

ISSN 0970-5260

# Panjab University Research Journal (Arts)

Volume XLVIII

No 2

July-December 2021



Editor-in-Chief  
Krishna Mohan

Editor  
Rani Mehta

**Panjab University  
Chandigarh (India)**

**Patron:** Vice-Chancellor, Professor Raj Kumar  
**Editor-in-Chief:** Krishna Mohan, Professor of Geography  
**Editor:** Rani Mehta, Professor of Sociology

***Editorial Board***

Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Department of Political Science  
Prof. M. Rajivlochan, Department of History,  
Prof. Archana R. Singh, Department of Mass Communications,  
Prof. Deepti Gupta, Department of English & Cultural Studies  
Prof. Meena Sehgal, Department of Psychology  
Prof. Smita Bhutani, Department of Geography  
Prof. Asha Moudgil, Department of Philosophy  
Shri Jatinder Moudgil (Technical Production Advisor), Manager, Panjab University Press

***Advisory Board:***

Prof. M.M.Puri, Former Vice-Chancellor, Panjab University  
Prof. (Emeritus) Gopal Krishan, Department of Geography  
Prof. Romila Thapar, Professor Emeritus of History, Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU, New Delhi  
Prof. Roger Wettenhall, Professor Emeritus in Public Administration and Visiting Professor, ANZSOG Institute for Governance, University of Canberra ACT, Australia  
Prof. Paul Giles, Oxford University, UK  
Dr. Pramod Kumar, Director, Institute for Development and Communication(IDC), Chandigarh  
Prof. Makarand R.Paranjape, Professor, Department of English, School of SLLCS, JNU, New Delhi -110067  
Professor Paramjit Singh Judge, Department of Sociology, GNDU, Amritsar  
Prof. P.Vinod, Dean Central University, Hyderabad  
Prof. R.K.Mishra, Director, Institute of Public Enterprise, O U Campus,Hyderabad  
Dr. Rammanohar Reddy, Former Editor, Economic and Political Weekly  
Prof. M.P.Bhardwaj, 744, Sector 12, Panchkula  
Prof. S.L.Sharma, 739, Sector 2, Panchkula

**Office Staff**

Rajni Bala

**Office**

*Panjab University Research Journal(Arts)*

Aruna Ranjit Chandra Hall, First Floor

Panjab University, Chandigarh -160014

***Web: [purja.puchd.ac.in](http://purja.puchd.ac.in) and Emails: [purja@pu.ac.in](mailto:purja@pu.ac.in)***

***Copyright 2021: Panjab University Research Journal (Arts)***

It is hereby asserted that all the rights with respect to the material published in this journal are vested in the publisher. Therefore, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system or translated, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Inquiries regarding reproduction in any manner, in whole or part, in English or any other language may be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, *Panjab University Research Journal(Arts)*.

However, the Editor-in-Chief takes no personal responsibility for the facts, opinions or views expressed in the articles published in this Journal.

*PURJA* is a liberal journal and often publishes opinions and views of the writers that are not strictly in consonance with those of its editorial policies.

ISSN 0970-5260

**Panjab University**  
**Research Journal (Arts)**

Volume XLVIII

No 2

July-December 2021



Editor-in-Chief  
Krishna Mohan

Editor  
Rani Mehta

**Panjab University**  
**Chandigarh (India)**



## Contents

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.	Indian Culture and Universal Values : Celebrating Soft Power in Higher Education	Rajeev Kumar	1-20
2.	Were the 1950s-70s really the “Dead Decades” of Indian women’s movement? Understanding the work of Punjab Istree Sabha through an alternate history perspective	Astha Dang	21-34
3.	The Commission for Air Quality Management : Stable and Sustainable Solution	Bharat Mukesh Kumar	35-54
4.	Higher Education Institutions In India: Disparities in Availability	Aman Kumari Smita Bhutani	55-78
5.	Exploring Nature and Risk Factors of Completed Suicide in Sikkim	Satyananda Panda Udangshri Basumatary Kinnari Kashyap	79-102
6.	Human Right, Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition : Some Philosophical Reflections	Lallan Baghel	103-114
7.	Among the poorest, the Lowliest And the Lost : Representation of the Downtrodden in Tagore’s Poetry	Sudeshna Majumdar	115-129
8.	Fire Disaster Development Cycle : A Case Study of Anaj Mandi Fire, Delhi, India	Shubham Kumar Sanu Vishwa Raj Sharma	130-155



## **Indian Culture and Universal Values: Celebrating Soft Power in Higher Education**

RAJEEV KUMAR

### **Abstract**

*India is a civilizational state with a deep-rooted cultural foundation. Indian culture and the universal values had been espoused by several ancient Indian literature. The civilizational connect embedded in soft power, rooted in Indian cultural history, which was manifested in millennia-old traditions and wisdom, thus, travelled far and wide through exchange of ideas and culture. From Buddha, and even before, to Bollywood, India has been communicating its culture, disseminating its values, and exercising its soft power in its relations with the world and is, thus, sometimes referred to as culture-driven soft power. To reap substantial proportion of soft power, India, thus, needs to employ its cultural diplomacy skills. Academia, especially the higher education, is one such arena where India has immense possibilities to reap in the dividends towards becoming a global soft power. Cultural diplomacy without a focused strategy towards cultural awareness in academia would, however, prove to be a futile exercise. Higher education, thus, has a key role in the propagation of soft power tool as it offers enormous opportunities of 'positive influence'. The National Education Policy 2020 has incorporated all these factors and stresses on nurturing and preserving the rich legacies; at the same time researching upon them. Therefore, higher educational institutions should be the role model in this exercise, promoting such ideals and values in classroom situations and connecting them with learners' experiences.*

*This paper, thus, seeks to establish the connection between Indian culture and universal values and how India, which had once been a repository of soft power assets, needs to recalibrate its position with respect to elevating its global stature with the use of soft power assets. For it to happen, the classroom and curriculum of higher educational institutions must be reoriented towards developing a natural bent towards Indian cultural heritage and universal values along with providing them skills for the current cut-throat competitive age.*

**Keywords:** Indian Culture, Universal Values, Soft Power, Higher Education, Indian Knowledge System

## Introduction

*We need an essentially new way of thinking if mankind is to survive. Men must radically change their attitudes toward each other and their views of the future. Force must no longer be an instrument of politics.... Today, we do not have much time left; it is up to our generation to succeed in thinking differently. If we fail, the days of civilized humanity are numbered. – Albert Einstein (1984, p. 43)*

The context of Einstein's statement was about moral duty towards universal peace and harmonization and what he talked about in the last century holds even today as it relates to all spheres humans deal with in their day-to-day life, viz. politics and international relations, science and technology, and education. What a scientist had to say about peace is reflective of the fact that science can no longer exist in isolation and the boundaries in education need to be blurred for a better understanding of events, their causes, and the remedies. The current era speaks volumes of our concrete efforts in the desired directions but we still have to cover good ground. This is so because we are standing perplexed at the occurrence of events, their patterns, and their everlasting effects on nations and humankind. In this context, a renewed emphasis on preserving cultural heritage, universal values, and celebrating soft power becomes quintessential. India figures prominently while talking about values and soft power as India has lived and practiced these virtues through its cultural foundation and has been transferring the same to several regions of the world for ages. This is due to the fact that India, as a nation, always believed in the concept of the eternal dharma, i.e. universal values of peaceful co-existence and that the wise must consider the entire world as a family.

अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्।  
उदारचतितरानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥

(Maha Upanishad VI. 71-73)



Nalanda and Taxila were ancient centres of higher education from where eternal dharma in the form of universal values travelled far and wide. Regarding this eternal dharma of working towards the greater cause of humankind, P.V. Kane expounded in his seminal *History of The Dharma Shastra* (Vol. 2, 1941):

The writers on Dharma Shastra meant by ‘dharma’ not a creed or religion but a mode of life or a code of conduct, which regulated a person’s work and activities as a member of society and as an individual and was intended to bring about the gradual development of a person and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence.

What Kane was referring to in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had already been talked about in the Manusmriti much earlier, i.e. Dharma protects those who protect it.

धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः

(*Manusmriti* 8.15)

Thus, ancient Indian values like non-violence, compassion, tolerance, peace, and acceptance, among others, are universal dharma. Peace and non-violence, as eternal dharma, find mention on numerous occasions in different scriptures and ancient treatises ranging from Rig Veda to Smriti and Yoga Sutra to Mahabharata, and from Kautilya’s Arthashastra and Vasishtha’s Dharmasutra to Kamandaka’s Nitishastra.

### **Indian Culture and Universal Values**

The phrase *dharma sanātana* occurs in classical Sanskrit literature, viz. Rig Veda (3.3.1), Manusmriti (4.138) and the Bhagavata Purana (8.14.4).

आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्हिताय च

(*Rig Veda*)

Rig Veda says that the Sanatana Dharma of a human being is to strive for one’s own salvation, and for the good of the world. In fact, Sanatana

values, viz. spirit of inclusiveness and peaceful co-existence constitute the core foundation of Indian culture. Kumar (2017) is of the view that these values are ever-relevant and welfarist. These are also inevitable for the smooth functioning of the system and, therefore, it is quintessential for humanity to cherish these Sanatana values. Indian culture was continuously attacked and many efforts were made to disintegrate the original cultural form of Bharat. But all such outrageous efforts went in vain and proved to be futile exercises. Indian cultural glory and pride are still intact. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar had recognized this beauty of Indian culture in the form of cultural nationalism. He maintained that there was no nation in the world other than India which had such cultural harmony. He was of the view that India is geographically well organized, and the cultural unity spread all over the country has also remained unbroken and constant (Ambedkar, 1916, as cited in Pritchett, 1979).

India is a civilizational state with a deep-rooted cultural and traditional foundation. Indian history is enmeshed with multiple examples of assimilation and amalgamation of thoughts from various other cultures while keeping the inherent culture entrenched in universal humanistic values. Indian culture and the universal values, which are moral principles common to all religions and also to those who do not follow any religion, had been espoused by ancient scriptures and treatises. The civilizational connect embedded in soft power, rooted in Indian cultural history, was manifested in millennia-old traditions and wisdom and, thus, travelled far and wide through exchange of ideas and culture.

Ancient Indian values like spirituality, truth, tolerance, ethics, acceptance, and non-violence have helped in the realization of the self and the purpose of life. Vedic culture advocated and inculcated tolerance and acceptance for harmony in society. Indian philosophy has, in fact, largely been rooted in universal values like non-violence, spirituality, the welfare of mankind, and *nishkama karma*, i.e. selfless action, which was also advocated in Bhagavad Gita and what we call *karma yoga* in Hinduism.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।  
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः॥

(*Bhagavad Gita 3.19*)

Bhagavad Gita further talks about the concept of *svadharma*, i.e. duty of the individual in particular situations. It also talks about truth, justice, and social duty which influenced, and even continues to, Indian sages and common people extensively. At the same time, the truth was perceived as the ultimate goal of life for which anything and everything could be sacrificed. It continued to play the same role in the modern era too when Mahatma Gandhi used it as a powerful tool for *Satyagraha* which ultimately illustrated the power of truth and the reasons as to why it should be pursued thoroughly. The turning of this tool into a force was possible only because the values were intact and the ultimate goal was to seek spiritual evolution.

From Buddha, and even before, to Bollywood, India has been communicating its culture, disseminating its values, and exercising its soft power in its relations with the world and is, thus, sometimes referred to as culture-driven soft power. The revered epics in the Indian context serve as the basis of human life and goal, viz. the concept of right and wrong formed the core of the Mahabharata, emphasizing on the values of peace, tolerance, truthfulness, and self-realisation. Similarly, our traditional performing arts have always been a medium of entertainment, imparting education and ethical values, viz. *Ramlila*. Indian cultural values strongly speak about non-violence as one of the traits every individual should aspire and practice. Vedanta philosophy opines that the true nature of everything is divine and morally good and, therefore, people should be compassionate towards each other.

Indian culture also played a pivotal role in awakening the spirit of nationalism in the country and also in uniting the people for the freedom struggle against British rule. The common cultural heritage of India and the undying spirit of unity in diversity were also behind the unification of

India under the able leadership of Sardar Patel after its independence from the British on August 15, 1947. On July 5, 1947, while starting the whole process of national unity, Sardar Patel said (Menon, 1955, p. 84):

This country with its institutions is the proud heritage of the people who inhabit it. It is an accident that some live in the (Princely) States and some in British India, but all alike partake of its culture (which is the symbol of unity in diversities) and character. We all are knit together by bonds and blood and feelings no less than of self-interest. None can segregate us into segments; no impassable barriers can be set up between us.

This statement was itself contemplative of the undying spirit of Indian culture and values. These universal values and the rich cultural heritage built on them were behind the image of India as a soft power since early times.

### **India's Soft Power: Antiquity of Global Influence**

Joseph Nye introduced and defined “soft power” to the IR discourse back in the 1980s as the ‘ability to shape the preferences of others’ (Nye, 2004). Nations have, ever since, championed this idea to elevate their global positioning and influence. Gupta (2020) is of the view that the soft power of a country is the ability through which it attracts other nations towards its culture, political values, and foreign policy, i.e. when the intangible cultural assets of a country become a subject of ambition and appreciation by the global community. This perception, according to Gupta (Ibid.), has served as the bedrock for countries to pursue public diplomacy and amplify their cultural engagement with both state and non-state actors. However, while the idea of soft power is only a few decades old, many countries are globally acclaimed for their cultural assets and values that date back centuries and remain sought after still today.

India is one such country whose soft power is premised upon its civilizational heritage, cultural accomplishment, and political values.

India's heterogeneous yet blended vibrant cultural fabric is visible all across inside the boundaries of the country and has served as a model for the world to emulate in terms of influence it continues to exert. India gave birth to the first republic in the world at Lichchhavi and has practiced democratic ideals and principles for ages. Amaresh (2020), talking about statecraft, applauds how Chanakya, the ancient strategist, steered the state and the policymakers to acquire the neighbouring powers through settlement by reaping the significance of soft power. Buddhism is a classic example of a religion, associated with a particular philosophy, spreading from India to other countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and to China and Japan in East Asia through peaceful means. The recent reckoning of India too, as a global power, can be dedicated to *Yoga* and *Ayurveda*. The ever-increasing popularity of these soft power apparatuses, viz. *Namaste* being embraced as a respectful gesture during the ongoing pandemic are evident of India's growing stature at international forums. The 'Namaste diplomacy' of India today has grabbed the attention of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic.

India has survived the vagaries of nature and times because of the eternal values that have been admired, celebrated, and developed since time immemorial. This cultural heritage of India has had been bestowed upon the Indians with a responsibility to carry forward the ideals of ethical and humanitarian values to subsequent generations of India and the world. The world-class ancient institutions of India at Takshshila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila were the most prominent centres of soft power where multidisciplinary teaching and research were undertaken by a number of scholars from all across the world. Soft power, as a cultural tool, was, thus, used to propagate and transfer these basic ideals of Indian philosophy to the world.

Kumar (2017) brings forth the basic tenets of Indian philosophy in the form of acceptance and absorption of all that is benevolent and welfarist. Becoming its foremost feature, it has greatly influenced Indian culture as well. What stemmed from such a pluralist worldview are the humanistic

and welfarist concepts of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah* which are concomitant with the core messages of Indian culture and serve as *mantras* of India's external presence. This has spread far and wide and the world has been recognizing this soft power of India for ages.

Indian soft power travelled far and wide in the form of epics—Ramayana and Mahabharata—as well as Buddhism too and it continues to flourish even today, especially in South and Southeast Asian countries. Ramakein, the national literature of Thailand, is the local version of Ramayana that has been adapted to their cultural aspects in the form of dances, theatre, and other crafts. This is the reason India is using diaspora, Buddhism and economic support as apparatus for attaining diplomatic triumphs and advancing the national interests of India. Indian society and culture that encompasses key assets of soft power, viz. Indian cuisines, religions and dharmic traditions, festivals, spirituality, arts and handicrafts, literary works, performing arts, tourism, diaspora, movies, and music have a great impact on the global market.

Soft power is closely associated with heritage too. In the foreign policy context, their combination has become a necessary tool of diplomacy for states (Mukherjee 2018):

in the way of promoting inter-cultural dialogue, essential to counter the multiple challenges to the existing world order by non-State actors. The dissemination of India's soft power through inclusive cultural and civilisation heritage across millennia has ably demonstrated that her values of secularism, tolerance, inclusiveness and cross fertilisation of cultures are more important than ever before in today's troubled world. Indian culture has emerged as the force to connect, to build relations and to heal the ruptures created by history and politics.

To further propagate this apparatus, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has:

determined to promote a “soft power matrix” to measure the effectiveness of the country’s soft power outreach. Initiatives such as ‘Destination India’ and ‘Know India’ have likewise been launched.

However, to achieve the full potential of India’s soft power, it becomes imperative to exercise an integrated approach incorporating public diplomacy at the global level, and a creative economy at the local. The involvement of all stakeholders, viz. academics, entrepreneurs, artists, civil society, and policymakers will be instrumental in achieving the desired result. One of the stakeholders in this pursuit of emerging as a force to connect and build relations and to re-establish the universality of the Indian value system is the field of academics, particularly higher education. This is because educational exchanges at the higher levels are often seen as facilitators towards the hybridization of culture at the people-to-people level, thereby helping to translate mutual respect into diplomatic efforts and camaraderie into economic cooperation.

### **Higher Education and Soft Power: Back to Basics**

Education is a tool instrumental in the construction of a nation and its culture. How can a nation evolve if its values and culture are not located in the realm of its educational activities? Mishra (2017) rightly points out that education, without universal ethics, is geared more towards economic development rather than solving mental problems at the individual level or social problems at the macro-level. The nature and structure of ideas embedded in learning resources of higher educational institutions must, therefore, be geared towards meeting the same.

Joseph Nye remarks (Nye, 2004):

The universities develop soft power of their own that may reinforce or be at odds with official foreign policy goals and are likely to become more and more important in the global information age.

Altbach and Peterson; and Mashiko and Horie (2008, as cited in Wojciuk, 2018) echo the views of Nye and point out the progressive effects of such an exercise when they maintain the view that:

The soft power of higher education is also exercised through influence on intellectual and scientific life and through spreading ideas worldwide. The attraction of students and scholars from abroad to higher education institutions is considered to be an effective approach to cultivating individuals who will develop an understanding of a given country and support for it.

While higher education, in the contemporary discourses on soft power, is being increasingly mentioned in the context of international recognition and acceptance of a given culture, it was already a source of soft power in early India when Taxila and Nalanda universities attracted foreign students and scholars from various places across the globe. Indian higher educational institutions, therefore, require to play the anchoring role of taking the learners back to the glory and shed light on the cultural past of India which encompassed the values and ethics for the world to emulate.

It will be a source of extensive soft power as India is projected to host 119 million college-aged students by 2025 (Pushkar, 2016a). This, in his view, will help in elevating India's growing stature as:

a larger presence of foreign students in a country is not only reflective of a nation's 'soft power' but further augments it. While democracy, diversity and culture are all important contributors to our soft power, a robust higher education sector could become even more important for the same reason, particularly in the current era where the knowledge sector is more valued globally than ever before.

Higher education is a soft power tool as it offers enormous opportunities of 'positive influence'. However, its potential in the global arena is yet to be realized by India. Looking at such opportunities and the steps needed to be taken for realizing the real potential, Sadagopan (2020) remarks:



Opportunities created in the form of scholarships for students and research centres that form platforms for student and faculty group to undertake high-quality research leads to a cascading positive influence that ultimately leads to sustainable leadership for the nation, a true measure of “soft power” and also lots of wealth creation opportunities.

The efforts enunciated by the Ministry of Culture (providing scholarships), University Grants Commission/Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of External Affairs even creating Institutes overseas must, therefore, be synergised looking at them as “strategic opportunity” (Ibid.) for enhancing soft power credentials. At the same time, bringing international students to India for higher studies in world-class higher education institutions should also be strategically planned and executed towards meeting the aim of placing India at the top of the list of countries with incredible soft power.

In this direction, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, now renamed as the Ministry of Education, approved ‘Study in India’ programme to:

improve the soft power of India with focus on the neighbouring countries and use it as a tool in diplomacy; to boost the number of inbound international students in India; to seek for improvement in overall quality of higher education; and to aspire for an increase in global ranking of India as educational destination (*Press Information Bureau*, 2018).

Thus, the ‘Study in India’ programme seeks to re-establish India as an attractive education destination as it used to be in the ancient days. As the presence of large number of international students boosts the soft power of recipient countries (Pushkar, 2016b), establishing world-class universities would be the first step towards achieving this goal as it will attract the best students from around the world to study in India.

World-class universities with students from across the world would play a critical role in boosting the soft power and would help in creating India's image as a smart power too. Sadagopan (2020) explains the mechanism behind the role of higher education institutions in enhancing the soft power of a nation. He says:

Students appreciate the training and skills they learn at universities since it improves their life chances, whether in the host country or elsewhere. Even those who do not stay behind to work in the foreign countries carry home a favourable image of the country where they received good quality education and spent a good many years as students. Many of those who return often move up into influential positions in the government or elsewhere which they use to support closer economic and more generally better diplomatic relations between their home country and the country where they attended university.

For this reason, 'Study in India' deserves to become a major higher education initiative as it has important implications for foreign policy as well. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recommends that:

India will be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable-cost. In fact, internationalization of higher education has received its due importance for the first-time in the newly formulated NEP which strives to promote internationalization, by bringing some structural policy reforms (Patwardhan & Mittal, 2021).

Stressing on the need for internationalization of education in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, Patwardhan & Mittal (2021) further talk about engaging with the world community through soft power. They are of the opinion that:

The internationalization of education has to move much beyond mere mobility of faculty and students to engaging with the

international world through soft power diplomacy. We need to strategically engage with the international community and develop a new narrative portraying the picture of “New India” that can contribute to global educational and cultural goals. For this we need to promote higher education in line with the SDGs of the UN. When merged with UNESCO’s overall emphasis on cultural memory and heritage-as-human-property, the obvious domain to focus on would be disappearing knowledge systems.

At the same time, localization of sustainable goals must also be pursued and India should look inwards and talk more about the vision and ideals of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo who considered holistic and humanistic approach as necessary tools for reaching out to the world and making a mark on the global arena. This will enhance India’s soft power credentials as the more we align our education system with the SDGs, the more acknowledgment our efforts would get.

To work towards preserving the disappearing knowledge systems, India must (Ibid):

aggressively market its cultural heritage and fast-disappearing materials (including languages) by demonstrating how these are important as a historical record of humanity itself.

At the same time, Indian academia, with able support from agencies such as ICSSR and ICCR, should actively participate, strategize and intellectually influence international initiatives.

To reap substantial proportion of soft power, India, thus, needs to employ its cultural diplomacy skills. But cultural diplomacy without a focused strategy towards cultural awareness in academia would prove to be a futile exercise. Talking about the need for cultural awareness, the NEP 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020, p. 53) says:

The promotion of Indian arts and culture is important not only for the nation but also for the individual. Cultural awareness and

expression are among the major competencies considered important.... to provide them with a sense of identity, belonging, as well as an appreciation of other cultures and identities. It is through the development of a strong sense and knowledge of their own cultural history, arts, languages, and traditions that children can build a positive cultural identity and self-esteem.

The NEP 2020 also throws light on preserving and promoting various soft power assets. It outlines that (Ibid., p. 54):

to preserve and promote its art and culture, there is a need to develop high-quality materials in various Indian languages, conserve artefacts, develop highly qualified individuals to curate and run museums and heritage or tourist sites, thereby also vastly strengthening the tourism industry.

The NEP 2020 also outlines the importance of India's cultural heritage and Knowledge System inclusive of Indian philosophy and thought which considers knowledge, wisdom and truth as the highest human goal. It says (Ibid., p. 4):

The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self.

Therefore, to keep the idea of promoting the Indian historical and cultural heritage in complete harmony with the objectives prescribed for and by higher educational institutions, history needs to be taught not just to the world at large, but more importantly, to the Indians first. India's contributions globally in the field of arts, science, medicine, economics, etc. are immense and influential. The NEP stresses nurturing and preserving the rich legacies; at the same time researching upon them in the newly revised system.

What needs to be done for nurturing and enhancing the rich legacies to

posterity is to first recognise such contributions, followed by their systematic study and bringing them hand-in-hand with the national discourse before they could be meaningfully exported. Thus, creating a narrative based on scientific research and empirical data should be prioritized and communicated and circulated through India's extensive diasporic presence across the globe. This will work as an effective mechanism for promoting India's soft power. In this regard, NEP 2020 (Ibid., pp. 54-55) recognizes that:

The knowledge of the rich diversity of India should be imbibed first hand by learners. This would mean including simple activities, like touring by students to different parts of the country, which will not only give a boost to tourism but will also lead to an understanding and appreciation of diversity, culture, traditions and knowledge of different parts of India. Towards this direction under 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat', 100 tourist destinations in the country will be identified where educational institutions will send students to study these destinations and their history, scientific contributions, traditions, indigenous literature and knowledge, etc., as a part of augmenting their knowledge about these areas.

This exercise would be in line with identifying and studying traditional Indian knowledge system (IKS) – scientific, philosophical and religious. There are multiple ways of viewing the world and including the IKS in higher education curriculum would certainly help to understand and experience the world through different paths, all leading to the same destination, i.e. self-realisation. To celebrate Indian traditional knowledge, which has the potential to offer solutions to many of the global challenges we face today, education curriculums of higher education institutions must incorporate Indian ethos, languages, rich cultural heritage and values. Provided with good reading material, students should imperceptibly imbibe higher human values such as devotion to duty, service before self and patriotism, thus, helping them to become ideal global citizens (Advani, 1996, p. 2078).

Such value-based education will include the development of humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal human values of truth, righteous conduct, peace, nonviolence, scientific temper, citizenship values, and also life-skills; lessons in seva/service and participation in community service programmes will be considered an integral part of a holistic education (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020, p. 37).

Higher education, in modern-day era, eventually needs to be student-centric and outcome-based. It should impart values with skill and should replace information gathering attitude with problem-solving approach. It should be geared towards building character, recalibrating attitude and behaviour and imparting skill with knowledge. Students should be garnered with focus inevitably on solving problems of the world making them global citizens, a concept once again driven from ancient Indian roots. Students should be encouraged not only to follow but live the ideals, concepts and values propagated by IKS. This can happen only when all the disciplines come together. Higher educational institutions should be the role model in this exercise, promoting such ideals and values in classroom situations and connecting them with learners' experience. NEP 2020 is a historic step towards achieving this objective.

### **Conclusion**

The knowledge and appreciation of India's cultural heritage, viz. soft power assets such as education, culture, traditions, diversity, customs, languages, ethos and values, are quintessential for every aware citizen of the country to take India to the global position it deserves. However, the modern and contemporary world of cut-throat competition has somewhere diluted the whole purpose, means, and ways of living life and the values are less cherished. Such universal values, therefore, need to be revived at the level of academia to give students the ancient Indian tool of rationality thereby helping them in evolving newer paradigms of values that may ultimately lead to progress and liberation.

*Above victory or defeat*

*The calm man dwells in peace*

(Dhammapada, 3-5, 201)

Universal values, in this age of artificial intelligence, need to be revived and imbibed. Educating the students about Indian culture and heritage will certainly help achieve the objective and therein the role of higher educational institutions and educators becomes important. Educators should take the responsibility for creating a more sustainable and value-based tomorrow that benefits from the injunctions of soft power at the teaching-learning level. Biodiversity protection, waste management and optimum use of resources which were discussed at great length in various ancient Indian texts should be the focus of teaching-learning methods, i.e. imparting practicality to students.

Cultural activities promoting traditional values should be regularly held in higher educational institutions in the form of discussions, debates, and deliberations to make the students imbibe these traits thereby becoming informed and conscientious citizens of the country. For it to happen, value-oriented courses and courses on ethics and morality should be developed; mass media and ICTs should be utilized to promote them and the role of the educators becomes central in the whole scheme of things. The Government of India has already taken a stride in this direction and through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 many such courses have been designed and included to impart values along with providing skills to the students and researchers. The NEP 2020 has envisaged and encompassed all these universal values at the level of policy-making in terms of setting the curriculum for higher studies. It recommends a system of higher education with a curriculum that caters to Indian culture, values and aspirations in Bhartiya way thereby promoting cultural heritage, democracy, scientific temper and encouraging students and researchers to care for the protection of the environment. Teaching-learning in higher educational institutions should cultivate, through good reading material and other extra-curricular activities, these higher human values which form the bedrock of Indian culture and which were disseminated to

various regions across the globe in the form of India's soft power credentials. A compassionate society can, thus, only be attained as a goal if the ancient Indian Knowledge System is revived. This can be achieved only by setting parameters right in higher education.

We need to continuously bear in our minds the essence of Indian culture and in our hearts its foremost characteristics, especially when we celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, and commit to move forward in the direction of re-establishing India as a *Vishwaguru*. We need to recognize, conserve and promote 14 Vidyas and 64 Kalas under the patronage of heritage. Revisiting, nurturing and revitalizing these unique knowledge bases and skill sources need to be initiated. Initiatives to explore the true potential of our soft power assets would, in the long run, prove to be a powerful tool in realizing our dream of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. Finally, we must use our soft power assets to exert influence more often and, at the same time, work towards combining the soft and hard power assets in policy-making so as to make India a smart power.

The essence of universal values and the contribution of Indian culture to the peaceful co-existence and happiness lies in the eternal dharma that has had been the life-breath of the Indians since time immemorial.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः।  
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु।  
मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥

(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.14*)

### **References**

- Amaresh, Preethi. (2020, August 27). Rise of India as a Global Soft Power. *Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Diplomatist*.
- Easwaran, Eknath. (2010). *The Dhammapada*. Delhi: Jaico Publishers.
- Einstein, Albert. (1984). *The World as I See It*. Secausus, NJ: Citadel Press.



- Gupta, Arunima. (2020). *Celebrating Indian Soft Power*. USD Center on Public Diplomacy. Retrieved from <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/celebrating-indian-soft-power>
- Advani, Shalini. (1996). Educating the National Imagination. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(31), 2077-2082.
- Kamandaki. *Nitisara*. (1896). Translated by Manmath Nath Dutt.
- Kane, P.V. 1941. *History of The Dharma Shastra*. Vol. 2. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Kautilya. *Arthashastra*. (1915). Translated by R. Shamasastri. Bangalore: Government Press.
- Kumar, Ravindra. (2017). Indian Culture: The Culture of Universal Values. *The Business Economics*.
- Menon, V.P. (1955). *Integration of the Indian States*. Delhi: Sangam Books.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development.(2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India.
- Mishra, T.K. (2017). *Honesty as the Basis of Universal Ethics*. Berzin Archives.
- Mukherjee, Bhaswati. (2018). India's Soft Power and Heritage: A Gift to the World. *Vivekananda International Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.vifindia.org/2018/july/04/india-s-soft-power-and-heritage>
- Nye, Joseph. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Patwardhan, Bhushan and Mittal, Pankaj. (2021, February 15). Optimizing the soft power: Internationalizing Indian higher education. *The Economic Times*.
- Press Information Bureau. (2018, March 23). '*Study in India*' programme to attract foreign students to study in India. Government of India. Ministry of Education. Retrieved from <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1526155>
- Pritchett, Frances W. (Ed.). (1979). *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* (Vol. 1). Bombay: Education Department. Government of Maharashtra.

- Pushkar. (2016, July 31). Why India Needs to Seriously Push Its 'Study in India' Initiative. *The Wire*.
- Pushkar. (2016, August 03). How the 'Study in India' Initiative Can Boost India's Soft Power. *The Wire*.
- Sadagopan, Sowmyanarayanan. (2020). *Higher Education as "Soft Power"*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehighereducationreview.com/opinion/mentors-opinion/higher-education-as-soft-power-fid-30.html>
- Wojciuk, Anna. (2018). Higher education as a soft power in international relations. In Watanabe, Yasushi (Ed.). *Handbook of Cultural Security* (pp. 343-360). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

## **Were the 1950s-70s really the “Dead decades” of Indian women’s movement? Understanding the work of Punjab Istree Sabha through an alternate history perspective**

AASTHA DANG

### **Abstract**

*This research paper discusses the role played by Punjab Istree Sabha (PIS), regional unit of the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), in strengthening the women’s movement in Punjab. The paper foregrounds the genesis of PIS in the 1940s, the circumstances under which it arose and the kind of issues it worked on. The focus of this paper is on the decades of 1950-1970s, which are sometimes referred to as the “dead decades” for the Indian women’s movement due to lack of documentation on the subject. By combining oral history methods, studying life histories of individual women, accessing their personal writings, letters, and using other archival material like reports and proceedings of the PIS and the NFIW, newspaper articles, this paper explores alternative historiographical accounts to analyse the work done by PIS during these decades. This research highlights that these decades formed an important cornerstone of the women’s movement. Organisations like the PIS, through their work highlighted some of the major issues concerning women at that time – issues of victims of dowry related crimes, unequal wage rate among industrial workers and demand for change in the labour laws.*

**Key words:** Punjab Istri Sabha, Punjab women’s movement, ‘Dead decades’.

### **Introduction**

The women’s movement in India has undergone several phases. The pre-independence phase has been broadly categorized as the Social Reform Movements Phase (1850-1930s) and the phase of Women as Agents of

Change in the National Struggle (1930-1947) (Khullar, 1997). After India’s independence, it was post 1975, that the next phase of women’s movement began. Although a lot of international and national factors were instrumental in bringing about this movement, the release of the report ‘Towards Equality’ by Committee on the status of women in 1974, proved to be a turning point (Mazumdar, 1994). This report presented a grim picture on the status of women, brought fore evidence of the violence and discrimination that was being faced by them, which went against the principles of equality enshrined in the Indian constitution (*ibid*). However, the decades after India’s independence, that is 1950’s to early 1970’s have been often been described as ‘**dead decades**’ of Indian feminism (Desai). This terminology is apparently used to describe a lack of action in the women movements during these decades. There are a few theories to explain this downslide. The researcher/author attempts discussing these theories in bits in this paper. The author argues that the ‘dead decades’ were in fact not dead. The women’s movement was churning in many parts of the country including in Punjab, which is the focus of my study.

Desai (*ibid*) posits that this inaction of the feminist movement during the ‘dead decades’ could be attributed to the fact that after attaining independence, there was a lot of hope from the Indian state and its policies. Mazumdar (1994) argues that by the time ‘Towards Equality’ report was published, there was an increasing sense of discontentment with the Indian state’s policies towards women. 1975 was also declared by the United Nations as International Women’s Year, which provided impetus to the women’s movement.

Recent scholarship has, however, contested the claim that the 1950s and 1960s were decades of inactivity for women’s movement in India (Datta *et al* 2021). According to them, this period of apparent inactivity is “less a reflection on the ground realities and more an effect of historiographical orientations that tend to validate specific patterns and actions over others” (Datta *et al* 2021). Pre-independence era saw emergence of prominent

women leaders and activists, who took up the cause of women. How does one explain their abdication to the cause of women (*ibid*)? Many of these women leaders and activists continued to work in this field in various regional areas through autonomous organisations or political platforms. Through this research, I bring forth the work being done by one such organization i.e., Punjab *Istree Sabha* (PIS), a regional wing of the National Federation of Indian Women<sup>i</sup>(NFIW). This research paper focuses on the women's movement that emerged in Chheharta<sup>ii</sup>, and soon spread to other parts of Punjab during this period.

In the first section, the methodology deployed for doing this research has been discussed. The next section traces the historical genesis of PIS in the pre-independence era, and the work done by them in Punjab. The next section focusses on the revival of the organization post-independence, and the work done by them through the 1950s, 60s and even 70s. This work by the PIS provided an impetus to the overall national women's movement, to reform in laws and policies as well as change in discourse on the status of women, both in the state of Punjab as well as the country.

### **Methodology**

The study uses multiple methods to analyse this period. Oral history interview transcripts, in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) of women activists have been referred to and analysed to understand the issues prevalent during this period (both pre independence and post-independence), work that was done, strategies deployed to mobilise women and challenges faced in the process. An archive of documents was created to research on this period, which included newspaper articles; conference proceedings of the PIS and NFIW; personal memoirs and writings of the women leaders associated with the movement. While writing a women's history, conventional sources are not always sufficient. Sometimes, making a sensitive archive using alternative resources can lead to very interesting and insightful accounts (Chakravarti in Sivaraman, 2006). During the fieldwork, interviews were conducted

with both residents of Chheharta, and women associated with the PIS and the movement. This helped in gaining firsthand insights into their activism and tribulations in the process. These interviews and oral history transcripts and archives offered rich insight into how innovative tools like folk songs etc. were used to spread awareness and mobilise women into activism. Documenting these rich traditions is essential as it helps bring those aspects of history into light, which are otherwise in danger of being “condemned to historical silence by archival absence” (Nair, 2008).

### **Historical background: Women’s movement in the 1940s in Punjab**

As aforementioned, the pre independence era, from 1930 to 1947, saw women becoming agents of change in the independence struggle. Mahatma Gandhi’s call to the women to join the freedom struggle provided a huge impetus to the women coming out in the public sphere to join the movement (Khullar, 1997). The women organisations were also cognizant of the constraints of women, and thus advocated their participation in the movement, but not at the cost of their household and other responsibilities (Khullar, 1997). However, most of these women organisations saw participation from the middle class educated women. But some women groups, for instance in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh<sup>iii</sup> and in Punjab made a conscious effort to engage with the women from rural areas as well as poor regions like the urban slums.

In Punjab, especially in places like Lahore, Amritsar, the thrust on the education of women was high. Lahore alone had around seven to eight women colleges. These provided a fertile ground to mobilise women students through study groups and make them aware about the ongoing national movement, and the issues with the colonial rule (Prasad). These study groups led to the emergence of **Women’ Self Defense League** (WSDL) in Punjab, in the year 1943 (Chakravarty, 1980). Initially this group comprised majorly of women students and teachers. This was also around the time when Second World War was ongoing, and Indian National Congress had launched the Quit India Movement. States like

West Bengal were in the middle of a deadly famine, in which around three million lives were lost. These groups of girl students travelled to West Bengal to assist the women groups called *Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti* (MARS) in their relief efforts (Sen, 2001). In Punjab, they conducted cultural programmes and organized help desks for relief funds.

It was also seen that there was a lot of food shortage in Punjab due to hoarding by the shopkeepers. This was because the rations were being supplied for the soldiers in the war, and there was also an impact on the import of food. Hoarding in the ration shops was causing food shortage. This in turn resulted in long queues outside the ration shops. Due to scarcity of supply, there was trepidation among the women that they will not be able to get sufficient food for their families. Thus, to get to the head in the line, women would jostle and push each other (Chakravartty, 1980). Many members from the WSDL started work in these *mohallas* (streets) by organising women in queues and providing them with a token to ensure they don't break lines. They would go to the ration shops early, look at the records to check the amount sanctioned for distribution (Prasad). They would ensure the sanctioned amount was distributed among the women, and to do so seamlessly, they provided tokens to these women (*ibid*). This entire process ensured that the ration was distributed judiciously and without any commotion. Since women from the urban *mohallas* spent a long time in these queues, they also took this opportunity to perform skits, songs to create awareness about the ongoing issues in the country. Thus, through this concerted effort, WSDL soon spread to other cities across Punjab – like Lyallpur; Jullundur, Amritsar, Ferozepur, to name a few (*ibid*). The movement spread to the working-class women, and their membership comprised of both Hindu and Muslim women. WSDL began work in the villages, after seeing the success and rise in membership in the urban areas of Punjab (Chakravartty, 1980). In the villages, classes were organised for peasant women, to educate them about the ongoing issues confronting the country, and then membership secured (*ibid*). They raised the issues of women farmers in the All-India Kisan Conference organised

in Amritsar. Their demands included opening of food depots among others (Chakravartty, 1980). The membership of WSDL rose to 12000 women across Punjab by the year 1944 (Prasad). Looking at the impact of their work, the All-India Women’s Congress (AIWC), asked to join hands with them so that they can make a concerted effort to uplift the women (Prasad). This partnership proved effective in propagating the movement further, establishing skill centres for women (*ibid*). This continued till India attained independence, and Punjab among other states was partitioned.

### **Issues taken up during the 1960s and 1970s**

WSDL movement disintegrated due to India’s partition. However, some of its leaders, who came to India, soon started work towards the revival of the movement. Due to partition, there were several refugees around the border. Many of these women activists first tried to rehabilitate the people, help them connect with some communes or camps to provide them shelter and food (Chibbar). The need to continue the earlier work, as well as reform was continuously felt among these women who were working in the grassroot. Thus, they slowly began the work of mobilizing women again – initially in places like Ferozepur, Jullundur and Chheharta (Amritsar). They soon started a women’s front called Punjab Istree Sabha (PIS) which was much built on the edifice of the WSDL (Chibbar; Chakravartty 161). One of the initial movements in which PIS became active was the trade union movement, in Chheharta, and as well as in several other parts of Punjab.

#### ***Trade Union Movement***

Chheharta is an industrial town near Amritsar, with presence of several textile factories. Post partition, many of the workers, who were employed in these factories, migrated to Pakistan. Those people who came to Amritsar, took up jobs in these factories due to lack of other economic opportunities. The mill owners took advantage of their situation and reduced their wage rate. They were not provided with any safety



mechanism at work, jobsecurity, or paid leaves (Sawhney, 2007). Dissatisfaction was brewing among the workers, and this provided an impetus for creating a union of workers called as *Ekta Mazadoor Union*. A lot of strikes happened in the 1950's and biggest among them was the 1955 General Strike. The unique feature about these strikes was the participation of large number of women in these protests. Infact, the discontentment among the workers was used as a pivotal issue to mobilise these women, who otherwise were confined to their household. Women participated in large number in the 1955 General Strike, courted arrests. The strike went on for 36 days, and the women prepared food, for the 1100 workers on strike. Some women were also the main strikers. When the men were put under arrest, it was the women who continued to strike and ensure that the movement sustained. This General Strike reaped results for the workers, with increment in the wages; decision on the lay off law and paid holidays per year (six in number) for the workers<sup>iv</sup>. There were several outstanding aspects about the movement as it was conceptualised: it was for the first time as early as in 1950's and 1960's that women were systemically organised and brought under one-fold to agitate along with the workers. It was also one of the first labour strikes which were women led (Sawhney, 2007). Velayudhan (1985) points out that in the 1950s and 1960s, known as "lull" period for the women's movement in India, women were mostly participating in agrarian struggles, working class struggle, anti-price rise movement etc. There was both an economic and developmental crisis in the country, with the situation of women becoming more vulnerable. Thus, the subsequent uprising of women in the 1970s can be examined in this context as well (Velayudhan, 1985).

### ***Anti-dowry movement***

One of the most important impact of the mobilisation of women under the ambit of Punjab Istree Sabha (PIS) was their struggle against Dowry. Since the PIS got consolidated, they started raising issues against discrimination of women which were widely prevalent in the society.

Anti-dowry movement emerged in Chheharta and Amritsar, in the 1950’s, and soon spread to rest of the industrial centres in Punjab, which had presence of PIS and the trade union movement. The leaders of PIS soon realised that dowry was a widely prevalent phenomenon in the region, and leaders of political parties as well as trade union movement took dowry during their marriages. Concerted efforts were made in collaboration with a few male leaders, to make both men and women aware about the evils of dowry. Leaders as well as workers in the trade union movement took a pledge denouncing the practice and committing that neither they nor their family members will practice it. Simultaneously, consistent efforts were made to promulgate changes in the law. Renu Chakravartty, Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha introduced a private members bill<sup>v</sup> for the Abolition (Restraint) of Dowry in Lok Sabha within its first tenure, in the year 1952 (Chakravartty & Chotani, 2014). This was done due to the signature campaign and requests by women organisations from Punjab, Bihar, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. Women from regional organisations in these states, including from PIS, met the law minister and presented him with signatures collected from various parts of the country in support of the Bill (*ibid*). PIS alone collected 14000 signatures from the state (*ibid*). The first amendment to the dowry law was made in the year 1961 due to the continuous pressure created by these organisations.

However, it was soon realized that the 1961 Anti-Dowry Act had barely any impact on the dowry related incidents as well as deaths. Organisations working at the ground level continued to report cases of dowry, including domestic violence, suicide etc. due to unmet dowry demands of the in-laws and harassment caused by them. PIS also played a crucial role during the decades of 1960s and 1970s, following the passage of the Anti-Dowry Act in 1961. One of its members, in an interview said that they formed anti-dowry committees that had been recommended by the 1961 Act as well. These committees were instrumental in creating a strong network across the state of Punjab, that if any case of dowry harassment, violence, death occurred, members of the PIS came to know about it. They did a

personal intervention with the victim as well as her family, protested against the accused causing public humiliation, and also helped the victim in registering the complaint to the police. PIS also held women *Aadalat* (courts) to solve family discords, dowry related disputes every week. Due to their work and social standing these decisions were usually upheld by the concerned parties. In cases of irreconcilable differences, entire dowry was returned to the girl's family. These courts were effective in creating awareness and curtailing the practice of dowry. Women *aadalats* were first started in Chheharta but soon spread to other parts of Punjab as well (NFIW 9<sup>th</sup> congress report). In the decade of 1970-80, PIS organised demonstrations against dowry murders in Taran Taran, Amritsar, Faridkot, Jalandhar, Chandigarh, Patiala and Fort Solan Nagar among others. Their intervention ensured registration of cases and speedy investigation. (*ibid*).

In 1975, due to the sustained efforts of organisations like PIS to bring forth the issues of violence and oppression of women, the Punjab government appointed a committee for examining these issues. Three members of PIS were also a part of this committee. PIS was also one of the first women organisations to raise the demand that “cases of women who died within the ten years of marriage must be investigated as unnatural deaths and not as cases of suicide as was being done by the police” (Chakravartty & Chotani 2014). These efforts and recommendations had an impact on the law against dowry as well. In 1975, Punjab was among the first states to make dowry a cognizable offence. A law was also passed that if a woman dies within seven years of marriage, postmortem of her body would be compulsory, unless the victim's family gives in writing that they do not expect foul play (*ibid*).

The dowry movement on the national front gained major momentum around the year 1978-79, when bride burning issues came forth. A united front comprising of various women organisations was formed called Dahej Vidrohi Chetna Manch (DVCM) which also had representatives from PIS among other organisations. These group sent recommendations to the Joint Selection Committee of the Parliament which finally drafted changes to

the 1961 anti-dowry law. It was through the sustained efforts of organisations like the PIS that the amendment to the existing law was made first in 1984 and then in 1986 (Agnes, 1980-89).

### ***Relief work***

Apart from raising issues against social oppression of women, like the dowry cases, rape and murders, issue of female infanticide and feticide; PIS also undertook relief work. During the 1965 India Pakistan war, Chheharta was bombed (11 bombs were dropped on the town) due to its location next to the border. This incident resulted in massive carnage in the town. It led to the deaths of more than 50 people, and hundreds were injured. The government civil system proved ineffective and did not provide much help. But PIS started relief work early on. Their office was also converted as the government’s civil defence office. They first ensure that the injured victims were hospitalized and provided suitable treatment. They also collected money for the cremation of those already dead. Work was also done to provide food, clothing to the victim’s family, who had lost everything during the bombs. They also assisted these families in getting assistance from the government (Chibbar, 2006).

During the 1971 India Pakistan war, PIS played a pivotal role as well. As per the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress report of the NFIW, “the most active participation in the defence work was done by the PIS. Punjab being a border state was directly involved in the war on the western sector, and this had caused a lot of suffering to the people of the area. The maximum number of civilian casualties in the 14-day war was in Punjab. Nearly two lakh people in the border villages had to vacate their homes and live as refugees. The members of the PIS toured the border area in the period to acquaint themselves with the problems of the people, and seek government help for relief”. In Chheharta, PIS was the first to start canteen for *jawaans* (army men), which was run throughout the period of war. Hundreds of *jawaans* were served tea and snacks. Refugees from the border were sent to Amritsar, and ration for two weeks sanctioned for them. They also

collected clothes and milk for the children and aided during some of the child births in the camps. When the border villages were bombed, members of the PIS were the first to reach there and rush the wounded people to the hospitals(NFIW 8<sup>th</sup> Congress Report).

## **Discussion**

The study highlights several nuances about how a women's movement is created and sustained at the grassroots. The oral history interviews of many of its activists revealed the negotiations and everyday challenges that they had to undertake to mobilise these women. For instance, in the early 1950s when women were mobilised for the trade union struggle, it was their first tryst with 'public sphere'. They were mostly confined to the household and would wear veil (Sawhney, 2007). Similarly, during the dowry movement, the challenge was that dowry as a cultural practice was so engrained in the society, that if not practised, she would remain unmarried. And the stigma of having an unmarried daughter was a huge one. Thus, to bring about change, it was important to rally this cause not only among women, but the men and the families, who could take a strong stand against this practice. This also included attempting reconciliation between families even when one party was at fault due to their demands, since culturally separating in a marriage was also a huge stigma for a woman. Raka Ray (2000) posits that "Organisations or activists are not autonomous or free agents, but rather they inherit a field and its accompanying social relations, and when they act, they act in response to it and within it". Ray (2000) enunciates upon the importance of "political culture" that is, acceptable, and legitimate ways of doing politics in a given field. In her opinion, activists in Indian women's movement organise and strategize within constraints, as do activists in all social movements (*ibid*). It is important to account for these since they bring forth the everyday struggles of being an activist.

Another aspect that came forth during the fieldwork was the importance of humane touch while building a movement at the grassroots. Leaders

engaged in the movement spent hours understanding the issues of women, within their households, trying to help them with their everyday challenges. These aspects come forth from personal memoirs and writings, letters of some of these leaders (Kondapalli; Sen). In a woman’s life, personal is political, and engagement with one cannot be devoid of the other (*ibid*). Gail Omvedt (2008) says that many issues taken up by women’s organisations may not involve questions of ‘women’s liberation’ or consciousness. However, in the process of coming out of their homes, “demonstrating and developing their own initiatives and decision-making power, establishing in practicing their equal role, the women’s consciousness will develop, and grassroots women’s organisation can be established in which working class women play a leading role”.

### **Conclusion**

This research paper emphasizes on the role played by regional women’s organisations like the PIS in building and sustaining a movement at the grassroots, that engaged with women from the working class. These movements are critical in not only the impact they had on the policy and legal landscape, but also on the awareness and consciousness among the women and society at large. This paper also highlights the importance of engaging with sources like oral history interviews, personal memoirs and writings while writing women’s history, since these narratives are often not captured or remain silent in the mainstream documents. Uma Chakaravarty has rightly pointed out that “conventional sources are problematic for writing women’s history as they are inherently biased against leaving records from a woman-inclusive or woman-centred perspective” (Sivaraman, 2006) and thus there is an overwhelming need for new ways to archive material in feminist circles. These methods of research can rescue women from the oblivion “to which they have been condemned as non-actors in a history obsessed by mega-events and a handful of individuals who have wielded political power (Sivaraman, 2006).

## References

- Agnes, Flavia. (1980-89). "Protecting women against violence? Review of a decade of legislation " *Economic and political weekly* (1992):WS19-WS33.<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4397795>
- Bhardwaj Datta, Anjali, Uditi Sen, and Mytheli Sreenivas. (2021). "Introduction: A Country of Her Making." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* : 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2021.1899170>
- Chakravartty, Gargi, and Supriya Chotani. (2014). *Charting a new path: Early years of National Federation of Indian Women*. People's Publishing House (P) Limited.
- Chakravartty, Renu. (1980). *Communists in Indian women's movement, 1940-1950*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House.
- Chibbar, Gita. (2006). "Oral History Interview of Smt. Vimla Dang" *Nehru Memorial Museum and Library*. Accession No. 901. New Delhi.
- Gail, Omvedt. (2008). "'Socialist-Feminist' Organisations and the Women's Movement" [w:] Mary E. John, ed." *Women's studies in India: a reader*. New Delhi: Penguin Books : 23-27.
- Koteswaramma, Kondapalli. (2015). *The Sharp Knife of Memory*. Zubaan.
- Khullar, Mala. (1997). "Emergence of the Women's Movement in India." *Asian Journal of Women's studies* 3.2 94-129.<https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.1997.11665796>
- Mazumdar, Vina. (1994). "Women's studies and the women's movement in India: An overview." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 22.3/4: 42-54. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40004254>
- Nair, Janaki. (2008). "The troubled relationship of feminism and history." *Economic and Political Weekly* : 57-65. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40278103>
- National Federation of Indian Women. (1976). *Eighth Congress Report*.
- National Federation of Indian Women.(1976). *Ninth Congress Report, Jullundur*.
- Neera, Desai. (2008). "From accommodation to articulation: women's movement in India [w:] Mary E. John, ed." *Women's studies in India: a reader*. New Delhi: Penguin Books : 23-27.

- Prasad, Uma. (1999). “Oral History Interview with Smt. Perin Bharucha” *Nehru Memorial Museum and Library*. Accession No. 725. New Delhi.
- Ray, Raka. (2000). *Fields of protest: Women's movements in India*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Sawhney, Nakul. (2007). *Once upon a time in Chheharta...*, Alternate View.
- Sen, Manikuntalā. (2001). *In search of freedom: An unfinished journey*. Stree.
- Sivaraman, Mythily. (2006). *Fragments of a Life: A Family Archive*. Zubaan.
- Velayudhan, Meera. (1985). "The Crisis and Women's Struggles in India (1970-1977)." *Social Scientist* : 57-68.

## Notes

- 
- <sup>i</sup> NFIW is a women’s organization in India that was formed in 1954, due to the efforts of several women leaders from regional organisations of West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh etc.
- <sup>ii</sup> Chheharta is an industrial town located around seven kms west of Amritsar. It derives its name from the Gurudwara Chheharta Sahib, established by Guru Arjan Dev.
- <sup>iii</sup> In West Bengal, the women’s group was called *Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti* (MARS) which did a lot of relief work in Bengal during the famine (Chakravartty).  
Andhra *Mahila Sangham* was one of the biggest mass organization of women after West Bengal. It comprised mostly of peasant daughters and their wives (Chakravartty 139).
- <sup>iv</sup> This information was gained through the documents of Ekta Mazdoor Union, which were accessed from their office in Chheharta.
- <sup>v</sup> A bill introduced by the Member of Parliament (MP) who is not a Minister, i.e., a non-government member is known as the Private Members’ bill.



## **The Commission for Air Quality Management: Stable and Sustainable Solution**

BHARAT

MUKESH KUMAR

### **Abstract**

*The right to pollution free environment is one of the basic rights for human existence. To examine and provide a real time solution of air pollution generated due to industries, power generation, vehicular activists and construction works; 'the Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority' established in 1998 for the National Capital Region (NCR) was repealed and "the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020" was promulgated on October 28, 2020 and again on April 13, 2021 solely to curb and cure the problem of air pollution in NCR and adjoined areas; thus fulfilling the constitutional mandate to provide pollution free environment. The Ordinance subsequently took the shape of an enactment.*

*The present research paper is an attempt to analyze the statutory functioning of the Commission along with its limitations. To achieve the objective of the paper both primary and secondary sources have been used by adopting doctrinal method of research. The present enactment seems to fulfill the commitment to improve the air quality as depicted through the functions discharged and the powers exercised by the Commission. Although, there are some limitations; however, it seems to provide a real-time solution to the problem of air quality and its management in NCR and adjoin areas.*

**Keywords:** Air pollution, Air quality, Commission, Environment and National Capital Region.

## 1. Prologue

“Man’s paradise is on earth; This living world is the beloved place of all; It has the blessings of Nature’s bounties; Live in a lovely spirit.”

– *Atharvaveda* 5.30.6 (Proposal)

India has rich ancient cultural tradition of protecting the environment. There exist several writings, which prove that in ancient India every individual had to practice the *Dharma* to protect and worship nature. The great philosophy of *Vedas* inherited by *Shrutis and Samritis, Puranas and Upanishads* has significantly contributed by enlightening the path of humanity towards the co-existence with nature and protection of environment. The basic attributes of environment *i.e.*, sun and earth along with air, fire and water has been worshiped as divine entities so that upcoming generations should respect the environment and follow the practice as rituals in order to transfer the thoughts of environment protection to future generation. The said philosophy of nature worship developed the idea of offence against forest spirits and divine powers if anybody acts contrary to basic attributes of environment (Leelakrishnan 10). Human spirit and equation with nature had been ingredients of cultural bondage. Otherwise also the dignity of individual depends on the quality of environment (Tiwari 10). This rich cultural heritage of protecting environment is still functional in India either as tradition or rituals or through formal legal system As the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Virendra Gaur v. State of Haryana*, 1995(2) SCC 577, observed:

“Enjoyment of life and its attainment including their right to life with human dignity encompasses within its ambit, the protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water, sanitation without which life cannot be enjoyed. Any contra acts or actions would cause environmental pollution. Environmental, ecological, air, water, pollution etc. should be regarded as amounting to violation of Art. 21.”

Further, the importance of clean and healthy environment was observed in *Hinch Lal Tiwari v. Kamla Devi*, (2001) 6 SCC 496, where the Apex Court held:

“Healthy environment enables people to enjoy a quality of life which is the essence of the rights guaranteed under Article 21.”

There exists a close relationship between the environment and life. Destruction of environment leads to destruction of all living creatures including human beings. Man, naturally endeavors to improve the quality of life but this can be done only if the quality of environment and development goes together. The need of the hour is that the environmental management should undertake the task of regulating man’s activities in such a manner that the environment should be able to sustain development. (Priya Darshni 1).

## **2. Air Pollution and Pollutants**

With the advancement in science and technology all over the world, environmental pollution increased manifold and, consequently, large-scale environmental degradation took place. Environmental pollution in the forms of air, water, noise and soil is widespread (Sati 123). Various anthropogenic, and largely industrial, emissions into air and atmosphere contribute local smog, acid rain to ozone depletion and climate change. The causations of the said problem are both natural as well as human driven (Fisher 603). According to the third report (1972) of the Royal Commission on Environment Pollution (RCEP), London (Walf 249):

“The introduction by man into the environment of substance or energy liable to cause hazards to human health, harm to living resources and ecological system, damage to structure or amenity or interference with legitimate used of environment.”

Air pollutants not only diminish the air quality but also cause serious/adverse effect to the environmental including human health and life. Major causes behind the causation of air pollutants are domestic and

industrial which also affects the cities, countries and environment world at large. Air pollution makes people sick; it causes breathing problems and promotes cancer and it harms plants, animals and the ecosystems in which they live. Some air pollutants return to earth in the form of acid rain and snow, which corrode statues and buildings, damage crops and forests, and make lakes and streams unsuitable for fish and other plant and animal life (Sati 123). Generally, Air pollution comes from activities like burning fossil fuels natural gas, coal, and oil to power industrial processes and motor vehicles. Among the harmful chemical compounds these burning puts into the atmosphere are carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and tiny solid particles including lead from gasoline additives called particulates (Sati 123).

Environmental protection especially issues such as preventing climate change and maintaining healthy eco-system is perhaps the biggest contemporary issue today. Environmental considerations have become central to the policy making and decision making across a wide range of issues and environmental considerations are increasingly perceived as integral to all aspect of life. The law is at center-stage to the management of environment in the modern age (Bell 3).

India's commitment to environmental protection, preservation and promotion under the Constitution and the aims and objectives of achieving the desired environment sustainability under the aegis of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is manifested through numerous measures which are under implementation since long (Indian Constitution, arts. 47, 48 A and 51A (g)) (Bharat).

### **3. The Commission for Air Quality Management**

In India, the National Capital Region (*hereinafter* referred to as the NCR) is facing serious issue of unhealthy air quality as in the year of 2020 Delhi figured in the list of top ten polluted cities in the world. Not only Delhi but the adjoining cities like Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida, Faridabad and Meerut are second, fifth, sixth, seventh and eleventh respectively in the list of world's most polluted cities (IQ AIR).

In order to counter the problem of poor air quality in the NCR and adjoining areas of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh which are major contributors to air pollutions, the Commission for Air Quality Management (*hereinafter* referred to as the CAQM) was established.

Apprehending the urgency of air quality management, the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, exercising legislative powers enshrined under Article 123 (1) of the Constitution of India provided legal framework for the same by promulgating the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020 (Ord. 13 of 2020; *hereinafter* referred to as the Ordinance of 2020). However, the Ordinance of 2020 could not get status of the Act as the Parliament of India was not in session and consequently lapsed on March 12, 2020. Showing commitment towards management of air quality and curbing air pollution, on April 13, 2021, the President of India re-promulgated the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2021 (Ord. 4 of 2021; *hereinafter* referred to as the Ordinance of 2021) in order to achieve the desired goals of the preceding Ordinance of 2020.

However, it is pertinent to note that the provisions of both the above stated Ordinances were same but, in the Ordinance of 2021, a provision regarding imposition and collection of environment compensation against the stubble burning was introduced. Further, under the Ordinance of 2021, the Central Government has been empowered to issue direction to the Commission or any official working under the Commission. Also, the Central Government was empowered to call any information from the Commission and it was binding on the Commission to furnish such information whenever so required.

During the Monsoon Session of Parliament, on July 30, 2021 the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021 (Bill No. 110 of 2021) (*hereinafter* referred to as the Act of 2021) has been introduced by the Ministry of Environment,

Forests and Climate Change (MoEF) in *Lok Sabha* to replace the Ordinance of 2021 and the same has been passed on August 04, 2021. After that the Bill has been sent to *Rajya Sabha* to be passed on August 05, 2021.

### **3.1 Rational behind the Commission for Air Quality Management**

The right to clean air is a dimension of right to life, enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution, was observed in *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India*, (1999) 6 SCC 9, by the Supreme Court of India. But unfortunately, in the NCR the problem of air pollution is a major threat to one and all. According to Section 2(a) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (29 of 1986):

“‘Environment’ includes water, air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among and between water, air and land, and human beings, other living creatures, plants, micro-organism and property.”

Unfortunately, the heart of India *i.e.*, New Delhi is consuming air of poor quality. In other words, it may be submitted that the people of NCR region are more prone to health issue due to heavy air pollution in environment. Not only human beings but other living creatures along with natural and artificial assets are affected by the unhealthy air and its remote consequences. In 2019, annual average fine particulate matter (*hereinafter* referred to as the PM 2.5) was 58.1 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) for whole of India whereas annual average of Delhi PM 2.5 was 98.6 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). These startling statistics depicts that Delhi not only recorded as highest among the capital cities in India to have unhealthy quality of air but also for any capital city in the world at large (Chatterji). According to statistics Delhi is world’s tenth most populated city in 2020 with 84.1 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) (IQ AIR). The major contributors as air pollutant in NCR region are exhaust from vehicles, industrial smoke, brick-kilns, construction dust, garbage burning and use of diesel generators, etc. Along with these pollutants seasonal dust

storms, fire broke out in forest area and stubble burning in the fields. These air pollutants are causing health issues to the millions of people who habitat in populated areas for long duration continuously under smoky or dusty atmosphere (Chatterji).

To deal with the issue of air pollution in a proficient and professional mechanism, a dynamic multi-State body was required to coordinate between different sectors and motivate public participation. Before the advent of the Ordinance of 2020, the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, (*hereinafter* referred to as the EPCA) (constituted by the Central Government for the NCR vide Gazette Notification SO 93 (E) dated 29.1.1998 in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated January 7, 1998 in *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India*, W.P. 13029/1985) was monitoring the issue of air quality under the directions of the Apex Court of India since last 22 years. However, the EPCA could not achieve its aims and objectives of putting curb on air pollution due to non-concentrated and non-coordinated efforts despite of adopting innovative measure and research attitude. Moreover, the absence of effective and efficient legal mechanism to ensure fruitful functioning of the EPCA in order to put a curb on air pollution was another major challenge before the EPCA (Chatterji) (Bharat).

With the rational to establish an effective, efficient and enduring body to deal with the issue of poor air quality and to regulate the air quality affairs in the NCR region along with native areas of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh from where air pollutants are affecting the quality of air in NCR region, the CAQM was constituted.

### **3.2 The Commission for Air Quality Management: Legislative response to corroborate Judicial Activism**

On October 16, 2020, in the case of *Aditya Dubey v. Union of India* (Writ Petition(s) (Civil) No(s). 1135/2020) the contention before the Hon'ble Supreme Court were raised that there is a grave concern about the quality of air in the NCR and that the quality is depleting rapidly due to several

factors, including the practice of stubble burning in the neighboring States of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh falling in the NCR. It was also been pointed out that despite of multiple measures which were taken, there is reported increase in the amount of stubble burning and that is increasing the pollution in NCR. Taking the note of it the Apex Court held:

“At this stage, we are not inclined to make an assessment as to the effectiveness of the measures taken by respective States. We are confident that each measure has been taken by the authorities with the intention of alleviating the problem of pollution. Nonetheless, it is necessary that there must be some monitoring of stubble burning with a view to its prevention before it assumes abnormal proportions.”

Further, with the object to facilitate and coordinate the activities of different authorities to resolve the issue of air pollution caused due to stubble burning, the Apex Court appointed Hon'ble Mr. Justice Madan Lokur, to act as the one-man Monitoring Committee to take stock of the measures taken by the States to prevent stubble burning; besides, directing the Chief Secretaries of the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and NCR of Delhi to assist Justice Madan Lokur and enable physical surveillance of fields where stubble is likely to be burnt and devise additional means and methods for preventing the burning of stubble. It also suggested that the services of National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS) and Bharat Scouts & Guides (subject to availability) may also be availed for assisting in the monitoring of stubble burning in the agricultural fields in these States. The Ordinance of 2020 came within days of a statement made by Solicitor General Mr. Tushar Mehta in the case of *Aditya Dubey v. Union of India* on a matter related to stubble burning (Bharat). The present concern of judiciary regarding the air quality and the legislative response clearly depict that how the different organs of the State are striving towards fulfilling the constitutional mandate and to achieve the aims and objectives of Article 21 for ensuring the right to life in pollution free environment.



### **3.3 Protagonist and purposes of the Commission for Air Quality Management**

The CAQM aims to curb air pollution by better coordination, scientific mechanism, detection and immunization of problems related to air quality in NCR and adjoining areas with a consolidated approach to monitor, tackle and eliminate causes of air pollution by harmonizing with Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and State Governments (Bharat).

Headquartered in New Delhi, the CAQM is a statutory authority functioning under the overall supervision and guidance of the Union Government with representatives from the adjoining states. To implement the Ordinance of 2020 in letters and spirit, on November 05, 2020, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the CAQM and appointed Mr. M.M. Kutty, IAS (Retd.) as Chairperson (Business Standard).

Primarily, the CAQM initiates the monitoring process to measure the present status of air quality in NCR region and adjoining areas and also observe the legal enforcement in order to facilitate the innovative, effective and real time solutions to curb the issue of unhealthy air quality. And, prominently, it addresses the entire 'airshed' issue as in an airshed; activities in one state affect the air quality of other state in the region. Moreover, for the first time, it puts into place the regulatory mechanism for stubble burning (Bharat).

The CAQM shall have at least three sub-committees namely Sub-Committee on monitoring & identification; Sub-Committee on safeguarding & enforcement; and Sub-Committee on research and development for the smooth functioning of office.

### **3.4 Operational Mechanism of the Commission for Air Quality Management**

The CAQM is empowered to entertain matters either suo-moto or upon complaints initiated by individual, non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) and other bodies having representative character relating to environment affairs. Also, the CAQM is conferred with exclusive jurisdiction to deal with the matters relating to air quality and its management and appeal against the decisions shall be lie with the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The powers of the civil courts to entertain the matters connected to the air quality and its management is restricted under the Act of 2021 (Bharat).

In case of any conflict in the orders/directions of the CAQM and any state government/pollution control board, the words of the CAQM will prevail. To ensure effective enforcement and implementation of its proposals, the CAQM will be submitting its reports to the Central Government regularly and the same will be presented before each House of Parliament by the Central Government.

### **3.5 Powers of the Commission for Air Quality Management**

The CAQM subsumes various committees that were formed to tackle pollution menace and accordingly, the CAQM can issue directions to various statutory authorities and take such necessary steps to curb air pollution and to prevent and prohibit activities that are responsible for air pollution in the target region. It has the power to prescribe the standards pertaining to air quality, discharge of environment pollutants, inspection of premises and may pass order to close industries/ plants etc. functioning against the law and investigate the causes of pollution etc. It can also provide the mechanism and the means to implement besides providing an effective framework and platform for protecting and improving the air quality (Bharat).

Also, the law provides for stern action against violators with a clause of imprisonment upto five years or with fine upto one crore rupees or with both in case of non-compliance or contravention of any rule, order or direction. Further, the CAQM is empowered to constitute the Special Investigation Teams to carry out the functioning of the CAQM (Bharat).

### **3.6 The Commission for Air Quality Management at Work: Identification of Immediate Initiations**

As active participation of citizenry is essence to deal with the issue of poor air quality. In order to encourage the public participation, on November 09, 2020, the CAQM has identified some measures to be adopted with immediate effects. Through these measures the CAQM emphasized to encourage the masses for opting public transport; to encourage work from home culture, strict implementation of legal framework pertaining to dust control measures including constructions site, flaming of solid waste and biomass in municipal area, etc. Also, the CAQM has emphasized to control dust through water sprinkling in dust prone areas; encourage the use of anti-smog guns especially at construction sites along with other polluted hotspots. Further, the CAQM emphasized on the strict enforcement of existing rules along with the orders of the Courts/Tribunals on stubble burning and use of fire crackers (Bharat).

The CAQM has also called upon the NGOs and vigilant citizenry to cooperate to report air pollution occurrences by using 'Sameer App' which provides hourly updates on the National Air Quality Index (*hereinafter* referred to as the AQI) published by the Central Pollution Control Board. AQI is a tool for effective communication of air quality in a single number, nomenclature and colour. Also, the CAQM has encouraged the industries to minimize the use of coal in order to improve the air quality.

### **4. Analysis of the functioning of the Commission for Air Quality Management**

The Act of 2021 is brought to find out a real time solution through the specially empowered the CAQM to deal with issue of poor air quality in NCR region along with adjoining areas. It is interesting to observe the practical functioning of the CAQM that how it would manage issue of unhealthy air. One of the challenges before the CAQM is that the contemporary law emphasis on the management of air quality in adjoining

areas of NCR region rather than improving the air quality in adjoining areas. Only management of air quality in adjoining areas would not serve the purpose of curing the problem of poor air quality in NCR regions rather it would affect adversely. The Act of 2021 depicts that it is only for the NCR region and its adjoining areas not for the whole of India (First Post). That's how, the law is bluntly discriminatory to non-NCR residents. Constitutionally, everyone is equally entitled to the right of healthy and safe environment, as in *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*, (1991) 1 SCC 598, the Supreme Court held:

“Right to life is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution and it include the right to enjoyment of pollution free water and air for full enjoyment of life. If anything endangers or impairs that quality of life in derogation of laws a citizen has recourse to Article 32 of the Constitution for removing the pollution of water or air which may be detrimental to life.”

To cover up such argument which sought discrimination, the Centre Government should also establish such similar committees/bodies to improve the quality of air in the polluted area of other jurisdictions so that everyone can enjoy their fundamental right to enjoy pollution free environment.

Another glaring issue emerges from section 3 of the Act of 2021, which states that the CAQM comprises of the ex-officio memberships of Chief-Secretaries or Secretaries who are handling the environment matters in Delhi and in adjoining States of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Utter Pradesh. This composition of the CAQM seems to create a ‘Civil Servants Club’ because on one hand, among the permanent body of fifteen members only three members will be representing the NGOs and on the other hand, it is to be headed by a former Secretary to the Government of India or Chief Secretary to the state government without requiring any domain experience or expertise of environment in general and air pollution in particular (First Post).

Moreover, the CAQM is empowered to co-opt the members; however, the majority of members are from the Ministries working towards pollution *i.e.*, Ministry of Power, Housing & Urban Affairs, Petroleum & Natural Gas, Road Transport & Highways except the Ministry of Agriculture. In the said composition the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Labour are surprisingly not included even when the Ministry of Rural Development directly deals with the stubble burning issues; the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare closely concerns air pollution affecting the health; and the Ministry of Labour is also directly connected with work-force. Therefore, representation to these ministries cannot be neglected to comprehensively realize the mandate.

Further, the co-opted membership is extendable to the representatives of associations of industry/commerce. Although, the representation of the associations/unions of farmers is not specifically denied but at the same time it is not explicitly extended to the associations or unions of farmers. (First Post). Also, the insertion of new provision regarding imposition and collation of Environment Compensations to the farmers in the cases of stubble burning has been criticized in by farmer unions having different ideology and political ambitions. However, the problem of stubble burning cannot be ruled out as a pollutant to environment.

One more concern is with respect to the powers of the CAQM to entertain the complaints. In the present law, Section 12 empowers the CAQM to entertain the complaints. The erstwhile, EPCA also had the same powers but it rarely exercised them and turned as advisory body to the Apex Court. The possibilities of the repetition of past practices relating to filing of complaints in the Court of Judicial Magistrate of First Class cannot be ruled out in the functioning of the CAQM because majority of its members are those public servants who are in service of Centre/State Government including Chief Secretaries & Secretaries and generally, they would not prefer to file complaint against themselves. Perhaps, it was the major reason due to which the EPCA has not initiated complaints in the Court

throughout its long voyage spanning 22 years (First Post). Breaking the glass ceiling, the CAQM has to overcome this past practice in order to realize its designs.

In relation to the punishment and penalties prescribed in the law, it is submitted that the punishment which may extend to five years or fine up to one crore or both reflects a significant deterrent in case of non-compliance or violation of the provisions of the law. But putting an upper ceiling on the fine is to a great extent inconsistent with the 'Polluter Pays Principle' (Polluter Pays Principle is an economic rule of cost allocation where source lies precisely in the theory of externalities. It requires the polluter to take responsibility for the external costs arising from his pollution) (Sadeler 21) as at numerous instances the National Green Tribunal has even fined the polluter for 150 to 200 crores as penalty. To substantiate, in the case of *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India*, AIR 1996 SC 2715, the Apex Court observed "the right of a person to pollution free environment is a part of the basic jurisprudence of the land" and held:

"Industries are vital for the country's development, but having regard to pollution caused by them, principle of 'Sustainable Development' has to be adopted as the balancing concept. 'Precautionary Principle' and 'Polluter Pays Principle' has been accepted as a part of the law of the country."

Initially, the intent of the Union Government was under scanner with the lapse of the Ordinance of 2020, but then it was re-promulgated through the Ordinance of 2021 to finally take the shape of an enactment duly passed by both the Houses of Parliament depicting the strong drive and determination of the Government in the context to the problem of air quality in the NCR region. However, despite of the issues and challenges, the CAQM seems to fulfill the constitutional mandate towards the citizenry as enshrined in the Part IV of the Constitution of India and other statutory provisions contained in varied enactments dealing with

environmental issues in NCR and adjoining areas. Also, it seems fulfilling the observation made by the Apex Court in the case of *K.M. Chinnappa and Ors. v. Union of India and Ors.* (October 30, 2002) where the Apex Court held:

“The State, in particular has duty in that behalf and to shed its extravagant unbridled sovereign power and to forge in its policy to maintain ecological balance and hygienic environment. Article 21 protects right to life as a fundamental right. Enjoyment of life and its attainment including their right to life with human dignity encompasses within its ambit, the protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water, sanitation without which life cannot be enjoyed.”

Further the Court held:

“Environmental protection, therefore, has now become a matter of grave concern for human existence. Promoting environmental protection implies maintenance of the environment as a whole comprising the man- made and the natural environment. Therefore, there is constitutional imperative on the Central Government, State Governments and bodies like Municipalities, not only to ensure and safeguard proper environment but also an imperative duty to take adequate measure to promote, protect and improve the environment man-made and natural environment.”

To add, the Supreme Court on December 17, 2020 has expressed its non-satisfaction with the functioning of the CAQM in the NCR and its adjoining areas. A bench headed by the then Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, comprising of Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian said that even people in Delhi are not satisfied with the work done by the CAQM on the issue of pollution (DNA). However, at this juncture, when the law is in infancy stage of its maiden voyage, it is inappropriate to question on the competence and functioning of the CAQMs by a sweeping statement as such.

As far as the stability and sustainability of the solution is concerned, the Act of 2021 is a timely move to curb the air pollution in NCR and adjoining areas, which is also evident through the immediate initiations and short term results. However, to a large extent, its suitability depends upon the conscious and commitment level of the enforcement agencies attached thereunder. As it has been rightly observed by the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Naidu):

“However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However, bad a Constitution may be, if those implementing it are good, it will prove to be good.”

## 5. Epilogue

Air is the most imperative element for the existence of the life on earth. To a great extent, healthy life depends upon the quality of air. Regrettably, India's heart, NCR is facing the issue of unhealthy breathing air along with its adjoining area. The burning of stubble, tactlessly, in the NCR as well as adjoining areas has also joined hands with other pollutant factors to make environment unhealthy. Even though India has stout & robust legal mechanism to maintain/regulate/control the air quality in the NCR region but the past experience depicts that due to many whys and wherefores this serious issue is increasing like the enlarging mouth of demon *Surasa* (Tulsidas) and accordingly, it needs to be assiduously addressed.

No doubt, that the CAQM is the need of hour for the efficient and effective management of the air quality in the NCR and adjoining areas, but it is imperative for the CAQM and its members to make this law a practical solution for the issue of air quality management rather than functioning as parking lot for 'Civil Servants'. Also, the CAQM should refrain from repeating the unholy practice of not filing complaints before courts on the unhealthy pattern of the EPCA, which reduced the EPCA to an advisory body of the Apex Court.



Beside the NCR and adjoined areas, the Government should extend/introduce the model of the CAQM for the different areas/regions in the country and look for a similar real time solution of the same as every citizen of India has fundamental right to live in a safe and healthy environment under the Constitution of India. For the success of the law not only the authorities but also the citizenry has a greater role to play for improving the air quality in the NCR and adjoined areas. Citizenry has to understand their responsibility towards environment in order to fulfill the words of the revered Father of the nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, as he said:

“The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our fore fathers but on loan from our children. So, we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us.”

For achieving the desired goal of environment protection, in *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of U.P.*, AIR 1987 SC 359, the Supreme Court has emphasized on the cooperation of Government and citizenry by observing:

“Preservation of environment and keeping the ecological balance unaffected is a task which not only Government but also every citizen must undertake. It is a social obligation and let us remind every citizen that it is his fundamental duty as enshrined in Article 51-A(g) of the Constitution.”

On the role of Government to sensitize the citizenry for environment protection, the Apex Court in *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India & Ors.*, 1988 SCR (2) 530, (*Ganaga Pollution case*) has rightly observed:

“It is the duty of the Central Government to direct all the educational institutions throughout India to teach at least for one hour in a week lesson relating to the protection and improvement of the natural environment wildlife including forests, lakes, rivers and in the first ten classes.”

Therefore, collective and concentrated efforts of State and citizenry are required to defeat this demon of air pollution which is otherwise nothing less than of becoming *Surasa* by enlarging its mouth to swallow the health, safety and welfare of the present and future generations in specific, and putting a question mark on survival of human instinct in general.

In decisive breakdown, clean air is an essential component for flora and fauna. India, through its journey of rapid economic growth is struggling with the menace of air pollution. The powerful oversight body in the form of the CAQM is entrusted with appropriate powers which can act on war footing against air pollution. It is a promising step towards blending all the ‘serious’ and ‘sincere’ efforts of the past in a coordinated manner to provide a ‘stable’ and ‘sustainable’ solution for curbing the menace of air pollution in the NCR and adjoining areas. Hope it extends to other parts of the country too in the coming times; after all we all need clean air to breathe!

### ***References***

- Bell, Stuart, et al. (2013). *Environmental Law*. 8th ed., Oxford University Press, New York.
- Bharat, (2021). “The Commission for Air Quality Management: Stable and Sustainable Solution.” *The Aman Sandesh Times* 7 Jan.: Print.
- Chatterji, Arpan. (2020). *Air Pollution in Delhi: Filling the Policy Gaps*. ORF Occasional Paper, [https://www.orfonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/12/ORF\\_OccasionalPaper\\_291\\_AirPollution.pdf](https://www.orfonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/12/ORF_OccasionalPaper_291_AirPollution.pdf).
- Darsini, G. Indira Priya, and K. Uma Devi. (2010). *Environmental Law and Sustainable Development*. Regal Publications New Delhi.
- Tulsidas, *Ramharitamans, Sunderkand*, The reference of demon *Surasa* is there in the *Sunderkand* of *Ramayana*, *Surasa* was one of the 12 daughters of Daksha, who was married to the sage Kashyapa and thereafter, she became the mother of a class of multi-hooded serpents. She trapped and unsuccessfully tried to eat *Hanumana* alive by enlarging her mouth, when

*Hanumana* was crossing the sea towards Lanka in search of *Sita*.

DNA, <https://www.dnaindia.com/delhi/news-air-quality-management-work-by-commission-not-satisfactory-according-to-supreme-court-2862698>.

First Post, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/repeating-old-mistakes-why-the-new-commission-on-air-quality-wont-ensure-clean-air-9101541.html#:~:text=Headed%20by%20former%20IAS%20officer,and%20Adjoining%20Areas%20Ordinance%2C%202020>.

Fisher E., et al. (2013). *Environmental Law*. Oxford University Press United Kingdom.

IQ AIR, <https://www.iqair.com/world-most-polluted-cities>.

Leelakrishnan, P. (2008). *Environmental Law in India*. Lexis Nexis Butterworths Wadhwa Delhi.

“MM Kutty (2020). appointed chairman of commission on Delhi air quality management.” *Business Standard*, 07 Nov., [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/m-m-kutty-appointed-chairman-of-commission-on-delhi-air-quality-management-120110600019\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/m-m-kutty-appointed-chairman-of-commission-on-delhi-air-quality-management-120110600019_1.html).

Naidu, M. Venkaiah. “Our Constitution strengthened our Parliamentary Democracy”. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1545034>

*Proposal to Constitute Environment Courts*. Law Commission of India, Government of India, (2003). <https://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/186th%20report.pdf>.

Roy, Esha. (2021). “MoEF to table Bill for panel on NCR air pollution: Bill on air quality commission drops clause on jail term.” *Indian Express*, 19 July. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/moef-to-table-bill-for-panel-on-ncr-air-pollution-bill-on-air-quality-commission-drops-clause-on-jail-term-7411144/>.

Sadeler, De Nicolas. (2020). *Environmental Principles: From Political Slogans to Legal Rules*. Oxford University Press New York.

Sati, Vishwambhar Prasad. (2012). *An Introduction to Environment*. Rawat Publications Jaipur.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, (2020) (No. 13 of 2020 dated 28 Oct. 2020).

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and

Adjoining Areas Ordinance, (2021) (No. 04 of 2021 dated 13 April, 2021).

The Constitution of India, 1950.

Tiwari, A.K. (2006). *Environmental Laws in India*. Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

Walf Susan, et al. (2002). *Principles of Environmental Law*. 3rd ed., Cavendish Publishing Limited London UK. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.

## **Higher Education Institutions in India: Disparities in Availability**

AMAN KUMARI

SMITA BHUTANI

### **Abstract**

*Higher education is one of the key drivers as it makes a significant contribution to the growth and development of any country. In India, there are large variations at interstate level in the availability of higher education institutions. In the present paper, an attempt has been made to examine the disparities in the availability of higher education institutions in the major states of India, in terms of number of colleges and universities by population and area. The four different variables have been taken into account and the z-score has been calculated for all the major states. The composite z-score has been calculated by summing up the z-score value of all the four variables. Based on the composite z-score, Haryana with 5.09 occupied the top position among the major states and Jharkhand with composite z-score value of -3.56 ranked at the bottom in terms of availability of higher education. Historical factors, physiographic constraints, role of private sector, locational and climatic conditions are the main reasons behind the uneven availability of the higher education institutions in the country. The present study is based on the secondary data which has been collected from the different reports of the Ministry of Human Resource and Development; University Grants Commission; All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE, 2018-19), Census of India, 2011 and Ministry of family and health welfare, 2020.*

**Keywords:** Availability, Composite z-score, Disparities, Higher Education and India.

## **Introduction**

In the 21st century, the importance of higher education has been realized more than the earlier times as the richness and the poverty of nations depend on it. Higher education is not limited to classroom teaching only, it has the potential of providing ample opportunities to a person at local as well as global level (Behera, 2019). The higher the level and quality of higher education; the larger the reservoir of skills; the greater the capacity to learn, and the better would be the chances of economic growth. In India, formal higher education dates back to the sixth century BC with the establishment of Takshashila University. Later on, during the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the universities of Nalanda and Vikramshila were respectively established. Hindu gurukuls, Buddhist vihara, and Koranic madrasas emerged as the main providers of higher education in the medieval period from 12th to 18th centuries AD (Duraishamy, 2016). The origin of the modern higher education system in India can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century. Wood's despatch of 1854 formed the basis for the establishment of modern education in the country (Aggarwal, 2001). In colonial India, higher education institutions remained confined in and around cities and towns (Choudhary, 2008). At the time of the independence of India, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 2.1 lakhs students receiving higher education. Post-independence period witnessed tremendous growth and expansion of higher education institutions. Most of the institutions were established by public sector in 1950s and 1960s. But from 1980s onwards, the investment of public sector was declined for higher education and private sector became active (Varghese, Panigrahi and Rohatgi, 2018). Trends reveal that the number of public higher education institutions has remained stable and private higher education institutions have seen rapid growth (Agarwal, 2006). Only in five years (2001-2006), unaided private higher education accounted for 63 per cent of the total higher education institutions (FICCI, 2011). This rapid growth, however, obscures the substantial disparities in availability of higher education institutions that exist across states and union territories (Choudhary, 2008). At present, the number has increased

to 993 universities, 39931 colleges, and 10725 stand-alone institutions with 37.4 million (19.2 million males and 18.2 million females) students enrolled in them and around 78 per cent of the total colleges are managed by private sector (AISHE Report, 2018-19).

The expansion of higher education in India is followed by increasing regional disparities (Varghese, 2015). The demand for higher education is increasing day by day therefore it is required to open more higher education institutions in the areas with low availability of the same. This will in turn bridge the gap of widening disparities in the availability of higher education institutions. There were in all 39931 colleges and 993 universities in the country in the year 2018. Uttar Pradesh had the highest number (7078) of colleges and Sikkim had the lowest number (19) of colleges among the states (Table 1). While in terms of ratio, i.e. number of colleges per lakh population, Karnataka ranked first with 53 colleges and Bihar with 7 colleges ranked last. Even though Uttar Pradesh had maximum number of colleges yet it ranked 13<sup>th</sup> according to ratio of colleges (number of colleges per lakh population) among the major states. This apparent disparity was due to large population in the higher education receiving age group i.e. 18-23 years. Again, in case of the universities, Rajasthan had the highest number (83) of universities and Goa, Mizoram and Chandigarh had the lowest number (3) of universities. But on the basis of the ratio, Sikkim had the highest number (89) of universities per ten lakh population and on the basis of area, Haryana had the highest number (11) of universities per ten thousand sq. km. in the country. The availability of colleges and universities varied in terms of absolute numbers and ratios due to the proportion of population in 18-23 years of age group in a state and the area of the state. The above discussion has revealed that there are large variations among the states and the union territories. The present study, due to data constraints, has focused only on the major states of India.

**Table 1**  
**India: Total Number of Colleges and Universities, 2018-19**

Sr. No.	State/UT	Number of Colleges	Number of Universities
1	Uttar Pradesh	7078	79
2	Maharashtra	4340	62
3	Karnataka	3670	65
4	Rajasthan	3156	83
5	Andhra Pradesh	2678	41
6	Tamil Nadu	2466	59
7	Gujarat	2232	72
8	Madhya Pradesh	2191	65
9	Telangana	1988	24
10	West Bengal	1371	45
11	Kerala	1348	23
12	Punjab	1063	32
13	Odisha	1062	28
14	Haryana	1038	48
15	Bihar	840	33
16	Chhattisgarh	760	28
17	Assam	544	22
18	Uttarakhand	438	36
19	Himachal Pradesh	336	26
20	Jharkhand	313	25
21	Jammu and Kashmir	293	15
22	Delhi	180	27
23	Manipur	92	6
24	Puducherry	76	4
25	Nagaland	67	5
26	Meghalaya	63	10
27	Goa	57	3
28	Tripura	52	4
29	Arunachal Pradesh	37	10
30	Mizoram	32	3
31	Chandigarh	25	3
32	Sikkim	19	7
33	Daman and Diu	10	0
34	Andaman and Nicobar	8	0
35	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	8	0
36	Lakshadweep	0	0
	<b>Major States</b>	<b>39205</b>	<b>911</b>
	<b>India</b>	<b>39931</b>	<b>993</b>

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report, 2018-19.



## **Literature Review**

Higher education improves the socio-cultural and economic growth of a country. It gives opportunity to persons to tap their inner potential that helps nations develop. It provides students to think in a creative way that can be useful to solve various global and national problems. Kaul (1972) examined enrolment in higher education since independence to find a multiplication in number of the institutions of higher education resulting in overcrowding, weakening teacher-taught relations, and student unrest. He recommended selection of students for higher education has to be much more guided by assessment of manpower requirements. Chanana (1993) studied about the access to higher education in India and found that in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Indian society, the variables of gender, caste, class and region are crucial in determining the access to higher education. The author concluded that educational policies and programmes are unable to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Tilak (2001) observed that despite being high level of literacy and near universal enrolment in elementary education, Kerala is not a developed state. The main reason behind it is the neglect of higher education in the state and concluded that Kerala has to enhance its priority for expansion of higher education institutions (that help in improving the quality) and financial policies for higher education. Teferra and Altbach (2004) analysed higher education in Africa and challenges faced by it in 21<sup>st</sup> century like accessibility, funding, governance and autonomy, gender gap, language issues, role of research, privatization, problems of scholarly communication and brain drain which are important to resolve for African countries future academic development. These issues can be resolved with proper planning and effective leadership.

Chakrabarti and Joglekar (2006) examined patterns and changes in the allocation of government funds for higher education, before and after the introduction of the new economic policies and concluded that the states with a higher proportion of population belonging to SC, ST and with higher sex ratio have lower expenditure on education. Agarwal (2006)

found that higher education in India expanded rapidly over past two decades due to growth driven by private sector. The growth of private institutes is chaotic and unplanned and of substandard quality. Due to emergence of private institutions and increase in tuition fees in public institutes, higher education is beyond the reach of poor people. Indian higher education system requires a systematic approach for a long time and should learn from other countries. Prakash (2007) studied the trends in growth and financing of higher education in India analysed variations in participation across states, gender and social groups.

Agarwal (2007) studied that Indian higher education has developed largely after the independence of the country in 1947, but over the last few decades, the growth rate is declining. Indian higher education needs pragmatic and innovative public policies so that the country's virtuous cycle of economic growth fuelled mainly by its large pool of qualified manpower is sustained. Chauhan (2008) made a comparative study of higher education systems of SAARC countries in terms of structure, access, equity, resources and contribution of private enterprises. The author observed low participation of women, poor quality and low expenditure on higher education in all the SAARC countries. Maringe & Gibbs (2009) have pointed out that the growth of higher education institutions has been witnessed during the second half of the 20th century and this growth has consequently not only led to offer the variety of such institutions but also made these varied institutions available to the desirous persons. Parekh (2010) observed that to raise the current Gross Enrolment Ratio (12.4 per cent) to 30 per cent by the year 2020, there is a need to increase infrastructure, teaching staff, funds, accessibility, technological support and address the issue of quality in a way that with proliferation quality does not get diluted. Mohamedbhai (2011) examined the higher education in Africa and challenges (enrolment numbers, funding, research output and quality) faced by it. He stated that some of these challenges can be dealt with at the institutional level, a number at the national level, and yet others require a regional approach. Atuahene and Ansah (2013)

observed that Ghana has recorded immense growth in various aspects of higher education like access, participation, growing private sector, expansion of academic facilities and policy formation. Despite these developments, women and minorities and people from low socioeconomic background have to face inequalities in access and participation of higher education. Affirmative action and quota policies can help in lessen the inequities and disparities in higher education.

Chahal (2015), Ransure (2017), Sheikh (2017) and Srimathi & Krishnamoorthy (2019) studied about the higher education system in India and identified the emerging issues and challenges in the field. The authors concluded that growth of higher education in terms of institutions and enrolment is not sufficient there is a need for policy formation and effective implementation. Jonaki and Prasenji (2016) studied the history of higher education in India and present status of higher education in terms of quantity of institution, fields of education, enrolment pattern, teacher availability, constitutional provision on higher education, disparity in access to higher education, governance practice, quality control mechanism and trend in finance. They also discussed the recent trends like privatization and globalization in Indian higher education. Kamal (2016) analysed that with the growth of information and communication technologies and other scientific innovation, reforms in higher education system are also required. The Indian government has set a goal of 30 per cent GER by 2020, to achieve this goal it is important for Indian higher education system to prepare a vision for reforms and innovation according to the need of the country. Singh (2017) analysed the Indian higher education system and stated that to become an economic power, India has to focus on higher education. With the increase in quality and quantity of higher education, good quality of human resources can be improved in the country, which automatically improves the socio-economic conditions by raising the per capita income of people and GDP of a country as a whole.

Higher education in India is mainly developed after independence. Continuous increase in the numbers of higher education institutions has

resulted into the overcrowding and quality of higher education has degraded. Higher education in India is expanding rapidly. Due to increased demand, the growth of private institutions of higher education is unplanned and of low quality and there are wide interstate disparities in the availability of higher education in India. Availability and quality of education, no doubt, effects the economic growth of the country.

Review of above literature showed that most of the studies on higher education are related with development, administration, management and policies and very few are related with spatial or geographical thrust and not discussed the disparities in higher education objectively. It is in this context, that the present study is an attempt to examine the disparities in availability of higher education and identify the states with low availability of higher education institutions. Availability of adequate number of centres of higher education is of prime importance for imparting quality education at tertiary level. Better availability of higher education institutions will definitely improve the gross enrolment ratio particularly of female students and students of other social groups. The present study may thus, prove to be of great significance for policy and decision makers to plan for mitigating disparities and ensuring better availability of higher education.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the present study are: (i) to examine the state wise availability of higher education institutions (colleges and universities) in terms of their ratios to their population and area (ii) to analyse the disparities in the availability of higher education institutions among the major states of India.

### **Database and Methodology**

The present study has been based on the secondary data which has been collected from different reports of the Ministry of Human Resource and Development; University Grants Commission; All India Survey on Higher

Education (AISHE) and Census of India. In all, four indicators have been chosen to study the availability of higher education by taking into account all colleges, universities, areas of the states and the population of 18-23 years of age group in the states under study. To examine the state wise availability of higher education, z-score has been calculated. The following formula is used to calculate the z-score:

$$z = (X - \mu) / \sigma$$

Where z is the z-score, X is the original value of the ith variable,  $\mu$  denotes the mean value of the ith variable and  $\sigma$  is the standard deviation from the mean value.

For the analysis of disparities in availability of higher education institutions, composite z-score has been calculated by summing up the z-score of all the indicators. Based on composite z-score, the states have thus been categorised into three levels of availability of higher education institutions.

## **Results and Discussion**

The present study has been divided into two sections. In the first section, availability of the higher education institutions (colleges and universities) has been discussed by calculating the ratios in terms of population (18-23 years of age group) and area. Its availability in the states has been compared with the national average. In the last section, the disparities in the availability of higher education among the major states of India has been explained with the help of composite z-score.

### **I. Availability of Higher Education Institutions**

To study the availability of higher education institutions in India, the following variables have been taken into account:

#### ***a. Colleges per lakh population***

There are in all 39931 colleges in the country, it implies that there is one college for almost 3756 students. At the national level, the need of the

higher education of one lakh population is being fulfilled by 28 colleges (Table 2). According to the college-population ratio, Karnataka has the highest number of colleges i.e. 53 for one lakh population and Bihar, with 7 colleges, has the lowest number of colleges per one lakh population. In Bihar (840) e.g. total number of colleges are more than Himachal Pradesh (336) but the ratio is very low i.e. 7 colleges per lakh population because of large population of the state. Out of the total 21 major states, 13 states have higher number of colleges than the national average and eight states have lower number of college population ratio than national average. The states which have higher number of colleges than national average are Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. The other remaining states falling in below national average category are Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar.

Due to the early arrival of education through British education centres and Christian missionaries' education centres (Bala, 2016), the southern states such as Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have better availability of colleges in comparison to the national average. The northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh with the only exception of Jammu & Kashmir also have higher number of colleges per lakh population than the national average.

***b. Colleges per 1000 sq. km.***

The availability of colleges in terms of area has been studied by taking into account the ratio between the number of colleges in a state and its area. At the national level, 1000 sq. km. area is being served by 12.61 colleges or 1.26 colleges are serving 100 sq.km. area. Only ten major states have better availability of colleges than the national average (as per this parameter) and 11 major states have lower availability of colleges than the national average. Kerala with 34.69 colleges per 1000 sq. km tops

the position and on the other hand, Jammu & Kashmir has only 2.88 college to serve 1000 sq. km area and hence that is the lowest, as per this parameter. The states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra have higher availability of colleges in terms of area than the national average. While the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh are below the national average (Table 2).

Analysing the reasons of this disparity, it may be mentioned that the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Assam have low level of availability of colleges due to their hilly terrain and harsh climate. Low number of colleges in Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar can be attributed to poverty, backwardness and inefficient government policies. States like Chhattisgarh (135,192 sq. km.), Madhya Pradesh (308,245 q. km.), Rajasthan (342,239 sq. km.) and Gujarat (196,024 sq. km.) with a small ratio between colleges and area are the large states with vast expanses of ravines, forests, desert, salt marshes respectively. A low ratio of colleges to area in the largest state of Rajasthan may be attributed to the vast area under desert in the state.

***c. Universities per ten lakh population:***

In India, university-population ratio is 6.62 universities per ten lakh population or it can be said that there is almost 1 university for 1.5 lakh population at the national level. Out of 21 states, 13 states have higher level of availability of universities per ten lakh population than the national average and eight states have lower level of availability of universities per ten lakh population than the national average. Out of these states, Himachal Pradesh has the highest number of universities i.e. 34.35 per ten lakh population and Bihar has the lowest number of universities i.e. 2.38 per ten lakh population. The other states having higher number of universities per ten lakh population than the national average are Uttarakhand, Haryana, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Karnataka,

Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. The states of Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Assam, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have lower availability of universities per ten lakh population than the national average.

*d. Universities per 10,000 sq. km.*

The availability of universities in terms of area has been studied with the help of the ratio between the universities and area per 10,000 sq. km. The availability of the universities in the country is 3.13 per 10,000 sq. km. of area. Out of all the major states, 12 states have better availability of universities per 10,000 sq. km. than the national average. Haryana state is at the top in availability with 10.85 universities and Jammu & Kashmir is at the bottom with 1.47 universities serving an area of 10,000 sq.km. The other states with the higher availability of universities than the national average are Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Bihar, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand. Moreover, there are nine states which have lower availability of the universities in terms of area. These states are Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Jammu and Kashmir. Though Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have almost double the number of universities than Bihar yet Bihar has better availability of the universities per 10, 000 sq. km. than Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana due to its small size(Fig. 6).

It has thus been observed that the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have higher availability of universities than the national average in terms of university-population ratio and lower availability of universities than the national average in terms of university-area ratio (Table 3).



**Table 2****Major States of India: Availability of Colleges, 2018-19**

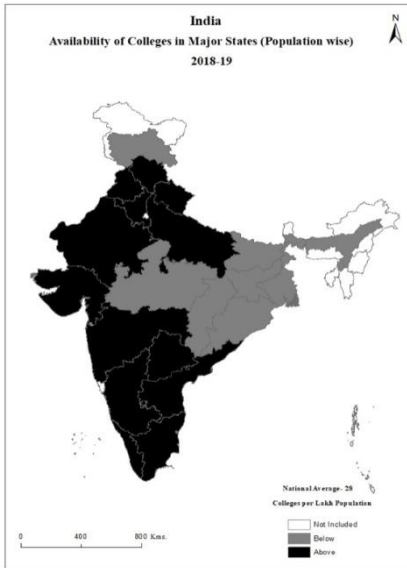
<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>State/India</b>	<b>No. of Colleges per lakh population</b>	<b>No. of Colleges per 1000 sq. km.</b>
1	Karnataka	53	19.13
2	Telangana	50	17.73
3	Andhra Pradesh	49	16.43
4	Himachal Pradesh	47	6.03
5	Kerala	45	34.69
6	Uttarakhand	37	8.18
7	Tamil Nadu	35	18.96
8	Rajasthan	35	9.22
9	Punjab	34	21.11
10	Maharashtra	33	14.10
11	Haryana	33	23.47
12	Gujarat	31	11.37
13	Uttar Pradesh	28	29.37
14	Madhya Pradesh	24	7.11
15	Chhattisgarh	24	5.62
16	Odisha	23	6.82
17	Jammu and Kashmir	23	2.88
18	Assam	15	6.93
19	West Bengal	13	15.44
20	Jharkhand	8	3.92
21	Bihar	7	8.92
	<b>India</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12.61</b>

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report, 2018-19.

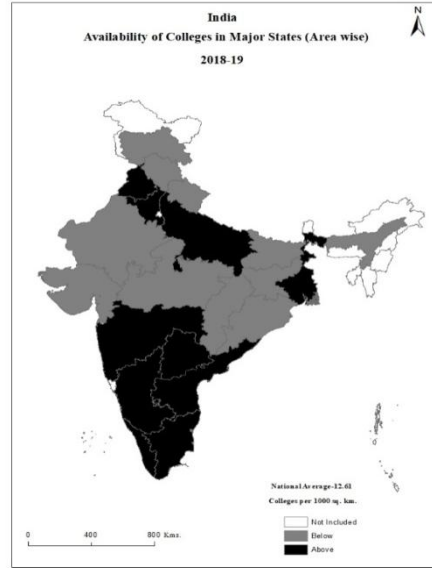
**Table 3****Major States of India: Availability of Universities, 2018-19**

Sr. No.	State/India	No. of Universities per ten lakh population	No. of Universities per 10,000 sq. km.
1	Himachal Pradesh	34.35	4.67
2	Uttarakhand	26.59	6.73
3	Haryana	14.51	10.85
4	Punjab	9.85	6.35
5	Gujarat	9.72	3.66
6	Jammu & Kashmir	9.65	1.47
7	Karnataka	9.42	3.38
8	Rajasthan	9.05	2.42
9	Chhattisgarh	8.54	2.07
10	Tamil Nadu	8.13	4.53
11	Andhra Pradesh	7.51	2.51
12	Kerala	7.24	5.91
13	Madhya Pradesh	6.91	2.11
14	Telangana	5.87	2.14
15	Odisha	5.79	1.79
16	Jharkhand	5.66	3.14
17	Assam	5.66	2.8
18	Maharashtra	4.72	2.01
19	West Bengal	4.25	5.07
20	Uttar Pradesh	2.81	3.27
21	Bihar	2.38	3.5
	<b>India</b>	<b>6.62</b>	<b>3.13</b>

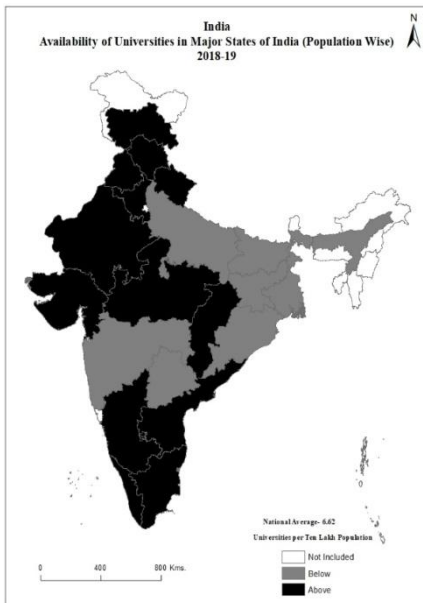
Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report, 2018-19 and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, July 2020.



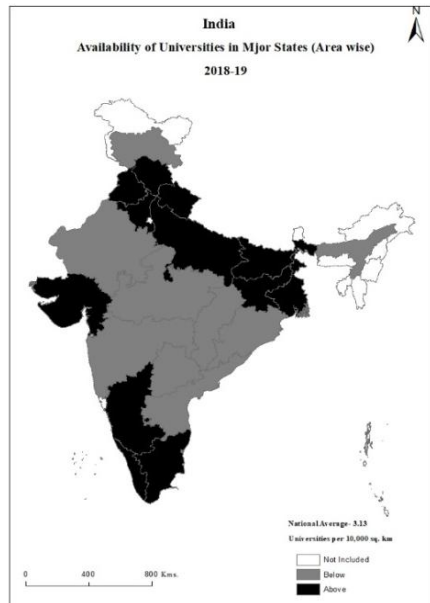
**Fig. 1: Availability of Colleges by Population**



**Fig.2: Availability of Colleges by Area**



**Fig. 3: Availability of Universities by Population**



**Fig. 4: Availability of Universities by Area**

## II. Disparities in Availability of Higher Education

To analyse the disparities in the availability of higher education institutions among the states composite z-score has been calculated by summing up the z-score of all the four variables of availability i.e. number of universities and colleges both by area and population. Based on the composite z-score, the states have been arranged into three categories of high (composite z-score above 2), moderate (composite z-score between +2 to -2) and low (composite z-score below -2) level of availability of higher education institutions (Table 5).

The level of availability of the higher education institutions is relatively high in Haryana, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Karnataka (fig. 5). A moderate level has however been found in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and West Bengal. The states with a low level of availability included Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand.

**Table 5**

### **Major States of India: Level of Availability of Higher Education, 2018-19**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>States</b>	<b>Level of Availability</b>	<b>Composite Z-score</b>
1	Haryana, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Karnataka	High	>2
2	Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal	Moderate	+2 to -2
3	Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand.	Low	<-2

Source: Based on table 4.

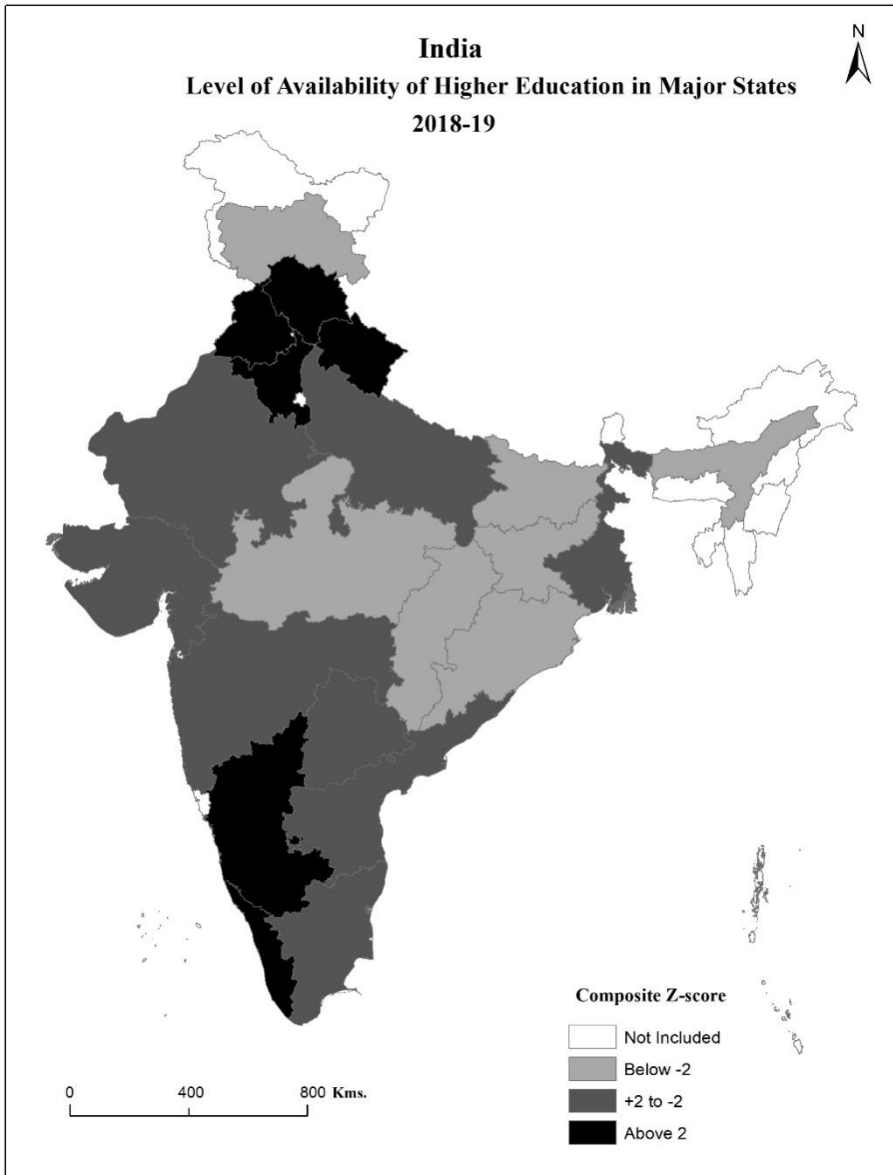
**Table 4**  
**Major States of India: Availability of Higher Education Institutions**

Sr. No.	States	Colleges per Lakh Population	Z- score	Colleges per 1000 sq. km	Z- score	Universities per Ten Lakh Population	Z- score	Universities per 10,000 sq. km.	Z- score	Composite Z-score
1	Haryana	33	0.16	23.47	1.14	15.07	0.63	10.85	3.16	5.09
2	Kerala	45	1.05	34.69	2.45	7.61	-0.29	5.91	0.94	4.14
3	Himachal Pradesh	47	1.20	6.03	-0.89	35.34	3.14	4.67	0.38	3.83
4	Uttarakhand	37	0.46	8.18	-0.64	29.72	2.44	6.73	1.30	3.57
5	Punjab	34	0.24	21.11	0.86	9.98	0.00	6.35	1.13	2.23
6	Karnataka	53	1.65	19.13	0.63	9.92	-0.01	3.38	-0.20	2.07
7	Tamil Nadu	35	0.31	18.96	0.61	8.21	-0.22	4.53	0.32	1.02
8	Andhra Pradesh	49	1.35	16.43	0.32	7.38	-0.32	2.51	-0.59	0.76
9	Telangana	50	1.43	17.73	0.47	5.97	-0.50	2.14	-0.76	0.64
10	Uttar Pradesh	28	-0.21	29.37	1.83	3.19	-0.84	3.27	-0.25	0.53
11	Gujarat	31	0.01	11.37	-0.27	9.99	0.00	3.66	-0.08	-0.33
12	Rajasthan	35	0.31	9.22	-0.52	9.41	-0.07	2.42	-0.63	-0.91
13	Maharashtra	33	0.16	14.1	0.05	4.65	-0.66	2.01	-0.82	-1.27
14	West Bengal	13	-1.32	15.44	0.20	4.13	-0.73	5.07	0.56	-1.29
15	Chhattisgarh	24	-0.51	5.62	-0.94	9.01	-0.12	2.07	-0.79	-2.36
16	Madhya Pradesh	24	-0.51	7.11	-0.77	7.35	-0.33	2.11	-0.77	-2.37
17	Jammu and Kashmir	23	-0.58	2.88	-1.26	11.36	0.17	1.47	-1.06	-2.73
18	Odisha	23	-0.58	6.82	-0.80	6.03	-0.49	1.79	-0.92	-2.79
19	Assam	15	-1.17	6.93	-0.79	5.92	-0.50	2.8	-0.46	-2.93
20	Bihar	7	-1.77	8.92	-0.56	2.89	-0.88	3.5	-0.15	-3.35
21	Jharkhand	8	-1.69	3.92	-1.14	6.59	-0.42	3.14	-0.31	-3.56

Source: Calculated from Tables 2 and 3.

Among the major states, in terms of the comprehensive availability of higher education, Haryana holds the first rank with the highest composite z-score value of 5.09 as it has the highest availability of universities by area. It also has relatively high availability of colleges both by population and area (fig. 5). With the composite z-score value of 4.14, Kerala ranks second and is followed by Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Karnataka. It has to be kept in mind that historical factors, privatization of higher education, locational advantages and better connectivity are the main reasons for high level of availability of the higher education institutions in these states. At the other end of the scale, Jharkhand with the lowest composite z-score value of -3.56 is placed at the bottom due to the lowest availability of colleges and universities by population and area. The other states which have low composite z-score value included Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha, Assam and Bihar. These states have witnessed low level of availability due to tough terrain, terrorism or naxal disturbance, poverty, large population in the relevant age group (18-23 years), low level of social and economic development and ignorance of policymakers. From the point of view of education, Rajasthan, along with Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir, is among the most backward states of the country. The difficult terrain of the state has been largely responsible for the backwardness in general and education in particular. (UGC NAAC Report of Rajasthan, 2008).

It has been noticed that many states have better availability of colleges and universities in terms of population than in terms of area. West Bengal was the only state with higher availability of colleges than the national average in terms of area and lower availability in terms of population. Again, in the context of universities, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh were the states which had higher availability of universities than the national average in terms of area and lower in terms of population. Moreover, Jharkhand and Bihar were below national average in terms of availability of colleges both population wise and area wise. In case of universities in these states, however, area wise position was relatively better but in terms of population, availability of universities was far below the national average. The government and policymakers should take appropriate steps to provide better availability of higher education institutions.



**Fig. 5: Level of Availability of Higher Education**

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing discussion has revealed that there are wide interstate disparities in the availability of higher education institutions in India. More noticeable variations could, however, be seen in the context of the area served by colleges and universities than the population. The level of availability of higher education institutions was relatively high in Haryana, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Karnataka. Haryana, Kerala, Punjab and Karnataka were above national average for all the four indicators of availability of higher education institutions. All the above-mentioned states, except Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, with high level of availability had 75-80 per cent share of private colleges to the total colleges in the respective states. Out of these six states, only Himachal Pradesh had more government colleges than private colleges. Similar pattern can be seen in Assam and Bihar as well. The states with low level of availability were Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand. Specific location, historical context and physiographic constraints attributed to the level of availability of higher education institutions in the specific states. Rugged physiography and harsh climate of the many northern states like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan and north eastern states like Assam were the main reasons for the low level of availability of higher education institutions in such states.

Early arrival of education through British education centres and Christian missionaries' education centres accredited to high level of availability of higher education institutions in states like Kerala and Karnataka. Moreover, the role of private institutions cannot be ignored as these institutions came up mostly in the areas where they could earn huge profit. Mountainous topography (in the states like Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh) and vast expanse of desert area (in Rajasthan state) to a large extent hinders the establishment and subsequent maintenance of essential educational infrastructure in such areas. Moreover, the level of availability depends on the efficiency and



effectiveness with which the state governments implement the policies and plans prepared by the central government. There is thus, a need for balanced expansion of higher education institutions and policy interventions to reduce the widening disparities.

### **References**

- Aggarwal, J.C. (2001). *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 17-21.
- Agarwal, P. (2006). Higher Education in India: The need for Change, *Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)*, Working Paper No. 180. 1–194.
- Agarwal, P. (2007). Higher Education in India: Growth, Concerns and Change Agenda, *Higher Education Quarterly*, 61(2), 197–207.
- Agarwal, P. (2009). *Indian higher education: Envisioning the future*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Atuahene, F., & Ansah, A. O. (2013). A descriptive assessment of higher education access, participation, equity, and disparity in Ghana. *Sage Open*, 3(3), 1-16.
- Bala, R. (2016). Higher Education in India: A Geographical Study. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(7), 39-46.
- Behera, M. (2019). Higher Education in India in the Age of Neo-Liberalism. *University News*, 57 (33), 17-27.
- Chahal, M. (2015). Higher Education in India: Emerging Issues , Challenges and Suggestions. *International Journal of Business Quantitative Economics and Applied Management Research*, 1(11), 67–74.
- Chakrabarti, A., & Joglekar, R. (2006). Determinants of expenditure on education: An empirical analysis using state level data. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(15), 1465–1472.

- Chanana, K. (1993). Accessing higher education: The dilemma of schooling women, minorities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in contemporary India. *Higher Education*, 26(1), 69–92.
- Chauhan, C.P.S. (2008). Higher education current status and future possibilities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Srilanka. *Analytical Reports in International education*, 2(1), 29-48.
- Choudhary, S.K. (2008). Higher education in India: A socio-historical journey from ancient period to 2006-07. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 8(1), 50-72.
- Duraisamy, P. (2016). Quantitative Expansion of higher Education in India, In N. V. Varghese & G. Malik (Eds.), *Indian higher education report 2015* (pp. 65-94). London & New York: Routledge.
- FICCI. (2011). *Private sector participation in Indian higher education*, FICCI higher education summit 2011, Ernst & Young Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata.
- Government of India. (2019). *All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-19*. New Delhi: Department of Higher Education and Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Hossain, A. & Mondal, G.C. (2019). History and milestones of higher education in India. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6(1), 978-983.
- Jonaki, B., & Prasenjit, P. (2016). Higher Education in India: Recent Issues and Trends. *Research Journal of Educational Sciences*, 4(1), 10–16.
- Kamal, P. (2016). Reforms and Innovations in Higher Education. *International Journal of Peace, Education and Development*, 4(1), 1-7.
- Kaul, J. N. (1972). Development of Indian Higher Education. *Economic And Political Weekly*, 7(31), 1645–1647.
- Maringe, F. & Gibbs, P. (2009). *Marketing Higher Education: Theory and Practice*. New York: Mcgraw hill: open university press.
- Mohamedbhai, G. (2011). Higher Education in Africa: Facing the Challenges in the 21st Century. *International Higher Education*, (63), 20–21.

- Prakash, V. (2007). Trends in growth and financing of higher education in India. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 42(31), 3249–3258.
- Ransure, P. (2017). Higher Education System in India: Emerging Issues, Challenges and Suggestions. *International Research journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 3.
- Sheikh, Y.A. (2017). Higher Education in India: Challenges and Opportunities. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(1), 39-42.
- Singh, S.P. (2017). The Higher education system in India and its Impact on the economy. *EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review*, 5(9), 222-225.
- Srimathi, H. & Krishnamoorthy, A. (2019). Higher Education System in India: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 8(12), 2213-2217.
- Teferra, D., & Altbach, P.G. (2004). African higher education: Challenges for the 21st century. *Higher Education*, 47(1), 21–50.
- Teichler, U. (1996). Comparative higher education: potential and limits. *Higher Education*, 32(4), 431-465.
- Teichler, U. (2005). Research on higher education in Europe. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 40(4), 447-469.
- Tilak, J. B. G. (2001). Higher education and development in Kerala. *Center for Socio-Economic and Environmental Studies Working paper no. 5*. Retrieved from <http://cesindia.org/admin/modules/cms/docs/publication/5.pdf> on January 6, 2018.
- UGC. (2008). *Higher Education in India - Issues related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance*. New Delhi: University Grants Commission.
- UGC. (2008). Analysis of peer team Reports of Accredited Institutions of Rajasthan- Issues and Strategies for Quality Enhancement, Bangalore: National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
- UGC. (2016). Annual Report 2015-16, New Delhi: University Grants Commission.

UNESCO. (1998). World declaration on higher education for 21st century: vision and action.

Varghese, N.V. (2015). Challenges of massification of higher education in India, *CPRHE Research Paper 1*, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education. New Delhi: National University of Educational Planning and Administration.

Varghese, N.V., Panigrahi, J. & Rohatgi, A. (2018). Concentration of higher education institutions in India: A regional analysis. *CPRHE Research Paper 11*, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education. New Delhi: National University of Educational Planning and Administration.

## **Exploring Nature and Risk Factors of Completed Suicide in Sikkim**

SATYANANDA PANDA

UDANGSHRI BASUMATARY

KINNARI KASHYAP

### **Abstract**

*The Sikkim state of India has been witnessing an increasing trend in suicide rates in the last decades. The present study was undertaken to evaluate the psycho-social, cultural, economic factors and psychiatric and physical co-morbidity of completed suicide in Sikkim. The details of the completed suicide victims were obtained from the police headquarter, Gangtok, Sikkim from Jan 2001- to March 2017. 206 close relatives of the suicide victims, four psychologists, five psychiatrists, six social workers, three panchayat members /councilors, four police personnel, and twelve survivors of a suicide attempt from four districts of Sikkim of the suicide victims were randomly selected and were interviewed comprehensively. Analysis of the obtained data of 206 suicide victims shows that males committed more suicide than females and the highest suicide was in the age range of 15-24 years. The percentage of suicide was higher in rural areas. Hanging and jumping from heights was the most common method of committing suicide in Sikkim. By qualitative analysis, major reasons leading to suicide was found to be conflicts/ violence in the family, extramarital affairs, divorce, failure in love affairs, inherited characteristics of suicide, low emotional attachment in the family, anger, suffering from various chronic physical illness, mental disorders like depression, borderline personality disorder and substance abuse like alcohol, opioids and abusing of counter- medicines among others. It is essential to understand the complex interplay of these factors of suicide to develop and implement effective prevention strategies in a prosperous state like Sikkim.*

**Keywords:** Suicide, Hanging, Nepali, Impulsive behavior, Jumping, Alcohol

## **INTRODUCTION**

Suicide is a major public health concern worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that out of nearly 9 lakh people who die from suicide every year globally, 1,70,000 people are from India (WHO, 2008). However, the National Crime Records Bureau of India which provides official suicide rates in India based on police reports is only 1,35,000 in the year 2011 (NCRB, 2008; NCRB, 2011). The possible reason for such underreporting of suicide in India is that suicide remains a crime in India (Patel et al., 2012). Suicide is a worldwide phenomenon occurring in any life cycle of a human being. Every year, globally around 8,00,000 people die (one person every 40 seconds) by committing suicide making it the second-highest leading cause of death among 15-29-year-old, and for one suicide there has been estimated to be 20 others who attempted suicide. The suicide deaths reported worldwide in the year 2012 were 804,000, so the uniform distribution of the age distribution of the age-standardized percentage of suicide was 11.4 per 1,00,000 population (15.0 for males and 8.0 for females). A difference in the male and female suicide ratio was observed between rich, low-income, and middle-income countries, the countries with high economic growth were estimated to have 3-time male suicide than females and 1.5 male to each female in the low and middle-income countries (WHO, 2014). In 2016 suicide was the 18th leading cause of death, 1.4% of death around the world occurred by committing suicide and 79% of them happened in low and middle-income countries (WHO, 2019). Globally, the average suicide mortality rate per 1,00,000 populations was 10.6 in 2016. World health organization reported that 30% of worldwide suicide occur in India and China (Befrienders Worldwide, 2018).

### **Suicide in India**

The National Crime Records Bureau of India reported that per day 242 males and 129 females; a total of about 1,35,455 people ends their life by committing suicide. The highest suicide rate in the country was recorded

in Puducherry with 36.8% per 1 lakh persons in the area, the second was Sikkim with 29.1%, Tamil Nadu registered 24.9% suicide cases followed by Kerala with 24.3% of suicide. Among the bigger states, Tamil Nadu had the highest record of suicide followed by Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. The age group of 15-29 years remained constantly on the higher edge from 2004-2013; the increasing number was observed among 5-14 years and 30-44 years of age group. The report of suicide among males is higher than females in all the age groups with the most prominent age group of suicide as 15-29 years and 30-44 years (NCRB, 2012).

### **Suicide in Sikkim**

Suicide in Sikkim is the major health concern with a gradual rise in the suicide rate despite being a small state of India with a population of around 6.1 lakhs as per the 2011 census. The overall population density is 86 persons per square kilometer and the sex ratio of 889 females per 1000 males. Sikkim has been reported to be continuously on the higher place for suicide since 2002. In 2008, Sikkim was the first state with the highest suicide rate and in the year 2009, it was in the second place; and it has been so far steadily in the higher range (Chettri et al., 2016). Suicide has been taking place in increasing numbers among males of the age group of 21-30 years (Pradhan & Dhakal, 2015). The prevalence of the precipitating factors of life along with depression among the suicide attempters was seen (Kumar et al., 2015).

### **Significance of the Study**

The effects of modernization, specifically in Sikkim, have led to sweeping changes in the socio-economic, socio-philosophical, and cultural arenas of people's lives, which have greatly added to the stress in life, leading to substantially higher rates of suicide. As a result of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and emerging family systems, social upheaval and distress exist. The traditional support system is decreasing day by day leaving people vulnerable to suicidal behavior. Hence, there is an

emerging need for external emotional support (Rane & Nadkarni, 2014). However, since any systematic information on the epidemiology of suicidal behavior in Sikkim is not available, it is necessary to find out the nature and causative factors of suicide in a prosperous state like Sikkim. It is necessary to understand the role of psycho-socio-cultural-economic factors of suicide among people of Sikkim, methods of suicide completion, treatment, and prevention approach for finding an all-time solution to this problem by empowering the society and the community to deal with the problem of suicide through introducing various community-based intervention programs.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To explore the socio-demographic characteristics of completed suicide in Sikkim.
- To evaluate the psycho-socio-cultural-economic factors of completed suicide in Sikkim.
- To study the psychiatric and physical co-morbidity associated with completed suicide in Sikkim.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### ***Sample***

The entire mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) study was conducted in two distinct phases to collect both secondary and primary data:

***Phase-I:*** The secondary data (quantitative) was gathered from the logbooks of the Crime Branch, Crime Investigation Department, State Police Headquarters, Gangtok, Sikkim, Local police stations, and Office of the Registrar of Births and Deaths, Gangtok. The number of suicide victims from Jan 2001- March 2017 as per the records of the logbooks were 2,611 inclusive of 65.04% male, 34.39% female, and 0.57% unidentified gender suicide rate for all the four districts. The sample considered for the present study consists of about 20 percent of the suicide



cases reported from each district (East Sikkim, West Sikkim, North Sikkim, and South Sikkim) of Sikkim during Jan 2001- March 2017.

**Phase-II:** The primary data (qualitative) was collected by using an in-depth interview technique with family members of the suicide victims, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, panchayat members/councilors, police personnel as well as the suicide survivors of Sikkim. Panchayat/councilor is the first person to be informed about any troubles in the area he/she is entitled to look upon. They are the person with vital information regarding the social behavior of the suicide victims from their respective areas. Most of them are aware of the family condition and the information regarding any disturbances in the family which information's are generally untold by the victims' families. The data was collected by using a stratified random sampling technique.

***Inclusion Criteria for Selection of Participants (Phase II)***

- Key Informants of the suicide victims (who can be a spouse, offspring, sibling, parent, or any other near or dear one who has been living with the deceased for at least the past 2 years).
- Health care professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers) dealing with suicide cases in STNM Hospital, SMU hospital, Gangtok, and other district hospitals of Sikkim to explore public health approaches for suicide prevention.
- Police personnel from Sikkim dealing with the psychological autopsy of suicide victims.
- Panchayat members/councilor of the locality of Sikkim
- Respondents hailing from Sikkim state.
- Both rural and urban settings.
- Those who gave consent for an in-depth interview

**Table 1**

District-wise no. of Participants for Primary Data Collection (N=240)

Sl. No.	No. of Participants	East	West	North	South	Total
1.	Key informants of the suicide victim	81	52	08	65	206
2.	Psychologists	01	01	01	01	04
3.	Psychiatrists	03	01	01	0	05
4.	Social Workers	04	01	0	01	06
5.	Panchayat members/ Councilor	01	01	0	01	03
6.	Police Personnel	01	01	01	01	04
7.	Suicide Survivors	08	04	0	0	12
<b>Total:</b>		99	61	11	69	240

All the four districts of Sikkim (i.e., East, West, North, and South) were covered for the qualitative data collection. For this, 206 victims (128 males and 78 females) were randomly identified from the list procured from the logbook of record room of the Crime Branch, Crime Investigation Department, State Police Headquarters, Gangtok, Sikkim. For in-depth interviewing of the family members/relatives of the suicide victims, addresses of the suicide victims were identified with the help of the Police Personal, Panchayats/Councilors, and Social Workers of the concerned locality. All the houses of 206 suicide victims in four different districts were visited for in-depth interviews depending on the communicability and accessibility of the place. Except it, other professionals like psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, police personnel, panchayat members, as well as suicide survivors in all four districts were also interviewed keeping in mind the objectives of the research.

### ***Interview Protocol***

There was no fixed interview protocol for all the respondents. Order and nature of questions varied according to the respondents and their experiences about the issue. In these free-floating interviews, the inquiry centered on eliciting the following information: each participant was interviewed individually face-to-face for more than an hour, depending on the flow. For maintaining the confidentiality of participants, each participant had been given a pseudo name. The psychologists and psychiatrists who were interviewed are all specialized and work full-time in the district hospitals of the 4 districts of Sikkim. They have addressed most of the suicide victims and suicide survivors. The interview contained the following information of the suicide victims obtained from the feedback from the key informants (who can be a spouse, offspring, sibling, parent, or any other near or dear one who has been living with the deceased for at least the past 2 years).

- Socio-Demographic variables, e.g., age, sex, religion, marital status, community, occupation, etc.
- Socio-economic variables, e.g., income, education, family information, etc.
- History of substance/alcohol abuse, if any, and its connection with suicide.
- Probable reasons/risk factors for suicide, e.g., psychological, physical, social, cultural, or any other factors.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

- Permission was obtained from the Crime Branch, Crime Investigation Department, State Police Headquarters, Gangtok, Sikkim for collecting secondary data of suicide victims after explaining to them the aim and objectives of the study.
- Consent was also obtained from the family members of the suicide victims, psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, police personnel, panchayat members, as well as suicide survivors of Sikkim.
- The ethical consideration of this study was passed by Sikkim University and ICSSR, New Delhi.

## RESULTS

The information gathered by using the in-depth interview technique among health care professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers), panchayats/councilors, suicide survivors, and police personnel, were analyzed by content analysis. Participants' demographic information, risk factors of suicide victims, and other details obtained during the in-depth interview were analyzed which are discussed below:

**Table 2**

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Suicide Victims during the Year 2001-2017 (N= 206)

Socio-Demographic Variables		Frequency and Percentage of Socio-demographic Variables				
		East District (n=81)	West District (n=52)	North District (n=8)	South District (n=65)	Total Sample (N= 206)
		Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	50 (24.27%)	34 (16.50%)	2 (0.98%)	42(20.39%)	128 (62.14%)
	Female	31 (15.05%)	18 (8.74%)	6 (2.91%)	23(11.16%)	78 (37.86%)
Age	5-14 years	4 (1.94%)	1 (0.50%)	0	2 (1.0%)	7 (3.40%)
	15-24 years	20 (58.25%)	11 (5.33%)	3 (1.50%)	18 (8.74%)	52 (25.24%)
	25-34 years	23 (11.20%)	12 (5.83%)	1 (0.50%)	13 (6.31%)	49 (23.80%)
	35-44 years	18 (8.74%)	14 (6.80%)	2 (1.00%)	17 (8.30%)	51(24.80%)
	45-54 years	12 (5.83%)	9 (4.40%)	1 (0.50%)	10 (4.85%)	32 (15.53%)
	55-64 years	2 (1.00%)	5 (2.42%)	1 (0.50%)	4 (1.94%)	12(5.83%)
	65-74 years	1 (0.50%)	0	0	0	1 (0.50%)
	75-84 years	1 (0.50%)	0	0	1 (0.50%)	2 (1.00%)
Religion	Hindu	50 (24.27%)	36(17.48%)	3 (1.46%)	37(17.96%)	126(61.17%)
	Buddhist	15 (7.28%)	13 (6.31%)	5 (2.43%)	21(10.19%)	54 (26.21%)
	Christian	16 (7.77%)	3 (1.46%)	0	6 (2.91%)	25 (12.14%)
	Muslim	0	0	0	1 (0.48%)	1 (0.48%)
Community	Lepcha	8 (3.88%)	1 (0.50%)	4 (1.94%)	8 (3.88%)	21 (10.19%)
	Bhutia	3 (1.50%)	9 (4.40%)	1 (0.50%)	3 (1.50%)	16 (7.77%)
	Nepali	59 (28.64%)	26 (12.62%)	2 (0.97%)	48 (23.30%)	135 (65.53%)
	Sherpa	3 (1.50%)	0	0	0	3 (1.50%)
	Limboo	4 (1.94%)	16 (7.77%)	0	3 (1.50%)	23 (11.20%)

	Others	4 (1.94%)	0	1 (0.50%)	3 (1.50%)	8 (3.88%)
Residence	Rural	41 (19.90%)	30 (14.56%)	4 (1.94%)	40 (19.42%)	115 (55.83%)
	Urban	40 (19.42%)	22 (10.68%)	4 (1.94%)	25 (12.13%)	91 (44.17%)
Marital Status	Married	52 (25.24%)	42 (20.40%)	5 (2.43%)	35 (16.99%)	134 (65.00%)
	Unmarried	29 (14.10%)	10 (4.85%)	3 (1.45%)	29 (14.10)	71 (34.50%)
	Separated	0	0	0	1 (0.50%)	1 (0.50%)
Education	Illiterate	11 (5.34%)	20 (9.71%)	0	11 (5.34%)	42 (20.40%)
	Primary	42 (20.40%)	20 (9.71%)	4 (1.94%)	31 (15.05%)	97 (47.10%)
	Matriculation	12 (5.82%)	10 (4.85%)	4 (1.94%)	13 (6.31%)	39 (18.90%)
	Graduation	15 (7.30%)	2 (0.97%)	0	7 (3.40%)	24 (11.70%)
	PG& above	1 (0.50%)	0	0	3 (1.40%)	4 (1.90%)
Occupation	Student	21 (10.20%)	11 (5.34%)	1 (0.48%)	19 (9.22%)	52 (25.24%)
	Unemployed	14 (6.80%)	4 (1.94%)	3 (1.45%)	14 (6.80%)	35 (16.99%)
	Teacher	5 (2.43%)	0	1 (0.48%)	2 (0.97%)	8 (3.88%)
	Skilled worker	25(12.14%)	13 (6.31%)	2 (0.97%)	16 (7.77%)	56 (27.19%)
	Semi-skilled worker	16 (7.77%)	24 (11.65%)	1 (0.48%)	14 (6.80%)	55 (26.70%)
Illness	Physical	24 (11.65%)	7 (3.40%)	0	10 (4.85%)	41 (19.90%)
	Mental	11 (5.34%)	11 (5.34%)	2 (0.97%)	18 (8.74%)	42 (20.39%)
Previous suicide attempt	Nil	46 (22.33%)	34 (16.50%)	6 (2.91%)	37 (17.96%)	123 (59.70%)
	Attempted once	6 (2.91%)	3 (1.47%)	1 (0.48%)	6 (2.91%)	16 (7.77%)
	More than once	12 (5.83%)	8 (3.88%)	1 (0.48%)	6 (2.91%)	27 (13.10%)
Family history of suicide	Nil	63 (30.58%)	41 (19.90%)	6 (2.91%)	53 (25.73%)	163 (79.13%)
	One	19 (9.22%)	12 (5.83%)	0	20 (9.71%)	51 (24.80%)
	More than one	8 (3.90%)	0	0	1 (0.50%)	9 (4.40%)
History of substance abuse	Nil	54 (26.21%)	40 (19.42%)	8 (3.90%)	44(21.36%)	146(70.90%)
	Present	53 (25.73%)	39 (18.93%)	7 (3.40%)	45 (21.84%)	144 (69.90%)
	Absent	28 (13.60%)	13 (6.31%)	1 (0.48%)	20 (9.71%)	62 (30.10%)

**Table3**

Methods, Causes, Warning Signs, Presence of Psychiatric Illness and History of Substance Abuse of Suicide Victims of Sikkim from 2001–2017(N=206)

<b>Variables</b>		<b>Frequency (%) (N=206)</b>
Methods adopted for suicide	Hanging	191(92.70%)
	Jumping from heights	8 (3.90%)
	Self-immolation	1 (0.50%)
	Drowning	1 (0.50%)
	By consuming poison	5 (2.40%)
The immediate reason for suicide	Quarrel with the family	2 (1.00%)
	Failure in love affairs	1 (0.50%)
	Quarrel with spouse	2 (1.00%)
	Quarrel with friends	2 (1.00%)
	Low emotional attachment in the family	64 (31.10%)
	Aggressive	25 (12.10%)
	Other (Debt, Family burden, Extra-marital affairs, unemployment.)	16 (7.80%)
	Reason/s unknown	94 (45.60%)
Type of warning sign	Introverted/ Loneliness	58 (28%)
	Hopelessness	68 (33.00%)
	Threatening to hurt or kill self and looking for ways to kill self	33 (16.00%)
	Nil	47 (22.80%)
Psychiatry diagnosis	Present	51 (24.80%)
	Absent	155 75.20%)
Type of substance/s abused	Smoking	12 (5.80%)
	Alcohol	104 50.50%)
	Drugs (not specified)	7 (3.40%)
	Smoking & alcohol	8 (3.90%)
	Alcohol & other substances (Smoking, drugs, etc.)	13 (6.30%)
	Nil	62 (30.10%)

**Table 4**

Category-Wise Mentioned Indicators as Reasons for Completed Suicide (N=240)

\* N=240 is the number of the participants including key informants of the suicide victims, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, panchayat members/councilor police personnel, and suicide survivors.

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.	Psychological factors	a. Mental illness	The capability of processing, thinking, and reacting lessens when a person is mentally unwell. The deterioration in mental health makes an individual partly handicapped. There are various types of mental illnesses with greater vulnerability to suicide. Sikkim has reported of rising in mental health problems.
		b. Substance abuse	The consumption of illegal, non-prescribed drugs, overconsumption of alcohol, prescribed or legal drugs can alter the feelings and emotions in the daily life of human beings. A large number of substance abuse by suicide victims was reported by the respondents.
		c. Low coping strategies/ skills	The strategies/skills are required to solve the interpersonal problems and come up with a

			positive solution to minimize and tolerate the issue. Though these are inborn reflexive characteristics, few people lack in coping with their problems of life.
		d. Impulsivity	The action of an individual by a sudden change of mind with or without outflow of appropriate behavior and forethought of its consequences. Suicide attempts are considered impulsive if the victim spent less than 5 minutes between the decisions for the suicide attempt and the actual attempt.
		e. Stress	The physical or psychological response to the demand or threat of the environment. The normal stress of daily life is good in a way as it keeps an individual motivated. Stress with an unpredictable change in life is to be addressed with caution.
2.	Physical health	a. Chronic physical illness	The physical illness which recurs is unbudgeable, difficult to cure, or not curable breakdown the person making life strenuous. The association between chronic illness and suicide was established in this study.
		b. Unwanted	Pregnancy before the legal age



		pregnancy	of marriage particularly among teenagers, due to forced marriage, unprotected sex, and the result of extra-marital affairs is unwanted depending on the degree of acceptability by the parents or guardians. This is one of the risk factors of suicide.
3.	Socio-cultural environment	a. Failure in love affairs	Lack of capacity to deal with broken relationships. Low motivation to deal with the actual reason for the loss. The failed love affair is one of the reasons which people attempt suicide.
		b. Lifestyle	Modernization has brought changes in many spheres of human life, raising the heat for the competition to be the best. This competitiveness often is accompanied by many unwanted confrontations as a result of which people at times take an extreme step to end life.
		c. Economic scenario	A strong economy increases the capability of the family or partner to support in daily life. Low or no income and socio-economic status were found to be associated with suicide in Sikkim.
		d. Religious beliefs	The devotion to supernatural power is described as the most

			powerful which controls the universe. The solution to all the problems revolves around these beliefs. Depressed people having low religious beliefs committed suicide.
4.	Family factors	a. Conflicts/Violence	Fights and quarrels of parents, spouses, or among family members for reasons like property unsettlement, difficulty with adjusting with in-laws, etc. were some of the risk factors of suicide.
		b. Extramarital affairs	Illicit romantic or sexual relationships outside of the marriage/ leaving spouse for somebody without any legal settlement of ending the previous marriage are the contributing factors of suicide.
		c. Divorce	Inability to accept the reality of early separation of marriage by the partner and the children creates an emotional imbalance leading to the harsh decisions of ending life.
		d. Inherited characteristics of suicide	A family history of suicide was observed to be the risk factor for the person to commit suicide. Exposure to the suicide of inspiring models (peers/celebrities).

5.	Other Factors	a. Lack of awareness	The inability among illiterate people mainly from rural areas of Sikkim to understand the connection between mental illness like depression and suicide act.
		b. Stigma	The prevalence of stigma about the “spirit” of previous suicide victims calling out to vulnerable people to commit suicide was found to be high in rural areas. This believed phenomenon could be explained as a lack of awareness and knowledge about various physical and mental health issues or ignorance.
		c. Media	The statements of suicide are too elaborate and revealing making the person with suicidal ideation more vulnerable to suicide.
		d. Lack of assessment tools	The early diagnosis of the suicidal intent in an individual who is already consulting for mental illnesses in some of the hospitals was not possible due to a lack of assessment tools.

## DISCUSSION

### *1. Demographics of Suicide in Sikkim:*

Suicide was found to be prevalent both in rural and urban areas in all the four districts (East, West, North, and South) of Sikkim. The rural area in

Sikkim is the most affected by suicide (55.83%) as compared to the urban area (44.1%). East district of Sikkim had the highest registered cases of suicide in both rural and urban areas whereas North Sikkim had the least case of suicide. Out of 206 relatives of the suicide victims who were randomly selected for the in-depth interview from all the four districts of Sikkim, 62.14% were relatives of male victims and 37.86% were relatives of female suicide victims who gave consent to participate in the study. 61.17% of the victims were Hindu, 55.83% belonged to the urban area and 65.00% of the suicide victims were married at the time of completed suicide.

The highest suicide rate was observed in the age group of 15-24 years, followed by 35-44 years and 25-34 years respectively. It can be observed that mid-adolescence to early adulthood is the most vulnerable age of suicide in Sikkim. Rane and Nadkarni (2014) reported that the age group for the high suicide range in Sikkim was 15-29 years followed by 30-44 years. 65% of the suicide victims were male and 35% were female and taking place more in a rural area (O'Connor & Nock, 2014).

The education level of most of the suicide victims was up to primary level(47.10%) followed by illiterates (20.40%), matriculation level(18.90%), graduation level (11.70%), and post-graduation & above (1.90%).The communities of Sikkim are Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali, Sherpa, Limboo, Non-Sikkimese and some cases were noted as unidentified. The Nepali community has the highest record of suicide cases(65.53%) followed by Limboo (11.20%) and Lepcha(10.19%) communities. Sherpa community of Sikkim has the lowest rate of suicide (1.50%).

The skilled (27.19%) and semi-skilled (26.70%) workers of Sikkim were found to be committing suicide which is on the higher side, though the percentage of suicide among students (25.24%) and unemployed (16.99%) cannot be denied. Except it, 3.88% of suicide was also observed among the teaching professionals.

It was found that 20.39% of the victims were suffering from mental illness

and 19.90% were suffering from physical illness (mainly chronic and terminal illness). Respondents of the victims reported that 13.10% of the suicide victims had previously attempted suicide multiple times and 7.77% had attempted only once. The history of single-time completed suicide in the family was found to be 24.80% and the history of two times completed suicide in the family was 4.40% which is a matter of great concern and a further in-depth study needs to be conducted. The prevalence of substance abuse was observed in 69.90% of the victims as reported by the relatives of 206 suicide victims. The most common type of substance used by the suicide victims was alcohol (50.50%) whereas 5.80% of them were into two substances. Except it, 5.80% of the victims were smokers, 3.9% were smoking and drinking alcohol, other substances not specified were 3.40%, and 0.50% of them were smoking, drinking alcohol, and taking different substances.

The most common method adopted for suicide by the victims of Sikkim as reported by the relatives was found to be hanging (92.70%) followed by jumping from heights (3.90%), consuming poison (2.40%), self-immolation (0.50%), and drowning (0.50%). The most common immediate reason for suicide by the victim as reported by the family members/relatives was low emotional attachment in the family (31.10%) followed by aggressiveness (12.10%). The warning signs of a suicide victim, as reported by the relatives, are hopelessness (33.00%) and introversion/loneliness (28%) whereas 16.00% of the victims expressed self-killing or hurt themselves before committing suicide.

## ***2. Psychological factors:***

24.80% of the suicide victims were diagnosed as having mental health-related problems and were undergoing treatment, as well as some of them, were just discharged from the rehabilitation centers. The main causative factors of suicide were found to be various types of mental illness (i.e., depression, borderline personality disorder) in addition to substance abuse (i.e., alcohol, opioids, or self-prescribed medicines) accompanied by

anger, stress, catastrophizing, and lack of coping skills. One interesting cause is described as “impulsivity” without suicidal ideation and previous suicidal attempt. Impulsivity is higher in young people rather than older people and prone to a person with personality disorders who had a history of repeated suicide attempts (Pandey et al., 2019). The participants reported observing symptoms of stress in the suicide victims for a longer duration, which they took lightly at that time but now they realize that there was some problem with victims. Low coping skills are mentioned separately because the suicide victims were not able to deal with their problems for which they might have been stressed and later on committed suicide. Most of the suicides were related to physical illness, psychological problems, drug abuse, and relationship problems (O’Connor & Nock, 2014). The young Nepali adolescents of Nepal with food insecurity, anxiety, loneliness, and gender issues are more inclined towards suicidal ideation. Adolescents with anxiety, loneliness, truancy, cigarette use, and gender issues tend to suicide attempts (Stedman, 2006).

### **3. *Health factors:***

The suicide victims were reported to have been suffering from chronic physical illnesses and in a few cases, they had a terminal illness. The realization and helplessness for the lack of cure of illness could have driven the person to take a drastic step like suicide. The uncontrollable emotional feelings caused by different personal health issues either physical or psychological, socioeconomic status, and relationship problems’ make the person end his life is ‘suicide’ (NCRB, 2015; Maltzberger, 1993). The person who ends the life fails to find any solution to the problems faced by him/her, these are the undeniable emotions experienced by the person which has increased for many years (Psychology Today, 2018; Rosenberg et al., 1988; Shneidman, 1985). The first and foremost sign of suicide is suicidal ideation or suicidal thoughts; which is the constant thought of ending ones’ life (Maris et al., 1992). Suicidal ideation with detailed planning and accessibility to the materials mentioned to be utilized for the act is a marked priority for intervention.

The person with previous suicide attempts or attempts becomes habituated to physical pains and is less afraid of death as they have been repeatedly exposed to it thus chances of dying by suicide increase (Pandey et al., 2019). The common predictors of suicide are the history of suicide attempts and suicide in the family, stressful life events, hopelessness, isolation, lack of support from the family, relationship troubles, economic and occupational problems, alcohol and drug abuse, physical illness, and psychological problems (like depressive illness and other psychiatric disorder) (Somasundaram et al., 1989).

#### ***4. Socio-cultural factors:***

The major social factors of suicide as reported by the family members/relatives were a failure in the love affairs/romantic relationships, the changing lifestyle in the modern era with poor socio-economic status and low income has taken a toll on many person's life. In the study, the prevalence of stigma about the "spirit" of previous suicide victims calling out to vulnerable people to commit suicide was found to be high in rural areas. This believed the phenomenon could be explained as a lack of awareness and knowledge about various physical and mental health issues or ignorance. The strong beliefs on the supernatural power were reported by the family members/relatives of the suicide victims. This could be linked to the symptoms of hallucinations in the case of the victims having a mental illness.

#### ***5. Family factors:***

The family factors such as the conflict in the family that includes regular arguments between parents or family members, separation of parents during the victim's early childhood, and separation of a married couple without a divorce settlement are key problems. The inability to express the emotional buildups in front of the family members due to the communication gap, fear of being misunderstood, and non-acceptance of ideas by them. The similarity of suicide patterns in the same family one after another and the same village of Sikkim was also observed. The

involvement of religious beliefs and cultural influences has been observed to be highly effective in case of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts which is similar to the study related to Tamils (Maris et al., 1922).

**6. *Other factors*** (*reports from psychologist, psychiatrist, panchayat/counselor*):

The lack of awareness among the common people about the various signs of mental illness, to identify the person suffering from suicidal ideation, and unwillingness or ignorance when a person is seeking help indirectly are the major reason for suicide. Many stereotypical unexplainable beliefs and stigma of being shamed by others for suffering from the mental illness in case of both suicide victims and family members of the victim. The reports of suicide by media are observed to be ornamented and too much disclosure of the methods. The probable reasons for suicide are the main issue that is possibly affecting the person with suicidal intent negatively. The inability of the early detection of the signs of suicide ideation due to lack of assessment tools/tests in the hospitals/referral units is also another possible reason for suicide.

**Limitations of the Study**

Participants of the research were limited to only family members/relatives of 206 completed suicide victims of Sikkim. A selected number of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, panchayat members/councilors and police personnel, and suicide survivors were taken for the study.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Suicide is linked to various mental disorders, particularly depression and alcohol use disorders, and the strongest risk factor for suicide is a previous suicide attempt.

The following protective suggestions could be adopted based on the various identified factors related to suicide:



- Efforts should be made by the authorities to reach out to a greater number of people at a time with door-to-door programs on the prevention of mental illness including suicide, especially in rural areas and particularly in suicide-prone areas.
- The awareness program regarding the identification based on signs and symptoms, treatment procedures, and the curability of the mental illnesses should be done on regular basis.
- A joint initiative by professionals in a greater number could bring a large change in society. The government should try to employ qualified persons based on the requirement of the mental health professionals and regular training should also be arranged for them.
- The joint meeting or awareness program for children and family members should be kept for topics like mental health, issues related to family conflict and relationship problems, problems of substance abuse, and its consequences. To reach out to all the students and parents, this program should be made compulsory and sectioned class-wise and articles or lectures should be delivered appropriate to their age. Mental health programs in various schools and colleges should also be carried out at regular intervals.
- Special attention should be provided by the school authorities to the students who have a traumatic experience recently or early for the age like losing of parents and accidents or illness, to transfer students as they might have adjustment problems.
- The workshops and lectures on coping skills with the difficult situation of work and life should be discussed openly.
- The motivational speech about a positive way of living openly for all the people by the renowned person of Sikkim should be arranged by the authority.
- The high number of suicides among substance abusers was also found in the study. The government should take strict action against the offenders like drug peddlers as well as chemist shops and consumers.

The offenders should be psycho-educated and trained with surviving skills to earn money as most of the drug peddlers do it just to earn easy money.

- Mass awareness should be carried out about the various helpline and crisis intervention programs of Sikkim through banners and hoardings in all the areas of Sikkim.
- The most suicide-prone age group in the study was observed to be late teens to mid-adulthood which happens to be the most productive part of the life of the person. From this perspective, special plans should be brought out to reach these age groups all over Sikkim.
- As problems could be related to education, low socioeconomic status, etc., regular training on life skill education could be organized for them in schools and colleges of Sikkim.

## **CONCLUSION**

Social and public health response to suicide is crucial in a prosperous state like Sikkim and should complement mental health. The gradual rise of suicide in Sikkim is a matter of concern for all health care professionals and the government. Even after applying some of the adopted methods and ideas to avoid suicide it somehow recurs forcing all the individuals to rethink. Many people say that education can change everything but suicide has been seen in the educated person too, so where do we lack it's a matter of discussion in the modern days and for mental health studies. There is an urgent need for short-term and long-term culturally sensitive intervention for the prevention of suicide at every level of Sikkim.

## **Financial Support and Sponsorship**

ICSSR, New Delhi.

## ***References***

- Befrienders Worldwide (2018). Suicide Statistics. Available from URL: <https://www.befrienders.org/suicide-statistics>.

- Chettri, R., Gurung, J., & Singh, B. (2016). A 10-year retrospective study of suicide in Sikkim, India: Socio-demographic profile and risk assessment. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 58 (4), 448-453. DOI:10.4103/0019-5545.196712
- Kumar, S., Rai, P., & Rambe, S. (2015). *Sikkim Human Developmental Report 2014*. Government of Sikkim. New Delhi, India: Routledge. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320125648\\_Sikkim\\_Human\\_Development\\_Report\\_2014](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320125648_Sikkim_Human_Development_Report_2014)
- Maltzberger J. T. (1993). Confusion of the body, the self, and others in suicidal states. In: Leenaars, A. A., Berman, A. L., Cantor, P., Litman, R. E., & Maris, R. W. (eds.) *Suicidology: Essays in honor of Edwin S. Shneidman*. Jason Aronson, Northvale, 148–17. ISBN 10: 0876685718 / ISBN 13: 9780876685716
- Maris, R. W., Berman, A. L., Maltzberger, J. T., & Yufit, R. I. (1992). *Assessment and prediction of suicide*. New York: Guilford Press. Available from URL: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1992-97626-000>
- National Crime Records Bureau (2008). *Accidental Deaths and Suicide in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Available from URL: <http://ncrb.gov.in/adsis2013/ADSI-2013.pdf>.
- National Crime Records Bureau (2011). *Accidental Deaths and Suicide in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Available from URL: <https://ncrb.gov.in/en/accidental-deaths-suicides-in-india>
- National Crime Records Bureau (2012). *Accidental Deaths and Suicide in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- National Crime Records Bureau (2015). *Accidental Deaths and Suicide in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of India, Government of India. Available from URL: [https://ncrb.gov.in/en/accidental-deaths-suicides-in-india?field\\_adsi\\_year\\_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2020&field\\_accidental\\_deaths\\_suicides\\_value=2&items\\_per\\_page=All](https://ncrb.gov.in/en/accidental-deaths-suicides-in-india?field_adsi_year_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2020&field_accidental_deaths_suicides_value=2&items_per_page=All)
- O'Connor, R. C., & Nock, M. K. (2014). The psychology of suicidal behavior. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2014, 1 (1):73-85. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(14\)70222-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)70222-6)
- Pandey, A. R., Bista, B., Dhungana, R. R., Aryal, K. K., Chalise, B., & Dhimal, M. (2019) Factors associated with suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts among adolescent students in Nepal: Findings from Global School-based Students Health Survey. *PLoS One*, 14 (4), e0210383. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0210383> [Last accessed on 2020 Nov 6].

- Patel, V., Ramasundarahettige, C., Vijayakumar, L., Thakur, J. S., Gajalakshmi, V., ...& Gururaj, G. (2012). Suicide mortality in India: A nationally representative survey. *Lancet* 379 (9834), 2343–2351. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60606-0.
- Pradhan, C. L., & Dhakal, M. M. (2015). Profile of risk factors related to attempted suicide in Sikkim, India. *Indian Journal of Private Psychiatry*, 9(1), 34-41. Available from URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280132608\\_Role\\_of\\_Auditory\\_hallucinations\\_in\\_Suicide](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280132608_Role_of_Auditory_hallucinations_in_Suicide)
- Psychology Today. Suicide; 2018. Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/suicide>. [Last accessed on 2018 Dec 9].
- Rane, A., & Nadkarni, A. (2014). Suicide in India: A systematic review. *Shanghai Archives of Psychiatry*, 26 (2), 69-80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1002-0829.2014.02.003>.
- Rosenberg, M. L., Davidson, L. E., Smith, J. C., Berman, A. L., Buzbee, H., Gantner, G., Gay, G. A., ...Jobs, D. (1988). Operational criteria for the determination of suicide. *Journal of Forensic Science*, 33(6), 1445-1456.
- Somasundaram, O. S., Babu, C. K., & Geethayan, A. (1989). Suicide behavior in the ancient civilizations with special references to the Tamils. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 31(3), 208-212. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2992114/pdf/IJPsy-31-208.pdf>
- Stedman, L. T. (2006). *Stedman's Medical Dictionary* (28th ed.). Suicide. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- World Health Organization (2008). *The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 update*. Geneva: WHO.
- World Health Organization (2014). *Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative*. WHO, Geneva. Available from URL: [file:///C:/Users/kinno/Downloads/9789241564779\\_eng.pdf](file:///C:/Users/kinno/Downloads/9789241564779_eng.pdf)
- World Health Organization (2019). *Suicide Worldwide in 2019: Global Health Estimates*. Available from URL: <file:///C:/Users/kinno/Downloads/9789240026643-eng.pdf>

## **Human Rights, Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: Some Philosophical Reflections**

LALLAN BAGHEL

### **Abstract**

*This paper critically engages with discourse of human rights. It tries to trace its genealogical understanding in the context of western modernity and how western liberal normative modernity provides an ontological background to articulate different charters of human rights within the rubric of liberal political philosophy. At another level in this paper, an attempt has been made to deconstruct the discourse of human rights from the perspective of multiculturalism as a pluralist discourse to create a space for discursive rationality and cultural identity. It also looks at feminism as a counter-public sphere and critiques human rights and its promises of universality and the inbuilt limitations of Indian liberal democracy in the context of social justice through an alternative reading of politics of recognition.*

*The major objective of this research paper has been to critically evaluate the conceptual and theoretical debates on human rights as discursive activity. Subsequently, it has been analytically explained that human rights as a normative concept is not frozen in time rather it has got an important bearing on concepts such as multiculturalism and politics of recognition from the perspective of social justice on the one hand and politics of identity on the other (Taylor Charles, 2006).*

*The methodological apparatus of this critical engagement revolves around hermeneutical approach where universality of human rights as essentialist concepts has been destabilized and deconstructed from the perspective of critical theory and multiculturalism in the context of Rawlsian theory of distributive justice. (John, 2005)*

**Key words:** Human Rights, Multiculturalism, Feminism, Counter-Public Sphere, Marginality

In contemporary times, the dialogue, discussions and debates about the discourse of Human rights, and Multiculturalism have drawn attention from every walk of life. Human rights have come to assume critical importance both for the present and the future human civilization. In a world dominated by market-centered ideology, human rights vision provides a moral corrective. It is therefore, academically it is necessary to carry a serious debate on the moral and philosophical dimensions of human rights. It is equally necessary and important to look at the ground realities in terms of social practices, which set the frontier areas of an inquiry. However, in order to understand the philosophical foundations of Human rights and its implications for the conceptual boundaries of Multiculturalism, one needs to re-define and analyze the different conceptions of Human rights and how these have important bearing on the individual and collective human good. Human rights are those basic rights possessed by every individual because of being human therefore it derives its sustenance and justification from humanity itself. Though, modernity offers only a normative liberal theory of human rights thus it is only a utopian ontological foundation to envisage any possibility of realization of rights in liberal cosmopolitan imaginations. Nobody should be discriminated on the basis of gender, sex, caste, class, religion and ethnicity. Though, these markers of human rights are abstract in the nature therefore even after many decades of declarations of different charters of human rights one notices a paradox about reality of human rights and its utopian universality.(R, 2004).

Universality of Human rights as a normative idea has always been subject of intense debate amongst political philosophers and cultural theorist. Both individual and collective or associational act of life we are apt to make choices and decisions and how these processes create a condition for human participation in legislating common shared humanity as an expression of human rights; irrespective of state-territoriality or geopolitical imagination. Keeping this background of enlightenment project and normative modernity, human rights as an instrument of global charters of human freedom gives an opportunity to reflect on these social and

political aspirations through participatory liberal democracy. Though Locke, Rousseau and Kant's social contract philosophy provides us a normative background to critically reflect on and to take cognizance of the nature of shift from monarchy to democracy. In this paper an attempt has been made to trace the roots of Human rights in the western conceptions of enlightenment and its critique is grounded in reflexive discourse of modernity and Multiculturalism. Subsequently, it has been shown how foundational principles of Human rights and the emergence of Multiculturalism are complementary to each other in the libertarian and communitarian debates in western social and political philosophy. In the third part of the paper, which is actually conclusive, a critique has been offered in the light of Rawlsian pluralist understanding of modernity and its nuances for the multilayered discourse of rights and its efficacy with specificities and historicity of existential human condition.

### **Universality of Human Rights: Some contesting claims**

A discussion on the origin of any social practice invariably commences with the relation of human beings with nature. For that, it was a nascent Human experience, what Marx called the early childhood of mankind, which was entangled with nature. That is what constitutes human nature and more so the behaviour and with what stuff it is made up of continues to be one of the ontological perplexes. The enquiry into this perplexity embraces several facets including that of human freedom.(J.O., 2019)(McLellan, 1977) For no discussion on human nature can be completed without full comprehension of human freedom. Given the understanding of human beings, one has to depend on the accumulated experience. The question of rights, therefore, is invariably linked with the evolving spheres of freedom. It is in this background that several dimensions of Human rights need to be discussed and articulated. The questions can be started with what was the origin or nature of earliest rights? The theoretical and philosophical debates suggest natural rights as a universal conceptual category envisaged in the body of knowledge emerged in the political philosophy of social contract tradition specifically

in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant. In simple terms the rights to life was the earliest right to be recognized or that to which human beings became conscious of. This right came to be considered as an inalienable right. As Jacques Maritan put it, “the human person has rights because of the fact that it is a person, a whole a master of itself and its acts and which consequently, is not merely a means to an end, an end which must be treated as such---by virtue of natural law, the human person has be respected is subject of rights, possesses rights. These are the things which are owed to man (human being)” (G.1998).

This ‘inalienable right’ over a period of time acquired deeper meaning and larger dimensions to realize in the every-day-life in the context of human rights discourse. The consciousness of freedom and therefore of rights stems from the ability of human beings to confront nature. For none of the other species is endowed with the ability to comprehend the laws of nature nor can take advantage of these laws as a human person can do. That there were inalienable rights called natural rights ever since human beings came into being may contain an abstract philosophical issue and its multiple connotations but historically the verifiability of this abstract notion remains doubtful. The human being always had a ‘right to life’ and the discourse of inalienable right(s) is not valid at the stage of food gathering, when human life was vulnerable and there was no protection whatsoever as a fundamental positive right. At this stage, life and its meaning itself were not only problematic but always subject to scrutiny amongst philosophers and critical social scientists. The problems leading to solutions and solutions through the problems got linked with the nature of production. It was logic that led to the formulation that rights are not natural but social. This implies that the concept of natural rights was a later stage a social or political construct imposed retrospectively on the nation of rights.

The whole concept of natural rights was subjected to severe criticism from several quarters. It was Bentham who observed that “Rights” is child of



law: From real law come real rights: but from imaginary laws, from law of nature, come imaginary rights----- Natural rights are simple nonsense, nature rights and imprescriptible rights (an American phrase) rhetorical nonsense, nonsense upon stilts.” (G, 1998) David Hume and Edmund Burke also attacked the concept of natural rights for different reasons and from differential perspectives. The problem with this concept seem to be not only its historical validity but its denial of struggles and sacrifices that human beings made in the course of realizing some of these basic right (J.O. 2019).

Admitting that the notion of natural rights is imaginary, yet it did have considerable influence on the political thinking of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, particularly in Europe which was transforming itself from feudal order in to a capitalist system and it is also known as journey from the realms of monarchy to democracy and this is considered to be an ontological foundation of human rights discourse. But at same time one needs to understand these conversations about natural rights are only happening at the levels of abstract philosophical imaginations to build cosmopolitan polity or a state based on principles of liberty, rights and equality in a normative frame of modernity. However, the roots of understanding natural rights are also available in other intellectual traditions of non-western world including India and China.

The debates on Natural rights, coupled with the fruits of European struggles, did contribute to the modern notion of Universal Human rights. The fact that the universal charges incorporated ‘human dignity’ and inalienable rights as a part of preamble is nothing but, giving what was called natural rights a moral and legal status. The 1948 declaration in a significant way was the crystallization of the legacy of rights. It is true that most of the rights included in the charters are the products of individual vs. collective at one level and market vs. state at another. The debates and struggles between the former shaped the concept of civil rights and the latter is considered to have given birth to the concept of political rights. This is one of the reasons why emphasis on civil and political rights has come to be characterized as Euro-centric discourse and

it traces its genealogical connection in the discourses around normative modernity of western political philosophy.

The universal charter thus was a product of several historical forces and its philosophical underpinnings. The civil and political rights were essentially a product of western liberalism and civil and political rights have come to constitute the essence of liberal democracy.

### **Human Rights Declaration: utopia and reality**

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration marked a decisive moment in the moral, cultural and political history of the world. It gave powerful testimony to a widespread longing for freedom, justice, peace and solidarity. Affirming the dignity of the human person, it specified and sought to secure certain freedoms and rights as essential to the protection of that dignity. The preamble calls the declaration “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations,” and as such the Declaration is itself of the single achievements of the modern world.

We must frankly recognize that, in both theory and practice, the universal declaration of Human Rights is today under attack. The very idea of universal human rights is challenged from several directions, and it must therefore be given a more secure grounding in religious, philosophical and moral intellectual traditions of diverse cultural ethos. Today one notices a curious and dangerous convergence between the philosophical nihilists and radical multiculturalists, on the one hand and, on the other, those states that reject the idea of universal human rights as an instance of cultural imperialism and cultural relativism. A scholar such as Upendra Baxi has demonstrated in his writings on human rights, there cannot be an essentialist understanding of human rights because rights are product of historical struggle and these struggles have spatio-temporal locations. Perhaps, it is uncritically assumed that most of the Declarations of U.N. charters are not taking proper cognizance of the cultural diversity and

historical specificities of third world nations – states in its theoretical and conceptual articulations.

In this process of discussion, one may raise certain questions about the very idea of universality thesis of Human rights. Are Human rights universal in the nature? Are universal Declaration of Human rights capable of accommodating cultural, ethical, social political and religious plural historical diversity of human experiences? Are these homogeneous in the nature? Is it possible to develop a creative dialogue between the process of cultural political homogenization and historical specificities of human existential dilemmas? Although, an attempts have been made in the second, third and fourth generations of late Geneva and Vienna conference (June, 1993) to address the above questions but yet to reach any consensus about universality of human rights as a foundational understanding in philosophical and theoretical discussions amongst social scientists on the one hand and social and political activists on the other. In subsequent debates the idea of human rights is contested from diverse perspectives including feminist standpoint where feminist scholarship questions the Eurocentricism on the one hand and normative and political consensus about distributive justice on the other.

### **Epistemology of Human rights and Feminism**

Another major critique on the notion of Universal human rights has emerged from the Feminist world-view and the feminist normative epistemology which is also known stand-point epistemology. The feminists have been pointing out that the universal rights proved to a rhetorical slogan, it lacks substance, as it did not bridge the gap between the different gender spectrums in the concrete articulations of reality. It is true that the concept of natural rights was replaced by rights of man. Writer and constitutional thinker such as Eleanor Roosevelt, who has used the word in differential context the term human rights, in turn questioned and problematized the discourse of human rights from women's perspective. This was how "women's rights are human rights" came in

currency. However, the recent debates and evidence suggests that human rights continue to be rights of man in a graded shadow of patriarchy. The discrimination of women all over the world, irrespective of the systems, levels of development, ideological and cultural differences, remained universal. The institutionalized forms of discrimination and dominance produced and reproduced day in and day out have hit woman in the recent years has had a quantum jump. Prostitution, rapes, gang rapes, dowry deaths and destruction of female fetus etc. are a few social issues of discriminations against women as a community are not only cited in a south Asian society but these may be noticed even in a societies where so called democracy is considered to be flourished. Given this evidence, the charter of universal declaration of Human rights, it is charged and contested to remain partial, partisan and male biased in its differential patriarchal articulations(Judith, 2006)

In this context, it would be interesting to notice the observations made by Marxist political philosopher and political theorist, Prof. Randhir Singh, “--- as history and politics are pushed out of it, what is emerging a particular, abstracted and almost bloodless, use of the term (human right’). ‘Human right’ has been a much used term for a long time, essentially expressive of the same or similar or same concerns as democratic rights or civil liberties and for certain purposes and democratic rights connotes the essence of human rights in a more nuanced sense. In contrast to human rights, democratic rights always had a certain history and experiential substance about it, referring as it does to that rather abstract category ‘human being.’ Thus it is not amenable to easy de-contextualization, it is always used in a particular meaning and sense, when the discourse of human rights are presented in a historical sense, thus the depoliticized version of ‘human rights’ which has come in the circulation with remarkable speed and strength in recent years, its trajectory rather closely related to that of other abstraction, ‘terrorism’ produced by the metaphysical mode of thinking(Randhir, 1993).Perhaps, what has been suggested by Randhir Singh is that, the discourse of Human rights needs to be located in the context and social political historical processes rather

than in the essentialist abstract ideology of the western modernity. Because rights are product of social political and economic struggles and these are always needed to be seen in the processes of evolution, not something out there as an abstract entities and therefore as an empty signifier<sup>(Slovaj, 2009)</sup>. Thus in order to understand the nuances of human rights discourse, we need to re-conceptualize from the perspective of democratic rights and how these are linked with the discourses of multiculturalism and politics of recognition from the perspectives of distributive justice within the debates of liberal democracy<sup>(Selyaben, 2002)</sup>.

The intersectionality approach concerning distributive justice has been conceptualized by many feminist philosophers but the writings of Selyaben has not only resonated but critiqued the discourse of human rights from feminist sensibility specifically Rawlsian understanding of overlapping consensus in the context of understanding the violations, discriminations and deprivations done based on caste, class, gender and race.

### **Multiculturalism, Politics of Recognition and Human rights**

Another interesting linkage one might develop between the conceptual boundaries of Multiculturalism, politics of recognition and Human rights. How does the recent discourse of multiculturalism influence the structural and post-structural logic of Human rights debates? But at the outset, I would like to raise a contention in the philosophy of constitutionalism in all modern societies. Because, most often most of constitutions of modern democracy offer us an abstract normative promise towards protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms but these are almost like an empty signifier from substantive understanding of democracy and human rights. However, one does not need to understand the problematic of Human rights, multiculturalism and politics of recognition in the isolation of each other, rather both are inter-linked. Indian constitution as philosophical text offers an ontological background to understand the multi-layered narratives of human rights; consequently these three concepts are closely related to each other and there is deep and surface

grammar beneath the philosophy of human rights and the principles of cultural diversity (Will, 2009).

Cultural diversity in modern society takes many forms of which three are most common one. Since one might welcome cultural but moral diversity and vice-versa, cultural and moral pluralism are not necessarily related. Bhikhu Parekh has classified three types of cultural diversity (1) sub-cultural diversity (2) perspectival diversity (3) communal diversity. Sub cultural diversity does not represent alternative culture but seeks to pluralize the existing one (Bhikhu, 2005). As far as perspectival diversity is concerned, it continuously tries to revise and redefine the different values, beliefs of dominant culture for instance, feminist movement within culture tries to question the basic patriarchal values and redefine the new values, that is why this can be called perspectival cultural diversity, on the other hand, communal diversity develops because of self-conscious and more or less well organized communities entering in to the host culture but living by their own different systems of belief and practices, and they include newly arrived immigrants etc. Consequently, cultural foundations provide theoretical tools to unpack the discourse of human rights from the perspective of cultural pluralism and it questions any monolithic understanding of the universality of human rights and it also offers an alternative possibility to re-read the text of human rights charters from Asian and African philosophical perspectives.

### **Concluding remarks**

For a comprehensive understanding of the discourse of Human rights and its implications for the multiculturalism and politics of recognition, one is needed to question the basic presuppositions of rights discourse, which is actually articulated in the light of western oriented and enlightenment projects. So, the first and foremost task would be to redefine the conceptual categories and these needs to be informed by specific, context bound experiences of cultures and alternative perspectives, so that these might capture the grass root struggles of local peoples and their aspirations. This process of negotiation should be mediated upon continuous dialogue, debates and understanding of the people, who have

been marginalized in the process of developmental discourses and also articulations of deferential understanding of human rights. At the same time, one does not need to fall in trap of multiculturalism and its nihilist and relativist underpinnings and relativist model, rather any further theorization about human rights must be sensitive towards context specificities and historical conditions of human existence. Since this paper has been primarily, written to understand the conceptual and theoretical debates concerning human rights as an idea and its genealogical connections with western liberal political philosophy thus it does not deal with empirical details of violations of human rights. However, It does reflect towards an understanding from feminist and multi-cultural perspective, that may be considered equally important empirical site to question any essentialist consensus about human rights as a normative idea envisaged in liberal modernity.

### ***References***

- Bhikhu, P. (2005). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. New York: Harvard University Press.
- G., H. (1998). *Political Economy of Human Rights: Emerging Dimensions*. New Delhi: Himalaya Publishing House.
- Gopal, G. (2012). *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- J.O., B. D. (2019, VOL.23 NO.4). Marxism and Human Rights: new thoughts on old debate. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 638-652.
- John, R. (2005). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: 2005.
- Judith, B. (2006). *Gender Trouble Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- McLellan. (1977). *Karl Marx Select Writings*. London: Oxford University Press.
- R, I. R. (2004). *The History of Human Rights From Ancient Times To Globalization Era*. Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Randhir, S. (1993). *Five Lectures in Marxist Mode*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

- Selyaben, H. (2002). *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in Global Era*. New York: Prenceton University Press.
- Slovaj, Z. (2009). *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Taylor Charles, G. (2006). *Multiculturalism and Politics of Recognition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Will, K. (2009). *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

### **Bibliography**

- Bhikhu, P. (2005). *Rethinking Multuculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. New York: Harvard University Press.
- G., H. (1998). *Political Economy of Human Rights: Emerging Dimensions*. New Delhi: Himalaya Pubshing House.
- Gopal, G. (2012). *The Cracked Mirror*. Oxford University Press.
- J.O., B. D. (2019, VOL.23 NO.4). Marxism and Human Rights: new thoughts on old debate. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 638-652.
- John, R. (2005). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: 2005.
- Judith, B. (2006). *Gender Trouble Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- McLellan. (1977). *Karl Marx Select Writings*. London: Oxford University Press.
- R, I. R. (2004). *The History of Human Rights From Ancient Times To Globalization Era*. Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Randhir, S. (1993). *Five Lectures in Marxist Mode*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications.
- Selyaben, H. (2002). *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in Global Era*. New York: Prenceton University Press.
- Slovaj, Z. (2009). *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Taylor Charles, G. (2006). *Multiculturalism and Politics of Recognition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Will, K. (2009). *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Parekh. Bhkhu.(2005). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. New York:Harvard University Press.



## **Among the Poorest, the Lowliest, and the Lost: Representation of the Downtrodden in Tagore's Poetry**

SUDESHNA MAJUMDAR

### **Abstract**

*Rabindranath Tagore as a humanist poet believed in the presence of divinity in man. The downtrodden people appear in his writings very frequently as pointers to this divine quality in man that is often overlooked in a strongly caste-oriented social-structure of India. Tagore's poems are enriched with many such characters that are lowly born and are denigrated in society. In his poetry, they emerge as spiritual guides for mankind while advocating an acknowledgement of human dignity.*

*In this study, poems and song lyrics of Rabindranath Tagore have been consulted as primary materials to decipher the spiritual contents of these poems and songs with reference to the basic tenets of Humanism. This study applies descriptive methodology that analyses the songs and poems (primary materials) and secondary works on Tagore. The description is then followed by explanation and interpretation of the findings with examples.*

*In the course of the narrative poems the upper-caste members of the society undergo a spiritual awakening through their interaction with these downtrodden people within the poems. Thus, through an analysis of Tagore's poems, this article attempts to convey how the representation of such peripheral and subaltern characters in Tagore's poetry helps to bring forth the social-humanism of his nationalistic thinking. Today, as the preservation of human rights has become a worldwide discourse, and the elevation of the underdog becomes prime concern for thinkers, Tagore's representation of the downtrodden becomes quite relevant and it demands a closer look.*

**Keywords:** Tagore, poetry, India, nationalism, the downtrodden, poverty, caste, society, humanism, subaltern.

The prevalent and malicious caste-hierarchy of India was still going strong in the heydays of Indian Nationalism while the humanistic thinkers dreamt of the birth of a new nation with a casteless society because they surmised that unless the country frees itself from the tutelage of superstition and taboos related to caste and communities, the attainment of true and holistic freedom (*purnaswaraj*) is not possible. This idea was prevalent behind Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on *Harijans* who were considered 'untouchables' in Indian society. Tagore's development as a nationalist underwent an evolution through a gradual understanding of the way Indian society worked. The earlier nationalistic writings of Tagore were influenced by Hindu revivalist thoughts that resulted in romantic idealism through a reimagining of the classical Vedic past. The vision of *Bharatbarsha* that appeared in earlier poems and nonfictional writings of Tagore was predominantly a Hindu *Bharatbarsha* that embraced myriad races and communities. But 1904 onwards, as he experienced the extreme manifestation of Hindu revivalist ideology throughout India in *Pratapaditya Utsav* (1903) and *Shivaji Utsav* (1904) and at the announcement of *Bangavanga* (1905) where the British rulers seemed to take advantage of the communal disharmony between the Hindus and the Muslims within the country, he readdressed the issue of communalism that seemed to have weakened the core of Indian society so much so that it could no longer be united to defend foreign exploitation. Moreover, the *Swadeshi* movement gaining momentum at the announcement of *Bangavanga* strengthened Tagore's ideas about the shortcomings of Hindu society. From 1910 onwards he gradually moved away from the romantic idealism of the national leaders and realized that, unless the social breaches between castes, creeds, and customs are mended, India cannot attain true independence. In this way towards the final phase of Tagore's poetic career, his thoughts on society evolved to attain maturity as he realized that social prejudices are the main obstacles in the way to freedom. This thought was well expressed in a lyric in *Gitanjali*, 'Hey mor durbhaga desh' (1910), where he blames the motherland as an

‘unfortunate’ figure because it has insulted its countrymen and hence it has suffered the loss of dignity. For Tagore, the country is a collective construct manifested through its people and he addresses them: “you have scorned the Divinity dwelling within the human heart by spurning the touch of fellow men day after day” (Tagore, *Gitanjali* 283) and hence the country has to suffer from humiliation.

Besides being a sage and a poet, Tagore was a humanistic thinker, who expressed his views on each of the contemporary socio-political moves taken by the national leaders and social reformers. Most of his thoughts on social prejudices and caste barriers are expressed through his correspondences with various acquaintances. He observed that the Indian society is divided from within based on communalism, caste-barrier, and cultural prejudices towards the untouchables and hence it could not withstand the blow from foreign attacks time and again. In a speech given on the occasion of Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s death anniversary in 1937 Tagore observed:

We have always been defeated since the beginning of history due to our fragmented minds and conduct. Can we still nurture the impossible hope of winning this time despite all these differences? Though we argue that we need to have the unity to save ourselves from the humiliation inflicted by strangers, we never get it into our hearts, which contain the poison of division. (Tagore, *Samajchinta* 287)

In the essay *Upekshita Palli*, he condemned the social taboos as irrational, stupid beliefs that break a country into pieces from within and outside. These are fostered by people “with care within society in the name of pure tradition and religion” (Tagore, *Palliprakriti* 529). He blamed the wavering minds of his countrymen for making them easy to be subjugated while their attainment of sovereignty over the land remains still an elusive dream.

Tagore, with his sensitive poetic self, reacted to the social taboos primarily

through his poetry. Many of the lyrics from *Gitanjali* deal with the thought that God is not to be worshipped inside temples, in shrines, and icons, rather be discovered among the working people. Lyric 119 from *Gitanjali* ('*Bhajan pujan sadhan aradhana*') that was translated and collected as lyric 11 in 1912, represented the socio-humanistic angle of Tagore's thought and figure of the struggling humanity emerged endowed with a divine glory:

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil! ...

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow. (Tagore, *English Writings* 46)

He was aware that there is a lack of communication between the educated urban few and the unlettered, uncared mass that lived mostly in the suburbs and in the rural areas. A speech given on the occasion of the annual festival at Shriniketan encapsulates his views on rural Bengal that he experienced during his visits to the family estates of Shilaidaha:

Those that we call gentleman, the education they receive, the goal they aim at, the dream they cherish, the opportunities they get, all remain at one bank of a riverbed that has dried up. They are far removed from the other bank in terms of knowledge, beliefs, customs, behaviour, and lifestyle. The rural people neither have education, nor health, nor property, nor clothes and provisions. Those that attend colleges, study law or medical disciplines, and deposit cash in banks on the other side of the river, live as if in islands, surrounded by the deep gorge of miscommunication (Tagore, *Samajchinta* 240-241).

This unlettered, unnamed mass whose struggle and suffering breed such a

sense of despair and a critical stance in Tagore's prose, transforms into a powerful symbol of undying collective power that remains constant, withstanding political turmoil. This realization strikes the poet towards the end of his life through his interaction with the changing scenario of the contemporary war-torn world. Poem 10 from *Arogya* ('*Ora Kaaj Kore*'; written in 1941, translated as 'Floating on Time's Stream') represents this celebration of people's power:

When on this Earth I cast my eyes,  
 great multitudes I see there  
 moving with tumult,  
 along diverse paths in many a group,  
 from age to age,  
 urged by mankind's daily need in life,  
 and in death.

They ever  
 pull the oars, keep holding the helm;  
 they, in the fields,  
 sow seeds, cut the corn,  
 They go on working.

...  
 Sorrows and joys unceasing  
 blend in chant raising the mighty hymn  
 of life,

On the ruins of hundreds of empires,  
 they go on working. (Tagore, *Tagore for You*, 171-172)

Similarly, the figures of the affectionate servant in Tagore's *Puratan Bhritya* and *Karma* or the *Santal* girl encapsulate the figure of the silent worker who holds the tenor of life with endurance and perseverance despite exploitation by the educated middle class represented by the narrator personae of the poems. Many of these figures are derived from

the poet's life in Santiniketan where the *Santals* were part of the daily chores of the *Ashram*, sometimes working as daily-wage workers in the construction site of his clay-cottage *Shyamali*:

I sit on my terrace watching the young woman toiling at her task hour after hour. My heart is touched with shame when I feel that the woman's service sacredly ordained for her loved ones, its dignity soiled by the market price, should have been robbed by me with the help of a few pieces of copper. (Tagore, *English Writings* 375)

Observing, how in India people are treated by fellow men as animals and how people are spurned in the name of religion Tagore questioned the role of society: "If we enthrone such an illusion in the place of religion, then why do we fuss about searching the enemy outside? There is no other dangerous blindness as there in the act of not considering a man as a human being. We won't get any freedom due to this bondage and blindness." (Tagore, *Kalantar* 398-401) This awareness led to a point of departure in his poetic journey and transformed his creative worldview where he resolved that he had to return from the ivory tower of aesthetic musings to the ground reality of struggling humanity. A poem from *Chitra* marks the watershed of his humanistic ideal. In *Ebar firao morey* (1894) the poet persona is about to leave his subjective world of pleasant aesthetic images and seeks to embark into the outer world of struggle, exploitation, and defamation. He feels that those exploited people of the world need him as their voice: "We need to give voices to these dumb, ignorant and sad faces,/We need to raise beats of hope within these weary, withered, and broken hearts." The poem thus becomes a manifesto of the people's poet, where he calls out at the poor and exploited masses to arise in a united stance against the evil spirits of oppression and torture. He asks the Muse of poetry to bring him back into the world of reality from the world of fantasy (Tagore, *Chitra* 474).

Tagore, to reunite Hindus and Muslims explored the social history and legends of medieval India and portrayed saintly characters from the Bhakti

movement in his poems to reiterate the divine presence in man. These characters primarily appear in many of Tagore's narrative poems of *Punascha* namely, in 'Suchi', 'Mukti', 'Premer Sona' and 'Snan Samapan'. Satyendranath Roy, in his introduction to *Rabindranather Samajchinta* observed that almost all saints of medieval India were advocates of union through love. Their non-communal stances and their attempts to embrace all humanity irrespective of caste and creed impressed Tagore, who termed this way of life *Bharatpantha* ('The Indian Way') and he named these *sadhakas*, *Bharatpathik* ('Followers of the Indian Way') (Roy, *Samajchinta*, 73). In a speech given on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1933 commemorating Raja Rammohan Roy's death (later edited as "Rammohun Roy") Tagore observed that the vice of division bred within humanity is considered as the main problem behind all conflicts. For that reason, those saintly figures, who appeared among us down the ages, realized that the way of convergence is the Indian way. In the middle ages, the problem of division between the Hindus and the Muslims aggravated, at that time Dadu, Kabir, and other Saints always attempted to establish a spiritual connection across that fissure:

Rammohun's predecessors, Kabir, Nānak, Dādu, and innumerable saints and seers of medieval India, carried on much further India's great attempt to evolve a human adjustment of peoples and races; they broke through barriers of social and religious exclusiveness and brought together India's different communities on the genuine basis of spiritual reality. (Tagore, *Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy* 437)

As most of these religious reformers and *sadhakas* hailed from the lower strata of the society, from peripheral communities of weavers, tailors, grain sellers, cobblers, and sweepers, who shared the same fate and same exploitation by the upper-caste people. Tagore, at the end of his poetic career, focused his thoughts on those uneducated and shunned guides of humanity. In, poem 15 from *Patraput* (written in 1936, translated as 'Shunned at the Temple-gates') hails the God of the poor as the poet's guide and validates the gradual concentration of his humanistic ideals:

I am the outcaste, the uninitiate.  
 Born in the household  
 of exile,  
 I was rejected by the respectable.  
 ...  
 By the contempt of the pious  
 I was thrust  
 into the arms of Man.  
 ...  
 I am blessed  
 who have known you  
 in the fellowship  
 of sons of the Immortal,  
 — even I, the outcaste, the uninitiate,  
 whose offerings are  
 to him in the Heavens,  
 and to the inner Man in me,  
 whose love is joy forever. (Tagore, *Tagore for You* 159-162)

Tagore's letter to Hemantabala Devi (dated 24 Sept. 1932) explains how in his thoughts religiosity interchanged with humanism: "Those that you call lowly born, you have requested me to advise them to become clean and pure. I can do it if you ensure me that those that have the right to see, touch and worship God, are all clean and healthy, that they do not sleep with the lowly born, they do not have any bad disease either, ensure that most of them are pure from within and outside, they do not file a suit against others and remain honest. If their entry into the temple does not desecrate God, if years and years of their association do not hamper their godliness, then is it the lowness of birth that they cannot tolerate? Does God belong only to you? Is He your sole property? Such an idea about God only insults Him. In India God is insulted, so are the people" (Tagore,



*Chithipatra* 165-166). His poem *Debatar Biday* (1896) represents through a metaphorical narrative how God dwells among the poor that the so-called worshippers of God fail to find. In this poem, the devotee prays through days and nights inside the temple. One day God enters the temple in the guise of a poor man. As the destitute man asks for shelter and is harshly turned away, he casts off his guise and shows his true self. He tells his devotee that it is He who wanders around the world in search of benevolence, and His grace reached the one who gives shelter to the homeless. This poem thus reverberates with the idea of divinity in man. *Din Dan* (1900) from *Kahini* (translated and collected in *Fruit-Gathering*, 1916) is another metaphorical tale of vain human pride where the King is reported that Narottam, the true worshipper of God imparts his teachings sitting under a tree and refuses to enter the King's palace because the latter had built a costly temple for God while denying shelter to his homeless poor subjects:

The King frowned and said, 'Do you know, twenty millions of gold went to the making of that marvel of art, and it was consecrated to God with costly rites?'/ 'Yes, I know it,' answered Narottam. 'It was in that year when thousands of your people whose houses had been burned stood vainly asking for help at your door./ And God said, 'The poor creature who can give no shelter to his brothers would build my house!'/ And he took his place with the shelterless under the trees by the road./ And that golden bubble is empty of all but hot vapour of pride.'/ The King cried in anger, 'Leave my land.'/ Calmly said the saint, 'Yes, banish me where you have banished my God.' (Tagore, *English Writings* 168-169)

Tagore's essay "Milaner Shristi" (printed in *Bichitra* 1929) chastises the false belief that guides idol worship in our country: "Look at our society, here too, the god who conducts the well-being of humanity all over the world, is not the same one. The rule that governs all the natural phenomena is not this rule. This is a custom, which is also a rule but an artificial one. This means it is a kind of machinery, moreover, a worthless kind of machinery. ... In this society human beings did not unite for the

cause of the world, in the name of a universal God. They became divided in the name of false customs that rolls man in the endless cycle of meaninglessness. ...Thus we are hurting the prime path of creativity” (Tagore, *Samajchinta* 240-241).

Tagore's criticism of the taboo regarding the untouchables is expressed through his narrative poems *Suchi* and *Snan Samapan* (translated and collected in *Poems*, 1942). Treatment of the untouchables and the underdogs of the society was a burning issue in the age of Indian Nationalism. The caste barrier that maligned Indian society at that time was directly addressed by Gandhi who prioritized the untouchables by naming them *Harijan*. Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* (1935) aptly represented the contemporary milieu and addressed the plight of the sweepers in pre-independence India. Tagore responded to the spirit of the age through several poems in *Punascha* (1932) and the dance-drama *Chandalika* (1933). The dramatic adaptation of *Chandalika* was made from a story from the Nepalese-Buddhist literature that narrated the spiritual awakening of Prakriti, a *Chandala* woman through her acquaintance with Ananda, the disciple of Buddha. In medieval India, *Chandalas* were the *Dalit* caste associated with crematoriums, and hence the girl was shunned by society. Ananda, by accepting drinking water from her hand reinstated self-esteem within her: “You are the same human being as I, my Daughter! The water that gratifies a thirsty man and cools down a parched heart, is the water of pilgrimage” (Tagore, *Chandalika* 1144). Buddha, who sheltered the peripheral members of society, the subalterns within his sphere of affection and compassion, thus obtained a crucial position of inspiration in Tagore's humanistic creative vision.

In *Suchi* (1932), Ramananda, the religious guru failed to find the grace of God within his heart despite worshipping him through days and conducting holy gatherings in the temple. His realization came in the form of a divine message at night that God abstained from blessing the guru because he was sad at the insults of the poor and the social underdogs,

who were shunned at the temple gates. With this realization in heart, Ramananda walked down the path and embraced Nava, the *Chandala*, at the crematorium. As Nava shrunk with fear, saying he was lowly born, Ramananda said, his heart was dead and it needed cremation. He walked on and met Kabir, the Muslim weaver, telling him hitherto his soul was naked and covered with dust and he needed Kabir's friendship to cover it with pure clothing. In this way, Ramananda, by getting across the barriers of caste and by embracing greater humanity, arrived at the realization that morning comes not at the end of the night, rather it comes whenever the mind is awake. Thus a group of verses in *Punascha*: specifically, *Suchi*, *Mukti*, *Rongrejini*, *Premar Sona*, and *Snan Samapan*, all written in the winter of 1932, attain the character of parables through their emphasis on human values and their reverence of human dignity. Tagore's letter to the freedom fighter Motilal Roy (dated 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1932), written in the same year, explains his views at the social intolerance regarding the untouchables and thereby corresponds to the spirit of these poems:

A calling that we term as lowly, which serves our own needs and the works that each of us should have done to meet our necessities, scorning those people, who take the responsibility of those works on our behalf is a deplorable act. The filth of the body could be cleaned with water, whereas it is stupidity to think that the filth of the mind could be cleaned by taking a bath. Such filthy touch we experience frequently at home and in the world (Tagore, *Samajchinta* 256).

In *Snan Samapan* (1932), Ramananda arrives at this realization by embracing the lowly-born cobbler Bhajan and thereby he becomes pure in the true sense. The holy water of *Ganga* could not wash out the obstacle of his mind and hence he felt his bath was not completed. The water of ablution touched him, at last, the moment he came in contact with Bhajan's body:

Ramananda drew him to his heart and Bhajan, his eyes filled with tears, cried in dismay, 'Master, why bringest upon thee such pollution!'/ And Master said, 'While on my way to my bath I

shunned your village and thus my heart missed the blessings of the Ganges whose mother's love is for all./ Her own touch comes down at last upon me at the touch of your body with mine and I am purified'. (Tagore, *English Writings* 373)

These poems help to bring out Tagore's humanistic stance regarding his personal faith, which is explained in a letter to Hemantabala Devi: "the God who gave me intelligence, taught me to respect fellow human beings, the one that attracted me towards the difficult process of love for mankind through renunciation, by paying homage to that God, I feel my religiosity to be fulfilled. My good sense and rationality consider his will as true and I abide by it" (Tagore, *Chithipatra* 265-266). A poem from *Gitanjali* (*Jethay thake sobar adham deener hotey deen*), translated as lyric 10 in the 1912 version, also projects this humane face of God:

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost./ When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost./ Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost./ My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost. (Tagore, *English Writings* 45)

*Premar Sona* (1932) justifies this point through a metaphorical narrative from medieval India, where the queen of Chitore embraces, Ravidas the sweeper as her spiritual guide. Thus Tagore narrates the emergence of Ravidas as the spiritual *sadhaka* of medieval India. Rani Jhali replied to the Brahmin royal priest:

"Revel in your pride of the unmeaning knots without number, harden your miserly heart, but I, a beggar woman, am glad to receive love's wealth, the gift of the lowly dust, from my Master, the sweeper." (Tagore, *English Writings* 319)

*Premar Sona*, which was later translated and collected in *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore* (1936), can be interpreted as 'Love's

Wealth', is thus derived through the development of human relationships irrespective of class and caste.

Tagore's *Pratham Puja* (1932) is a dynamic exploration of the brutal treatment of the Dalit by the higher caste since the classical age. In this narrative poem the lowly-born *Kirats*, a race gifted with artistic skill are ordered to restore the broken deity of the royal temple. The eyes of the master craftsman remain bound so that his 'polluted' glance could not desecrate the deity. The deity originally belonged to the *Kirats* but unfortunately, the *Kshatriya* king usurped their land as well as their god and shunned them from the temple premises. However, after completing the sculpture of god, the master craftsman Madhav, the leader of the *Kirats* unfolded his eyes to look up to the deity and at once he was beheaded by the King, who stood behind him. The climactic moment of *Pratham Puja* thus offers a fable of human brutality where the 'Pratham puja' or the first worship of the shunned man becomes his last salute at the feet of god. The drama of this narrative poem lies in its treatment of the story where the action gathers tension by letting the downtrodden into the forbidden zone.

Tagore's imagination of a glorious and essentially Hindu past of India, which had been influenced by a revivalist ideology, suffered a setback in the first two decades of the twentieth century, as he realized the deep-rooted communal disharmony that ailed Indian society. In a letter to the religious activist and social worker leader of Aryasamaj, Swami Shradhyananda Tagore indicated the gaps within the society, which cannot be repaired. "When two persons have to stay in the same country without having any cordial relationship, the lord of destruction enters through that fissure. Hence in our country, whenever the chariot of welfare is attempted to be run by us, it always stumbles at these fissures" (Tagore, *Samajchinta* 228). According to Tagore every shortcoming of the Hindu society needs to be addressed and eradicated: "the Hindu society is already fragmented from within in terms of caste, states and communities. Nobody can overcome this barrier and get united, not even against foreign invasions"

(Tagore, *Kalantar* 359-360). Towards the end of his poetic career, as communal disharmony worsened the condition of the society with the impending shadow of *Bangabhanga* looming over Bengal, Tagore realized, unless the people of the nation overcome their mental blockage and taboo, they would not be able to attain freedom in its entirety. In a speech, edited in *Kalantar*, he observed with despair how the people of the nation, irrespective of caste and creed, suffered from lack of fellow feeling: "the poverty that trouble man most is the poverty of love. With this limitation within our hearts, we can maintain what we call 'purity', but we cannot sustain our humanity" (Tagore, *Kalantar* 400).

Visualizing society as a body Tagore wished to eradicate its malady of social prejudices. In the 7th essay from *Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy* (1928), he observed that as the human body, the body of the society is alive as well: "All its evils are retained within its inertness. The struggling vitality of society should always fight with lacklustre of intelligence, the limitedness of knowledge, and lack of friendliness." (Tagore, *Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy* 408) The poem *Samanyo Lok* (1895), later translated and collected in *The Fugitive* (1921) asserts his latent socio-humanistic vision that dreams about the emergence of the common man as the guide of mankind.

If the ragged villager, trudging home from the market, could suddenly be lifted to the crest of a distant age, men would stop in their work and shout and run to him in delight./ For they would no longer whittle down the man into the peasant, but find him full of the mystery and spirit of his age./ Even his poverty and pain would grow great, released from the shallow insult of the present, and the paltry things in his basket would acquire pathetic dignity. (Tagore, *English Writings* 291)

His belief in the divinity in man strengthened toward the end of his creative oeuvre as the evils of the World Wars seemed to destroy man's faith in humanity. In this way, the ideas of Nationalism, society, and religion interacted with each other in Tagore's writings. Today, as the

preservation of human rights has become a worldwide discourse, and the elevation of the underdog becomes a prime concern for thinkers, Tagore's representation of the downtrodden becomes extremely relevant and it demands a profound treatment.

Note: Excerpts cited from "Milaner Srishti", *Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy*, *Chandalika*, *Chithipatra*, *Chitra*, *Gitanjali*, *Kalantar*, *Pallipakriti*, and Tagore's letters are translated by the writer of this article.

### **References**

- Das, Sisir Kumar. (2001). Ed. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. 1994. Vol 1. New Delhi: Sahiya Academi.
- Ghose, Sisirkumar. (1984). Ed. *Tagore for You*. 1966. Calcutta: Visva Bharati.
- Roy, Satyendranath. (1985). Ed. *Samajchinta: Rabindrarachana-Sankalan*. Kolkata: Granthalay Pvt. Ltd.,.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. (1961). "Bharatpathik Rammohan Roy". *Rabindrarachanabali*. Vol. 11. Centenary ed. Kolkata: The Govt. of West Bengal. pp. 381-439.
- . 'Chandalika'. (1961). *Rabindrarachanabali*. Vol. 6. Centenary ed. Kolkata: The Govt. of West Bengal. pp.1139-1157.
- . *Chithipatra*. (1964). Vol. 9. Kolkata: Visva Bharati.
- . 'Chitra'. (1961). *Rabindrarachanabali*. Vol. 1. Centenary ed. Kolkata: The Govt. of West Bengal. pp.461-538.
- . 'Gitanjali'. (1961). *Rabindrarachanabali*. Vol. 2. Centenary ed. Kolkata: The Govt. of West Bengal. pp. 213-314.
- . 'Kalantar'. (1961). *Rabindrarachanabali*. Vol. 13. Centenary ed. Kolkata: The Govt. of West Bengal. pp. 207-411.
- . 'Pallipakriti'. (1961). *Rabindrarachanabali*. Vol. 13. Centenary ed. Kolkata: The Govt. of West Bengal. pp 493-582.

## **Fire Disaster Development Cycle: A Case Study of Anaj Mandi Fire, Delhi, India**

SHUBHAM KUMAR SANU

VISHWA RAJ SHARMA

### **Abstract**

*Fire is a pivotal resource and in day to day life it serves human beings to satisfy various needs. As a resource, it is a boon to human beings, but once it transforms itself into resistance then human beings and society have to pay very devastating costs. Fire transforms itself from resource to resistance due to various anthropogenic and natural causes, but anthropogenic factors are more prominent. The transformation of fire from a resource to a disaster doesn't occur suddenly, but it takes ample time and follows more or less a cyclic path. In this research work based on the Anaj Mandi fire incidence of Delhi, a cyclic path of fire disaster development has been suggested. The development cycle of fire disaster has been divided into four major phases and further into different stages. This work provides a comprehensive view to study fire disasters from a geographical perspective.*

### **Keywords:**

Fire, Fire Disaster, Development cycle of Fire, Urban Fire, Delhi Fire

### **1. Introduction**

The Word Disaster originated from the Latin Word Dis Astro which means 'bad star' (Merriam Webster) in simple terms implies any event caused by Nature or man having an adverse impact on human beings and larger sections of society is called a disaster (Anu Kapur, 2010). So it is an adverse, sudden, controllable or uncontrollable, unfortunate, extreme



natural or anthropogenic event that occurs rapidly or slowly but affects indiscriminately human life, property, and human-related aspects and put them under social, economic, physical and psychological trauma is a disaster. Disaster is such an event that lies between 2D means Delivery and Death, and hypothetically everyone has to face it in one or other form during the two mentioned D points. These 3D (Delivery, Disaster and Death) are the true reality of life and are very positively related to each other and form a cycle. Here Delivery means the birth of human beings on this mother earth, with the birth man, become prone to disaster and also leads to disaster in anthropogenic cases. So delivery leads to disaster directly or indirectly and ultimately disaster becomes one of the causes of death. According to Hindu Mythology after death, rebirth took place so a complete cycle is formed. In this research work development cycle of fire disaster has been suggested. As disaster is part of the life cycle so, it is a matter of concern for the creator of it because it is a bad star and leads to loss and death of human beings. Generally fire is a manmade disaster mainly caused by short-circuits, malfunctioning of power equipment, flammable material, explosives and human negligence, etc (Sanghavi et al. 2009). Since the discovery of fire in the Stone Age this crucial resource as well as resistance has been playing a very pivotal role in the development of human beings and present-day civilization. We cannot imagine today's developed civilization without giving due credit to the discovery of fire. This resource has played an important role in making today's humans modern and developed. It is very rightly said that as a servant, Agni is a very loyal servant, that provides many kinds of services, but once it becomes a lord, it brings destruction and disaster with him. Many examples of which are available from the world level to the level of India. The Anaj Mandi fire in the national capital region of Delhi is one of the many such events. The fire incident is a serious threat to life and property. The major cause of the fire is a difference in actual occupancy and defined land use as a result of the unplanned growth of settlements. In India between 2012-15 fires caused about 70,000 deaths (Tomar, et al. 2017).

As per estimate in 2001 more than 163000 fire-related deaths occurred and which was about 2 per cent of all deaths (Sanghavi et al. 2009). Delhi is a disaster-prone city and fire disaster is one of them. Fires are a growing hazard in Delhi as the number of average calls of 7 per day in the 1970s to it has reached 25 per day in the 1990s, with three times multiplication within 2 decades. 99 per cent of fires are small in terms of occurrences. Almost in all localities from residential to industrial, there is an increasing trend of fire indices, which is also evident from the fact that on every alternate day one person is injured due to fire incidence. Another black aspect associated with fire is that it leads to loss of life, business failure, destruction of vital official documents, personal treasures, and psychological trauma and also pollutes the air of capital (Anu Kapur, 2005).

## **2. Data Sources and Methodology**

Data sources comprise both secondary and primary data. Primary sources of data comprise Questionnaires based interviews and empirical observation. A very detailed and objective concentrated questionnaire was prepared to gather information regarding different dimensions of the New Anaj Mandi and its disastrous event. The questionnaire-based interview method was adopted in this case as the matter is very sensitive and most of the people of the concerned population are reluctant to share their pieces of information and information regarding that tragic event. So here faith winning of the surveyees was a crucial aspect and this method helped in gaining the faith of the surveyees and establishing a relationship to get true information. A total of 100 samples were collected by applying Stratified Random Sampling. Empirical observations were made during a personal visit to the area and a field diary was prepared to record observations. To substantiate the primary data and get authentic data regarding the demographic profile, fire and other aspects of the study area different secondary sources of data were employed. As this incident was one of the biggest disasters in the Nation Capital region so different committees were formed by Bharatiya Janta Party, North Delhi Municipal Corporation and

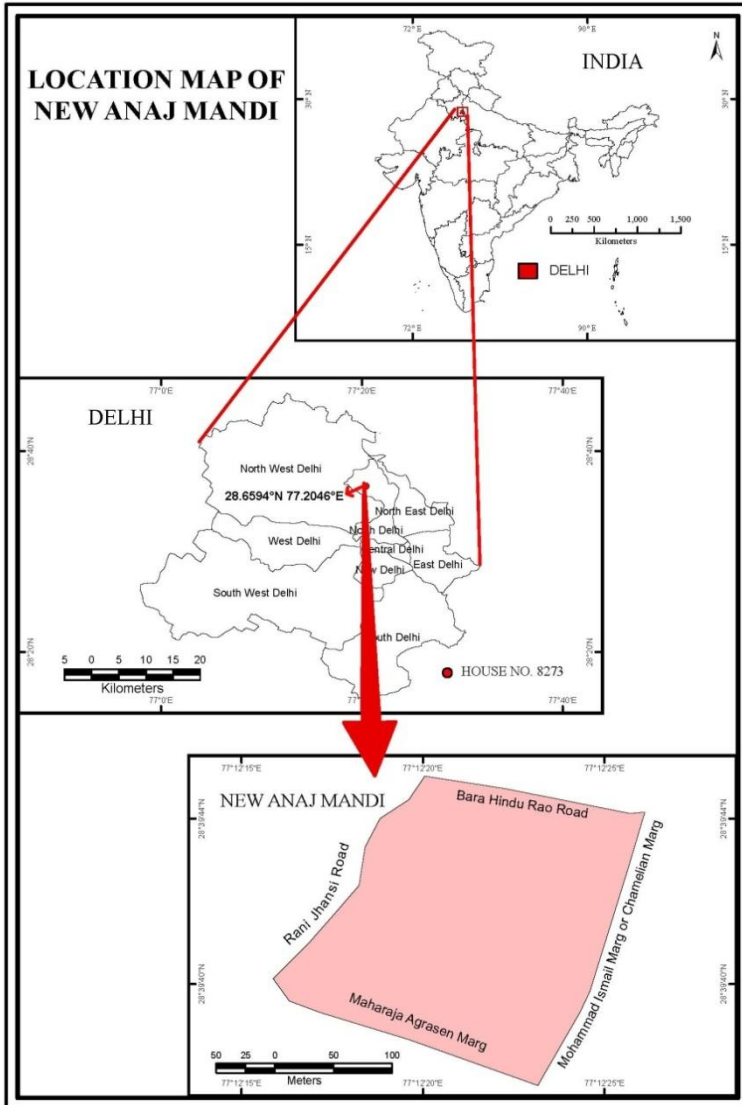
an order for a magisterial probe were given by Delhi Government, these unpublished reports were also taken into account. Most Valuable and overloaded with detailed information regarding this incident were reports from various newspapers, which has a very lucid and comprehensive explanation about this incident were also worked as the main source of secondary data. Books, journals, thesis, published articles and reports on earlier fire incidence were also used to achieve the objective of the research. The collected data from the survey and secondary sources were tabulated and arranged in an appropriate format with the help of Excel sheet and Word Sheet for further analysis. After that graphically representable data were represented with the help of various statistical and cartographic techniques. Subsequently, detailed analysis of the gathered information and findings were given.

### **3. Study Area:**

Delhi is the capital city with a population of 1.1 Crore as per 2011 census and an area of 1484 km. sq. and consisting of 12 districts. In the North Delhi district, the study area comes. It composes of Sadar Bazar, Civil Lines, and Kotwali Subdivisions. This district is surrounded by North West Delhi in the north and west, West Delhi in the Southwest, Central Delhi in the south, North East Delhi in the East and River Yamuna in the East of the district. The total population of the district is about 8.8 lakh with a population density of about 13000 in the area of 59 sq. km. The Sex Ratio is 871 females per thousand males and literacy of about 87 per cent as per the official figure of the 2011 census. The district has recorded a growth rate of 13 per cent from the base year of 2001. New Anaj Mandi, Chawk Nai Basi comes under Sadar Bazar Tehsil or Subdivision of North Delhi. Sadar Bazar has been the Market place since the time of the Mughal era with the name of Paharganj to till now as Asia's one of the biggest wholesale markets. It consists of several markets like the Swadeshi market, Pratap market, Teliwara or Timber market, etc. In these markets, there is the availability of various household goods as well as other items like toys, imitation jewellery, stationery, clothing, shoes, imported, and

other products. The study area comes under the vicinity of this old Bazar of Delhi that immensely helping and helped *Anaj Mandi* to develop as the hub of secondary and tertiary activities.

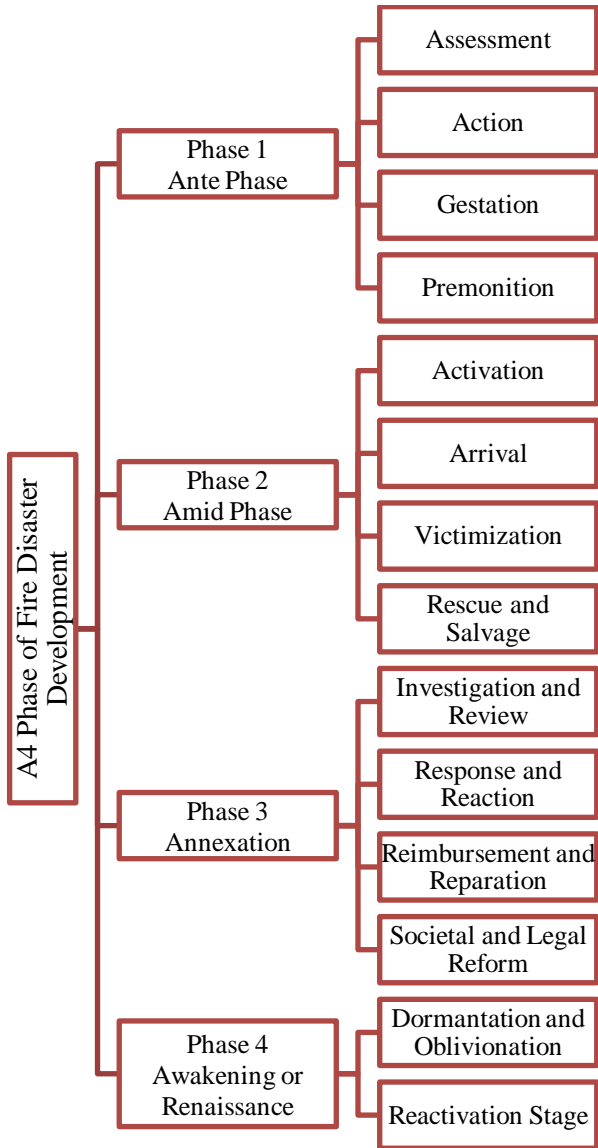
**Map 1**  
**Location map of Study area**



Source: Authors Original Work

**4. Result**

*Development cycle of fire disaster:*



**Fig. 1: Visualising *Anaj Mandi* Fire incidence through A4 model of fire disaster development cycle**

The development cycle of a fire disaster shows how the development processes of fire as a disaster take place. This simplified version puts this development process into A4 Phases which are Phase I, Ante Phase, under that Assessment, Action, Gestation, and Premonition are 4 paces or stages. After this second, Amid Phase comes under that Activation, Arrival, Victimization, and Rescue and salvage are 4 stages. This is followed by Annexation Phase, in this Investigation and Review, Response and Reaction, Reimbursement and Reparation, and finally Societal and Legal Reforms come. Finally, the last phase of Awakening or Renaissance comes which compose of Dormantation and Oblivionation and Reactivation Stage (Fig. 1). In simple words Phase I is the initial or nascent phase under which background for fire development starts, which culminates its impact in the second Phase where actual fire disaster occurs and that leads to the third stage where response and rehabilitation to that disaster start and various rules and regulations were formed to control such incidences in future. And finally, the last stage of renaissance comes when the maximum population forgets about the past disastrous event and starts considering fire disaster as a casual event that leads to another fire disaster at the same location or in another location. In this way, a fire disaster forms a cyclic path of its occurrence.

## **5. Discussion**

Anaj Mandi Fire incidence of Filmistan near Sadar Bazar is one of the devastating fire disaster as more than 45 people lost their lives and thousands and lakhs of people's livelihoods were impacted due to this incident. Socially and psychologically also this incidence has impacted the population of the study are. The occurrence of fire is very common in cities like Delhi due to the high level of population concentration, haphazard construction, improper management of electrical equipment and wirings, lack of awareness and efforts at an individual and societal level. The incidence of fire normally follows a cyclic path. Through the Anaj Mandi fire incidence and other past fire incidences of Delhi will like to

establish this fact. Anaj Mandi fire incidence has been described in a systematic manner by following the fire disaster development cycle.

### **Visualizing ‘Anaj Mandi’ fire in A4 phase of fire disaster development cycle:**

**5.1 Phase 1:** This is the Ante Phase. Ante the prefix which means before, in the context of a disaster this is a phase before occurrences of disaster, which is famously also called a pre-disaster period. This is the beginning phase of the development of disaster, where the foundation stone of causative factors of disaster is laid down.

**5.1.1 Assessment Pace:** Assessment Pace: In a literal way, this is the process of collecting and discussing pieces of information from different and diverse sources to understand in detail about the area in terms of physical socio-economic, cultural, and political aspects. When these factors become favourable to individuals or groups of individuals only then they move to the second stage of Action.

#### **Detailed Description about Assessment Pace**

Before purchasing house number 8723 (where the fire occurred) in 2004 father of Rehan (owner of the building), first of all, visited the site and did a great inspection about that. They analysed the physical aspect of it in terms of distance from the main market Sadar Bazar, connectivity to the mode of transportation like railway, bus connectivity. In the physical aspect, they also analysed the size, shape, and structure of buildings. After analysing the physical aspect of the building they also assessed the economic benefit of the building. As in the early years of the 21st-century Anaj Mandi was developing as the hub of SECTER (Secondary and Tertiary activities), particularly manufacturing hub by replacing the earlier business of grain, so father of Rehan think the spot viable beneficial from a business point of view. As far as the social and cultural aspect of the area is concerned, the site of Anaj Mandi is dominated by Muslim communities in terms of numbers, so for the owner performing their religious duties

also becomes convenient in this milieu. By analysing all the facets of Anaj Mandi Rehan's father decided to purchase this property in 2004. After becoming mentally prepared to purchase the property they move to the second stage of Action to purchase the property.

**5.1.2 Action Pace:** In this stage progress toward achieving the desired thought starts. At this pace individuals or groups of individuals took action. Favourable factors force or allude to the desirous person to start acting in a certain area. In this stage, the action took place to establish the desired activity. For instance, after knowing in detail about the Anaj Mandi area Father of Rehan the factory owner purchase the three-floor building in Anaj Mandi.

#### **Detail Description about Action Pace**

After knowing all the dimensions of Anaj Mandi Rehan's father become mentally prepared to purchase house and they take action of purchasing houses in 2004. After purchasing the unit they started their business activities in the house. With the passage of time, Rehan transformed the building into a commercial chamber and constructed two additional floors too. In the building, there are five floors. On the ground floor with the use of moulding machines plastic toys were made. On the Second Floor, there was a diary binding unit and storage space for cardboard. Rexene bag manufacturing unit was on the second floor from where the fire began and some rooms were used for the night stay and cooking of labourers. Garments and mirror manufacturing were taking place on the third floor, and at some space, the raw material for it was stored. There were cardboard boxes on the fourth floor which was probably used for packing purposes.

**5.1.3 Gestation Pace:** Gestation means a development period of disaster. It explains what type of activity initiated by the individual or group of individuals caused the main incidence. After the establishment of activity in any area, due to malpractices, negligence starts that leads to the



germination of fire disasters seed. In this, the mistakes committed by the owner and concerned individuals come. For instance, after establishing his factory in *Anaj Mandi* and over time negligence started, such as allowing workers to stay at the site, using heavy types of machinery, etc.

### **Detail Description about Gestation pace**

This stage of fire disaster development explains what type of factors played a role in the activation of fire. The building with the extent of 500-600 square yards, located in a narrow congested lane, enclosed by other manufacturing illegal units running in houses. These all the units developed at the place of earlier housing rooms, by converting them into manufacturing units and allowing workers to food and shelter at the same site of work. Using electricity more than the limit prescribed by the electricity department. The use of electricity was more than 80 kW. Also, the height of the building was more than the prescribed height of 15 M in a residential area and heavy types of machinery were in use for the mounding procedure of plastic. The owner was running illegal manufacturing units on almost all the floors of buildings. With just one narrow exit, that was under fire and blockage of the second exit with the pile-up of row material obstructed the escaping route for the occupants from a building, which was added with the bare presence of ventilation, grilling of windows with iron bars. The building was packed with combustible material such as cardboard, rexine, plastic, and other packaging material that aggravated the fire and resulted in dense smoke, which suffocated the people trapped inside. The windows of the building had been blocked with cardboard to prevent anyone from viewing the activities going on inside the building. The cardboard had trapped the smoke during the fire, which led to the workers getting asphyxiated. The combination of all these aspects helped in the creation of Anaj Mandi fire incidence as a disaster.

**5.1.4 Premonition Pace:** Simply premonition means warning before the occurrence of any major unpleasant event. In this stage, the first warning

of non-acceptable practices is given by the natural power itself, but mostly signals are ignored or misinterpreted by grabby and lazy persons. If appropriate action will take place in this stage disaster can be avoided. For instance before the occurrence of 'Devil of December' (occurred in December month) in Anaj Mandi, in the same lane, on the 8th of September 2019 fire took place and killed more than 5 people according to locals. Even one night before that disaster minor fire occur in the same lane.

### **Details Description of Premonition Pace**

At this stage indications of fire incidences come before the occurrence of a major fire. The area of Anaj Mandi with its congested lanes and wires hanging lanes is notorious for fire incidents. Before the occurrence of the December fire of Anaj Mandi, even less than 24 hours before, the same area has seen two other factory fires, before any harm they were doused. As per the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) in the same area one day before 2 fires occurred, one in the same lane and one in the adjacent lane of the incident site, which was doused without any causality of life.

Those who survived in this furious event told that we informed the manager, owner, and the contractors who bring them from their village about sparking in sub meters many times. But they did not take any action which resulted in a massive fire. As per Police inquiry, it was found that in the same building a small category fire broke out six months ago, on the ground floor, which was doused by locals and fire fighters. A resident Pushpa told, "So many times fire occurs in many buildings of this lane but the owner and locals manage it without informing the authorities so that they can run their illegal activities without being highlighted."

The statement of police, fire officers, workers and locals highlight that so many indirect indications for the future upcoming massive fire was given in the form of spark in the meters to the one night before small category fire just 50 meters away but factory owner and manager not understood

these indications and ultimately they suffered from the massive fire incidence.

**5.2 Phase 2:** This is the Amid Phase. In this context meaning of amid is middle or during the disaster period. This period explains what happens during disaster time. In this phase, the main cause of disaster triggers the event which engulfs the surroundings and affects the stranded persons, which leads to the process of victimization. Then the rescue and response team reach the site to save the stranded persons and rescue them.

**5.2.1 Activation Pace:** Activation means the process of making something active. This stage talks about the main causative factor that leads to disaster. The triggering event took place, this event becomes the main cause for it and is blamed to hide the real cause. For Instance in Case of Anaj Mandi Fire shorts circuits on the second floor are blamed as the main cause of the disaster, but there are many more factors that were responsible for it.

#### **Details Description about Activation Pace**

There is a various factor that leads to the development process of the disaster at the incidence site but the main cause that triggered the event and become the main responsible cause in the eye of most of the population was a short circuit in one of the sub-meter, which was installed on the second floor. As in building, there were seven main meters and eighteen sub-meters so spark in such meters was a usual phenomenon for the buildings due to overload and use of heavy types of machinery as also mentioned in the gestation pace. Forensic experts told that “a short circuit in sub-meter of the second floor caused the fire.” The triggering event was just the initiator or starter of the furious fire of December but there are so many causative factors and creators of Devil of December.

**5.2.2 Arrival pace:** Arrival means emergence or appearance of disaster in the case of fire. After activation of triggering events that lead to engulfment of surrounding area and disaster activates itself and shows its

arrival to victims. People who are active and cautious about their surroundings get time to escape and neutralize the activated disaster, but unawareness leads to victimization. For instance, a short circuit turned into fire and engulfed the surrounding combustible materials. Victims and locals also contact the concerned authorities like Fire Service to douse the fire at this level.

### **Details Description of Arrival Pace**

At the early dawn of the 8th of December devastating fire disaster occurred in a residential building of 5 stories due to short circuits in sub electric meter of the second floor. After spark and fire in the meter that starts engulfing the surround row materials like plastic, rexine, etc. which were stored there. The accumulation of combustible raw material like plastic, rexine, etcimmensely helps the fire to expand itself from one story to another. As incidence occurred in the early morning so most of the labourers were sleeping. The victims on the first two floors of the fire engulfed building manage to escape from it but the labourers of the third and fourth floors were trapped into this as the fire started from the staircase of the second floor. When the workers on the 1st floor know that there is a fire in the buildings they rushed out and informed the locals and fire department about this.

One of the workers Saddam survived the fire and due to his activation and awareness about the surroundings, he escaped from the building on time. He told that there was only one exit and entrance gate in the building, and fire safety measure was also not available. Statement of Saddam explains how the arrival pace of the fire disaster cycle took place at the incidence site and how the active and aware population avoided this disaster.

**5.2.3 Victimization pace:** It means physical, psychological and social assaults given to victims during a fire and it involves those persons who live the disaster and survive or deceased into it. This stage talks about the suffering during fire faced by victims. Fire disaster shows its evilness to

the engulfed population. These populations live, experience, and understand the devil of a fire disaster. For instance, workers sleeping in that building faced the incidence and died.

### **Detailed Description of Victimization Pace**

In this stage, there is an analysis of the words of survivors or those who lost their life. How they faced the fire. One of the survivors AsrarAlam (19) “When I saw a lot of smoke coming in and the whole room went black with smoke, I lay there... Many of us got unconscious...in the morning... don’t know when...when I show the light of torch... then I raised my hand...and someone picked me out from there”. Another survivor Afzal, “There was huge smoke in room... to save myself from this I covered my face with a cloth... and stood next to a hole in a window to breathe...”. Before death a worker on phone to his loved one.“ Hello Monu bhaiya, I am going to die. There is no place to run, a fire has broken out. Please take care of my family. Bhaiya, I am unable to breathe. What should I do?...Hai Allah! Now, I can’t even breathe.” Another call was made by Shakir Hussain (28) to his pregnant wife and told “I am trapped. Won’t come out alive.” The last words of Hussain and Musharraf explain the evilness of fire. The Disastrous Devil of December victimized so many people directly and indirectly to thousands of population. The victimization pace is a devastating period. These are heart-wrenching events.

**5.2.4 Rescue and Salvage Pace:** Rescue means an act of saving from danger or difficult situations to victims or stranded persons. This explains the process of the rescue operation and the difficulties faced during it. Fire Response and an emergency management team like a fire department, police, National Disaster Management Authority, etc. reached the site and put their efforts to rescue the engulfed population, save people, and salvage physical assets. For instance in this case Delhi Fire Service, Delhi Police, NDRS reached the site to save and rescue stranded persons.

### **Details Description about Rescue and Salvage Pace**

In this stage response team reach the site and rescue the trapped population from the trapped site. Delhi Fire Service (DFS) got a call at 5:22 am, which is situated within approximately 0.5 Km initially sent only four tenders to douse the fire as the address of the building was of a residential area, so fire fighters think that it is ablaze at the house. Then when the first fire fighter team reaches to site they immediately informed the fire officer of the supply of more men and tenders as that was a factory and many people were trapped in that. So after that 150 fire fighters and 32 fire tenders reached to cope with this effectively. Anaj Mandi fire was of a serious category of fire, rescue operation was tough as the site was congested and entrance to buildings was restricted. By doing dare fire fighter team entered the building with breathing apparatus despite knowing that fire is fuming inside. There were 15-20 people on each floor, most of them unconscious. Overall fire fighters rescued 63 people and 45 people died. All the rescued bodies and victims of Devil of December were sent to Lok Nayak, Lady Hardinge, and Dr Ram Manohar Lohia hospital for further treatment and post mortem of deceased bodies. DFS officer said narrow staircases, windows with grills, which took 20 minutes to cut, building packed with combustible material and locked terrace turned the building into 'Death Chamber'. Lack of water resources was another problem the firemen faced. Helped by Civil defence volunteers, fire fighters began carrying unconscious men on their shoulders. Some locals also give shelter to the victims and provided them care until the arrival of the ambulance.

**5.3 Phase 3:** This is the Annexation Phase. Annexation means complete takeover over the occurred event. In this case of study, it means complete control over the occurred fire event. Popularly this phase is also known as the post-disaster period.

**5.3.1 Response and reaction pace:** Response means a reaction to the incidence comes in this stage. Here Reaction means post-disaster changes

and scenario of area, in this case, Anaj Mandi. After the occurrence of incidence response and the reaction of different concerned authorities and population comes out in this stage. Talk about who is responsible for it, why it happened leads towards blame game. The order of investigation was also announced during this period. For instance response of Delhi Fire Service (DFS) director Atul Garg about this incidence of Anaj Mandi.

### **Details Description about Response and Reaction Pace or Stage**

Delhi Fire Service director Atul Garg told “The whole building becomes a gas chamber. A team of fire fighters entered the building from the terrace after breaking a window. Most of the bodies were found in the hall located on the fourth floor where most of the workers were sleeping. Fire services arrived at the spot within five minutes, but the narrow lane allowed only one fire engine to enter at a time. The fire was doused at 10.05 am”. He added that the arch shape entrance gate made it impossible for the fire trucks to enter into a lane. In the rescue operation, 150 fire fighters and 32 fire tenders were used. Adding this he said the owner never field for NOC, there was no fire safety equipment in a building, if they had applied for it we have been rejected because the big and heavy commercial activity cannot run in residential buildings. He added “It did not follow a single rule under the ‘Delhi Building Bye Law related to fire,’ which mentions the kind of exits, connectivity to the main road, doorways. North MCD representative told that last week's team of officers surveyed the buildings, and during the survey, the top floor of the building was locked so that it could not be inspected. Crime Branch of a special investigation unit (SIU) visited the site and told there several lapses were found and the owner constructed illegally top two floors without ventilation and lanter.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) asked the Centre to form a committee of experts to look into violation of norms by building owners, shopkeepers, individuals or firms undertaking commercial activities in residential areas by encroaching on public roads in alleged connivance with a public official of different agencies. Further added “No one seems

to bother about rules or norms which are to be followed by building owners, authorities of municipal corporations of Delhi, the local administration, police and the fire safety authorities. The painful incident could have been avoided and precious human lives could have been saved, had the norms not been violated by authorities responsible for maintaining fire safety of each of the buildings in congested places, as well as the owner of the building who had shown scant regards to the rule of law." Rehan (owner) told to police "he was sleeping at home Sunday morning when he came to know about the incident. After reaching the spot, he met Furkan and they tried to douse the fire. They also asked someone to run and inform fire officials at the nearby fire station. They were part of the initial rescue operation, but fled the spot later after they discovered that the death toll was mounting."

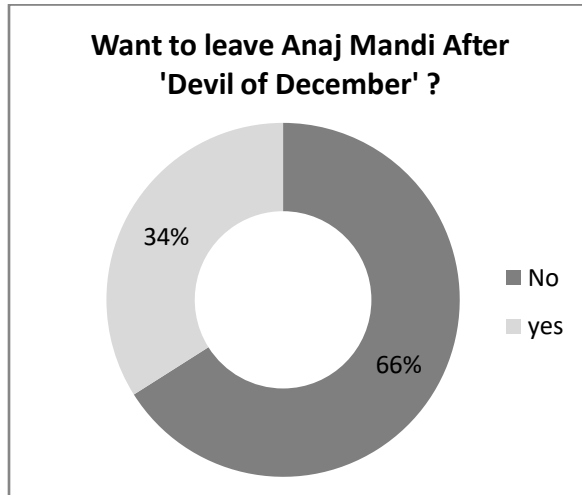
In a political remark, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told "the fire in Delhi's Anaj Mandi on Rani Jhansi Road is extremely horrific. My thoughts are with those who lost their loved ones. Wishing the injured a quick recovery. Authorities are providing all possible assistance at the site of the tragedy." President Ram Nath Kovind "Extremely sad to hear the tragic news about fire Delhi's Anaz Mandi my thoughts and prayers are with affected families. Wishing an early recovery to those injured. The local authorities are doing their best to rescue people and provide help". Union Home Minister, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind, etc also expressed grief. The Anaj Mandi fire incident was raised in the Rajya Sabha also with parliamentarians seeking steps to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. Senior political leaders across party lines made a beeline to the spot of the fire, visited hospitals, expressed sympathy, and announced compensation for the victims. However, by following their original inherent nature they indulged in a political blame game also.

### **Post Disaster Scenario:**

In the memories and suffering of kin Mohammad Haider standing and crying outside the LNJP hospital by repeating "Bhaichalagya... Baap



re...His marriage was only four months away and he said he will earn something in four months and paint the house so that it will look good.”



**Fig. 2: Opinion about Anaj Mandi**

Source: Primary Survey, 2020

The post-disaster scenario in the lane and locals and labourers views are also crucial to understanding the impact of this disaster.

The tragedy of Anaj Mandi not only impacted the sufferers but also the business of the entire Anaj Mandi. Hundreds of labourers and shop owners shifted from the area overnight. Akbar a local told “Business has been impacted in the area for everyone. Most of the residents have departed after the tragedy. We have seen people emptying their shops and warehouses at night.”

During the primary survey of the area after three months, most of the respondents told that for almost two to three months there were few people were left in this lane. Most businessmen and labourers shifted to other localities or their home town. In simple words after the devil of December, this has become deserted in terms of its appearance. The maximum population of the area after the Devil of December wants to leave Anaj

Mandi because of its furious fire incidence and lots of interference of authorities and concerned departments in their business and work. But it is also true that they don't want to lose such a commercial hub just for an incident, they are waiting for the betterment of this very soon. The statements of locals, labours, landlords, and factory owners of the area explain the adverse impact faced by them due to this disastrous incidence. It also shows that the loss resulted out of this disastrous incidence cannot be filled or overcome.

**5.3.2 Investigation and Review Pace:** Under this, an investigation is conducted after an incidence or disaster with the help of various upgraded technology by responsible authorities and researchers. In this stage earlier works or major concerning disaster and activities of the study area are also reviewed. Investigator submits their reports and they give their feedback about that particular fire disaster, which were implemented to a certain extent. For instance Report of Magisterial Probe, Fact-Finding Committee Report, etc.

Delhi Police said "Rehan and Furkan have been arrested under IPC Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire). The further case has been to the Crime Branch for further investigation". And Factory Manager is also taken into custody. The Delhi Police and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) visited the site of incidence to collect samples and inspected the charred structure for more than two hours. An officer said, "We have collected samples from the building, including raw material, cooking utensils, and electric appliances used by the labourers." The 3d laser scanner technology which was first used by Delhi Police during an inspection of Arpit Place Fire, Delhi, was used in this case also. A 3D laser scanner was used to collect evidence from the surroundings of the building as well as of a building.

During the inspection, it was found that commercial activities were taking place in the residential building. Also, there was no fire fighting

equipment, a panic alarm, safety measures, and a safe exit found inside the building, the officer said. There were only one window and no ventilation in the building. Of the two exits, one had been converted into a storehouse, the police alleged. Over six manufacturing units were operating from the building. The Special Investigation Unit of the Crime Branch recorded the statement of minors. The investigation team found that a total of five minors died and seven survived in this incident. BBA filed a PIL. In reply to PIL filed by NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), a bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice C Hair Shankar issued notice to the Centre, Delhi, Bihar government and police to know their stand on the employment of child labour in Anaj Mandi, where a fire occurred.

A 37-member NDRF team followed and found a heavy concentration of carbon monoxide throughout the building, which is possibly what killed the people. Most workers had been sleeping in one room, which had a single inlet for air.” Order for Magisterial Probe was given by Delhi Chief Minister. Delhi BJP set up its four-member “Fact-Finding Committee,” to probe the devastating incidence of the Anaj Mandi fire.

**5.3.3 Reimbursement and Reparation Pace:** Reimbursement means compensating the affected individual or group of individuals to repair them to overcome form loss faced by them. Responsible parties provide reimbursement and reparation to the victims or the family members of it to tackle down or face the critical consequences of a fire disaster. For instance, Ex-gratia by Delhi Government, Bihar Government to the victims of Anaj Mandi Fire, etc.

#### **Detailed Description of Reimbursement and Reparation Pace:**

Most of the families who lost their loved ones also lost their main breadwinner. For their survival now the only source is compensation promised by the Centre, Delhi, Bihar, BJP, and other organizations. Mohammed Sujeem (55), from Sahara, Bihar. He left behind three unmarried daughters, a 15-year-old son, and a wife. Her sister told “the family won’t survive without financial support. How will such a young

boy run the family?" To give financial assistance to the families of the victim Government and other social bodies announced the ex-gratia for their kin.

**Table 1**  
**Ex-gratia For the Families**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Kin of Dead</b>	<b>Injured</b>
PM Relief Fund	Rs 2 lakh	Rs 50,000
Delhi Government	Rs 10 lakh	Rs 1 lakh
Delhi BJP	Rs 5 lakh	Rs 25,000
Bihar Government	Rs 2 lakh	

Source: Indian Express, 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2019

**5.3.4 Societal and Legal Reform Pace:** In this stage by considering the lessons learned from incidence are considered and the reforms suggested by different investigation reports and scholars are taken into account to make society safe. It includes creating social units, making new legislation and changes in laws and regulations that take place in this stage. For instance, an example can be taken from Uphar Cinema Fire when the court gives its verdict to make the city more fire resilience.

**Detailed Description of Societal and legal Reform Pace:**

As the incidence of the Anaj Mandi fire is a very recent occurrence of Capital city, so till now not any legal reforms take by the authorities. But the authorities of the concerned department become more aware. People of the Anaj Mandi area also become more aware of the disastrous aspect of fire. Societal reforms that took place in Anaj Mandi can be visualised through the instalment of fire extinguishers and safety equipment's in factories by the fire department. In primary survey found that more than 90 per cent of fire safety equipment's in factories and house areas was installed after the incidence. This indicates the step taken up at the level of the Fire Department. North Delhi Municipal Corporation also took various

steps to improve the situation of the area by sealing illegal factories that were using heavy types of machinery.



**Fig. 3 Timing of Fire Safety equipment instalment**

Source: Primary Survey, 2020

Changes also took place at the individual level as most people become aware of fire safety. A respondent during the survey explained the individual level steps taken up by him to protect himself and his family from such an incident in the future. It can be said that from the individual level to the societal level most of the population of Anaj Mandi become more cautious about fire safety after the occurrence of a furious fire in December. And legal reforms after this incident has still waited as the case is under trial in court and investigation is going on. Normally most of the fire disaster is followed by this phase when initially everyone from authority to society and from individual to a group of individual takes precautionary measure to protect themselves from such incidence in future, but with the passage of this fade up, which leads to the next pace or stage of fire disaster development cycle, which is called as Dormantation and Obliviation pace.

**5.4 Phase 4:** This is called Awakening and Renaissance. Awakening here means coming into existence again. In this case of study fire disaster, after its occurrence, it reactivates itself at the same place or another place over time again due to various activities of human being mentioned in the Ante Phase, so this phase is called as Awakening or renaissance phase of fire disaster and in this way it forms a cycle.

**5.4.1 Dormantation and Obliviation Pace:** With the passage of certain time matter start becoming blurred and reach the stage of dormant or oblivion. Example: The dwellers of Delhi forget the Uphar tragedy.

#### **Detailed description of Dormantation and Obliviation Pace**

Just with the passage of five months, people of the Anaj Mandi started forgetting about the horrific fire incident, as those factory owners who moved out with their big plastic moulding machine, again shifted to Anaj Mandi with the same accessories. A local told “After the fire, most of the people left from here who had an illegal factory... It hasn't been 5 months yet... And then again those people started coming here... This is a very sad thing....”

To understand this situation we have to take examples of some past incidences of fire in Delhi. This will clearly explain how people of Delhi forget about the past incident and they started taking it casually and the Devil of December occurred. In the last 22 years since the Uphaar incidence, Delhi has witnessed many blazes like Uphaar Cinema, 1997, 59 people died; LalKuan, 1999, 57 people died; Bawana, 2018, 17 people dead; and Karol Bagh, 2019, 17 dead. In this list latest one is the Anaj Mandi fire which engulfed 45 people. But despite so many tragedies, Delhi is yet to learn lessons on fire safety norms. After every fire incidence authority, population and policymakers follow rules and regulations but with time they forget it, which ultimately leads to the next disaster. A status check of the past fire incidence of the capital city shows the activeness of authorities to deal with incidence decrease with time.

And they wait for the next disaster to speed up their process. The past some fire and their status report at present shows how authority, people, and community start their casual behaviour again which becomes the foundation stone for the next fire disaster at the same location or somewhere else, that stage is called as the Reactivation Pace.

**5.4.2 Reactivation Pace:** Reactivation is the act or process of reactivating anything again. When past fire disasters become oblivion then people's inherent habit of malpractice and negligence start again which leads to reactivation of the fire disaster cycle at the same or any other location. For instance, Anaj Mandi Fire or Devil of December.

#### **Detailed Description about Reactivation Pace**

In the earlier stage of Dormantation and Oblivionation, we observed how the workers were negligent toward their safety, and how authorities were dealing with past incidences. These all factors cumulatively After Uphar Cenama fire lead towards another fire incidence of Anaj Mani in December month. Devil of December did not occur suddenly, but it developed in phases and was created by the sufferers themselves. As the working labours of the illegal factory were negligent toward their safety, and working in such a messy condition. Owners who just want to earn profit at any cost. Authorities were sleeping as under their nose all kinds of illegal activities were running. These aspects lead towards the Devil of December.

### **6. Conclusion**

Fire as a disaster repeat or develop in a cyclic form. This statement with the help of the Anaj Mandi fire disaster and other fire incidences of Delhi has been tried to prove in this research work. Understanding of different stages in the development process of any disaster is of crucial importance as this provides a comprehensive and systematic idea about that particular disaster. In this research work development process of fire disaster has been broadly divided into 4 major phases and further into stages that are

Ante Phase (Assessment, Action, Gestation, and Premonition are stages), Amid Phase (Activation, Arrival, Victimisation, and Rescue and salvage), Annexation Phase (Investigation and Review, Response and Reaction, Reimbursement and Reparation and Societal and Legal Reforms) and Awakening or Renaissance Phase (Dormantation and Obliviation and Reactivation). Based on the clear and detailed understanding of these phases and stages and their specific characteristics a comprehensive roadmap to make Delhi or India fire resilient can be developed. This fire disaster development cycle will help to come up with specific strategies for different stages by the individuals, community and institutions. Once we will truly develop the management strategy for each stage and implement it at the grassroots level the target of fire resilient and safe Delhi can be achieved.

### ***References***

- Disaster Definition & Meaning—Merriam-Webster* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disaster>
- Kapur, A. (Ed.). (2005). *Disasters in India: Studies of grim reality*. Rawat Publications.
- Kapur, A. (2010). *Vulnerable India: A geographical study of disasters*. SAGE Publications India.
- Pal, I., & Ghosh, T. (2014). Fire incident at AMRI hospital, Kolkata (India): A real time assessment for urban fire. *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research*, 3(1), 9–13.
- Sanghavi, P., Bhalla, K., & Das, V. (2009). Fire-related deaths in India in 2001: A retrospective analysis of data. *The Lancet*, 373(9671), 1282–1288.
- Tomar, S., Kaur, A., Dangi, H. K., Ghawana, T., & Sarma, K. (2017). Fire Risk Analysis Using Geospatial Approach and Mitigation Measures for South-West Delhi. *International Journal of Emerging Research in Management & Technology*, 8, 131–137.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). 43 dead in fire at illegal factory. *Hindustan Times*, p. D1.



- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). Not fire but smoke killed men: Docs.*Hindustan Times*, p. D4.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). 'There is no escape...take care of my family'.*Hindustan Times*, p. D4.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). Illegal building spotted, wasn't sealed.*Hindustan Times*, p. D5.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). Centre faults fire dept, AAP govt says bid to shield MCDs. *Hindustan Times*, p. D5.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9).Faceless victims: Aspirations for a better life bring you migrants to jobs in 'tinderboxes'.*Hindustan Times*, p. D5.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). Delhi learns no lessons from past fire tragedies.*Hindustan Times*, p. D7.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9). Five storey building with minuscule windows, doors.*Hindustan Times*, p. D7.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 9).24 hours earlier, there was a fire in neighbourhood.*Hindustan Times*, p. D7.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 10). 'No safety gear, fire alarm, escape route'.*Hindustan Times*, p. D1.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December, 10). Factories down shutters, workers out in the cold.*Hindustan Times*, p. D3.
- Sunny, S., & Roychowdhury, A. (2019, December 11). As factories go quiet, workers head home with hopes to return.*Hindustan Times*, p. D3.
- Singh, K. P., (2019, December 11). Dozen illegal sub-meters found in gutted building.*Hindustan Times*, p. D3.
- Adak, B. (2019, December 11). MCD have 20 days to shut 9,000 illegal factories, but only 15 inspectors to do it.*Hindustan Times*, p. D3.
- Sunny, S. (2019, December 11). Fire extinguishers spotted on building's walls, locals say they found six buckets of sand too.*Hindustan Times*, p. D3.
- Pillai, S., Shranghi, V., (2019, December 11). It is not just Anaj Mandi: Five tinderboxes that dot Delhi.*Hindustan Times*, p. D4.
- Correspondent, HT. (2019, December 11). Parents move HC against school over fire norms.*Hindustan Times*, p. D3.



**FORM-IV**

*(SEE RULE 8)*

1. Registration No. : ISSN 0970-5260
2. Place of Publication : Panjab University,  
Chandigarh (India)
3. Periodicity of its Publication : Biannual
4. Publisher & Editor-in-Chief's Name : Krishna Mohan
- Nationality : Indian
- Address : Professor  
: Deptt. of Geography  
Panjab University,  
Chandigarh.
5. Printer's Name : Jatinder Moudgil
- Nationality : Indian
- Address : Manager, Panjab  
University, Press
6. Name and addresses of  
Individuals who own the  
Newspaper s and partners  
of share holders holding more  
than one per cent of the total  
capital : Panjab University,  
Chandigarh

I, Krishna Mohan, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**(Krishna Mohan)**

Signature of Publisher

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This is to declare and certify that the research paper entitled, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ,

submitted for PANJAB UNIVERSITY RESEARCH JOURNAL (ARTS), written  
by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

is my/our original work. It does not infringe on the rights of others and does not contain any libelous or unlawful statements.

This is to further declare and certify that the said paper and, or its part/parts are not plagiarized. I/We take full responsibility of originality of this work and shall be liable for action, if found guilty at any stage.

Also, I/We declare and certify that the said paper and, or its part/parts have not been published or sent for publication anywhere else.

I/We hereby authorize you to edit, alter, modify and make changes in the article to make it suitable for publication

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. ....<br>(Name with designation/position | .....<br>(Signatures with date) |
| 2. ....<br>(Name with designation/position | .....<br>(Signatures with date) |
| 3. ....<br>(Name with designation/position | .....<br>(Signatures with date) |
| 4. ....<br>(Name with designation/position | .....<br>(Signatures with date) |

## About the Journal :

Panjab University Research Journal (Arts) earlier known as Panjab University Research Bulletin (Arts), PURJA is the mother journal of Panjab University, Chandigarh (India) Started in early 1950s, it is a bi-annual *refereed* journal of international repute and publishes research papers/articles/reviews/survey papers duly assessed and reviewed by a panel of experts. It is included in UGC CARE list. It is devoted to the publication of original research papers/articles/reviews of a very high standard in various disciplines of humanities, languages and arts. One of the objectives of this journal is to create a forum for the dissemination and exchange of ideas among the scholars within the country and outside. Though the journal primarily focuses on theoretical issues of wide contemporary relevance, it also announces special issues drawing attention toward well-defined thematic areas in humanities, languages and arts in general. The journal seeks to propagate and stimulate philosophical, critical and interpretative dialogue across the national and international frontiers. For this reason, we look forward to receiving contributions from scholars working in diverse areas covered broadly under the disciplines of humanities, languages and arts.

## Guidelines for submission of Research Papers

1. The research paper should embody the results of original research and give ample evidence of scholarship, which should be creative, independent in character and fundamental in nature.
2. The research paper should be neatly typed, double spaced with broad margin on sunlit bondpaper and submitted in duplicate along with one soft copy and an **abstract** of the paper in about 100-150 words. The abstract must include the objective, methodology and major findings of the paper.
3. All notes and references should come at the end of the paper.
4. The research paper should preferably be between 3000 to 5000 words.
5. The format should be in accordance with the latest APA seventh edition. Sample entry for workscited :

**Books:** Elder, Stuart. (1997). *The Birth of Territory*. The University of Chicago Press.

**Articles:** Bhatia, B and Dreze, J. (2006). Employment Guarantee in Jharkhand: Grand Realities. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 41, pp. 319-202

6. **Graphs, Tables and Charts** in MS Office (Word /Excel format -**Black and White**) or equivalent format are preferred. Fonts for special characters also be provided.
7. A short biographical sketch in duplicate should accompany the paper.
8. The author must give an undertaking that the paper has not been published wholly or partly, in any other journal, and that it has not been submitted to any other journal for consideration or publication.
9. All articles submitted for publication shall be used subject to the positive reports from neutral and objective experts in relevant fields of specialization. Only in case of rejection shall the reports of the experts be made available to the contributors.

Research papers not found suitable shall not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. With regard to the acceptance or rejection of the research papers, the decision of the editorial board shall be final and binding. In this regard, the editorial board shall not entertain any correspondence from the contributors.

10. Copyright of the articles published in this journal rests solely with the ***Panjab University Research Journal (Arts)***.
11. Ten reprints of each article and one copy of the issue in which it is published shall be sent free of cost to each contributor. Additional copies of the journal shall be supplied at the usual rates, plus the necessary postal charges.
12. Annual subscription is offered at a flat rate of Rs. 500/- (£ 40 or \$ 80 US). However, a single copy of the current issue or back issues may be obtained for Rs. 200/-. All these rates are exclusive of the postal charges.
13. Subscriptions may be sent only in form of a Bank Draft drawn in favour of the Registrar, Panjab University, Chandigarh. No other form of transaction is acceptable.
14. The contributors may send all their articles / reviews/research papers directly to: Editor-in-Chief, Panjab University Research Journal (Arts), Panjab University, Chandigarh 160014 (India). They may also be e-mailed to [purja@pu.ac.in](mailto:purja@pu.ac.in)

## **AUTHORS FOR THIS ISSUE**

Aman Kumari, SRF, Centre of Advanced Study in Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Aastha Dang, Pursuing Ph.D in Gender Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi.

Bharat, Assistant Professor, University Institute of Legal Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Kinnari Kashyap, M.Phil, Research Scholar, Sikkim University, Gangtok.

Lallan Baghel, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Mukesh Kumar, Assistant Professor, University Institute of Legal Studies, Chandigarh University, Mohali.

Rajeev Kumar, Assistant Professor, History, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala.

Satyananda Panda, Associate Professor & Head, Sikkim University, Gangtok.

Shubham Kumar Sanu, Doctoral Scholar, Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

Smita Bhutani, Professor, Centre of Advanced Study in Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Sudeshna Majumdar, Assistant Professor, English, Rampurhat College, West Bengal.

Udangshri Basumatary, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Sikkim University, Gangtok.

Vishwa Raj Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi.







## Contents

Sr. No.	Article	Author(s)	Page
1.	Indian Culture and Universal Values : Celebrating Soft Power in Higher Education	Rajeev Kumar	1-20
2.	Were the 1950s-70s really the “Dead Decades” of Indian women’s movement? Understanding the work of Punjab Istree Sabha through an alternate history perspective	Astha Dang	21-34
3.	The Commission for Air Quality Management : Stable and Sustainable Solution	Bharat Mukesh Kumar	35-54
4.	Higher Education Institutions In India: Disparities in Availability	Aman Kumari Smita Bhutani	55-78
5.	Exploring Nature and Risk Factors of Completed Suicide in Sikkim	Satyananda Panda Udangshri Basumatary Kimmari Kashyap	79-102
6.	Human Right, Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition : Some Philosophical Reflections	Lallan Baghel	103-114
7.	Among the poorest, the Lowliest And the Lost : Representation of the Downtrodden in Tagore’s Poetry	Sudeshna Majumdar	115-129
8.	Fire Disaster Development Cycle : A Case Study of Anaj Mandi Fire, Delhi, India	Shubham Kumar Sanu Vishwa Raj Sharma	130-155