discourses had moved away from the earlier preoccupation of studying women by using the “male models”, there was no equivalent shift towards work on gender and aging (Ardener, 1975). Many argued that the theoretical inability to study the older woman was the outcome of some kind of sociological obsession with paid productive work, dating from the founding fathers of the discipline, which renders anyone and anything outside the category of paid work as less important for research (Arber & Ginn, 1991; Roberts, 1981; Stacey & Thorne, 1985).

It is only very recently, around 1980s, that feminist discourses as well as gerontology have started taking into account the issues of older women (Calasanti, Slevin & King, 2006). This, however, is not to suggest in any ways that old age became a central area of feminist analysis or that a feminist revolution occurred within social gerontology. This can be attributed to the fact that only a small group of researchers within both the fields were trying to explore the intersection of age and gender (Gibson, 1996). From these preliminary efforts, emerged a sea of material concerning the difficulties associated with being old and female. Starting from philosophical to factual empirical, the problems that older women face have now been widely studied and researched.

However, despite the availability of so much of work, many scholars felt the absence of a coherent understanding of how gender affects the process of aging and vice-versa. Many reasons could be cited for this inadequacy; firstly, the available materials tend to analyze older women only in relation to men. These studies always tend to argue in certain ways, like older women face widowhood differently than men or that older women face more trouble while accessing health benefits (Balagopal, 2009; Davidson, 2006). The experiences of older women are always almost documented in comparison to the older men; as if the older men are the “ideal types” (Weber, 1968). As a result, these works end up highlighting only those experiences of older women which are different from their male counterparts. In the process a whole gamut of other experiences and advantages that are unique to older women, like sharing strong emotional bonds with their family or friends, are left behind (Davidson, 2006). Secondly, by taking up this one-dimensional way of analyzing older women, these studies has overemphasized on their problems and disadvantages so much so that there is a risk
of viewing old women only in terms of those problems - of “reinventing and reinforcing a self-concept and a societal concept of old women as a group with little to offer society and much to demand” (Gibson, 1996, p. 435). Underlying this assumption is the tendency to overlook the idea that despite the challenges and problems the older women are satisfied with their lives and are enjoying freedom from the former commitments and the close bonds that they had nurtured in the later phase of their lives (Calasanti, Slevin & King, 2006).

The following essay is an attempt to understand older women through a different lens - to understand the freedom and satisfaction that is associated with being old and female, and not stick to the general perception of problems and disadvantages that usually goes on to define older women. This, however, is not to deny that older women have problems or that at times these disadvantages are far more complex than their male counterparts; but then to study older women only from that perspective would not help us in developing a sound understanding of them and their experiences. In doing so, the following essay will be divided into four sections. The first section deals with the double jeopardy model of understanding older women and the problems associated with such one-dimensional model. The following section tries to put forward a different perspective of looking at older women – by taking into account the strong social networks or coping strategies that they successfully use to enjoy the later phase of their lives. The third section points out some other areas which are not usually covered in discourses concerning older women. The final section looks into some possible reasons that explain the frequent tendency of relating older women with problems. The reasons cited, however, are not in any way exhaustive.

**The double jeopardy paradigm at work**

Many researchers argue that occupying the two stigmatized statuses of old age and female - a situation termed as “double jeopardy”1- brings with it greater negative consequences than occupying either status alone (Payne & Whittington, 1976; Posner, 1977; Chappell & Havens, 1980). Different researches took different starting points for testing the double jeopardy model.

Few took the heterosexual family as their starting point. The combination of men marrying younger women and the greater longevity of women leads to higher incidence of widowhood among women. The absence of a spouse in old age is associated with a range of potentially negative domestic, psychological, and social consequences. This is because spouses often act as a significant source of assistance in serious illness or disability, provide social and emotional support and financial security, and are people with whom they share domestic labor. In addition, the loss of perceived sexual attractiveness and reproductive function experienced by old women also goes on to add to the

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1Double jeopardy model usually examine the combined effects of two negatively perceived statuses on some general quality of life indicator such as income or health (Chappell & Havens, 1980:1)
disadvantaged and dependent imagery of older women and makes aging a particularly more difficult phase for a woman, as compared to her male counterpart (Allen, 1988; Gee and Kimball, 1987; Calasanti, Slevin & King, 2006).

Other analysts have focused more on the adequacy and availability of public provisions. A number of theorists have emphasized on the disadvantaged position of old women with regard to income and pension schemes (Coleman and Watson, 1987; Estes, Gerarg, and Clarke, 1984; Minkler and Stone, 1985). They argue that older women are often economically more disadvantaged because of the gendered division of labor, which assumes that women mainly need to perform reproductive labor, care-giving tasks and unpaid household work. And since they spend less time or no time in the labor market, they tend to get lower salary and pensions (if at all any).

Few others, on the other hand, have given attention to the use and availability of medical and hospital services and facilities to overcome disaster or emergency situations (Arber and Ginn, 1991; Gee and Kimball, 1987; Hess, 1980). These studies have pointed out that older women are at a much higher risk of disabling conditions and chronic diseases (cervical cancer, breast cancer, osteoporosis and so on) as they age, which therefore requires long-term intensive care than older men (HelpAge International & UNHCR, 2000). However, many developing countries have serious shortages of supplies, services, and staff trained to handle women geriatric issues (Gupta, 2013, p. 10; Raju, 2011, p. 18). Even when health care facilities or treatments are available, older women face difficulty in accessing them due to problems with transportation, affordability, or illiteracy. A HelpAge International study conducted in Tanzania, for example, pointed out that older women are frequently prohibited from accessing free health care facilities if they lack proper identification cards to prove eligibility. This prerequisite is in a way totally prohibiting older women from accessing free health care facilities, because they are less likely to have attended any kind of formal education or be registered at birth to obtain identification cards. On the other hand, many studies point out that the belief that women are care-givers restrict the older women from availing medical facilities. In a case as in India, older women are more likely to be taking care of their husbands or their much older in-laws, which leaves very little time to look after themselves (Raju, 2011). Likewise, in Sub-Saharan Africa, as the HelpAge International and UNHCR (2000) report points out, older women are forced by circumstance to become full-time caregivers to family members dying of HIV/AIDS, instead of attending to their own medical needs. There are also works which highlight that even in developed countries like the United States, where the current health care ties access to affordable health insurance to employment and marital

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2 http://www.HelpAge.org/HelpAgeusa/what-we-do/older-women/older-womens-health/

status, older women are placed at a disadvantage because they are more likely to be unemployed or are working part-time in industries that do not offer health benefits. Also, even if the working older women have some sort of medical coverage, their lower incomes mean that they would spend more – up to 25 percent of their disposable income – on out-of-pocket health care expenses. These studies show how lack of adequate government medical insurance schemes and overall expensive health care facilities – whether in a developed or developing country – pushes older women into a life of poverty and dependence (Gupta, 2013).

Besides, there are also reports which have analyzed the particular problems of older women in situations of a disaster or emergency, and in this way goes on to further substantiate the helplessness and dependent imagery of older women (HelpAge International and UNHCR, 2000). These reports highlight that in emergency situations, where service provision and allocation of resources are already scarce, older women tend to be even more deprived of critical life-saving resources (HelpAge International and UNHCR, 2000). Although older women tend to be more numerous in refugee populations, age and gender barriers are likely to exclude them from the decision-making process concerning the distribution of resources. They are often left with lesser aid than others. If an older woman is alone or widowed, it seems that there are even more chances of receiving lesser or no aid.

During such emergency situations, older women also face additional risks when it comes to their safety and protection, their belongings and property, and their access to relief and rebuilding efforts. A study done in Uganda by the HelpAge International, as its website points out, states that older women who remain unprotected in refugee camps fear for their safety and worry about sexual and gender-based violence and abuse within these camps. Many older women and girls in the conflict areas of this region have already been victims of violence, including abduction and sexual slavery.

Documentation of the disadvantages confronted by older women also went to look into their representation in popular culture and the world of fashion. These studies highlight that older women are misrepresented and were more negatively stereotyped than their male counterparts (Lemish and Muhlbauer, 2012; Magoffin, 2007). As Lemish and Muhlbauer (2012) comment, “Their (older women) bodies were often displayed as objects of ridicule”. While older women are always portrayed as someone having less or no goals older men, on the other hand, are always allowed to remain active, vital, and attractive on the silver screen and fashion runways throughout their lives (Magoffin, 2007).

Research on older women, particularly action-oriented research, must certainly take into account these

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intersections between gender and age. The evidence of discrimination in the fields of health, income, disaster relief provisions, personal relationships, and also their (mis)representation in popular culture and fashion industry surely makes a compelling reading and highlights the peculiar problems that a woman faces in the later periods of her life. However, this should not be the only lens used to look at older women, for these works fail to take account of the advantages that may accrue to old women by virtue of the same lifelong patterns of sex-specific behavior. Secondly, such a view tends to reduce the aforesaid problems as something that is very specific of older women. These studies and reports tend to overlook the fact that women's poorer health, lower income, less adequate housing, and so forth do not suddenly appear in old age. Rather, it is the result of a continuous form of disadvantage.

**Using a different lens**

Women tend to outlive men and in these “extra” years they undergo a series of unique experiences and problems. While scholars are now recognizing and writing about the different kinds of problems and experience women face in the later stage of their lives, there is a tendency to focus only on the problems and the negative aspects and to not incorporate the advantages of greater longevity of women into their analyses.

The HelpAge International website, for instance, while describing older women's health, points out how they are at a higher risk of chronic illness and at the same time lack resources to deal with these risks, thus, demonstrating this preoccupation with "the problem of old women". Their introduction, however, is particularly interesting:

“Older women face a higher risk of chronic illness and disability compared to older men”.

Not only does it enforce the idea that older women are always weighed down with illness and disability, it also shows that older women are in constant comparison with their male counterpart. Older women are always portrayed as the “other”. Just as Edwin Ardener (1975) talked about adding female to male models, the discourses on older women also tend to give us the feeling that the category of older women is like an addition to the already prevalent works on older men.

A more concrete example of this preoccupation of seeing older women with a negative lens, as seen above, was the frequent tendency to portray older female characters in popular culture and fashion industry as a marginal individual - someone who is always ill without goals; isolated, worthless, vulnerable and dissatisfied. The male characters, on the other hand, are always allowed to remain important.

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contributors to the world throughout their lives.

In these instances, as mentioned here and also in the previous section, one can see the dominance of the double jeopardy model that constructs longevity of women as a problem. This model fails to take into account the sense of wellbeing and happiness that an older women feels of being connected to her older friends and relatives or doing some charity work (Davidson, 2006). In addition, these researches tend to see the category of older women as one unified block, whereas in reality the life-chances and experiences of a 50-year old woman would be very much different from that of an 80-year old woman. While the 50-year old woman, in a professional setting may be at the peak of her career; the latter would be retired and doing some charity work or even enjoying her retirement phase travelling.

Another area in which the positive aspects of being female and old tends to disappear from academic view is that of social networks and social support. Much is written about the greater propensity of old women to widowhood, which is readily associated with a range of financial, social, psychological, and sexual difficulties. For example, argues women have seen themselves perceived by married women friends as a sexual threat or as easy sexual prey to married male friends, and this has caused a withdrawal from participating in couple-centered activities. However, comparatively very little is understood of the closer instrumental and affective ties the women experience with family and friends, despite the presence of many empirical evidences (Demetrakopoulus, 1983; Gibson, 1996) which points out that such stronger networks exist. Gibson went one step ahead and argued that women with a lifetime of experience in maintaining and establishing social bonds within families, friendship networks, neighborhoods, voluntary associations, and so forth, are far better equipped than older men to confront challenges like poverty, illness or even widowhood.

Despite the presence of all these studies, the general narrative that surrounds older women still portrays them as isolated, needy and disadvantaged. Such studies fail to recognize the importance of social bonds and networks that help older women to be satisfied and content as they age and also overcome to an extent their problems.

**The muted issues**

There are also many other areas which remain uninvestigated in relation to women and old age. While there are many works dealing with the post retirement phase of men and few for working women, there is a lack of studies which deal with the transitions in work that “non-working” women or the “housewives” undergo as they move from youth to old age(Young and Schuller, 1991; Jacobs, Kohli and Rein, 1991; Chan & Stevens, 1999). As Gibson (1996) pointed out, for many women, the transition from midlife to late life will contain significantly more continuities and
discontinuities in terms of interests, activities, and social participation than it does for men. Despite their relative importance, the transition in the kind of work performed by women as they age and their experiences associated with their changing “work profile” have not been very well documented.

Another area of relative silence is that of the old women's involvement in the domestic (informal) and unofficial economies. According to Rose (1985), participation in unofficial economic activities is linked to economic downturns and the availability of leisure hours. Both these conditions are likely to be present in the lives of many old women, which points out that older women may well be heavily involved in a range of nonmarket activities. The hypothesis is also somewhat supported by Vera-Sanso’s (2012) work on how older women in India work in the informal economy and contributes to the family, national and global economies. Hassan and Farooq’s (2015) study in Pakistan is set along similar lines. While such studies are still inadequate, these and other such studies into unspecified areas of investigation may tell us a great deal about the lives of older women. These studies also remind us that our knowledge is partial, and that the double-jeopardy paradigm is not adequate enough to recognize some of the other very important experiences of women.

However, why are older women understood only in relation with problems?

As we have already seen, the ongoing preoccupation with "the problem of old women", has “invisibilised” the positive and important aspects of old women. This has occurred in a number of ways. Firstly, by constructing the image of older women in relation to older men. Secondly, by overemphasizing on the problems and finally by the academic silence on the favorable aspects of old women's lives.

This following section attempts to look into the reasons as to why exactly older women are understood only in relation to their problems and disadvantages. The reasons, however, are not in any way exhaustive. The first, and most obvious, explanation is that there is an element of truth in such a correlation: Older women really do have a number of problems.

The second, and perhaps most powerful, explanation may be found in intellectual history. The study of old women emerged at the confluence of social gerontology and women's studies, both which have a strong traditional concern with social problems and the social construction of disadvantages and inequality (Gibson, 1996). In a way, it was almost evident that when social gerontologists and feminists focused on older women, they would be dealing with questions of inequality and social disadvantages of old women and what could be done to correct that disadvantage.

A third explanation emerges from the methodological inadequacies inherent in much of the work underpinning the social gerontological literature. Hess (1980)
observed that most gerontologists failed to realize that the young-old distinction was in most respects a gender difference. The confusion between age and gender intersections continue to adversely affect research in this area till date. The studies are based on male models, which is somehow interestingly believed to be of a universal paradigm. There is a lack of theoretically informed intersectional analysis in these literatures (Gibson, 1996). Even when intersectional work has been undertaken, gender is frequently taken into account as just another variable. When the effects of variables such as lower income, greater disability, better social support, widowhood, and extreme old age are taken into account, studies have shown that gender do not account for any additional difference(Edwards and Klemmack, 1973; Leonard, 1981). As a result, most of the researches are based on a few universalized parameters of old age such as disability, illness, lack of financial security and so on. Any other parameter (like higher social participation, importance of social networks), which would have been included if the gender aspect had been considered, therefore disappears. In this way, older women came to be exclusively related only to problems and disadvantages.

Finally, as Gibson (1996) argues, it is important to look for explanations within the subject itself. There is a sense of hierarchy which is present within the subject of social gerontology that places certain issues over others. “In social gerontology, as else- where, work on public sphere issues (retirement, income security, etc.) retains more prestige than that on the private sphere (friendship networks, the informal economy)” (Gibson, 1996, p. 444). It, therefore, becomes evident that whenever a social gerontologist would take up a study on older women, the study will try to limit itself within public spheres – looking into issues of access of public services - for the sake of achieving that academic prestige and importance, instead of taking into account the more personal aspects of social bonds and friendship.

**Conclusion**

It was only a few decades back that the issues of older women started to feature in the academic discourses. While this may seem like a welcome change, a close scrutiny points out that these studies have an underlying obsession with male models. The studies almost always revolve around certain themes; older women are higher users of prescription drugs than older men, older women need higher rates of institutional care than older men and so on, giving us an impression that the issues and experiences of older women are a mere addition to the already available male models of understanding of old age. By taking older men as “ideal types” and overemphasizing on the problems of older women, such a “malestream” understanding of women overlook many other important aspects – like the coping strategies or participation in informal labor - that colors the life of an older woman (Gibson, 1966).

Recently, disabled feminists have proposed an auto critique of the feminist
literature on caring, pointing to its preoccupation with the needs and perspectives of careers which virtually exclude those being cared for (Graham, Arber, S., & Ginn, J. (1991). Gender and later life. London: Sage). It is possible to argue, in a similar vein, that there is a need to recognize ageism and to an extent the androcentrism, that continues to influence the studies on gender and aging. There is a need to focus not only on how older women differ from older men but also what is unique about them, on not only what their disadvantages are but also on what they do well and what they can contribute. There is a need to acknowledge that our comfortable wisdom about older women can be shown to have some uncomfortable inadequacies. It is time we step outside that comfort zone and deconstruct the way older women are perceived in academic circles, policy making or otherwise. Which again is possible only by changing the way we write and speak about older women. This essay is a very small step in the long journey that needs to be undertaken by researchers, academicians and policy makers to build a positive and balanced understanding about older women. Last but not the least, it is important to point out that there may be many more advantages of being an older woman or for that matter even many more ways to analyze older women as a category which this paper has not taken into account.

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