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## EDITORIAL

### **Reflecting on the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Indian Anthropological Society**

RAJAT KANTI DAS

*Editor, Journal of Indian Anthropological Society*

The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Indian Anthropological Society held at Indira Gandhi National Tribal University ( IGNTU ), Amarkantak during January 29 – 31, 2018 was a significant event in more than one sense. The National Seminar on ‘ Tribal Situation in India : Contemporary Issues and Concerns ‘ was organized on this occasion jointly by the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU ), Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya ( IGRMS ), Bhopal, Tata Steel, Jamshedpur and, of course, the Indian Anthropological Society, Kolkata. The Seminar made a serious attempt to understand the tribal situation in India in the context of natural resource management and conservation, livelihood and sustainable development, governance and policy, social and cultural heritage, arts and crafts, ethnicity and identity, change and conflict. Naturally, critical issues like climate change, gender, empowerment, resource and technology, poverty and unemployment, education, health and nutrition, entrepreneurship came up for discussion.



The participation of scholars across disciplines was all the more encouraging because it actually laid the foundation for future interdisciplinary and collaborative researches. The representation was almost total as there were participants from all over the country. The Russian scholar Svetlana Ryzhakova of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Science, is, however, a regular participant in Society's events. It was more than a pleasant surprise to find her speaking in the Seminar on "Tribal Dances" in India. The question she had raised about the "tribe-ness" of the tribal dances like the Santal dance or Kebelia dance of Rajasthan touched upon the basic point of "tribe" – "non-tribe" distinction, which sometimes creates contradictions, leads to political instability and at times gives rise to violence. In some respects, the tribal dances could be the precursor of some forms of Indian classical dances.

The point of consideration is if the distinction between "tribe" and "non-tribe" is more real than imaginary, where does the reality lie? Tribal form of reality is now more elusive than real. What is tribal is rather situation-specific. The situation a tribe could be identified with represents a long process of alignment with or protest and rebellious movements against alien politico-historical forces in operation in different times. In course of delivering the 'Nirmal Kumar Bose Memorial Lecture' Shalina Mehta makes a relevant point about tribe. She observes,

"... Colonial perceptions rooted in western imagination and political ingenuity created a 'false and imagined unified category of people' subsumed under the construct of 'Tribe'. Communities that were brought under it in any part of the world were the ones that had survived centuries of challenge that ecology or human invasions masqueraded..."

There may be different manifestations of tribal situation in different regions and in the present context the only way these could be uniformly treated is by linking them with the dynamics of change. Again, to understand the process of change more importance is probably given on the formal institutions working within and from outside the society at different levels. For example, the role of education in tribal upliftment is universally recognised and in the Seminar a number of researchers dealt with this. But while presenting their cases at least two scholars revealed their stereotypic and somewhat taken-for-granted attitude about tribes, to which we also subscribe as an expression of common understanding. The paper on "Status of tribal education in the Naxalite-affected areas: Some observations on Koraput District" by Sili Rout raised a point of controversy. She took pains to establish that in Bandhugaon and Naranapatna villages of Koraput district in Odisha children's education had suffered immensely because of the ongoing Naxalite conflict. Children were caught in the conflict between Naxalites and security forces for no fault of theirs. They could not go to schools, the teachers from outside could not come and in some cases even the educational

institutions were destroyed. Because of these activities, there is a general tendency to project the Naxalites as the greatest stumbling block against the spread of children's education in tribal areas. Actually, the Naxalites are against the education system as it is imparted now. To say that they are against education or any form of development to be undertaken is rather too harsh a statement. To them, the present form of development only undermines the rights of the local people – a view sometimes shared by the human rights activists also. There are tribals within the Naxalite organization and it would be more pertinent to ask what has prompted them to join the outfit. Naemul Haq, a Research scholar from Jammu and Kashmir, took up the case of Gujjars of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as an example of their transformation through the promotion of modern education among them. Education, according to him, is the strongest factor of social mobility or inclusion of Gujjars by eradicating their geographical separation or isolation, socio-cultural problems, economic crisis, exploitation, unprofitable agriculture, unemployment and underemployment, non-availability of banking facilities, problems of health and sanitation, complications of land ownership, and everything that goes with improved living. All in all, it has revolutionised their life for the better. The researcher called it 'self-liberation'. However, to a question whether or not it had made them ever dependent on the government for help and support at the cost of their own way of independent living he had no clear answer. We had no answer as well. Apparently, loosing territorial rights for the sake of attaining greater social mobility, improved status, taste of modern living seem to be the only logical course of action to follow at present. There is something inevitable about it. Changes will follow the direction government decides them to happen. The state now dictates the term of reference, which sometimes clashes with the tribal way of deliberation. To the state-centrists, deliberations at the tribal level are informal in nature. A research scholar from Kerala suggested 'public sphere' as an alternative to tribal way of doing things. This is not as smooth a journey as one assumes to be. We have the notion that there is hardly anything like public sphere or public domain in the tribal system. All deliberations are informally discussed; informal because they do not enter the public domain. What is, however, informal to us comes within the purview of the institutional network defining a tribal system. It seems there is no immediate end of this dichotomy engulfing the tribal system once it comes in direct contact with the larger domain of public life dominated by non-tribes. Suggestions have also been made to evolve strategies based on core values, level of competence and skill, state of environment, working of government machinery, role of market economy and performance of social agencies. Even if rational transaction of goods, commodities and services is ensured in tribal areas, the negative effects of these cannot be avoided. The imminent collapse of the traditional tribal social structure will have far reaching consequences, the indications of which are already in the fore. The Seminar took time to discuss at length some of the issues which have been

plaguing tribal life for quite some time. Identifying the areas of conflict of various forms, which include ethnicity, environment and economic was no mean achievement. From the conceptual point of view, it has been realised that there could be several 'interconnected domains of discourse' developing from tribe as a functional symbolic system. Can tribe still be taken as 'an alternative form of discourse' in the context of social development?

Tribal villages as 'localities' have been reduced to 'relational, contextual' categories. In varying degrees, tribal villages have become a part of the rural-urban network. Some well known anthropologists of the last century could foresee the way tribal transformation would take place. One such name is Irawati Karve, the famous anthropologist-cum-sociologist of the Deccan College, Poona (now Pune ). In one study conducted at Phaltan and the surrounding villages of Maharashtra in mid - 1960s, she and her co-worker Ranadive made the following observations :

"The classical village community is dead... Keeping the distinction between rural and urban or emphasizing it further hinders the real progress of the rural..."

They actually advocated seeing the urban and the rural, the town and villages, into an interconnected unity in such a way that the town becomes the heart of the social intercourse because of well placed roads and well placed villages. They pleaded for concentrating more on a small town as an intermediary and channel of communication between a village and a big city. But this may not apply to all tribal villages. Not all tribal villages are strategically located or have regular urban link. In any case, the proposition made by Karve and Ranadive may come closer to Robert Redfield's concept of 'folk-urban continuum', provided we are convinced that the rural tribal is essentially a part of the total complex where they could be equated with non-tribals at the folk end. After more than fifty years of Karve and Ranadive's findings, we have come to realise that the distinction between 'tribal', 'folk' and 'urban' does not follow a uni-directional pattern. Social behaviours, cultural experiences and knowledge system of each and every community need to be looked into from its own specificity because they are indicative of the survival mechanism of the concerned community. In such a situation, 'personal survival' cannot automatically be delinked from group identity because the question of cultural continuity is intricately related with it. That is the reason why the very basis of culture-linked identity has come under sharper scrutiny. Tribal institutions are now crystallized into power relations with a nationalist design. Nowhere is the process more explicit than in the legal recognition of tribal culture, which gives it a stamp of national acceptance. Side by side, it gives effect to the 'culture of politics', which involves interpretation and reinterpretation of culture reducing it to a flexible, widely debated phenomenon. Of course, the nationalist character of tribal culture is rather an invented one, which is often juxtaposed or superimposed along with its ethnic definition. There has been

an attempt on the part of some tribes to promote tribal nationalism with ethnic identity giving rise to what is often called 'ethnic nationalism'. At the tribal level, ethnic symbols are sometimes used as markers for group rights. Even the political activists and promoters of national integration give due importance to them for their own interest. Such a stance helps them come closer to tribal mind. Again, for greater national interest they sometimes question the applicability and utility of tribal institutions as promoters of integrative nationalism. The problem is the tribal brand of nationalism with its bottom-up direction is not always compatible with the kind of integrative, assimilative national structure, which we think will be able to keep the whole country united, even if in a loose sense. All in all, any simplistic assessment of tribal situation in India leaves much to be desired. Every community's life exposition has its own specific character, which represents a stage in its attempt to reach that height as is manifested by the life process itself. This is probably the lesson we have learnt from the Seminar-cum-Conference.

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**PROBLEMS OF CULTURAL MARGINALIZATION:  
A study on impact of post Tsunami relocation of the Marine  
fishermen in Kerala**

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**Abstract:** Post independent India experienced massive socio cultural and political changes along with challenges in many economic sectors, including marine fisheries. Until the initiation of modernization in the fisheries sector, fishing (both marine and inland) was considered as a caste or community based economic activity, especially in a state like Kerala. Like any other socially and economically downtrodden sections of the state's population, marine fishermen were also characterised by poverty, low educational attainment, and minimum material possessions, including the living space.

The study was conducted among the 'Arayan', a Hindu marine fishermen community relocated after the tragic happening of tsunami in Kerala. For this study, two relocation settlements from Kerala with 86 families were selected. The relocation of the fishermen from their native habitat to a new geographical space has been creating many socio-economic and cultural problems threatening their identity. Depletion of marine resources and its consequences have serious implications for them, especially in the areas of subsistence, food security, job opportunities, political affiliations, changing attitudes and world view. Based on these issues, this paper attempts to suggest some solutions to the problems faced by the post-tsunami relocated marine fishermen of Kerala.

*Key words :* Culture-marginalization, Marine fishermen, Kerala, post-Tsunami

#### INTRODUCTION

The term 'marginalization' is a problematic usage which requires much attention from development planners, administrators, academicians, and policy makers. Technically it is a floating phenomenon, changes with social, economic, political and psychological conditions and may not be static like any other social stigma, such as exclusion. Marginalization and exclusion can be better understood in terms of time and space. Peter Leonard (1984, p.180) defines social marginality as 'being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity'. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and livelihoods, including the resources available to them earlier. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be confined to limited space resulting in the development of low self-confidence and self-admiration. This kind of a mental state with low aspiration levels often results in a condition which is at the receiving end of negative attitudes and approaches supporting the statement of Sen (1992) that lack of "capabilities" is one of the key components of the process of exclusion.



The response towards marginalization is different for different individuals and societies depending on the personal and collective social resources accessible to them. People who are experiencing economic marginalization are likely to have unsubstantiated involvement in balancing their subsistence economy. Such an involvement subsequently leads them to marginalization from social networks, both internal and external. According to Charlesworth, “no matter what one has done occupationally ... [once marginalized] ... there is no way one can escape the experience of a social context that is like a stagnant pond in which we are the suffocating organisms. There is an absence of the social conditions that make optimism and hope a realistic life strategy” (2000, p. 60).

Being a major humanitarian problem in keeping with the spirit of humankind, marginalization has to be addressed with consistent efforts, starting from family, the basic unit of social organization, to global levels because of its particular nature of derivation from specific experiences and constellations. Classifying or keeping away a category as ‘marginalized’ without attempting any remedial measures is anthropologically unethical resulting in psychological constraint put upon one’s self determination and attitudes. Kanbur (2007) goes a step further. According to him, marginalization is relational and continuous as well as an outcome and on a whole, a process. It is relational in the sense that it implies the existence of some ‘other’ and continuous depending upon the level under consideration. The ‘outcome’ characteristic of marginalization addresses relationships of inequality and process concerns the degree of integration. Kanbur goes on to say that the concept of marginalization is often misapplied to refer to ‘informal’ organization, where informal is described as ‘chaotic’ or ‘disordered’. He cautions that “this is a dangerous mindset which is empirically false and has led to policy disasters” (2007, p. 2). Inequalities due to differences in circumstances often reflect marginalization and social exclusion, and should be tackled through public policy interventions.

#### POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century experienced rapid interventions in social policies and practices emphasizing concern for human development. If human development is taken as an indicator to highlight the entire population, one has to consider the rational linkages between culture<sup>1</sup> and development which is very much important. Culture includes people’s way of survival supported by a set of closely related ‘belief systems’ which exercise on their world views. The ideologies and perspectives of those involved in policy formulation and implementation, whether they are administrators, planners, social scientists or academicians, also have a direct or indirect impact on the survival system of the target population. Thus, it appears that there is always a gap between these two streams of perspectives which is identified as one of the important loopholes in any attempt of development intervention. Inclusiveness is a

remedial strategy formulated in the development interventions to overcome the constraints experienced in such attempts. This is especially true in the case of societies and groups which are totally marginalized or are in the process of marginalization.

The Commission on Growth and Development<sup>2</sup>, notes that ‘inclusiveness’ – a concept that encompasses equity, equality of opportunity, and protection in market and employment transitions – is an essential ingredient of any successful growth strategy. Here, the idea of equality of opportunity is defined in terms of access to markets, resources, and unbiased regulatory environment for businesses and individuals. Inequality can result from differences in either *efforts*, which are under the control of an individual, or *circumstances*, such as gender, religious background, geographical location, and parental education, which are outside the control of the individual (Roemer, 2006). The same is true in the case of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) as they are excluded from the mainstream society by circumstances unique to their culture.

While discussing the issues on growth and development, the basic questions that ‘how far one can possibly take advantage of new innovations and how the lowest stratum of the society is benefited are to be answered. Research in these areas of development strongly support that systematic inequality of opportunity is “toxic” as it will disrupt societal growth process through unmatched political channels or ideological conflicts. As a result, the socially and economically marginalized sections of the populations are not rightly captured by policies framed by the government (both Central and State) and non-government organizations. It is established that inputs from local knowledge system and local perspectives are very much important in the formulation and implementation of policies as it supports the psychological state of an individual to go on par with the changing surroundings. It also helps the administrators and planners to formulate policies from ‘emic’ (insider’s view on culture) perspective which anthropology always stands for.

Local knowledge system is not homogenous as it is influenced by the local environment (both biological and social), proper participation of beneficiaries in development interventions, practicability of development policies, and attitude of the beneficiaries. But it is seen that development interventions among the marginalized societies to a certain extent deteriorates their traditional values, social institutions, such as family and kinship and customary practices along with traditional social control mechanisms. Most often these result in various negative reflections of culture and works as barrier to development. Moreover the balance between culture and nature itself would be hampered resulting in disproportionate distribution of resources and beneficiaries.

## TSUNAMI RELOCATION OF THE MARINE FISHERMEN

The Tsunami that took place in India on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004 seriously affected the coastal states, such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and the Union Territories of Pondicherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Approximately 2,260 km of the coastal area was affected damaging fishing technologies and material assets of fishermen valued crores of rupees losing even a small hope of restoration. The fisheries sector was the one severely subjected to the impact of the Tsunami, accounting for 85 percent of the damages (Venkatesh Salagrama, 2006).

The Tsunami also caused serious damage to houses down the coastal line. This has left a large number of fishermen (the fishermen of Kerala coast is a heterogeneous population mainly comprised of Hindu, Muslim and Christian families) to a state of homelessness. Depending on the availability of land, the houses were being provided to the victims either in the same area where their houses were previously located or in other places far away from the coast. The issue of relocation had been subjected to debate and left with many anxieties, both for the communities as well as the governments. Those who are fully depending on the marine ecosystem faced the severe threat of economic crisis along with other problems of sustainability. Active fishermen<sup>3</sup> staying near the coastal areas are compulsorily shifted to other places as part of post Tsunami relocation. From the beginning itself they showed reluctance in shifting because of the reason that settlement in a faraway place will never support their traditional activity of fishing.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Kozhikode district of Kerala. Two Gram *panchayats* of Kozhikode district, namely Azhiyur and Onchiyam, were selected as areas of study because Tsunami Relocation settlement is situated under these *panchayats*. In the initial stage, household survey was conducted in all the 86 households in the two relocation settlements to get primary details of each family and its members. Information such as age at the time of interview, sex, marital status, occupational status, land holdings and details of material possessions were collected using a household survey schedule. The relocation settlements were visited frequently to establish rapport with the inmates. I made regular non-participant observations to understand the problems of interactions and infrastructural facilities as raised by the inmates and the kind of daily economic activities and transactions taking place in the settlement. Key informants were identified and unstructured interviews with male and female informants were made to understand their opinions regarding the problems of distant relocation. Focus group discussions with fishermen were conducted to collect information on their agonies, frustrations and anxieties regarding the uncertain subsistence for survival. Genealogies of all the surveyed families were taken to get a picture of the involvement of persons

in the traditional occupation of marine fishery through generations. Questionnaire was used to collect information from the fishermen regarding personal stress, addiction to alcohol, problems at work place and work related vulnerabilities. In addition to primary data, secondary sources such as documents available at Revenue office, *Panchayat* and Village offices were also consulted to gather information on governmental interventions.

As academic source only few literatures are available on post tsunami problems from the perspective of anthropology. Sunita Reddy (2013) discussed the post-tsunami relocation in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Hastrup (2011) explores the recovery process of tsunami in Tamil Nadu and gives interesting account of the villager's experiences from an academic point of view. She contends that overtime the disasters became part of everyday life of the victims. Gamburd (2014) observes the power relations after tsunami and shows how the disaster has changed social identities, economic dynamics and political structures in SriLanka. Oliver-Smith (1999:10) pointed out the importance of anthropological research in emphasizing the pre-disaster conditions and analysing the approach to recapture from disaster. He highlighted that the impact of disaster on different groups in society as the same calamity affects the people differently. Smith states that "the concept of social vulnerability expresses the multidimensionality of disaster by focussing attention on the totality of relationships in a given social situation which constitute a condition in combination with environmental forces (2008:11).

In Kerala no anthropological study has been conducted in this area except the publication of few general articles in local language. This paper is the first attempt on this line focussing on the problems of tsunami relocation and consequent cultural marginalization.

#### BACKGROUND OF RELOCATION SETTLEMENTS

The Government of Kerala with the help of Revenue department constructed houses/ apartments for the selected<sup>4</sup> Tsunami victims (fishermen families) of the above *panchayats*. These two settlements consist of a total of 86 houses situated 2-3 km away from the coastal belt. As per the revenue records, Tsunami relocation settlement in Azhiyour *panchayat* is situated in 1.5 acres of land and that of Onchiyam in less than one acre of land under the Revenue department of government of Kerala. The settlement in Azhiyour *panchayat* is provided with independent houses with each house having 350 sq. feet area in 1.5 cents. But, in Onchiyam *panchayat*, the Tsunami relocation settlement is like an apartment house with 4-5 stairs and each family is given a flat in the apartment. The layout of the rooms in flats/independent houses is the same in both the relocation settlements. Although the government has given house and house site of 1.5-2 cents to each family (under Azhiyour *panchayat*) yet the occupants have not received the land documents. But in the case of apartment under Onchiyam *panchayat*, the occupants have no landed property and the land they use is the property of the government. Discrepancy is clearly

evident in these two cases where in they can not avail or claim any benefits from the governments without a proper land document. They are also not in a position to mortgage or sell the property at the time of economic exigencies. It is also known that 50 % of them are provided with APL ration card contrary to their income.

#### *Housing- pitfalls in infrastructure*

The government has provided a total number of 86 houses/flats in both the *panchayats* for marine fishermen families who lost their material assets, including house property, after Tsunami. For receiving this governmental aid, the victims of Tsunami (here the study participants) were selected based on the intensity of loss as revealed by the victims and previous recorded data on material possessions from governmental sources. In Azhiyour *panchayat* the houses in the relocation settlement are arranged in a linear pattern with few rows facing each other. All the houses are of Reinforced cement concrete (RCC) type, with two small bedrooms, one small visitor's room and a very small kitchen. These houses have attached toilet facility but not with a veranda. The small land size of 1.5 cents is insufficient for them to dispose waste water and frequently quarrels break out among the families regarding the disposal of waste water. The houses are constructed in such a way that the waste from one house reaches the front yard of other house, if it is not properly routed. Moreover, lack of land space is a major constrain in digging a separate pit for waste water disposal.

The size of each house can hardly support 2-4 members, as the space inside each room is very small (two bedrooms with a size of 100 and 80sq.feet, one central hall of 80 sq. feet, kitchen with 50 sq. feet, and a toilet cum bathroom with 50 sq. feet). In the relocation settlement at Azhiyour, 43 families stay. Out of these, 26 families are nuclear, 8 extended families, 5 broken nuclear and 4 are incomplete nuclear in existence (figure.1). The nuclear families are mostly inhabited by grown up male and female children. Most of the male children either live outside the house in a space additionally constructed by them as veranda or stay in their relative's houses where there are less number of family members. . The house owners are not satisfied with the quality of construction. This refrains them to build additional floors on upstairs. The ground space is also insufficient for adding additional rooms. It is very difficult for an extended family to occupy the house space because of more number of persons as inhabitants. Now economically better off families in the colony vacate the house for their close relatives who really deserve a house and shift to other places where they can afford.

#### *Drinking water*

Non availability of drinking water is the second major problem raised by the inhabitants. The Kerala Water Authority provided water supply to the settlement. There are 5 distribution points for all the 43 families in one settlement. The settlement is situated on a hilly area and all the distribution

points are fixed in the front entrance only. It is difficult for the families in the elevated area to take water from downstairs. In the case of apartments, the occupants have to carry water from down stairs and the task of fetching water becomes difficult for the older females. Non availability of drinking water is the serious problem which the inhabitants are facing now, especially during the summer seasons. They have to walk a few kilometres for getting their clothes washed and taking bath. Informants complained that they couldn't even send their children to schools as the female members are moving to various places in search of water. There is a well nearby, but it was constructed by the continuous effort of few families outside the colony area (with 50% private investment and 50% from *panchayat* and they did not allow the colony people to take water. Conflicts and quarrels are common among the occupants for water. There are two water tanks with 50, 0000 and 30,000 litre capacities made by the Block *panchayat* authority, but the water supply has not started yet. Since the colony is situated in a hilly terrain, there is also less scope for a bore well. If drinking water is not a problem in the settlement, their friendship with the neighbours would be a cordial one without emotional constraints.

A small single room is shared as toilet cum bathroom attached to the main house. The non-availability of water also affects the proper maintenance of toilets and the male persons go outside for nature's call. For females, it is really a problem during seasons of extreme water scarcity and most often it is kept unused. They have to go to their relative's houses (situated far away from the relocation settlement) for taking bath and washing the clothes. This has also affecting their attendance in daily wage works required for subsistence in the absence of income support from their male counterparts.

#### *Transport facilities*

Tsunami relocation settlements under study are situated in the hilly terrains and it is difficult for the inhabitants, especially the aged ones, to commute alone. The inhabitants have to either walk 1-2 kilometres or hire a vehicle to reach the settlement from the national highway. Public bus transport facility is not available here and students have to walk all these distances to reach school or other institutions. Most often people have to pay Rs.20-30 to reach the main road for taking public transport system. In fact this is an additional burden to the people especially during lean seasons where economy is insufficient to two ends meet.

The case of active fishermen is worth mentioning here. Since the relocation settlements are constructed in distant places from the coastal line, the fishermen have to walk all the way from the settlement to their place of work. Reaching the workplace on time is a real problem to them because of their distant habitation and non-availability of transport. In such a situation the fellow fishermen never wait for them as they may lose the catch. As the subsistence of the marine fishermen is fully centred around an unpredictable resource, this type of a habitation never support them with the traditional way

of subsistence. They have to leave the house early in the morning around 3AM for joining fishing operations with others. It is really difficult for them to reach there in time after walking a long distance. The task becomes extremely difficult especially during the rainy season. Absence of street lights and threats from snake and dog bites make their mobility restricted. These inconveniences are gradually compelling these fishermen to give up their traditional occupation of fishing.

#### *Waste disposal*

Disposal of solid waste is also a serious problem to the families in the relocation colonies. The closeness of the houses and shortage of land space prevents them from burning solid waste within the compound. As a result, the families have to carry the solid waste for few kilometres distance for disposal. To make the matter worse, the neighbouring families always suspect the colony people even though others have put waste in their premises. That also results in growing conflict between the inhabitants of the settlement and the outsiders. Since the settlement is situated in an elevated area, disposal of waste water from all the houses becomes a problem to the neighbourhood.

#### *Occupational status*

When we examined the occupational status of the inhabitants in two of the relocated settlements, it was found that out of the 83 males only 50 are engaged in economic activities, such as fishing and wage labour. There are less than 30 men continuing with traditional occupation of marine fishing and all of them are above the age of 45 years. This indicates that the fishermen community are trying to continue with their traditional activity even in these unfavourable circumstances. A section of them opined that they are not competent enough to do any other economic activity other than fishing. From childhood itself there were engaged helping elders in net making, processing works, and small scale marketing. In a focus group discussion seeking information on their attitude towards economic activities other than fishing, 80% of the fishermen showed their reluctance highlighting low confidence level. But in the relocation settlements, there are 26 men between the ages 20 and 45 engaged in activities other than fishing. They opined that it is difficult for them to continue with traditional occupation mainly because of accessibility problem to landing centre, non-availability of transport facilities during off hours along with unpredictable nature of marine resources. Discussions with the fishermen strongly expressed the opinion that relocation settlements never substantiate their emotional attachments to sea and traditional occupation of fishing.

Now it is seen that some of the fishermen in the relocation settlement are slowly withdrawing from fishing activities which will result in the decrease in number of active fishermen when compared to fishermen engaged in other wage labours. Diversification from the traditional economy led to the deviation from traditional cultural environment and relationship with fellow fishermen in the work place. But unmarried youngsters in the relocation settlements

engaged in fishing used to stay with their close relatives or friends near job centre in the coastal belt. Continuous stay away from the family compels them to settle in a new place convenient for their occupation and in this way they slowly get detached from their parental family.

Decreasing involvement of men in fishing activities forced their women folk to take up alternative earning strategies to keep two ends meet. Traditionally women from fishing communities were seldom sent outside the family premises to take up other occupations. They either help their men in offshore activities or engaged in fish vending. But now the situation has totally changed. Here, 25 out of 99 females are working either as domestic help or in low paid private sector jobs. They have started taking the economic responsibility of the family in the absence of a permanent income from their male counterparts. This has resulted in the authority of women in taking decisions at family level and their status is found increasing in matters of society where women participation is customarily inevitable.

*Cultural marginalization of the marine fishermen- Anthropological insights derived*

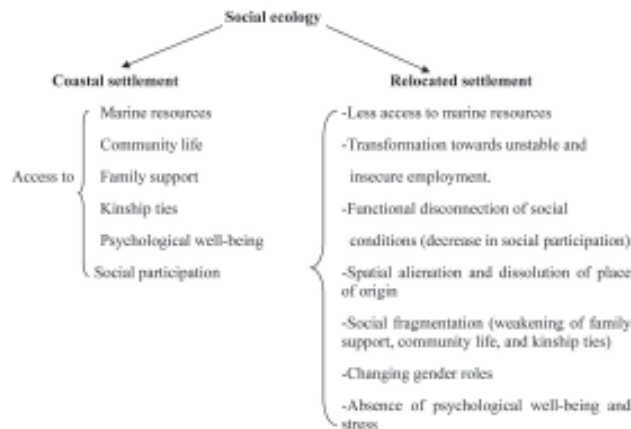
According to Matthias Bernt <sup>5</sup> the term “marginalization” has unfolded with multiple meanings. Consequentially, it has three fundamentally different meanings: (a) underdevelopment, lack of resources, distance, (b) relation, oppression, closure and (c) lack of cultural integration, lack of adaption to norms (i.e. “culture of poverty”, “urban underclass”) (2013). In the case of marine fishermen, the issue of relocation has created much socio-cultural, economic and psychological vulnerability. They were reluctant to leave their coastal habitats mainly because of the conviction that being close to the sea is their customary right and their entire culture revolves around that right. In Kerala, most of the Tsunami relocation settlements are situated in distant places from the coastal belt and this distance from the sea remains a serious distress for the marine fishermen. They argued that their stay is mandatory on the beach at all times and keep a watch on the behaviour of the sea, ready to launch their boats at any time, irrespective of day and night or climate for fishing operations. After mechanization, marine fishing became a complete group activity and co-operation and help of many hands is required in each step of this venture. If they compromise this role, naturally they would be alienated from this group which is beyond their imagination. More over beach is fishermen’s private (they are under the impression that fishermen are the custodian of sea and beaches) public space where they can perform offshore activities, such as net repairing, drying ,sorting, peeling, etc., as a group activity, thereby creating their own spatial imaginaries which have social relevance in fishing villages.

Threat of natural disaster is always there when the fishing communities are exposed to living in open beaches. At the same time their traditional subsistence activities are closely linked to their coastal habitation. Definitely there arises a problematic situation of subsistence vs. safety. For them



relocation really means a question of survival which have potentially wide-ranging consequences. According to them, coastal belt or beach is a social space where they spent their entire life since childhood with much adaptive exercise. The entire practice of belief system and social networks are centred on that space where they feel much comfortable. People engaged in traditional occupation of fishing are the most affected group. To them, this isolation from the main caste group may create cultural uncertainty and social insecurity in their life. The traditional social organization with sharing pattern of economy, social interactions emphasizing care and support, tradition bound religious practices, strong kinship ties in the face of an unpredictable ecosystem are the major concerns that have to be given due consideration in the case of fishing communities.

Vulnerabilities experienced by the fishermen in relocated settlements



Genealogical data shows that in the present generation, number of persons involved in fishing is very less when compared to the previous generations. Many of the non-active fishermen in the relocation settlements acquire low skills in activities other than fisheries. These men work in insecure job sectors as daily wage labourers in the settlement premises. The absence of an adequate, steady, and reliable source of income is a major reason of deprivation in the relocation settlements. Low educational status as well as limited access to mobility and transport, further reduces such people’s opportunities to find suitable employment other than fishing.

The victims of Tsunami include both fishermen labourers and owners of boat and gears who lost their entire assets. In post Tsunami period, most of the owners would have to work as labourers for economic survival. Along with that the relocation from their original habitat also led them to psychological trauma which still persists among them. The male members in the relocation colonies showed much anxiety when compared to their counterparts in coastal settlements. Parental stress is also affecting the children resulting low motivation in studies. After 15 years of age, boys are interested in pursuing

their traditional occupation instead of continuing with higher studies. About 30% of the boys in the relocated settlements expressed their unhappiness in depending on their helpless parents for money in pursuing their education and they return to beach for small scale marketing and other minor jobs in landing centres and markets.

Regarding the anxiety on survival of families (Table.1), 50% of the male members in relocation settlements showed their tension as compared to 30% the fishermen in coastal settlements. In relocation settlements fishermen are not getting adequate moral support from others, as all of them are experiencing the same problem of lack of support. But in coastal settlements they have chances of sharing their miseries with others whereby their tension gets minimised. The social comfort that they are getting from the coastal settlements they think is really beyond their explanation. Regarding age variations in source of anxiety, fishermen in the middle aged category are worried more about the survival of their families than the youngsters. Diminishing marine resources and decreasing price are not at all affecting them deeply as the educated among them aspire to get jobs other than fishing. For some of them, fishing is considered as a derogatory economic activity which they don't want to continue for long.

*Addiction to alcohol: fishermen's words*

Work related alcohol use is increasingly being recognized as a significant issue among the marine fishermen in the relocation colonies, especially near Mahe (a place under union territory of Pondicherry where liquor is exempted from sales tax and it is available for low price) where they have maximum access to liquor. It is observed that active fishermen are more likely to use alcohol than those who are not occupied. Reduced physical and mental health; socio-economic impacts on families, relatives and neighbours; low productivity of marine resources; and increased risk of injury are some of the important consequences reported in the study areas. Culture <sup>6</sup> and social context have significant influence on these practices.

In the words of few fishermen, "We do not have any aspiration towards colourful and materialistic life aspects because of the uncertain nature of economy. We are not even sure about the survival of family relationships in the light of this unpredictable occupation. Our decision making power in the family is getting lost and even children are not obeying us due to the reason that we are not in a position to substantiate family income". Fishermen continued ..... "For us fishing is the indispensable subsistence activity and educated youngsters do not want to continue with this occupation.....and not interested to tell others about their parent's occupation which they consider as derogatory" (excerpts from FGD). In fact the gap created between generations often creates tensions among the elders which they consider highly dangerous.

Fig.3 Factors leading to alcohol consumption



Regarding the questions on addiction to alcohol, some of the fishermen opined that they are forced to take alcoholic drinks only because of the internal stress. But their female counterparts said..... “our men are making false reasons to justify their habit of alcoholic drinking...during seasons of affluent catch they take drinks saying that they have to enjoy the occasion and during lean months without any income they justify their habit by saying that stress is the reason” (excerpts from FGD) . In the questionnaire distributed to women for collecting their opinion, 99% said that they are not at all happy with their men’s habit of alcoholic intake. They substantiate that this evil habit even marginalize their men from a group who are aspiring for a better future with the meagre income from the sea. The large number of liquor shops in and around coastal belt and the way of getting liquor by paying money on weekly basis support them to continue this habit despite of the economic conditions.

Work place is a distinct cultural space and environment within the larger space of fishermen community that can either support or discourage the habit of alcohol consumption. Marine fishing in the deep sea is recognized as hazardous and the fishermen in most of the families experience pressure as a result of continually adjusting operations to remain economically viable in a challenging climate along with indefinite resources and the use of alcohol may be a contributing factor in some work related injuries and accidents. Neighbouring<sup>7</sup> families of the relocation colonies are reluctant to mingle with the persons addicted to drinks which again lead to the isolation of those persons from social space.

Fishermen’s words..... “Isolation from the communal work space and uncertain resources exerts much emotional pressure on us. Relatives and friends are keeping distance as we are not in a position to help them whenever any help is required” (excerpts from FGD). Regarding the factors leading to drinking habits, stress is identified to be as the main reason. Reduced accessibility to marine resources, absence of skill in non-fishing activities, shortage of money for minimum requirements, non-contribution of money for

familial needs, and isolation from their communal social space is the main reasons revealed by 60% of the male persons as possible reason for their stress. For the remaining 40%, circumstances with low aspiration levels, low educational background and low motivation are identified as reasons. External pressures leading to alcohol consumption include liabilities, indebtedness, poverty and health problems. Circumstances are understood as the combination of all the negative aspects existing in family, work space and society. A person who is not in a position to support the family with his income is automatically debarred from the decision making process leading to depression and other psychological problems.

*In the case of relocated marine fishermen, space (geographic) and time play significant role in making them socially and culturally marginalized.* Spatially marginalized fishermen have been psychologically denied access to the resources (mainly marine resources but cultural, emotional factors also play significant roles) that enable them to acquire 'capabilities', especially capabilities for subsistence and survival. Most apparently such capabilities also extend to the wider spheres of health and social participation. When shifted to a distant place they are not getting chances to participate in their religious gatherings and there were instances when key positions in temples and welfare societies were replaced with others because of their non-involvement as full time participant. Another serious issue is related to marriage alliances. Those who are staying near the coastal areas and engaged in active marine fishing are not interested to make marital alliances with families staying in relocation settlements even if the later desires so. This has led to the increased number of inter-caste love marriages among people in relocated settlements. The slow isolation of people from social, economic, religious and cultural spheres from the parent society (still practicing traditional customs and practices) would result in a distraction in the socio-cultural realm of the community with far reaching implications. As Stonequist (1937) observes, some individuals exposed to two cultures are "on the margins of each, but a member of neither" (p. 3). Whether or not this is a transitory state is unclear. What appears clear, Stonequist claims, is that individuals experiencing marginal cultural status often experience inner turmoil and are vulnerable to stress.

An opinion survey among the inhabitants of the relocated settlement gave anthropologically relevant response. 90% of the inhabitants showed their interest in returning to their original abode (in the coastal area). They said that it is the best and comfortable space for them in spite of its all inadequacies. They also complained that had the authorities take their opinion before shifting to a relocated settlement far away from their work space and space of community they would have never agreed to accept this kind of an intervention. Some of the families were shifted with force leaving a space emotionally so important to them. Even after many years of relocation, the inhabitants are still in a traumatic situation imposed on them by the nature (in the form of Tsunami) and the Government.

## CONCLUSION

Anthropologists have long been taking interest in examining human sufferings from various sides and these areas of interest include studies on how suffering is personified and how experiences of suffering can have transformational consequences for individuals and groups. The findings of this paper show that contextual factors, such as family structure, technological changes, intervention by state government, market, and resource scarcity, have significantly influenced sustainable fishing practices. Tsunami relocation as a public policy requires urgent attention of the authorities. Why the beneficiaries are reluctant to stay away from their natal habitat should be examined cross culturally and measures are to be taken to implement development programmes without disturbing the cultural background of the beneficiaries. If the victims are given houses in a convenient location to continue their traditional economic activities they were eager to move into the new houses because that would give them the security of ownership of their house which they consider as a privilege. If appropriate land is not available, government has to take alternative measures by consulting with the beneficiaries for whom the policy is targeted. A report of the Asian Development Bank (2007) has made a very meaningful comment regarding the term 'inclusive growth', which focuses on ensuring the economic opportunities formed by development activities are available to all, especially to the marginalized sections of the society. Enhancing the growth of income per person is fundamental and important in advancing inclusive growth, as this is the basis for creating and expanding economic opportunities. This has to be mandatory in any case of intervention.

The basic solution suggested is a kind of 'interactive policy making' which ensures involvement of the target population/beneficiary during policy formulation or at the level of decision making along with the representatives of concerned State and other development agencies. This type of an involvement or participation in decision-making process makes sure the quality and effectiveness of policies with the support of traditional knowledge system, local practices and people's attitudes which are inevitable elements in the formulation of public policies, especially policies for the marginalized sections of the population. When local perspectives and demands are not given due attention and consideration in the development process, it cannot change people's attitudes for bringing sustainable development in any tangible forms

## NOTES

- 1 Culture is that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor.1871)
- 2 Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development: 2008
- 3 Active fishermen are fishermen who daily involves in marine fishing and related activities for their subsistence and survival.

- 4 Selection was based on the degree of vulnerability especially loss of houses and material possessions.
- 5 ([www.irs-net.de/download/wp-exclusion-marginalization-peripheralization.pdf](http://www.irs-net.de/download/wp-exclusion-marginalization-peripheralization.pdf))
- 6 As Roche et al (2009) points out, while alcohol has been identified as 'integral to the Australian way of life', there is a lack of understanding about this cultural context which makes drinking meaningful. Considering culture in the workplace context is also critical, and recently, workplace culture has emerged as a concept for understanding patterns and prevalence of work related drug and alcohol use, and developing successful interventions (Pidd et al 2006).
- 7 Regarding the neighbouring communities, most of them are non-fishermen people engaged in wage labourers and other occupations other than fishing.

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Table.1 Reasons of anxiety among the fishermen in coastal and relocated settlements

Variables	Reasons of anxiety among the fishermen			
	Relocation colony		Coastal settlements	
	Actual	Percentage	Actual	Percentage
Survival of family	50	50.0	30	30.0
Diminishing marine resources	10	10.0	30	30.0
Decreasing price for the catch	15	15.0	20	20.0
Climate change	5	5.0	10	10.0
Loss of control over resources	20	20.0	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0	100	100.0

Source: Author's field data

Fig. 1 *Type of families in the relocation settlements*

	Type of families	Number of families	Percentage
1	Nuclear	26	60.46
2	Extended	8	18.60
3	Broken nuclear	5	11.62
4	Incomplete nuclear	4	9.32
	Total	43	100.0

## **Genetic Variation and Population structure: A study on the Tipuris and Hrangkhawls of Tripura**

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**Abstract:** Genetic polymorphisms of ABO and RHD blood groups and Haptoglobin (HP) types have already been widely used to understand variation and population structure. The present study attempted to understand the variation and population structure of the two endogamous Tibeto-Burman speaking tribal populations, namely Tripuris and Hrangkhawls of the state of Tripura, using the polymorphic traits ABO, RHD and Haptoglobin (HP). We conducted the study on 46 participants from Tripuri populations and 58 participants from Hrangkhal populations. We used antigen-antiserum agglutination test to determine the ABO and RHD blood groups and Polyacrylamide Gel Electrophoresis (PAGE) technique for determining the HP types. Allele frequencies and  $F_{st}$  were estimated by using standard method. Examination on ABO blood group revealed that the allele frequency of O was higher in both the populations followed by that of A and B blood groups. A higher frequency of D allele in the RHD blood group system was observed for each of the population groups. On the other hand, serum protein marker- HP types demonstrated higher HP\*2 allele frequency than HP\*1 alleles. The estimated  $F_{st}$  value ( $<0.1$ ) of all the three polymorphic markers (ABO, RHD and HP) were suggestive for low differentiation between Tipuri and Hrangkhal groups, indicating less population admixture.

*Key words :* ABO, RHD, HP, Tripura, PIC, Heterozygosity,  $F_{st}$

### INTRODUCTION

Determining the genetic structure of natural populations forms an important part of population genetics. For example, this has applications in evolutionary biology, conservation and forensics. The estimation of  $F_{st}$  (Wright, 1965) is the most frequently used parameter to assess the population structure. Wright originally developed the F-statistics as inbreeding coefficients, defined as a correlation between uniting gametes. This was long before the advent of allozymes and other genetic markers (classical and molecular), and Wright therefore assumed loci to be biallelic. Later, when polymorphic markers were introduced as a convenient marker to assess the genetic diversity of a population, Wright's  $F_{st}$  was adopted for the use with multiallelic loci, redefined as a ratio of genetic variances (Cockerham 1973). This led to the development of several statistical frameworks to estimate  $F_{st}$  statistics from small samples to large number of populations (Weir and Cockerham 1984; Nei and Chesser 1983). It has been established that the value of  $F_{st}$  ranges between '0' and '1', where, '0' represents no differentiation, and '1' as fixation of different alleles within population.

India, occupying the centre-stage of Palaeolithic and Neolithic migrations, and somewhat has been under-represented in genome-wide studies of



variation (Cann, 2001). Being at the cross-roads of migration, Indian populations have undergone complex and ancient admixture events over a long period (Bamshad et al. 2001; Reich et al. 2009; Moorjani et al. 2013; Basu et al. 2016) and have been the melting-pot of disparate ancestries originating from different parts of Eurasia and South-East Asia (Basu et al. 2003, 2016). Although the date of entry of modern humans into India remains uncertain but it is reasonable to consider by the middle Paleolithic period (50,000–20,000 years before present [ybp]), humans appear to have spread to many parts of India (Misra, 1992). The contemporary ethnic India is a land of enormous genetic, cultural, and linguistic diversity (Karve, 1961; Majumder, 1998, Roychoudhury *et al.*, 2000). A more recent study exploring Indian genomic diversity demonstrated four major ancestral genetic components in mainland India that included four dominant ancestries in populations from mainland India: Ancestral North-Indian (ANI), Ancestral South-Indian (ASI), Ancestral Tibeto-Burman (ATB) and Ancestral Austro-Asiatic (AAA) (Basu et al. 2016). On the basis of the literature review on major and contributing publications regarding genetic structure of the North East Indian population, it has been found that studies on the tribal populations of Tripura seems to have been under represented.

In this context, to best of the knowledge, the present study is the first attempt to understand the variation and population structure of the two endogamous Tibeto-Burman speaking tribal populations, namely Tripuris and Hrangkhawls of the state of Tripura, using the polymorphic traits ABO, RHD and Haptoglobin (HP).

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

##### *Background of studied participants:*

Tripura, a hilly state in the North-Eastern region of India is the homeland 19 tribal populations. The tribal populations can be divided into two major groups as (i) Ab-original (Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Lusai, Uchai, Chaimal, Halam, Kukis, Garos, Mog and Chakma ) and (ii) Immigrants (Bhil, Munda, Orang, Santal, Lepcha, Khasia, Bhutias). The aboriginal tribal populations of this state have been migrated in this territory from a place in between Tibet, up hills of Burma, like Arakan Hills Tracts and Shan State and adjacent to China. The immigrant tribal populations mostly migrated from the their homeland located in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. Some of these tribes are, however, Northern-Frontier tribes who migrated from the states of Bhutan, Meghalaya, Sikkim and North Bengal. The Chakmas and the Mogs are the Arakan Tribes who entered Tripura through the Chittagang Hills Tracts.

Linguistically, the aboriginal tribal populations of the state of Tripura can be divided into three groups, such as Bodo Groups, Kuki-Chin Groups and Arakan Groups. The tribal populations, like Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Uchai and Noatias bear Mongoloid physical features and belong to the Bodo linguistic

group. The Kukis, Lusai and most of the tribes under Halam tribes linguistically belongs to the Kuki-Chin group and speak in Kuki-Chin language. The Mog and the Chakmas speak in Arakan language. While most of the tribal populations of Tripura follow Hinduism, the Lusai-Kukis embraced Christianity and the Chakmas and Mogs embraced Buddhism (<http://www.tritripura.in/tri/Tribes/Index.aspx>).

We carried out this study on two endogamous tribal groups, Tripuris and Hranghaws (a sub clan group of Halam). The area of the study was Kamalagar and Sipahijola districts of West Tripura (Fig 1). Ethnically, Halam belongs to the Kuki-Chin tribes. Their language is also similar to that of the languages under the Tibeto-Burman family. Halams are also known as Mila Kuki, though they are not at all Kukis in terms of language, culture and living style. Halams are divided into several sub-clans which is referred as “Barki-Halam”. The major sub-clans of Halams are (1) Kaloi, (2) Kor-Bong, (3) Keipeng, (4) Bong, (5) Saka Chep, (6) Thanga chep, (7) Dab, (8) Bongser (9) Rupini, (10) Hrangkhawl, (11) Chorai, (12) Langai, (13) Kaireng, (14) Ranglong, (15) Naveen and (16) Khulang. The Hrankhaws are one of the sub clans of Halam-Kuki community. On the other hand, Tripuris originated from the Indo-Mongoloid stock and linguistically affiliated to the Tibeto-Burman family. The Tripuris are the largest tribal community and the first group of aboriginal tribal migrants of Tripura.

We conducted this study on 46 participants of Tripuri group and 58 participants from Hrankhwal group of West Tripura. Prior to the study, verbal consent was taken from each of the participants. Blood samples were collected in EDTA vial and kept in ice buckets collected samples and transported to the Human Genetics Laboratory, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta for further analysis. ABO and RHD blood phenotypes were obtained by standard antigen-antiserum agglutination technique (Daniels, 2002). Polyacrylamide Gel Electrophoresis (PGE) (7%) technique was used to identify the Haptoglobin (HP) phenotypes using standard protocol with slight modification (Hasan *et al.*, 2012). The allele frequencies for all the polymorphic markers, such as ABO and RHD blood groups including HP were computed by Maximum Likelihood Estimation (Cavalli-Sforza and Bodmer, 1971). Weir and Cockerham’s  $F_{st}$  statistic (Weir and Cockerham, 1984) was calculated to estimate the genetic differentiation between Tripuris and Hrankhaws groups. The cut off was set as  $p=0.05$ .

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The distribution of phenotypes and allele frequencies of ABO blood group as presented in Table 1 demonstrated higher frequency of O alleles in both the Tripuris and Hrangkhaws followed by A and B alleles, which is in consistency with earlier studies from this region (Walter *et al.*, 1991; Meitei *et al.*, 2010). The present study further corroborates to the higher ABO\*A allele that has already been reported highest among the Tibeto-Burman speaking people

(more than 20%) (Bhasin et al., 2001) in comparison to other linguistic groups of north-east India. The estimated Hardy-Weinberg (HW) equilibrium revealed no deviation for ABO allele frequencies among the Tripuris and Hrangkhawls. Moreover, the two groups did not show any significant ( $\text{Chi}^2=3.72$ ; 3 df;  $p>0.05$ ) difference in the distribution of ABO blood group phenotypes. on the frequency of Rh blood group phenotypes (Table 2) revealed highest proportion of D alleles which corroborates with HW equilibrium for both the groups. Comparative distribution Rh blood phenotypes between the Tripuris and the Hrangkhawls revealed no significant ( $\text{Chi}^2=0.411$ ; 1 df;  $p>0.05$ ) differences. The estimated allele frequencies (Table 3) of serum protein marker (HP) revealed higher frequency of HP\*2 alleles and both groups showed deviation from HW equilibrium.

The estimated heterozygosity ( $H_e$ ), Polymorphism Information Content (PIC) and  $F_{st}$  values (Table 4) for three polymorphic genetic markers (ABO and RHD blood group and Haptoglobin groups) revealed highest heterozygosity and PIC in ABO marker followed by that of HP and RHD markers among the Tripuris and Hrangkhawls, and thereby in the total population. There are numerous indirect approaches to estimating gene flow using genetic data. One such method is towards the regress measures of genetic distance, such as  $F_{st}$  (Rousset, 2000). The present  $F_{st}$  was computed (Weir and Cockerham, 1984) under the assumption (Paetkau et al., 2004) that both the groups for almost all the genetic markers, follow HW equilibrium (described earlier). The result revealed, that the estimated  $F_{st}$  ( $F_{st}<0.05$ ) were found to be very low (Table 4) for all the genetic markers, indicating low differentiation (Hartle and Clark, 1997) between these two ethnic (aboriginal) groups of Tripura. The result of the present study corroborates with the earlier studies conducted on Tibeto Burman speakers of Tripura in terms of low differentiation (Ghosh *et al.*, 2011, Sengupta *et al.*, 2006) and high homogeneity on Haplogroups. The overall result obtained from the present attempt delineates higher possibility of endogamy in Tripuris and Hrangkhawls (Tibeto- Burman speakers) and thus indicating no admixtures between these two Tibeto Burman speaker groups.

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Table 1. *Distribution of ABO blood group phenotypes and allele frequencies among the Tripuri and Hrangkhwal populations*

Groups	Phenotype					Allele Frequency		
	N	A	B	O	AB	A	B	O
Tripuri	50	22 (44.00)	6 (12.00)	22 (44.00)	0	0.248	0.065	0.687
Hrangkhawl	68	25 (36.7)	15 (22.05)	26 (38.23)	2 (2.94)	0.225	0.135	0.640
Total	118	47 (39.83)	21 (17.79)	48 (40.67)	2 (1.69)	0.241	0.102	0.657

*Figures in the parenthesis denotes percentage*

Table 2. *Distribution of RHD blood group phenotypes and allele frequencies among the Tripuri and Hrangkhwal populations*

Groups	Phenotype			Allele Frequency	
	N	Rh D	Rh d	D	d
Tripuri	50	38 (76.00)	12 (24.00)	0.52	0.48
Hrangkhawl	68	55 (80.88)	13 (19.11)	0.56	0.44
Total	118	80 (67.79)	38 (32.20)	0.54	0.46

*Figures in the parenthesis denotes percentage*

Table 3. *Distribution of Haptoglobin (HP) group phenotypes and allele frequencies among the Tripuri and Hrangkhwal populations*

Groups	N	Phenotypes			Allele Frequency	
		Hp1-1	Hp2-1	Hp 2-2	HP*1	HP*2
Tripuri	50	2 (4.00)	30 (60.00)	18 (36.00)	0.34	0.66
Hrangkhawl	68	1 (1.47)	40 (58.82)	27 (39.70)	0.30	0.70
Total	118	3 (2.542)	70 (59.32)	45 (38.13)	0.32	0.68

*Figures in the parenthesis denotes percentage*

Table 4. *Heterozygosity, Polymorphic Information Content (PIC) and Fst values among the Tripuri and Hrangkhwal populations according to the polymorphic genetic markers*

Groups	Genetic Markers	PIC (Polymorphism Information Content)	Heterozygosity	Fst Values
Tripuri	ABO (multiple allele)	0.399	0.462	0.01
Hrangkhawl Average		0.463 0.439	0.521 0.499	
Tripuri	RHD (Bi-allelic)	0.375	0.499	0.002
Hrangkhawl Average		0.371 0.373	0.492 0.497	
Tripuri	HP (Bi-allelic)	0.346	0.449	0.01
Hrangkhawl Average		0.332 0.341	0.421 0.435	

## **Medical Pluralism and Health: The Challenges and Prospects of Universal Health Protection in India**

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**Abstract:** Buying health at individual level under the monopolizing allopathy medicine has been very difficult to a vast majority of Indian populations. In order to overcome the financial burden in securing health, universal health coverage programme, supported by public funding was envisaged by the Government of India. However, when it comes to the execution of the programme, it is proved to be very difficult owing to many conditions, such as financial constraints, planning deficit, inefficient management, inaccessible locations and cultural barriers to accept the modern health care system by the target groups. Traditionally many types of health providing systems were already in vogue as an inherent part of the local cultures having to their credit a number of success stories at affordable expenditure. The evolving trend in health seeking behavior of the people is to get the best of health at lower cost. This will definitely sway the health professionals and planners to look for an alternate medical system, which integrates the merits of diverse systems into a more comprehensive means under the platform of Universal Health Protection.

*Key words :* Universal health, Allopathy medicine, Traditional health practices, Integrated medicine.

### INTRODUCTION

The Government of India, in its eagerness to ensure an overall development of all the sections of the society, has embarked upon a number of welfare schemes and developmental projects. In this pursuit many programmes were introduced to provide employment, education, communication, housing and more specifically health.

In the year 1936, a Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune who is known for his crusade on public funding for health introduced the idea of Universal Health Protection to all. This was gradually embraced by the government of many countries, including India. Bethune pointed out that financial inability, ignorance, discrimination and lack of medical services are the causes of ill health. Committed to the Universal Health Coverage (UHC), India has set 2020 as its goal, and in case it fails to deliver UHC then it is basically because of the lack of political will rather than system inefficiency and fund allocation (Kollannur, 2013). However, when it comes to the execution of the programme, it faced many difficulties because of insufficient funding for public facilities, improper planning, inefficient management and more significantly geographical and cultural barriers in the way of target groups to accept modern health providing system. Furthermore, it is also found that public expenditure and the budgetary allocation on health accounts for 0.9 per cent of India's GDP (Kumar, 2005).

The rural India is diversified not only with regard to the availability of the basic infra-structure and health facilities, but are also physically inaccessible. In that sense the tribal populations mostly occupying more or less isolated places in deep forests, on hill tops, in islands and desserts are more under-privileged to get modern health facilities. Tarafdar (2008) in a study based on the tribal populations of Midnapur, West Bengal asserts that apart from administration of vaccination to children, majority of the tribal people do not visit the Primary Health Centre (PHC). One of the primary reasons in their reluctance to visit PHCs is the distance from the tribal villages. So, each of these groups living in diverse geographical regions have developed their own health seeking behavior which is more or less institutionalised and became a part of their culture. Thus, the socio-cultural resistance to the alien system of remedy for the health hazards has been well reported from every quarter of the country. "The dependence on and confidence in traditional medicine men or magicians and shamans are again often responsible for the non- acceptance of modern medicine" (Chaudhuri, 2012). At the same time the commitment of UHC programme to meet the requirement through the allopathy medicine is not having ready cultural acceptance though the system is more effective than the others (cf. Verma and Shah, 2014).

India has a vast ecological and geo-climatic diversity. Owing to this diversity the density of the population is high in the sub tropical and the tropical regions compared to the other. However, culturally these low density zones are also equally important in the interest of the nation and more so with reference to their ethnic and cultural identity (Boski *et al.*, 2004). Being a plural society, the diversity among the people of India is not only confined to language, religion, dress pattern, food habits, etc; but it is also reflective in their health seeking behaviour. Here the varied cultural diversity and faiths have developed specific attitude towards disease and health seeking behavior (Boban 1998) of different cultural groups.

Anthropology in general, through its sub fields of medical anthropology not only document and analyse ethnomedical practices of different cultural groups but also concentrate on the modern health care facilities and health delivery systems. As such, on one side it brings out the local knowledge on disease and health and on the other hand mediates in accessing the modern facilities by the traditional societies by dispelling the notions of both the health providers and the receivers. Nichter (2008) is of the view that anthropology intersects public health from different perspectives ranging from the study of popular health cultures and local perceptions which would help improve international or universal health programmes. The goal of anthropological work in universal health is to "reduce global health inequities and contribute to the development of sustainable and salutogenic socio-cultural, political, and economic system" (Janes and Corbett, 2009). In that sense Mishra (2013) asserts that medical anthropology (he actually used the phrase- critical



medical anthropology) argues for examining the local in relation to the national and global so that the units of analyses are interactions and interfaces at different levels.

#### *Aim of the Study*

The UHC is a bold step taken in the pursuit of providing free quality health care to all citizens, incorporating a number of proactive steps and innovative ideas. The study aims to analyse UHC programme in the backdrop of plural medical practices and traditional health seeking behavior that are in vogue citing examples from some of the tribal communities residing in South India.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of this study, the UHC programme as envisaged by the Planning Commission in the year 2011 and the National Health Policy 2017 (NHP-2017) were analysed for their content. The report of the High Level Expert Group (HLEG), appointed to assess the UHC programme is also considered to look into the suggestions made for its effective functioning. Apart from that, my fieldwork experiences among Chenchu (1996-2000) and Koya (2015) tribes of Andhra Pradesh, and Paliyar (2002) of Tamil Nadu provided meaningful anecdotes to substantiate the health seeking behaviour and the available local health care facilities.

During my course of field work, I gathered detailed information on the indigenous medical practices of these tribal communities using observation, recollection, group discussion, focused interviews and case study methods.

#### *Disease Perception*

Although disease is a condition of impediment in the biological system and/or the state of mind of the individual, yet its recognition and consequent treatment to overcome is culture based. So, the perception of those conditions felt in the body initially determines the kind of response in the form of remedial measures; and these responses are also culture specific. The literature on disease and health seeking behavior (Swain, 1994; Mahapatro and Kalla, 2000; Sharma, 2004; Sonowal and Praharaj, 2007; Singh, 2008) provide us information that every society has its unique cultural perception on disease and health. This unique understanding of disease generally influences how people cognize and reflect upon disease. This kind of ethno-medical knowledge is not only applicable to the folk societies, but also seen to a certain extent in the modern societies.

#### *Health Care System*

Like cultural pluralism, we also find the practice of medical pluralism across India. For example, there is a tendency of co-existence of the indigenous healing systems with the modern medicine in the heartland of Muria, whereby certain medical practices are appropriated from the tribal custom by the State (Scambler, 2002; Turner, 2004). In other sense, "government itself introduces

alternative medical systems to cater to different health requirements. In fact this has become a common feature in the post- modern society, both in India and abroad” (cf. Agarwal, 2014). A critical look at the different health care practices in India indicates that they are dominated by magico-religious beliefs (Hemant and Kapoor, 2007; Chowdhury, 1967) and to a certain extent include unrefined herbal formulae which were all an integral part of their cultural antiquity. Thus, we come across a number of health seeking practices and procedures that are based on indigenous concepts. All the more, some of the indigenous knowledge over the ages has evolved into a formal medical educational course, such as Ayurveda and Siddha. These streams along with Unani, Yoga and Homeopathy are treated as Indian medicines and collectively branded as ‘AYUSH’. There is specific governing council at the Union Government level and are accepted as alternative to biomedicine.

#### *Allopathy Medicine and Its Monopoly*

With the advent of the British colonial rule in India, the western medicine (Allopathy or Biomedicine) monopolized the health providing arena of the country. Due to its quick remedial power, the allopathy medicine got acceptance across the society in spite of initial resistance. Being a fast growing system with promising technological involvement it has created marvels in curative as well as preventive medicine. However, it also has some setbacks, such as high costs of treatment, diagnostic and therapeutic exigencies, spiraling investigation procedures and side effects. In the present day context it is even difficult for middle class families to pay medical bills for an ordinary ailment under allopathy system. The fate for the families falling in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category (which accounts for more than 60 per cent) is more critical. “These health expenditures are ‘catastrophic’ when it exceeds a certain pre-specified threshold of medical expenditure to household ability to pay” (Gupta and Joe, 2013). Claiming to be a scientific system of medicine it demands for a number of diagnostic tests to ascertain even minor ailments and start treatment which can be mismanaged by those with vested interest. All the allopathy drugs are usually products of chemical composition and most of these drugs have deleterious side effects, even if used following medical prescription (Brooks, 2002). Under these circumstances people look for alternative medicines that can offset these ill-effects and provide better treatment.

#### *Health Seeking Behaviour*

Irrespective of economic and education levels one’s own culture influence the decision making in life and nevertheless in procuring health. In this regard there is much diversity between urban, rural and tribal populations, especially owing to the availability of the kind of health delivery system. A number of studies show that the rural and tribal populations resort to the indigenous systems (which may be magico-religious) of health care practices and other ethno-medical forms at the initial stage of the health problem (Willoughby,

1928; Rahman, 1974; Thite, 1982; Winkelman, 1990; Sexton 1992; McClenon, 1997; Sosis, 2007; Quamar, 2016). Boruah (2012) while reporting the status of the village Yajang-A notes that people of this village depend mostly on two types of experts, depending on the nature of the disease. In case of evil spirit and snake bite they approach the magico-religious man. And for all other diseases, they first approach the herbal medicine man. In case the person fails, they look for biomedicine. However, the access to biomedicine is often regulated by terrain, financial position and perceptions. The urban populations look for alternative medical systems when they find that biomedicine has not given expected results. However, this divide is only an ideal one and cannot be very rigid. By this way we find that AYUSH has become an alternative system of medicine, but is thriving very well in co-existence with biomedicine. Furthermore, there are occasions that Health Department of Tamil Nadu recommended to administer '*Kabasura Kudineer*' (the concoction is a mixture of 15 herbs including *Nilavembu*, *Karpooravalli* and *Lavangam*) for the treatment of Swine Flu '(Correspondent, 2015)' This concoction was given as alternative medicine along with biomedicine and the results were encouraging.

#### *Medical Syncretism*

An emerging tendency of employing more than one system of medicine for treating disease is visible across cultures. This is done not only at the personal discretion of the patient and the family, but often with the consent of medical practitioner either of one side or of both the sides. In the process of controlling the outburst of certain epidemics the Government Health Department which is purely loaded with allopathy practitioners allow for administering homeopathy or ayurveda drugs and even certain local herbal formulae along with allopathy drugs. The doctors of biomedicine are of conviction that these alternatives are significant in saving the life of the patients when used along with biomedicine. In case of handling with dengue fever, the Government of Tamil Nadu decided to administer a herbal drink (made of papaya leaf + Nilavembu kudineer + Malaivembu) to all the patients visiting PHC or Government General Hospitals (including in-patients) with the complain of symptoms of dengue fever (Correspondent, 2012). It is surprising that the results are very encouraging and patients got recovered very quickly. Knowing the success story of alternative medicine, the opposition parties of Puducherry Assembly made a fervent demand for the introduction of similar treatment for dengue patients in Puducherry Government Hospitals. Not only that for a number of diseases, like piles, constipation, hypertension, filariasis and meningitis there are a number of individual testimonies that this kind of collective treatment by divergent streams worked well.

#### *Some anecdotes from field experience*

The health seeking behavior of the Chenchu tribe of Nallamalai forest of Andhra Pradesh involves a collection of practices. With the belief in supernatural cause

of disease, they resort to magico-religious treatment under the direction of a shaman. This perhaps gives a psychological strength to the patients. The shaman may also decide to apply tight bandage or massage or apply hot packs in order to stimulate muscles and nerves. Their traditional treatment also includes materia-medica that is extracted mostly from plant sources. All these practices are carried out under the supervision of local shaman. However, there is no bar in using the allopathy medicine if possible. All these treatment procedures work on different principles, but are still integrated together only with the intention of securing health. Most of the plant products used by Chenchu people for various diseases are exploited by visiting non tribal medicine men who run soaring business in two ways- (a) by offering herbal medicines to the patients and (b) by supplying medicinal herbs to pharmaceuticals that initiates a chain of business transactions. This commercial exploitation of medicinal herbs has threatened the very existence of those species. Realizing this problem, the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) of Paderu (in Andhra Pradesh) in collaboration with the forest department has developed a park for medicinal plants. The local tribal communities are employed to identify and grow medicinal herbs in these parks as a measure of preservation. This indicates that the validity of traditionally used herbal formulae is recognized by the administrative and scientific community.

On interacting with Koya respondents of Kalleru hamlet of Chinturu village of Andhra Pradesh, one of the participants of that community said 'we trust on our medicine man. He visits our house and treat the patient without charging anything. At the most we offer food to him'. They further said that there are hardly any facilities available in the primary health centre. Even if the doctor is available, the case is referred to referral hospital located at a distant place which is again plagued with many limitations. The treatment at the private hospital is expensive and not affordable.

The hamlet Kalleru is on the banks of the river Sileru in Andhra Pradesh. The village Motu is situated (in the borders of Odisha) on the opposite side of the bank. A big herbal pharmacy is in operation in that village. The owner of this pharmacy has learned the herbal treatment from the Koya community and being a little educated, he runs the pharmacy attracting patients even from the surrounding urban areas. The patients visit this herbal pharmacy with chronic problems, like paralysis, diabetes, nervous disease, infertility for which they do not find any remedy elsewhere.

A Koya man who is seeking allopathy treatment for an undisclosed ailment called for the services of the traditional medicine man who performed magical rites and administers herbal pills for consumption. The wife of the Koya man said, 'if not one, the other would work; he is the only bread winner for our family'. Two men were suffering from ankle wounds. They sought the help of traditional medicine man, who started invoking the spirits and sucked

the wounds with his mouth. He picked up a pinch of rice and place aside. If there are even number of grains in this pinch, then the remedy is very near. If there is odd number of grains, the healing would take more time and he repeated invoking the super-naturals.

The Paliyar tribe of Kaduguthadipudur village was dislocated from their forest habitat. Now, their economic pursuit revolves around the forest produce and labour. They collect non timber forest produce and firewood to sell in the nearby villages. But their appreciation for the forest resources, especially the medical herbs has not abated. The traditional dance they often perform at nights include a reflection of their experience with traditional healing practices. At the time of dancing, males and females cover and adorn themselves with foliage, branches and flowers of the forest. In their dance form they depict how a medicine man of the community searches for medicinal herbs in the forest to treat an ailing person and treats the patient; and how the cured rejoices after getting cured. It also depicts how a victim of snake bite, who is at the point of death was miraculously revived when certain herbs are administered. This shows that in the new habitat where their herbal medicines are not accessible, traditional practice entered into their culture as a symbol.

A few success stories of alternative medicine that does not involve much expenditure and side effects were recorded. A patient suffering from the problem of 'nail decay', caused due to fungal infection was prescribed heavy antibiotics without any assurance of healing. The prescribed drugs have deleterious effects on liver. The patient rather preferred homeopathy treatment and regained his nail within six months with a nominal cost. Similarly, another individual who was suffering from piles ailment was prescribed for surgical intervention, but got cured through Ayurveda and Homeopathy system of medicines. Another individual was suffering from meningitis. He was declared to be at a terminal stage by the doctors of a corporate hospital. However, homeopathic intervention saved his life.

#### *Frame of Universal Health Coverage*

Universal health Coverage (UHC), which was meant to provide health to all the citizens was an ambitious programme introduced by the Government of India. After the great deliberations, UHC in India has been defined by High Level Expert Group (HLEG) as "ensuring equitable access for all Indian citizens, residents in any part of the country, regardless of income level, social status, gender, caste or religion, to affordable, accountable, appropriate health service of assured quality (promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative) as well as public health services addressing the wider determinants of health delivered to individuals and populations, with the government being the guarantor and enabler although not necessarily the only provider, of health and related services" (cf. Reddy and Kumar, 2012).

For an effective implementation of UHC, the HLEG made some important recommendations- (1) a health entitlement card is to be issued to every citizen

to access National Health package of essential primary, secondary and tertiary care to both in-patient and out-patient; (2) the services included under UHC must be government funded and freely delivered; (3) user fee is to be abolished (Reddy and Kumar, 2012). It also decided that contributory social insurance is not appropriate for India because about 93 per cent of work force is in unorganised sector and the majority of them falls around the poverty line.

The four priorities suggested by HLEG include the following (cf. Reddy and Kumar, 2012 in reference to Planning Commission of India, 2011)

1. Increase in Government (Centre and State) spending on health. Accordingly the primary health care must be improved, by staffing with well-trained non-physician health care providers, both facility-based and outreach services can be provided without being doctor dependent. Strengthen District hospitals to provide high quality secondary care, some elements of essential tertiary care and trainings to different categories of health care providers.

2. Improve the size and quality of health workforce. Primary healthcare being the priority, resources must be devoted to the production of competent and committed community health workers for the frontline, mid- level health workers or AYUSH doctors for the sub-centres and general and specialist nurses as well as non-specialist doctors for PHCs. More specialists are needed for higher level of health care. Public health competencies must be increased through inter-disciplinary education which is aligned to health system needs.

3. Provide essential medicines and diagnostics free of cost at public facilities. At the same time, referral linkages and patient transport services should be improved to integrate primary, secondary and tertiary health care. Remote areas and vulnerable population groups should receive special attention while designing health services.

4. Put in place the necessary public systems for UHC. Strengthen regulatory system from hospital accreditation to health professional education and from drug licensing to mandatory adoption of standard management guidelines for diagnosis and treatment at each level of health care. Encourage community participation in designing, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of health programme. Large investments should be made in health promoting programmes in sectors such as water, sanitation, nutrition, environment, urban design and livelihood generation.

#### *National Health Policy 2017*

The primary goal of NHP-2017 is exactly the replica of UHC programme of 2011, but it has focused on the innovative steps that were of anthropological interests. This policy is committed for encouraging medical pluralism, in achieving UHC by incorporating the services of AYUSH and other traditional community level practices. Particularly, steps will be taken to conduct research and validation of tribal medicines. Mainstreaming of different health care systems and providing for cross referrals of different systems of medicines is a

significant development. There is also provision for appointing AYUSH practitioners not only in rural but also in urban health care centers. The government also intends to create digital platform for sharing information about the services offered by AYUSH and its practitioners to obtain their services. This also provides for mainstreaming AYUSH through mandatory bridge courses that gives them 15 competencies. Moreover, it also creates livelihood to local communities by engaging them in processing medicinal plants.

#### *Goals and Constraints*

The primary goal of UHC is to ensure quality health care facilities free of cost to all sections of the society irrespective of socio-economic conditions and geographical locations. In the words of Zachariah (2012), “the ambitious goal of UHC is to deliver and assure ‘essential health package’ to all citizens of our far-flung and populous nation. But our starting point is near the bottom among nations - 112th in the quality of health care and 145th in per capita health expenditure”. In spite of the lofty goals, the UHC is plagued with so many constraints that function as barriers in the process of execution of the said programme.

The crucial problem is adequate funding from the state to meet the requirements. India’s public spending on health according to Dr. K. Srinath Reddy and Dr. A. K. Shivakumar, members of HLEG is just around 1.2 per cent of GDP- is among the lowest in the world (Reddy and Kumar 2012). This condition has automatically increased the health services in the private sector, especially the corporate health. The escalating out-of-pocket health expenditure under the private sector has magnified health inequalities. While the Government sponsored programmes, like National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), *Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)*, *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)* schemes have provided a partial response, and out-of-pocket expenditure still remain unimaginably high. Availability of modern infrastructures to cater health services in rural and remote areas is very bleak. The posting of allopathy doctors in such areas and the proposal of compulsory rural service for MBBS graduates for some stipulated period were faced with much resistance.

Cultural barrier is another hurdle on the way of getting UHC materialized. The perception of the disease, the choice of line of treatment and the punctuality in following the treatment protocol are decisively cultural construct (WHO 2014). People often ignore the signals of disease found in their body as there is no significance for such symptoms in their culture until it has produced debilitating effect. Often they do not resort to timely remedial measures, even if done they may not really meet the requirements.

It has been created that, only through allopathy medicine disease can be cured and health be restored. Thus, allopathy medicine plays almost a total monopoly in marketing health. The other medical systems are rather looked down and are rejected on the grounds that they are not scientific. With this

kind of medical ethnocentrism, the alternative medicines are discredited and discouraged despite of their cost effectiveness. At the same time the public funded free medical units are ill equipped, unmanned and irresponsible, thus encouraging the commercial health providers through private sector. Under these circumstances the health seekers, mostly the poor, are left to the fate as they could neither decide the course of action nor meet the heavy costs. Under these conditions of gloom and helplessness, UHC creates a great hope.

#### *Reverse Pharmacology*

In mitigating health needs, the indigenous societies not only rely on magico-religious practices, but also use bio-products formulated from the nature. These products are used for treating disease, and when subjected to scientific screening proved to be effective and were later on commercialized by the pharmaceuticals. According to Harvey (2002), the natural products and ethno-pharmacology were the valuable sources of drugs. In 1985, William Withering (1741-1799) proved the medicinal value of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) (Shailes, 2015) from which digoxin was formulated to treat heart problems in allopathy medicine. Similarly, isolation of anti-malarial drug quinine from the bark of Cinchona tree, anti-hypertension agent from *Rauwolfia serpentine*, anti-asthma agent from *Ephedra sinica*, the muscle relaxant derived from *Chondrodendron* and *Curarea* species are now in the drug list of allopathy medicine; these were once used by the indigenous populations

#### *Integrated Medicine*

The phrase, 'integrated medicine' has been a buzz word in the health delivery parlance indiscriminately used by both professionals as well as non-professionals who are seriously bothered about it. The common sense feeling about integrated medicine is the availability of all the required facilities or state of the art facilities that are the latest. Here, the focus is to provide the patients the best of the medical services drawn from diverse systems so that the patient get rid of the problem with least financial burden, minimal fear psychosis due to the procedures and no side effects. Traditional Medicine and Health Care Coverage, unit of 'WHO (Reprints 1988)' defines integrated medicine as "merger of modern and traditional system in medical education and practice under an umbrella". This view proposes the idea of a merger of biomedicine and the other traditional systems based on the merit of success of their procedures. A similar sentiment is expressed by the 'Indian Foundation for Development of Integrated Medicine (1993)' when it says integrated medicine is "attributed to promote the best of all systems of treatment and healing together under an umbrella for best medical, health and family care and cure" (cf. World Association of Integrated Medicine, 2016).

If this ideology has to be materialized, the allopathy system should be able to overcome its bias towards other systems when there is proven merit. However, at the same time the traditional medical systems should be in a position to produce goods to meet the standard requirements and stand the



test of scientific screening. In this endeavour, much change has to be brought into the curricular aspects of medical education by integrating medical knowledge taken from diverse streams. In my perspective integrated medicine should start with a soft and dignified attitude by the dominating allopathy fraternity towards other systems of medicines instead of rejecting them outright in the name of scientific validity.

The medical students who are trained in various streams of medicine should have a preliminary knowledge of all the other streams of medicine so that their apathy towards other medical systems can be minimized. As there are limitations to every other system of medicine so also is to biomedicine. In true sense, biomedicine also fails to cure or prevent some kind of diseases or when a disease reaches advance stage. The time tested experience shows that the so called non-scientific medicines have a bright track record in handling such disease very effectively and eradicate them completely with very simple drugs and the expenditure towards it is very reasonable. The integrated medicine should encourage a medical practitioner to suitably advice and refer the patients to consult a particular stream of practitioner where the curative procedures are simplified and affordable. This could best work with government hospitals and corporate hospitals where there is space for appointing a variety of specialists of allopathic medical system under the same roof. This effort would definitely prove to be patient/disease centric so that the best remedy could be reached before the patient run out of money, loses courage, confidence and the vitality in the body. The long standing lofty thinking of bringing curricular modification in medical education and scientific screening of each procedure of different systems, the functional nature of the drugs in vogue and the undesired effects of these drugs can be positively worked out at a later stage.

#### DISCUSSION

Considering the social, cultural, economic, geo-climatic and educational aspects of country, the UHC is a step forward in the direction of ensuring equal access to good health care to all the citizens of country at the cost of the public exchequer without any conditions. Although the full realisation of UHC depends upon overcoming the financial and cultural constrains, yet the idea of UHC is promising. The main target of this programme is that no one should be deprived of the best health care service simply because he/she is unable to pay for it. This indicates that the entire medical expenditure is subsidized cent percent. The HLEG in its study found that the entire UHC programme is suffering fund crunch. But perhaps, this is not the only problem.

As of now the UHC in India is highly monopolized by allopathy medicine. In spite of its successful performance in curative and preventive medicine, and the marvels it has done with organ transplantation, stem cell research, cloning and many other surgical fetes, it still faces limitation. This perhaps leaves scope for alternative medicines to come for the rescue. Here, we see

medical syncretism is in operation. Thus a kind of new health providing approach is being evolved, cutting across cultures, giving importance to both tradition and modernity in addressing health and disease.

The suggestions made by HLEG have addressed the above mentioned issues to some extent giving utmost importance to primary health. The HLEG has recommended for manning these health centres with doctors from AYUSH. It has also pointed out that health professional education need to be regulated and made inter-disciplinary. It also suggested community participation should be elicited to actively engage people in designing, delivering and evaluation of health programmes. Thus, UHC cannot be confined to mere biomedicine doctrine in providing good health. Rather it allows for greater flexibility in fixing the line of treatment culminating into integrated medicine, of course subjected to proven success and cost effectiveness. In the long run, this ideal would facilitate for undertaking rigorous scientific research not only in AYUSH, but also in the fields of ethnomedical practices to identify and harness the best of it for human welfare, a strong advocacy of Anthropology. But the true colours of UHC can be visible only when HLEG guidelines unfold fully in this evolving UHC in this multicultural land when implemented.

#### CONCLUSION

While framing the Universal Health Coverage programme, the health planners and the health professionals have realized that the monopoly of allopathy medicine is not an absolute solution to meet the health requirements of the country. It is not only the traditional medical systems like AYUSH but also the practice of indigenous medical care be given importance in framing the National Health Policy according to UHC. As the government is committed to promote medical pluralism in the best interest of every citizen of the country, liberal spending on conducting research in diverse streams of medicine would definitely help them overcome the stigma they suffer. The UHC programme with its ultimate goal to achieve free health for all sections of society is resolved to take the best of all medical systems including ethnomedicine.

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## **Gendered Monastic Spaces: A Study of Annies in Sikkim**

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**Abstract:** Buddhism is often promulgated as an egalitarian and gender-neutral religion. It is generally believed that Buddhist culture and practices do not relegate women to a religiously inferior status relative to men. However, what is found in everyday contemporary practice is that Buddhism, much in line with other world religions, such as Hinduism or Catholicism, has strong patriarchal connotations. Dialogues especially concerning the issue of gender across the globe encourage critical reflection on the unequal gender hierarchies within Buddhist tradition and societies. These in particular highlight how certain Buddhist precepts tend to place the *annies/nuns* in a position of inferiority. A review of literature on *annies* of Sikkim and Bhutan reveals that very little has been written on their role and position in monastic culture. In this regard, this paper presents a novel material on how Vajrayana Buddhism from a more gender egalitarian position has developed patriarchal views on women in the Himalayan region. Concretely, it investigates the religious narratives of gender role and the impact of Buddhist religious ideas on gender roles as practiced in the monastic hierarchy. The study further elaborates on the impact of gender based spatial sharing on the daily life of the *annies*.

*Key words* : Tibetan Buddhism, *Annie*, gender, monastic hierarchy, Sikkim

### INTRODUCTION

The functioning of the *sangha* or monastic organisation marks the social basis of the historical continuation of the Buddhist practices and values '(Reynolds and Hallisey, 1989: 4)'. Monks and nuns/*annies* are the core inhabitants of the monastic communities. The phrase *chatudissa bhikkusangha* as found in ancient Buddhist inscriptions or texts symbolizes "community's common spirit and common ownership of property" (Wijayaratna, 1990:1-2). However, although Buddhism is often envisioned as a gender egalitarian religion, the canon of Buddhism sends a mixed message (Heirman, 2011: 603-631). Gender relations have come to take on different meanings as Buddhism adjusted itself into the different societies in which it took hold. In tantric Buddhism<sup>1</sup> we specifically find how it philosophically took on more gender-neutral connotations (Josh 1967), although later stories explain women's religious degradation (Shaw 1994). In practice, however, tantric Buddhism has turned patriarchal where women take on a subdued religious role. Although this is well researched in the context of Tibet (Tucci 1970, Shambhala 2002), little is written on Buddhism and gender relations in the Himalayan states of present day India which are highly influenced by tantric Buddhism.

A review of literature on Himalayan *annies* of Sikkim and Bhutan reveals that there is a vacuum of research on the role of *annies* in the monastic culture and their position in the monastic hierarchy. Thereby, in this paper, an attempt

has been made to address how traditionalization of Buddhism with a focus on certain textual prescriptions affects gender stigmatization within the monastic world in the Himalayan region of Sikkim. A concrete focus is on how religious narratives construct, promote and institutionalize particular roles for women in their spiritual lives.

The analysis was conducted on the basis of 50 qualitative semi-structured interviews along with participant observation carried out in Sikkim during the years 2013 and 2014 at the Chorten monastery and Rumtek monastery. Twenty five respondents were randomly selected from each monastery. Chorten monastery is heterogeneous in composition in terms of gender where both monks and *annies* are contesting for space and is also referred to as a Bhutanese monastery because it has monks, *annies* and devotees from Bhutan. Rumtek monastery on the other hand is homogenous in nature in the sense that it is an all-*annie* monastery, consisting of *annies* from different parts of the Eastern Himalayas. Both of these monasteries are located in East Sikkim. In this regard, the present paper highlights on the difference owing to the composition of monastery inhabitants in relation to gender and address how processes of certain traditionalization of Buddhism affects gender stigmatization in practice within the monastic spaces in the Himalayan region of Sikkim. A narrative approach is used for inquiry because it provides an effective way to undertake a systematic study of personal experiences of the respondents. This approach helped to link events, viewpoints and experiences of respondents in order to adequately fill the spaces in the research.

#### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BUDDHISM IN CONSTRUCTING GENDER RELATIONS:

Religion has always influenced the identity and position of women in a society. Women in turn play a crucial role as an agent of socialization which also includes the generational transmission of religious beliefs, values and symbols. Buddhism as a religion<sup>2</sup> seems to have given enough scope since its beginning to women with regard to equality and respect, than ever accorded to them (Heirman, 2011: 609). However, before looking at the Buddhist literary sources and attitudes expressed toward women, one need to briefly consider the social context within which Buddhism arose and developed. Society at the time of Gautama Buddha was marked by the prevalence of oppressive caste system and patriarchy. Gunapala Dharmasiri (1997:138-172, 150) describes the culture at the time of the Buddha as one “where the woman was by definition inferior to man and where woman was strictly stated to be the obedient servant and devotee of the husband”. In the meantime rapid change in the eastern Gangetic valley in terms of urbanization and the emergence of a new sense of self- consciousness and individuality, especially among individuals who were marginalised, resulted in widespread acceptance of Buddhism in society, because Buddhism professed equality (Josh, 1967: 368). Although women’s activities were confined principally to the domestic sphere, their religious

position began to improve. Buddhism provided a new opening for women to take on a religious role, as the Buddha gave *dhamma* (teachings of Buddha and path to enlightenment) to both man and woman, which is reflected in the canonical literature, such as the *Jataka* books and *Milindapanho*. Moreover, he opened the religious spaces to female practitioners, although the question of whether he accorded them an egalitarian status remains contested (Sponberg 1992, Heirman 2011). According to Schopen (1997:72-85), all members of the monastic community, including monks, nuns and probationers, are frequently represented in early Buddhist texts without any anti-female connotation. However, from the fifth century onwards, nuns are less represented. According to the account of a Chinese monk namely Yijing, the monastic community at Nalanda does not contain any misogynistic view, but he did refer to the depleting economic condition of the nunneries because there was no enough donation to run them.

Nevertheless, Mahayana literature displays a gradual evolution of a positive concept of women in terms of their wisdom and practice. Most significantly, it advocated the idea of a *Bodhisattva* figure that embodies the highest state of wisdom and compassion in which all sexual and social discrimination ceases to exist<sup>3</sup>. In this early Buddhist philosophy women's chance of achieving spiritual emancipation is equal to that of the men. However, this positive and egalitarian image of women changed in the later Buddhist history. In the later Buddhist texts they are portrayed as jealous, ignorant, passionate and deceitful (Paul 1981), Buddhism inherited a view of women whereby if they are not represented as mothers then they are portrayed as either lustful temptresses or as evil incarnate. Even Mahayana literature, although propounding an egalitarian view, does not unanimously uphold the equal status of women and they are often relegated to a secondary status. To be consistent with the Mahayanist egalitarian view toward all sentient beings, the motif of sex transformation was introduced into these *sutras*. If a woman's virtue, merit and wisdom are extraordinary, she may through a sex change become a *Bodhisattva* or a Buddha in her present or future life. Transformation of gender symbolizes a transition from the imperfect condition of a human being represented by the female body to the mental perfection of a *Bodhisattva* and Buddha represented by the male body.

Account on the alms women (nuns) is found in the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the *Suttapitaka*<sup>4</sup>. Even in earlier Buddhist texts like *Larger Sukhavativyuha-sutra*<sup>5</sup> and *Smaller Sukhavativyuha*<sup>6</sup> one can find an anti-women attitude which ranks female practitioners lower than male practitioners, an attribute it shares with other institutionalised religions. Buddha specified that all nuns be subject to the authority of monks by the "eight heavy precepts" (*lciba'ichosbrgyad, garudharma*). The first and most important of these eight rules dictates that a nun who has been ordained a hundred years must bow down to a monk ordained for only a day (Heirman, 2011: 606).

Although there is an availability of literature which highlights the role of women and gender in Buddhist societies, they have not explored in depth the extraordinarily rich source of material available and the questions they raise. Many scholars have sought a narrow scope in analysing women's social and symbolic roles in Mahayana Buddhism (Gross 1993, Barnes 1994, Kajiyama 1982). However, studies have also emphasized on significant social shifts in the status of women in different Buddhist traditions; like the question of women's attainment of Buddhahood, the shifting roles of women in contemporary Buddhist societies, including recent initiatives such as the move to reinstate full ordination for nuns. Historically speaking, Buddhist studies over a period of time have tended to focus more on men than on their women counterparts, which has created a lopsided andro-centric view of Buddhism (Wing, 2011: 5-31). The primacy of text over other sources of knowledge has further accentuated the marginalization of role of women in Buddhism. Rather than rejecting religion for its inherent patriarchal notions, a feminist dialogue between members of Buddhist communities across the globe puts forward a new agenda pointing at the need to reinterpret the religious texts and systems in a way that is both coherent and consistent with traditional values and teachings<sup>7</sup> as well as with feminist notions of gender equality by questioning the inherent patriarchal textual implications and practices (Collet, 2009: 91-117).

#### POSITION OF WOMEN IN VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM

Vajrayana Buddhism was established in Tibet in the 8th century when *Sāntaraksita* (Great Buddhist Master of the Mahayana school, abbot of the Buddhist University of Nalanda) was introduced to Tibet from India at the request of the Dharma King Trisong Detsen, sometime before 767. He established the basis of what later came to be known as the Nyingma School<sup>8</sup>. As a Tantric master Padmasambhava's contribution can be credited with making Vajrayana a part of Tibetan Buddhism and from there it entered into Sikkim and Bhutan. In its origin, Tantric Buddhism presents a gender egalitarian vision of women, because it theoretically resolves the distinction between the male and female, and ascribes to women an equal opportunity for receiving enlightenment as men. Padmasambhava advised Yeshe Tsogyal (popularly known as the Mother of Tibetan Buddhism) that far from being a hindrance to enlightenment, as was generally accepted, a woman's body is an asset: "The basis for realizing enlightenment is a human body." In original Vajrayana philosophy, the female is symbolic of wisdom, while the male is symbolic of compassion, somewhat opposite of the way the sexes are viewed in the West. Women are considered to be superior practitioners than men as they are said to have a greater capacity for wisdom. The union of the male and female principles, compassion and wisdom, is known as *bodhicitta* (Wilson 1992, Allione 2000).



According to June Campbell, prior to Buddhism in these two countries i.e. Bhutan and former Sikkim, the bon religion existed which had a strong matriarchal component (Campbell 2002). It is also widely argued, that pre-Buddhist society in Sikkim and Bhutan held important matriarchal elements, female goddesses and deities were central objects of animistic practise, as testified by archaeological excavations (Bothe and Sachdeva 2013: 295). As Buddhism was introduced into Tibet, it amalgamated existing local animistic practices, gods and goddesses with itself. The feminine elements of the existing religion may have therefore fitted well with tantric philosophy that dissolved the binaries between the male and the female. In Tantric Buddhism there are several examples of feminine embodiment, e.g. Tara is worshiped as an example of a female Buddha. Additionally there are female messenger of wisdom called a *dakini*. The Tibetan word for *dakini* is *khandro* which indicates that these are ethereal bodies and are called “sky-goers” (that which can travel through empty space). The *dakinis* are the most important elements of the enlightened feminine in Vajrayana. Additionally, they are a female embodiment of enlightened energy and part of a tantric practice called the ‘Three Roots’<sup>9</sup>. Women thus play a vital role in the practices of Vajrayana Buddhism and are essential to the attainment of the ultimate goal of enlightenment which places them at par with men. Here the importance of women begins to unfold. It implies that women should be treated justly because they are the essence of the goddesses and female Buddhas that preceded them. By disrespecting a woman, one is disrespecting the goddess or Buddha that she embodies. This is a rather strong statement because disrespecting a Buddha is offensive. The treatment of women became even more important to the male practitioner when the consequences of disrespect were laid out. These consequences may seem very severe, but it only goes to show how important it was that women be respected in Tantric Buddhism. Later on, however, Vajrayana Buddhism slowly evolved into a patriarchal religion.

The move towards patriarchy within Vajrayana Buddhism remains under-researched. We suggest it may well be associated with the state building efforts of Songsten Gampo, who unified Tibet and institutionalized Buddhism as a state religion in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. A theory suggests that in order to suppress the female aspects of religion and society, the female demonesses had to be subdued by the male Buddhist practitioners, this in turn led to an injection of patriarchal elements into Buddhism. Most famously, Songsten Gampo<sup>10</sup> had to nail down a demoness, *Srinmo* with temples for Buddhism to take hold in Tibet, and with it began a patriarchal approach to religion. If this theory holds true, Buddhism, however, only managed to suppress the feminine aspects of the “big religion” (organised religion) whereas such practices continue to survive in the “small religion” (non-organised religion), at least in the periphery of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim (Crins 2004:588, Balikci 2008:145, Bothe and Sachdeva 2013: 295).

The proceeding section uncovers how Tantric Buddhism, despite having gynocentric root bears andro-centric flowers (Gutschow 2004), by looking into the Buddhist philosophy and practice in two monasteries in Sikkim. It, however, lies outside the scope of this paper to reflect upon the detailed differences between these monasteries. Further, it is also beyond the scope of this paper to provide a description of the different versions within Buddhism in general and Vajrayana Buddhism in particular.

#### GENDERING MONASTICISM: HIERARCHY AND SPACE

Although in a socio-religious context, Buddhist women have enjoyed more prestige and freedom in the Tibetan periphery of Bhutan and Sikkim than in either China or other parts of India, and probably also even more so than in Tibet itself (Crins 2004: 587, Bothe and Sachdeva 2013: 298), gender hierarchy being followed in the Buddhist monastic life can no longer escape from the eyes of a sensitive observer. This could be a result of the impact of the larger socio-political and cultural context or emphasis on selective women centric precepts of Buddhism. In this section, on the basis of a comparative analysis of narratives gathered from *annies* and monks from the two monasteries of Chorten and Rumtek in Sikkim, an attempt has been made to illuminate how contemporary Nyingmapa Buddhism seems more influenced by misogynist traditions than by the original wisdom of tantric masters, in particular GuroPad Rinpoche<sup>11</sup>.

During the fieldwork, it has been observed that the *annies* prefer to define their religious identity on the basis of a comparison between themselves (as religious practitioners) and the ordinary women. They narrated how they are in better control of their mind after joining the monastic life. A Bhutanese *annie* found herself better placed in the monastic system than as an ordinary woman. According to her,

Firstly, the basic difference is based on our ability to control mind, *annies* have a better ability to control than ordinary women. Secondly, *annies* are away from five bad behavioural aspects (desire, anger, ego, jealousy and ignorance) whereas ordinary women are inclined towards it. Thirdly, Lord Buddha himself has said that, those who wear his sacred dresses and follow codes and conducts are considered superior than ordinary being. (Annie Loday Wangmo, age 33, interviewed on January 2014, Chorten monastery).

However, it is observed that being an *annie* is an achieved status and being a woman is indeed an obstacle in their path of religious enlightenment as reflected in the following narrative:

I feel being a woman is a sin. We are like a dustbin. Buddha has called us that. He wanted to warn his disciples to beware of women; that is why he called us a dustbin. I am a woman and I have to obey to his teachings.  
(Annie Tshewang Dema, age 25, Chorten monastery)

Another *annie* contested the 'dust bin' story, and said it is a misconception of Buddhism, and she tried to explain the unexplored meaning and interpretation behind it in these few words:

This is always interpreted in a wrong way and no one has tried to clarify it. In fact, the Buddha was trying to scold monks indirectly who were mostly attracted towards women. There were no nuns during that period so in order to divert the mind-set of men from worldly desire towards the spiritual world; he had said “Why you get attracted to such body, whose beauty is associated with dressing”?.

(Annie Loday Wangmo, age 33, interviewed on January 2014, Chorten monastery).

Thus, although the rules prescribed in the *vinayas* (guidelines for monastic conduct) may remain the same, the perspective of a woman practitioner may vary as per her experience, time and context. Further elaborating her ‘dustbin story’, Annie Loday Wangmo shared another narrative to illuminate how women are viewed as religiously inferior. In this narrative a sixty year old lady seduces a young yet senior monk (*galong*) in the monastery. According to their codes, the *galongs* are not supposed to have physical relation and thus his purity was at stake. The moral of the story is that women were regarded as inferior because they have more sexual desires. Such stories were more frequent in the Chorten monastery. In contrast, such degrading narrative on women’s inferior position was not encountered in the Rumtek monastery. In the words of an *annie* at the Rumtek monastery,

All the women cannot become an *annie*, only when you get a call from God you can become an *annie*, it needs lots of dedication.

(Annie Chultrim Pema, age 42, Rumtek monastery).

According to Annie Nima (Age 52, Rumtek monastery):

It is not necessary to be a man to achieve spiritual enlightenment, you can be a man or a woman, it does not matter.... what is needed is focus and determination.

Similarly, in the words of Annie Tenzing Loday (Age 34, Rumtek monastery):

There are many things which we hear in the name of religion, but here in our monastery we are allowed to grow on our spiritual path. We also hear in some monasteries where there are monks many rules are being followed.

Thus, even though the core teachings of Buddha dharma do not express gender hierarchy at least as conveyed in the *Mahayana* and *Hinayana* (Gross, 1987: 101); the above mentioned excerpts from the narratives from Chorten and Rumtek monasteries indicate a ‘gendered way’ of seeing social reality. There is an implicitly overarching patriarchal value guiding the voice of the *annies* from Chorten monastery. Although they may have a certain sense of superiority in comparison to the ordinary women folk, still being a woman is somewhat a hindrance for them in the path to spirituality. On the other hand, narratives from Rumtek monastery somewhat reveals a more transcendental way of seeing self and other i.e. in a non-dualistic manner. However, it has been observed that unlike their all *annie* monastery one is also aware of the rigid rules being followed in a monastery shared with monks. In this regard, it would be rather interesting to note how the *annies* from Rumtek monastery may actually conduct themselves in the presence of monks. Still, it is observed that the *annies* in Rumtek monastery appeared more free and vocal with a

sense of respect for themselves. In this regard, sharing or not sharing space with monks within the monastery and in terms of its functions seems to be a determining factor.

#### MONASTIC RANK HIERARCHY

The present section further explores the relationship between Buddhist text and contemporary gender narratives and practices in the two monasteries.

It has been derived from the narratives that in the monastic system, ranks are determined by knowledge and the way it is followed. Classification of positions is sketched in the *Sutrayana* (path of teaching and learning derived from scriptures) where monks and nuns are ranked accordingly. The first stage is known as *Gatshel* for men and *Gatshelma*<sup>12</sup> for women and both should strictly follow ten vows. If they are able to follow ten vows then they are eligible to advance to the next position, called *Galong* for men and *Galongma* for women. To be a *Galong* men need to follow two hundred and fifty (250) vows and for getting initiated to a position of a *Galongma* there are three hundred and sixty four (364) vows to be followed by women. Inquiring why for getting ordained to a rank of *Galongma*, women need to go through 114 more vows or steps, it has been appraised that because of their low status owing to the nature of their menstrual cycle, women need to work, endeavour and persevere more than men. According to the Khempe (position of authority) Dorjee Thinley, age 39, of Chorten monastery,

These vows are written in the *Dulwa*. It outlines how women need to conduct herself in front of a *Galong*. The Buddha said the monks are not supposed to disclose what is in the *Dulwa* until and unless they acquire the position of a *Galong*.

As such, the rule that places monks above nuns in the monastic hierarchy is said to have its origin from the Buddha himself. Yet, its validity comes from centuries of repeated subordination of women based on the guidelines prescribed in the *Vinayas* or canonical monastic discipline where these are stated. Although the Buddha admitted that women can gain enlightenment just as men, he only accepted women into his monastic order on one condition. He specified that all nuns be subject to the authority of monks by the “eight heavy precepts” (Heirman, 2011: 606-07). This interpretation of the view of the Buddha was continually reproduced through monastic practice in the Chorten monastery as in one of the *annie*’s accounts:

There is a difference in sitting position of the *annies*, we are supposed to stay behind or in lower position compared to monks. It is a sign of respect because they have acquired more wisdom than us...they are men.

(Annie Kuenzang Choden, age 56. Interviewed on January 2014, Chorten).

According to another *annie* from the same monastery,

Even when a young monk comes to the prayer room we have to stand up, these are rules we have to obey. (Annie Kunzangyal Pema, Age 60, Chorten).

This statement was corroborated during the fieldwork. One of the *annies* invited us to her room for lunch; she offered us a raised sitting place because we were her guests but since she was sitting on the floor and as a mark of respect we decided to share the same space with her. Then a young monk in his twenties entered the room and the *annie* immediately got up and offered him the raised space which he gladly accepted. We were quite embarrassed because of this demeanour and decided to take the monk's view on the position of women in the monastic system and he commented, "Buddhism does not differentiate between men and women, but since we are born man we have earned this respect". On the other hand in the Rumtek monastery, by virtue of the homogenous nature of the monastery with regard to gender the *annies* enjoyed equality in terms of the sitting arrangement, they appeared more confident and at ease. However, they did offer their seats when the senior *annies* walked in.

Gender hierarchy was also observed in the practice of reading and memorising certain texts. It was rooted in a specific interpretation of core texts of tantric Buddhism. This practice equally prevented women from learning religious texts as is described in a novel by Kunzang Choden titled *The Circle of Karma: A Novel* (2005) about the life and experience of a girl from rural Bhutan who finally becomes a nun. The *Dulwa* is one such text which the *annies* are prohibited from reading. The *Dulwa* influenced the construction of a negative image for the *annies*. When inquired from a Bhutanese *annie* from the Chorten monastery about the *Dulwa* and why the women are prohibited from reading it, she mentioned:

*Dulwa* is a book based on ethics of body and speech; it is read by *galongs* only. The reason why women are deprived of reading this book is based on an old story. Previously, women were also capable of becoming *galongma* along with *galongs*, but it stopped from the reign of *galongma* Pelma, who was a reincarnation of Lord Buddha. During that phase she didn't find apt women to whom she could impart all the wisdom which she had, and she died without finding a female reincarnation. Ever since, women's lineage has been cut off from reading the *Dulwa*, though some wished to study but due to lack of female teachers on this specific field they are unable to do so. (Annie Tshewang Dema Age 44, Chorten)

Nonetheless, other *annies* at the monastery informed us that it was possible to read the *Dulwa* if they reached the position of *Galongma*. The Khempo reiterated this view. He informed us that the *Dulwa* comprises of 'thirteen volumes'. It is not, that women in principle are not supposed to read the *Dulwa* but they are only allowed under one condition that is they have to attain the position of *Galongma* by taking three hundred and sixty four (364) vows. To guide them they need senior *Galongma* along with a *Galong*, but the problem is that the lineage of *Galongma* no longer exists, because at the time there were no women who were wise enough to follow such vows. Thus, women are only eligible to be *Gatshelma* (lowest level) and not *Galongma* and it is therefore prohibited for both *Gatshelma* and *Gatshel* to read *Dulwa*. Hence, the *annies*

never have the opportunity of advancing beyond the lowest level. According to Khempo, there is hardly any probability in contemporary context that women might attain such high position, because in one way or the other their path to the highest levels in the monastic order is obstructed. This kind of explanation produced discursive boundaries between the *annies* and the monks. When inquired at the Rumtek Monastery about the *Dulwa*, they said they can read it but it has been observed that they were ignorant about the existence of such a text and the nature of its content. On the other hand, at the Chorten monastery all the *annies* were aware about this text and expressed their inability of not being able to read it. In the words of an *annie* from the Chorten monastery:

I wish we could also become Galongma, and read the *Dulwa*, the monks tell us that it changes the path to reach God, but the path is so difficult and 364 vows are difficult to accomplish. (Annie Pem Choden Drukpa, age 32, Chorten)

Thus, attaining a higher position of rank in a monastery is determined by gender hierarchy. Despite Buddhism being generally considered as non-dualistic, as a story goes Buddha himself was initially reluctant to ordinate his step mother Mahaprajapati into the monastic domain (Heirman, 2011: 606). Indeed, the 'eight fundamental rules or precepts' to be followed by women as a condition for becoming a nun itself clearly shows a nun's dependence on hierarchically superior monks since the start. However, in the present study it has been observed that an all *annie* monastery unlike a monastery where both nuns and monks inhabit provides more scope for women to freely move on for her spiritual quest less rigidly guided by traditional religious orthodoxy as prescribed in texts. The narratives discussed above in this section points out to the prevalence of gendered lens through which the *annies* see themselves especially in the case of Chorten monastery (inhabited by both nuns and monks). Such lens is rooted in the patriarchal power structure of the broader society which defines the role of nuns on the basis of a dichotomy wherein males are considered as superior beings (deserving, rational and wise) than females (irrational and emotional). Moreover, knowledge itself is connected to power which lies in the hands of higher ranking monks. However, on the other hand, it has been observed that Rumtek monastery inhabited by just *annies* provides more scope for them to express themselves in the path to attain religious/spiritual goals within the larger patriarchal societal structure.

#### BODY DYNAMICS AND REINCARNATION

While it is clear that in Buddhist tradition both men and women are subject to miseries to *samsara*, women in some text seem to suffer more because of their bodies. According to Paul (1989: 6), "symbolically, women represented the profane world, *samsara*. Perhaps more detrimentally women were potential obstacles in actual life to man's spiritual growth. In spite of the tantric vision of women as the locale of wisdom, the patriarchal impetuous of Buddhism seemed to penetrate the monasteries with the vision of women as having less intelligence, excessive attachment and uncontrollable desire. But more

puzzling their religious role has come to be associated with misogynist ideas of religious impurity, because of their menstruation cycle and role in child-birth.” These views have tangible effect in the monastic institutions as discussed in this section below. Despite the monastic androgyny which is associated with renunciation of family life and traditional markers of gender like the hair, they continue to be re-sexed and characterised as suffering from the negative corporeality of being women. The women are viewed as impure because of their menstrual cycle. According to a respondent at the Chorten monastery,

Women are impure because, they can't control their tongue; girls have more knowledge to cheat others and have more sexual desire. Because of these reasons they are considered as impure. We have menstruation which makes us impure (bad smell). During whole period in actual we are not supposed to do sacred tasks but tend to do because of lack in alternatives. (Annie Kezang Yuden, age 67, Chorten)

How this view of women as impure entered Tantric Buddhism remains a mystery, given the initial equality ascribed to men and women in it. A plausible explanation well may be because of an amalgamation between Buddhism and Hinduism, but it remains an unexplored ground. Somehow the correlation between the menstrual cycle, sexual desire and the ability to control one's tongue did not answer the query and in this regard the view point of another *annie* at the same monastery has been considered. According to her,

Women during menstruation, experience pain and in this pain they can say bad words to anyone. It is this menstrual blood which aggravates her sexual desires.

We even spoke to the monks at the Chorten monastery to ascertain if the *annies* were being conditioned by some pre-emitted ideology, in the words of a young monk:

Menstruation makes women psychologically insane. They are not able to do their regular chores. Thus how will they practise spirituality.

According to another monk,

Men have more bones than women, and women lose their bones because of their menstruation. That is why they cannot reach the same spiritual place as us.

On the contrary, *annies* at the Rumtek monastery did not resonate a similar sentiment. In the words of an *annie*, they had entered the monastic world for a place of equality rather than inequality. Could this be explained by the fact that they were not contesting for space with the monks at the monastery? Further, when asked if they were in a monastery along with the monks will they still enjoy the same freedom and will they bow before the monks, the same *annie* replied:

Yes, I do, but that is out of respect and choice. But, we live separately, we have freedom. If we stay together then there is risk of impurity. So, in order to avoid this, it is good we have different institutions. In our monastery, we do everything during our periods, but in the 'big' monastery we are not supposed to. I have heard they are very particular. In this environment we can learn instruments without

feeling shy of other opposite sex. We don't feel any sort of awkwardness. So the learning process is very much flexible.

(Annie Karma Chazom, age: 25, Rumtek.)

By referring to the monastery where the monks reside as the 'big monastery', the *annie* made an oblique reference about the superiority of the monasteries inhabited by the monks.

*Karma* is the driving mechanism of the basic Buddhist theory of transmigration which essentially posits a particular relationship between mind/consciousness and the body upon which Buddhist idea of liberation is based. Mind and body are interconnected, but the body acts a temporal abode for mind consciousness that moves from one life to another within a gradation of six possible forms of existence, from human beings to God. A consciousness achieves rebirth in a better or worse form depending on the *karma* that has been accumulated through one's merits and demerits. In Buddhist thought though the body is essential as it is only in human form one has a chance to attain salvation out of this endless trouble and suffering of *Samsara* but at the same time it is polluting. The body seems to contain a natural orientation towards attachment and desire. Thus, the liberating path advocates that one should transcend the material body and see it as something defiling (Makley 2005: 268-269). Women's body is generally perceived as more closely associated with sexuality requiring containment and regulation. According to this Buddhist philosophy, sex differences produce different mind-body relations and results in basic proclivities that differentiate a man and a woman. With regard to one's body a male have more merit from past lives (*ibid* 270). Such views were reiterated by the *annies* from Chorten monastery. In the view of an *annie*,

Men and women are different. Women are born women, because of their bad deeds in their previous life as compared to the men. Men have done good deeds so they have attained the life of manhood. If you are a man then by being a man you will be able to spread the doctrine to the masses and help the needy (Annie Pema, age 56, Chorten)

Importantly, the gender-bias with regard to low status of the female body is based on the assumption that it is a burden with physiological suffering because of menstruation and childbirth. It is thus difficult for women to attain enlightenment due to a misogynic belief that menstrual cycle makes them psychologically unstable. This was reflected in the narrative of Annie Kezang Yuden, age 67, Chorten monastery. When questioned what being a Buddhist practitioner mean to her, she answered:

It is a noble profession, because I know the prime purpose of my life. I am fortunate to be born as human being. It is really a difficult task and on top of that to devote life by being a religious practitioner is an added blessing. But I am a woman.... I cannot attain the next level in the religious field. I want to be born a man and fulfil this unfulfilled dream and attain nirvana. It is also said that there is a prayer in Buddhism, especially for those who have conceived which states that, "let the



foetus be a male”<sup>13</sup>. This is because males are considered superior than women. We are seven lives behind men.

In a Tibetan folklore, women are seven lifetimes behind men. Women must accumulate the merit of seven additional lifetimes before they can be reborn as men in order to attain the highest goal. The proverb persists despite a rather dubious logic and this remains an area to be investigated. According to the above mentioned viewpoint of Annie Kezang Yuden, the very nature of suffering is explicitly associated with the female body.

An assumption of a close relationship between women and suffering is longstanding in Buddhism. Early Buddhist literature presents a list of unique situation of women’s suffering; the ‘SamyutaNikaya’ lists five of these: 1. Leaving blood after marriage, 2. Menstruation 3. Pregnancy 4. Giving birth and 5. Waiting for a man (Harris 1999:54)<sup>14</sup> According to the respondents from both monasteries, the female body itself is a *samsara*. Women’s body is regarded as implicitly more profane and degrading in this dualistic system of bondage and enlightenment. Male bodies are rewards because of past merit or virtue; female bodies are to be reviled and rejected. The *annies* at the Rumtek monastery did not agree in principle, some have heard about the seven lives concept and others have not. But they resonate similar patriarchal sentiments about being born a woman as reflected in the words of an *annie*:

When we are born as a woman we have to work very hard for spiritual progress. For a man, it is already half done. He is born a man and that is because of his good karma. (Annie Kalzang, age 34, Rumtek monastery)

The above viewpoint is rather strengthened in a study conducted by Mondal (1999). One of the aspects of his study highlighted that the funeral pyre of a woman is eight layered and that of a man is seven layered reiterating the view that women need extra layer for salvation.

Thus, although the role of women in Vajrayana Buddhism is generally considered equivalent to that of men, the present study signifies that there is a difference in how the practitioners look at themselves and other practitioners and outsiders. Although they enter the monastic institution regarding it as a place of equality, their perception may indeed continue to reveal the broader patriarchal structure of the society even after entering it. Owing to an inquiry, what does being a man mean, a Lama responded:

Firstly, to be born as a human being is very difficult and on top of that to be born as a man is considered privileged. A person is born as a woman due to her past *karma*. They have negative karma from their previous life. The variables for the negative karmas are “mi gawachu” or ten non virtue deeds<sup>15</sup>/actions<sup>16</sup> to which women are prone to as compared to men. Women due to their fickle behaviour they tend to be victim of such sinful behaviours and because of which in their next life they tend to be born as women. So, I believe that if women in their present life check this loophole by devoting themselves to “gawachu” or ten non virtue deeds<sup>17</sup> and actions<sup>18</sup>, then in their next life they can be born as men. (Lama Tashi Tobgay, age 21, Chorten).

According to another Lama,

Women do not perceive themselves as equal to men and that is a problem with them, if they accept inferiority, they will get an inferior treatment. (Lama Samten, age 45, Chorten)

Thus, there is a strong misogynist and patriarchal underpinning reflected by the demeaning views of the monks on women. Still while inquired about why such views are so common among the monks, the *Khempo* at Chorten monastery looked embarrassed and clueless.

Further, although there is a woman consort to the Rimpoche<sup>19</sup> in Chorten monastery it is intriguing that none of the monasteries in Sikkim had/has a woman Rimpoche and in order to find an answer to this, the *annies* from both Chorten and Rumtek were approached. In the tantric iconography, female Buddhas do appear as central figures. Vajrayana Buddhism also recognizes many female *yogini* practitioners who have achieved enlightenment (Nirvana). Yeshe Tsogyal, one of the five tantric consorts of Padmasambhava is an example of a woman (*yogini*) recognized as a female Buddha in the Vajrayana tradition. According to an elderly Annie (Annie Ladenla Tshering, age 46, Chorten),

I became an *annie* at the age of 28 years and I had plans of becoming a consort of the Rimpoche, but you have to be chosen to become one. Women also have the capability of becoming Rimpoche, but somehow women are not making enough effort these days. Religion also seems to have been shrouded with a lot of dos and don'ts and this puts off individuals.

Buddhist practices have perpetuated a consistent preference for monks over nuns. This is highlighted in this ontological narrative,

Every time there are rituals being performed in the families, always the monks are invited. They are always preferred over *annies*, this is a demotivator for many of us. We only have to keep preparing the prayer lamps and the threads..... the holy text inside the threads are also inserted by the monks. (Annie Dolma Dhukar, age 52, Chorten)

It was observed during the fieldwork that *annies* are not invited to big rituals and ceremonies. They continue to occupy their place and position at the periphery of Buddhist practices. The *annies* at Rumtek mentioned that they do go for chants when invited, but even they could not recall any major prayer and ritual ceremony where they had been invited. The ritual practices that produce merit and purity illustrate the sheer impossibility of transcending difference and rank. Duality may be conventionally illusory but in practice it is real and necessary. While the female body signifies defilement and constraint, the male body suggests purity and potential. Ritual practices reinstate the subordination of female nature (Gutschow, 2004).

Thus, the excerpts from narratives discussed above in the present section clearly indicate how women's body itself may turn out to be a hindrance to the path to *nirvana* (Enlightenment as characterised by complete bliss not

affected by desire), attainment of which is possible only when a woman will re-incarnate as a man in the next birth. In order to do so, one has to strictly follow the prescribed canonical rules such as the “eight precepts” (as given in *Dharmaguptavinayaka* tradition) (Heirman, 2011). The very basis of these precepts is governed by the superiority of monks or male practitioners on whom the nuns have to remain dependent. However, in this regard in terms of practice it has been observed that there is a contextual variation in relation to gender composition of the two monasteries being studied in this paper. While in the Chorten monastery as the above discussed viewpoints of the *annies* and monks indicate, there are more rigid patriarchal structural norms governing such views wherein woman is perceived as prone towards sexual desires and cheating. Her body is held as impure due to menstruation and childbirth. Thus, she has to put a more rigorous check on her bodily functions and needs in order to achieve high in the religious path as compared to man who is seen as pre-gifted. Being born a man is itself a privilege in this path. He has to just follow certain discipline in order to move on in the path to *nirvana*. Moreover, women are not even considered as authentic religious practitioners to supervise the prayers and rituals at homes and their role is confined to the peripheral functions such as arrangement of prayer lamps and threads. On the other hand, in the Rumtek monastery, it has been observed that comparatively there is a certain degree of flexibility and a sense of openness and respect with regard to one’s position as *annie/nun* who can possibly move in the spiritual path without much hindrance. However, even the *annies* here are aware of the superior recognition given to the monks in society. They too have to give space to monks because of traditional religious prescriptions which indeed are not conventionally attached to early Tantric Buddhism in general. Still, unlike the *annies* in Chorten monastery there is a degree of self-respect and a sense of freedom and possibility expressed by the *annies* at Rumtek monastery on their own position as well with regard to the position of women in general.

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHT

It is widely believed that the path to Enlightenment is not an easy one for a spiritual seeker and if the spiritual seeker turns out to be a woman then the path itself may close down or rather become more rigorous especially in a society dominated by patriarchal norms. The narratives discussed above in this paper implicitly or explicitly indicates an overarching patriarchy driving the monastic lives of the *annies* in both the monasteries of Chorten and Rumtek. Nevertheless, in the words of the fourteenth Dalai Lama (spiritual leader, Tibetan Buddhism) when asked, “can the Dalai Lama’s incarnation be female in the future?” he said “yes” then explained “because firstly, there are already high female reincarnations among Tibetan lamas... In our time there are high female lamas as well. Yes, we accept female gurus, female teachers. The purpose of a reincarnation lineage is to serve people through the Dharma, and

if the circumstances are such that a female form is more useful, then why not?" Further, when inquired, "what could we do to promote the development of gender equality in Tibetan Buddhism?" the Dalai Lama responded, "according to our tradition, the ordination of a *bhiksuni* must be carried out by a *bhiksuni* preceptor, and since a Mūlasarvāstivāda *bhiksuni* preceptor is not available, according to our tradition the bestowal of ordination stopped. This is the problem. Some scholars say an exception is possible but the majority still says "no"... According to *Vinaya*, the final decision must be made by a *sangha*—a group of monks—not by a single monk... As far as study is concerned, there is no such kind of restriction or problem. Around forty years ago I introduced serious studies such as those done by the monks in the big monasteries in a nunnery in Dharamsala. Many of these senior nuns have reached an excellent level of education through learning and debate."<sup>20</sup>

However, despite Dalai Lama's above mentioned effort to uplift the nuns the prevalence of gender hierarchy in the daily lives in Buddhist monasteries cannot be denied. Still, the influence of patriarchy may differ in relation to variations in terms of time, region and monastic space sharing etc. In the context of the present paper, the space shared by both monks and *annies* in Chorten monastery seemed to restrict and stifle the *annies* in their spiritual path who being women were indeed caught in their own self-deprecating patriarchal image. On the other hand, the *annies* in Rumtek monastery were comparatively more vocal and presented a non-dualistic image of themselves with an implicit awareness of the overarching patriarchal dichotomies. Moreover, the inhabitants in the Chorten monastery comprised mostly of inhabitants of Bhutanese origin unlike in Rumtek where the *annies* are from Sikkim. Thereby, the socio-historical, political and cultural background of the inhabitants of the two monasteries may have an impact on their daily attitude to monastic practices. Gendered monastic spaces further reflect an impact of focus on selective religious women centric Buddhist precepts which in turn may have been influenced by broader patriarchal societal structures.

Regardless of the differences between the two monasteries of Chorten and Rumtek, also despite the distinctions within Buddhism, what is crucial is to ponder on the following questions: Religion or spiritual pursuit is for whom? Is the Buddhist path to enlightenment/*nirvana* not meant to move beyond hierarchies and desires, represented by the everyday world of *samsara*?

#### NOTES

- 1 Tantric Buddhism is the third school or yana (vehicle) of Buddhism (other than Hinayana or Mahayana) that is practiced in the Himalayan regions of Tibet, Nepal and Sikkim etc. It is also known as Vajrayana, Mantrayana or Esoteric Buddhism. The word Tantric means *Tantra*. The word *tantra* means books/texts dealing with rituals, discipline, and meditation emphasizing on a gradual path to salvation. Monks and priests in Tibet are known as Lamas, so Tantric Buddhism is also called Lamaism which was introduced in Tibet in the 7th century A.D. It mixed together Indian Buddhism and Tibetan beliefs. This form of Buddhism is totally different from its other forms. —This consists

of worshipping by reciting prayers and sacred texts, along with chanting of hymns. Indian Buddhist tantric practices have been preserved in Tibetan Buddhism. A body of texts called the *Tantras* was written so that only initiates of a particular *guru* would be able to understand them.

- 2 Other than religion Buddhism is also variously labeled as philosophy, culture or civilization. For further details one can refer to an article titled “Buddhism as Religion and Philosophy” by Reginton Rajapakshe in the Journal called Religion (1986), Vol.16, p 51-55. Also, one can refer to Frank E Reynolds and Charles Hallisey’s chapter on “Buddhist Religion, Culture and Civilization” in the book titled “Buddhism and Asian History” (1989) edited by Joseph M Kitagawa and Mark D Cummings, Macmillan: New York.
- 3 The ‘*Vimalakirti Sutra*’ and the ‘*Srimala Sutra*’ belong to this category. In these two ‘sutras’ the position of the female reaches its highest peak. The doctrinal basis for this culmination lies in the Mahayana doctrines of ‘*sunyata*’ (emptiness), ‘*Tathagatagarbha*’, non-duality, etc. Instead of attempting to identify maleness with Bodhisattva hood and Buddhahood, the sutras in this category claim that notions of duality—either male or female, subject or object, etc.—are merely mental attachments contradicting the teaching of emptiness.
- 4 The *Vinaya* comprises of the rules and regulations for monastic discipline. It consists of two sections, the *Bikkhuni-vibhaga* and the *Bikkhuni-Khadhaka*, both of which deal with the code of conduct that the *Bhikkhunis* and female probationers should observe. These hold a great deal of gender equality with the belief that women may also attain enlightenment. The *Suttapitaka*, for instance, deals with the verses narrated by those nuns who had attained vision of nirvana or *arahantship* (Horner,1961).
- 5 The thirty-fifth vow of the ‘*Larger Sukhavativyuha-sutra*’ states, “If, when I attain buddhahood, women in the immeasurable and inconceivable buddha lands of the ten directions who, having heard my Name, rejoice in faith, awaken aspiration for enlightenment, and wish to renounce womanhood should after death be reborn again as women, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.” For further details one can refer to “The Three Pure Land Sutras” translated by Hisao Inagaki in collaboration with Harold Stewart, Numata center for Buddhist Translation and Research (2003). This could also be retrieved from [http://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET\\_ThreePureLandSutras\\_2003.pdf](http://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET_ThreePureLandSutras_2003.pdf)
- 6 This declares that there are no women in the Pure Land.
- 7 Traditional values and teachings here indicate the basic Buddhist teachings applicable to all irrespective of gender etc such as the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path etc.
- 8 The Nyingmapa, a Red Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism, incorporate mysticism and merged the local deities shared by the pre-Buddhist Bon religion into itself, which has shamanic elements. The group particularly believes in hidden treasures. The Nyingma tradition actually comprises of several distinct lineages which trace their origins to the Buddhist master Padmasambhava.
- 9 Dakinis also represent the Three Roots as they may manifest as a guru, a yidam or a protector.
- 10 The first ruler to unite Tibet was Songtsen-Gampo. Srong-btsan sgam-po, 617 – 649 C.E.
- 11 Padmasambhava was an 8th-century master of Buddhist tantra who is credited to have introduced Vajrayana to Tibet and Bhutan. He is revered today as one of the great patriarchs of Tibetan Buddhism and the founder of the Nyingmapa School. In

Tibetan iconography he is the embodiment of the dharmakaya. He is sometimes called “Guru Rinpoche,” or precious guru. He visited Tibet during the reign of the Emperor Trisong Detsen, (742-797). He is associated with the building of the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, Samye Gompa.

- 12 The Gatshelma implies that women are not supposed to have sex, steal, kill, lie, touch gold and silver, have dinner, wear jewelry, apply perfume, sing, or sleep on a king bed.
- 13 It is a prayer which is found in the book called Dukarcheydu.
- 14 There is a Pali version of a ‘five obstructions story’ extant in the Chinese *Bahudhatuka Sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikaya*: “One of the qualities of a wise person is that he knows that a female cannot become ruler of the world of humans and gods ... He knows that it is not reasonable for a woman to become an arhat or truly enlightened one. He knows that it is reasonable for a man to become an arhat of truly enlightened one. He knows that it is not reasonable for a woman to become a Cakravartin king, Indra, Mara or a Brahma” (Nagata 2002: 282).
- 15 Ten non-virtue deeds that hinder individual’s quest for spirituality or acts as a barrier to pursue religious activity. As compared to men, women are more prone to these ten bad or sinful behaviours.
- 16 10 non virtue Actions are:
  - i. Killing any living being
  - ii. Stealing anything of value
  - iii. Sexual Misconduct
  - iv. Lying
  - v. Divisive Talk
  - vi. Harsh Talk
  - vii. Idle Talk
  - viii. Carving/Converting
  - ix. Ill Will
  - x. Wrong view
- 17 Ten virtue deeds which will lead any individual to attain nirvana or eternal bliss.
- 18 10 Virtue Actions are:
  - i. Not to take a life
  - ii. Not to take what is not given
  - iii. Avoid Sexual misconduct
  - iv. Not to Deceive
  - v. Avoid Slander of others
  - vi. Avoid Harsh words
  - vii. Avoid Empty Speech
  - viii. Avoid Greedy Thoughts
  - ix. Not to be Malicious
  - x. Avoid the Wrong View
  - xi. Some texts, such as the *Pure LandSutra*, deny women birth in the Pure
  - xii. Land unless they *despise* their female nature. Despising the female nature results in rebirth as a man in the Pure Land.

19 Rimpoche is an honorific term used in the Tibetan language. It literally means “precious one”, way of showing respect when addressing those recognized as reincarnated, older, respected, notable, learned and/or an accomplished Lamas or teachers of the Dharmas. It is also used as an honorific for abbots of monasteries.

20 Details could be retrieved from [https://info-buddhism.com/Interview\\_Dalai\\_Lama\\_about\\_the\\_Full\\_Ordination\\_of\\_Women.html](https://info-buddhism.com/Interview_Dalai_Lama_about_the_Full_Ordination_of_Women.html)

\*The names of the respondents have been changed for confidentiality without compromising the meaning of the gathered data.

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## **Culture and Anthropology of Space: Theorizing the contemporary urban behaviour among the apartment house dwellers in Kolkata city**

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**Abstract:** The subject of *space* has emerged as a critical base for understanding the cultural theory in 1970s which gradually gets strengthened and acquired a renewed look in the 1990s and thereafter. The present paper attempts to examine cultural space in an urban locale in Kolkata city in post-colonial India, dominated by the Bengalee population. Two apartment housing complexes in Kolkata were selected for the study. The selection of the two houses was made on the basis of the economic status of the residents, infrastructure management and time of construction. Both the housing complexes were predominantly resided by Bengalee Hindu people representing Middle Income Group (M.I.G) category, grossly oversimplified by the concept of *Maddhyabitta*, which is a cultural identity. Information have been collected using techniques like observation, case study, structured, unstructured and group interviews following which analysis and interpretation have been made to theorize the said context with special emphasis on the nature of spatial contribution in cultural production in everyday urban life.

*Key words* : Culture, space, housing complex, Kolkata

### INTRODUCTION

From anthropological perspective, the concept of culture can be understood in terms of *root metaphors* (Gupta, 2001) that govern diverse forms of social relationship; and here lies the significance of 'Space'.

The concept of *Space* is multifarious. Like culture, it cannot be brought within a single analytical conceptual framework. The works of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Lefebvre are foundational to spatial theory. Foucault (1977) suggests that *space* is no longer treated as "the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile" (p.p.70). Rather to consider the spatialization of life is to fill out the context(s) of social formation- our daily and institutional practices in all their situatedness (Said, 1984). For Foucault, *space* is both a way of thinking synchronically rather than diachronically and a means for bringing together architectural or physical space and domains of realms of thought. Foucault's idea of *space* is thus a blend of material and ideological construction. He used this blend to understand the constitution and operation of power. For Bourdieu, *space* is relational and implies mutual exteriority and difference. It is a "field of power" where individuals or groups occupy relative positions in which difference is symbolically enunciated by the deployment of social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1998). Lefebvre's (1991) work on the "Production of Space" presents a revolutionary form of analysis based on *space*. For Lefebvre, "The form of

Social Space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity. But what is assembled? The answer is: everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols.” (p.p.101). Lefebvre (1991) focuses attention on the production of space, but constructed a model of various ‘processes of assembly’ (p.p. 31-33) including three elements, viz. ‘representations of space,’ ‘spatial practices’ and ‘representational spaces’.

Anthropologists in recent times have acknowledged that *space* has become an essential component in culture studies. The point of realisation lies in the fact that “Culture is enlivened in *space* such that without *space* there is no clear conception of cultural membership” (Gupta, 2001). Anthropologists are therefore rethinking and reconceptualizing culture studies in spatialised ways.

In the present study, the focus is on the way *space* acts as the site in cultural production amongst the *maddhyabitta* Bengalee apartment dwellers residing in two blocks of apartments in Kolkata city. Majority of the dwellers of these apartments are Hindu. The information have been collected and represented here from two different dimensions, viz. conformity–conflict dichotomy and tradition – modern dichotomy. In brief, to understand how cultural characters of rupture, discontinuity and recreation are manifested in the aforesaid domains and also to observe the way culture enlivens in *space*.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted following the anthropological method of first-hand fieldwork. In this regard, *case histories* through in-depth interviews have been collected from the informants. Selection of informants was done on the basis of a set of qualitative and quantitative variables. Care was taken in choosing the informants based on the ability to communicate or encode information to the researcher. Observation served a very important role in the entire span of fieldwork. Following the collection of information, the reporting of data was done in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations. Analysis of the data was done through conversation analysis. Each of the aforesaid techniques helped to interpret human behaviour in everyday life and communicate meaning to the readers. The analysis of conversations has its roots in ethnomethodology. It treats conversation as a series of utterances which are intended to perform a particular function, beyond that of simply reporting an observation. This technique of analysis constructs the embodied space of an individual manifested through his words. The technique for data collection for this form of analysis is verbal recordings. Conversations are described in terms of performative actions, which enable the complex structure of conversation to be decoded.

The study was conducted in the locale of the urban setting in Kolkata within the premise of apartment house among the middle-class Bengalee population popularly called *Maddhyabitta* [*Maddhya* – Middle; *Bitta* – Class (in

Bengali)] who have developed a cultural identity for themselves overcoming the economic identity of 'class'. The apartment houses studied are located in two different locations in the city of Kolkata, viz. Tangra and Kasba. Henceforth the two locales of the study will be referred to as Tangra Complex and Kasba Complex. These two apartment houses exhibit differences in a number of characters, like time of formation, infrastructure management and economic status of the residents. To talk about the selection on the basis of the time of construction, the *Tangra* Complex represents one of the earliest apartment Complexes in Kolkata (built in 1966). In the truest sense, the complex was built with the motive of constructing human hives with a socialist policy of providing a living space to every family. In contrast, the project in *Kasba* is essentially a part of the present-day apartment culture (built in 1998), built with the purpose of not only providing shelter but also adding a character of luxury into it. On the basis of infrastructure management, *Tangra* project was still maintained by the State Government (Department of Housing, Government of West Bengal), but the one in *Kasba* is run by a co-operative society. While the residents of *Tangra* pay monthly rent to the government which incorporates their maintenance charge, the residents of *Kasba* pay their monthly maintenance charge to the elected administrative body of the co-operative society in the form of subscription, which probably implies a sense of involvement in a spirit of membership.

The study was conducted during the period 2003-2005 at repeated intervals of time.

#### *The Locale of Study*

The Tangra Complex was built under North Kolkata Parliamentary Constituency and under ward number 58 of Kolkata Municipal Corporation. It is one of the oldest housing Complexes (developed in the 1960s) in Kolkata. People living here have their roots in three different cultural settings from the past- (1) those who bore the effects of the partition of Bengal and whose identity of past was ruptured and for whom a new identity of refugee was created and who were housed earlier in colonies built for them; (2) those who migrated from the local rural hinterlands, other districts of West Bengal as well as adjacent states in search of livelihood opportunities; and (3) people who used to stay in private rented houses in the city itself, but decided to shift to government rented houses to have a sense of social security. The first generation residents in this complex were predominantly from the Lower Income Group (L.I.G) as well as from the lower tier of Middle Income Group (M.I.G).

The Housing Complex in Tangra consists of forty one (41) blocks, the nomenclature of which has been done in alphabetical order (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, A/1, B/1, C/1, D/1, E/1, F/1, G/1, H/1, I/1, J/1, K/1, L/1, M/1, N/1 and O/1). Apart from the apartments, Blocks or buildings, the Complex has a number of associated in built features in the form of infrastructural, recreational and sacred ones.

The Housing Complex consists of apartments of three distinct categories: (a) the 'Slum Clearance Project' (SCP) with carpet area of 350 sq.ft, (b) the 'Small Two Room' (STR) with carpet area of 450 sq.ft. and (3) the 'Regular Two Room' (RTR) with carpet area of 600 sq.ft. The local nomenclatures of these three apartment types are *Lal Quarter* (Red Buildings), *Halud Quarter* (Yellow Buildings) and *Sada Quarter* (White Buildings) respectively. The reasoning behind such a nomenclature is that the outer walls of these apartments were painted in these colours when it was constructed. The location of the different buildings with the aforesaid apartment types within the Complex is provided in figure II where blocks numbered as C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O and P represent *Lal Quarter*; Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Z, A/1, and B/1 represent *Halud Quarter*; and A, B, Y, C/1, D/1, E/1, F/1, G/1, H/1, I/1, J/1, L/1, M/1, N/1 and O/1 represent *Sada Quarter*. The physical identity of these apartment types has acquired a cultural meaning over the years. The concept of *Lal Quarter*, *Halud Quarter* and *Sada Quarter* symbolizes not only building types, but also a distinct income group. It has induced a sense of affinity, homogeneity, and community among the residents and thereby gives them an identity.

The ground plan of each building with two apartments in each floor is shown in figures I (a), I (b) and I (c) as mentioned above. The terraces in each building or blocks are unusable as they lack parapets. Earlier terraces were used mainly for keeping television antennae.

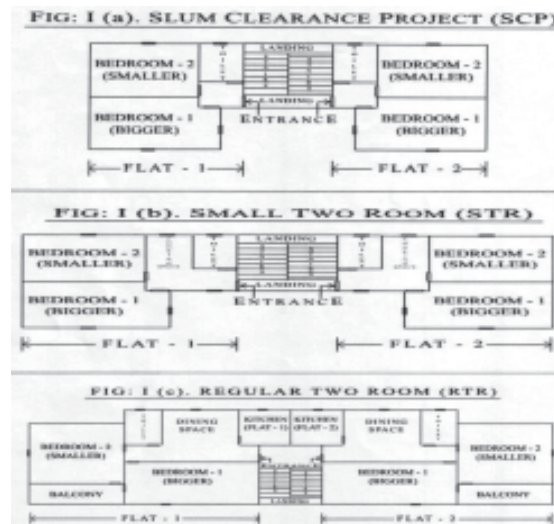
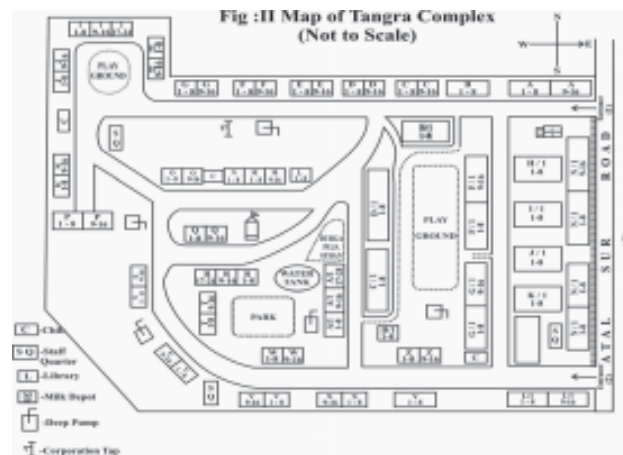


Fig: 1: Ground Plan in Tangra Complex

Beyond the Blocks comes the Complex as a whole, the schematic representation of which is given in Figure: II. Apart from residential character, the Complex has some associated features related to infrastructural, recreational and sacred dimensions. The infrastructural features include residential quarters for government employed personnels, like mason, sweeper, plumber, water-pump operator and electrician; a 50,000 litre storage capacity

water tank, a state government run milk distribution depot, one pump house and garbage disposal units. The recreational infrastructure inside the Complex include two playgrounds, one children's park, one library, one fenced statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, four Club Houses and some chatting places spread here and there in the Complex. The sacred places in the Complex includes a temple with shrines of "Shiva-linga, (Lord Shiva)" "Radha-Krishna" (Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha) and "Lokenath Brahmachari" (local deity). Moreover, "Durga puja" and "Kali puja" two of the most popular Bengali festivals are performed in an open space almost at the central point of the Housing Complex.



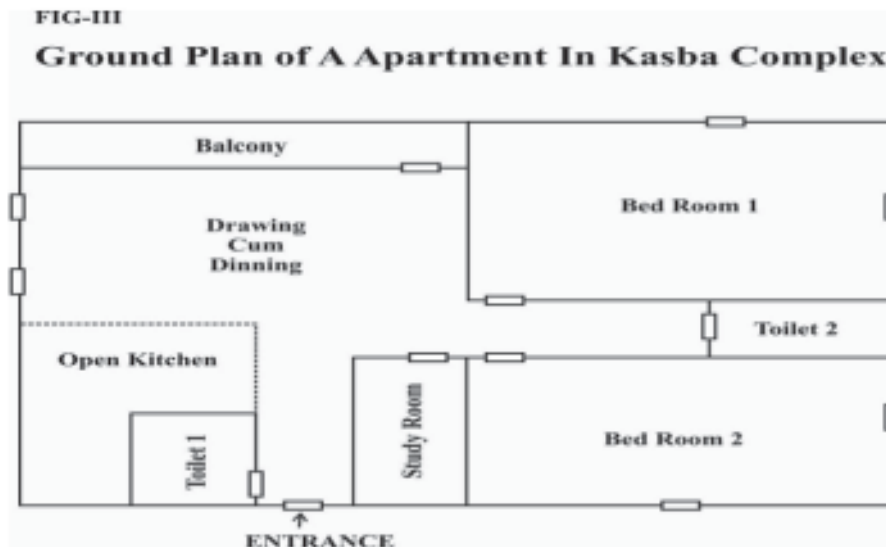
The Kasba Complex, on the other hand, is a relatively new housing project. It is located in ward number 107, under Borough-XII of Kolkata Municipal Corporation and falls under South Kolkata Parliamentary Constituency. The foundation stone of the project was laid in 1995 and the residents started living since 1998. The Complex was constructed through a co-operative society, formed in 1967. The residents of Kasba Complex exhibit a difference in its character and formation due to the co-operative membership compared to the Tangra Complex. The Cooperative was initially composed of 111 members referred to as promoter members. These members were allotted land by the Government of West Bengal for the construction of house. The members unanimously decided to construct an apartment Complex principally for financial reasons. The promoter members were predominantly from the 'Nimno' and 'Maddhya' *Maddhyabittas* (lower and middle tier of the middle class) who were not quite in a position to construct houses on their own. Their historical background is similar to the first generation residents of Tangra Complex discussed earlier, but in terms of economic resources, the Kasba residents appears to be better off.

The promoter members of the Kasba co-operative, agreed upon transforming the character of residential space from a house to a flat in a

Housing Complex. The cultural and architectural features of the Complex attracted people from *Uccha-Maddhyabitta* (middle to upper tier of the middle class) and from diverse communities to apply for and purchase flats in the Complex. The Complex thus had both promoter members and non-promoter members or purchasers. The heterogeneity or the diverse manifestation of social space in the Complex originates from this very point. The differences in monetary resource possessions between the promoter and non-promoter members at the outset generate differences among the residential units within the Complex.

The plinth area of a flat in Kasba Complex ranges from approximately 900sq.ft to 1200 sq.ft with a number of intermediate categories. All the flats in the Complex have a similar ground plan and are provided with two bedrooms, one study cum guest sitting, one drawing-cum-dining room, one open-kitchen, two toilets and one balcony. Structurally, the lay out of flat to the design of buildings exhibit a character of homogeneity. Each building is a five-storied structure with a minimum of five and maximum of twelve flats in each floor. The ground floor serves as the garage space.

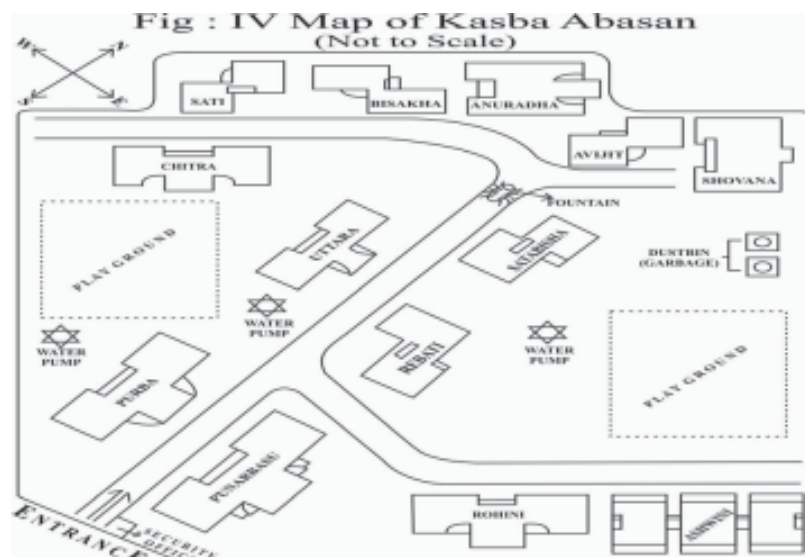
The ground plan of each apartment is provided in Figure III.



The Kasba Complex consists of 13 buildings named after the sacred stars of Hindu cosmology- *Anuradha, Aswini, Avijit, Bisakha, Chitra, Punarbasu, Purba, Rebati, Rohini, Shatabisha, Srobona, Swati* and *Uttara*. The number of flats in each building varies- 20 (*Avijit*), 24 (*Bisakha, Purba, Swati, Satabisha, Revati, Rohini*), 28 (*Punarbasu*), 32 (*Srobona, Anuradha, Chitra, Uttara*) and 48 (*Ashwini*). The contour of each building conforms to a rectangular profile and contains two stairs at two ends of the buildings together with an elevator.

This Complex has a number of complementary architectural features, which raises its status from shelter to home. The complementary character includes two-playground, one children's park, three water pump station, underground drainage system, one fountain, a garbage corner, 10m wide main road inside the Complex and 7m wide lanes connecting to different corners in the Complex. The most interesting part inside the Complex is the look of the buildings. Each building is shell white in colour and its appearance generates a feeling of appreciation. In architectural domain, these buildings do not resemble first generation apartment houses; they are house with personal space.

The schematic representation of the alignment of buildings within the Complex is given in the following Figure IV



From the figures / maps provided, it may be possible to get a fair idea of the spatial character of the housing complexes under study.

#### DISCOURSE

##### *Architectural Space*

To study the 'culture- space' interface from an architectural perspective, in the Tangra Complex, a dual approach has been taken into consideration. The *anthropological approach* considers the building as a cultural artifact in order to reveal the relationships of dwellings to family, social structure, and mores. The *phenomenological approach*, on the other hand seeks to identify the experimental nature of *space*, within and outside the building, which in some way are affected by it. To begin with the anthropological approach, the apartment does exhibit the character of cultural artifact, but this character shows flexibility. In some aspects, limited physical space alters the character

of vernacular architecture whereas in some areas, it retains so-called traditional cultural characters of yester years. To exemplify the situation where limited physical space affects cultural space, I will discuss the traditional Hindu concept of *food area* (Khare, 1976). The traditional Hindu *food area* is composed of a *cooking area*, a *servicing area* and a *storing area*. One prominent architectural feature in the apartments under 'Slum Clearance Project' and 'Small Two Room' is that the government architects have ignored the puritanical concept of Hindu *food area* pushing it to the background. There is no earmarked space for cooking and eating in the name of kitchen or dining place. The food related as noticed in the traditional Hindu culinary scheme has been violated on two counts. First, food related area which is considered as pure is not located away from the waste disposal area or polluted area. Rather, they are adjacent to each other. Second, food related area is not demarcated from those spaces assigned either for sleeping, sitting or for receiving guests and visitors. The space-limiting factor differentiates the integrated activities of cooking, serving and storing. Therefore, physical space limitation has broken the single traditional identity of the food area. However, in the case of 'regular two room apartment' the traditional *food area* has been restored with the provision of a separate kitchen and a dining space where the storing provision is also available.

Taking a phenomenological standpoint, we can identify the experimental nature of *space* within and without the building. It appears that such experimentation is reflected in the practice of cultural space centering round the given physical space. The residents reproduce the tradition in the apartment by creating self-constructed boundaries of 'sacred-profane' and 'pure-polluted'. In a number of cases, it is observed that the elderly generation refuses to allow non-vegetarian items in particular rooms, especially where the household deity is kept. Apart from worship, that particular room also serves the purpose of sleeping, storing household cereals and vegetables, as well as for receiving the guests. This character is complemented by two other sets of observations. First, the garbage bins of each apartment are kept outside, just beside the entrance to the flat. And second, the polluted service providers from outside, like sweeper do not venture inside the living or bedrooms of the apartment. In spite of the aforesaid, production of tradition become the grey areas where reciprocating characters of anthropological and phenomenological concepts are observed. In a number of apartments of the Complex, the residents compromise over their so-called 'traditional' cultural space owing to compelling situations. Constrains in physical space has caused overlapping of functions of purity and pollution in a number of cases. Even non-vegetarian items are not entertained in the worship rooms of a number of apartments. Moreover, the domestic help of any caste and creed (particularly those belong to lower social hierarchy) are free to move in different rooms to sweep the floor, wash household utensils, wash clothes, clear up the garbage bin, cut vegetables, dress fishes and cook food. Here, cultural categories of purity and



pollution overlap. The practice of creating boundaries on one hand and overlapping the other, produces compromises on one hand and contradiction on the other, which in turn explains the phenomenological character within an apartment or in the residential domain.

The Tangra Housing Complex exhibits a dual representation of tradition and modernity in architectural paradigm. In one sense, it is pro-tradition, matching the profile of 'rural-agrarian' character, while on the other; it exhibits westernized and urban character. To maintain the pro-traditional character, the spatial arrangements in rural-agrarian India, caste hierarchy has made a significant contribution. The upper caste people occupy the central part of the village while the lower castes are distributed in the periphery. This age-old character is discontinued in urban setting, but is recreated in the present housing architecture in an altered form (caste to income-group). In the Tangra Complex, each types of apartment building representing distinct economic status and has a definite relationship with its location within the territorial limit of the Complex. The smallest apartments, i.e. blocks under 'Slum .Clearance Project' are located in the northwestern part and is the farthest from the entrance (evident from Figure -II) . The 'Regular Two-.Room apartments', the best category are located near the entrance and occupy (best possible location) the southern and eastern part. To put in brief the tradition is discontinued but recreated in an altered form.

This fifty-year-old housing Complex symbolizes modernity principally by the urban character of space constraint. It exhibits the character of a refugee colony with mere basic amenities. The architects inspired by the image of western workers colony in industrial estates have to compromise over the traditional concept of purity and pollution. This Complex witnessed the introduction of the so called 'Interdictory Space' (Flusty, 1994) and compromised over the concept of 'Privatopia' (Mckenzie, 1994). With the introduction of multifunctional use of space, together with the concepts of 'Adapted Space' and 'Channel Spaces' (Lynch and Rodwin, 1958), this Housing Complex has bred the 'Culture of Heteropolis' with heteroarchitecture resulting in mixing categories, transgressing boundaries, inverting customs and adapting marginal usage. The breakage of traditional caste based spatial ordering generates the inter-caste social intercourse.

The Kasba Complex being relatively new in comparison to the Tangra Complex, the production of space within the defined place provided by the promoter is very much evident. The architectural design of the space is common for the entire Complex, but there exist difference in the pattern of usage. Some residents have erected a partition to separate the open kitchen from the entrance to create a distinct cooking area. The cooking area together with the dining space constitutes food area of each apartment. Intimacy determines the extent to which the hosts open the interior of the flat for the guests. Instance may be drawn from the altered function of study located

almost at the entrance in flat. The study has been converted into sitting space for the outsiders in a number of cases. Excepting the primary kin, the close friends and neighbours, the residents exercise a formal guarded identity with other residents of the Complex. A distance is created for the purpose of maintaining separation and privacy. This 'indifference' about others is a representative form of production of urban culture determined by spatial availability. Thus, we find a stronger identity formation for a resident is still in a process of further crystallization.

For these buildings, the outer contour is common for all the categories, irrespective of the categories defined by floor area. A silent walk through the Complex would generate a number of meanings to different observers. For some, buildings create palatial look, a site of heritage and aristocracy. Again, to others, the Complex would appear a pleasant space full of comfort. For the author, it is a recreation of tradition. The architecture meant for aristocracy in the past, particularly the one existing in the time of colonial rule, has been recreated with urban culture of today.

Inside each building constitute private and public spaces. The apartments on one hand represent the private space, while the passages, stair cases and elevators form the public space of the Complex.

The most important character of the Kasba Complex is its apparent seclusion. Many residents stay relatively unknown to each other or hesitant to interact and want to maintain distance from one another. This is particularly the case with the tenants who have rented flats from some absentee owners. The availability of physical space and its location being complemented by architecture of aristocracy have generated a sense of possessing wealth for the residents. A character of hiding operates and dominates leading to closure of doors for the neighbours. A character of suspicion toward the unknown even if they are neighbour, prevails in the ambience of the Complex. As mentioned earlier, the character of 'interdictory space' is very much evident and any compromise on privatopia is discouraged.

#### *Social Space*

Social space is symbolic in nature. But this element of symbolism has multiple cultural attributes leading to its production. The social attributes in operation have produced a new component out of the provided space. The aforesaid symbolism follows its own course. The concept of social space simultaneously exhibits the character of the *producer* and the *produced*. In a sense, for social space, the meanings are altered or rather recreated. The differential meanings are derived from the situations actors are placed in at a particular point of time.

The residents of Tangra Complex are predominantly from the Bengali-Hindu community and belong to low and middle economic status. It also exhibits differences in terms of ethnic identity. However, the other identities are pushed a back to form a new identity, 'member of Complex'. The Complex

in itself reproduces stratification by amalgamation of differences based on caste-class. But it also stands for the creation of a homogenous class identity<sup>1</sup>. The new urbanites born after India's independence have deviated from the caste-based stratification of agrarian India, particularly of Bengal. In one sense, the tradition of old rural Bengal and new city culture of Kolkata is coexisting.

With regard to religious identity of the inmates, two families belong to Islam, four families to Christianity (including 2 tribal families), three families to Buddhism and the remaining 468 families are Hindus (at the time of field work). These minority families put their religious identity in abeyance to form a new identity, defined by the activities in the Complex. For instance, during the occasion of Christmas or Id, the neighbouring Hindu families are invited to their places to participate in the celebration. Again, at the time of Durga Puja, the Christian and the Muslim families put on new dresses and feast. They do not refuse to accept the *puja bhoga* (food offered to Hindu deities)]<sup>2</sup>. Thus, apart from rituals, celebration no longer remains community specific. The space created to dissolve the religious boundary is also sustained in other cases. The demolition of *Babri Masjid* at Ayodhya on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1991 has sparked large scale communal disturbances in India. The Tangra area (neighbourhoods surrounding the Complex) is one of the worst affected zones of Kolkata. During that time, slums, shops and other establishments were burnt to ashes. The Muslim residential areas were worst affected. The two Muslim families living in Tangra Complex were shocked and thought of leaving the Complex at that point of time. But the neighbours, as well as the tenants' association of the Complex stood beside them as a shield. The Complex generated a renovated identity of class solidarity or so to say 'class for itself' in that tension-ridden situation. Since then any situation of neighbourhood centered conflict over the issue of religion has never appeared. Living together for years has created a social space in the Complex.

Identities based on community, language, region and religion for the residents of Tangra Complex show that apart from Bengali Hindus, the residents include three Santal (Tribe) families (two of which are converted to Christianity), two Bihari Hindu families, two Oriya Hindu families, two Gujrati Hindu families and one Nepali Buddhist family. There are three sweeper families from Bihar, who reside in staff quarter.

Caste identities of the Bengali-Hindu people are *Brahmans*, *Kayastyas*, *Goalas*, *Gandhabaniks*, *Subornobanik*, *Kumor*, *Tili*, *Aguri*, *Poundra* and *Napit* respectively. The *Kayasthas* are numerically dominant followed by the *Brahmans*. But the caste compositions have no structural traditional occupational connotation. The traditional caste identity of the different groups has been discontinued excepting the case of a couple of Brahmin families<sup>3</sup> who perform worship and rituals relating *rites-de-passage* only of the residents of that Complex. The very distribution of flats to the government service holders

just after the construction did not give any stage for developing caste group feelings. This happened because the flat owners are government servants, independent of caste identity. So, the caste group sentiments almost ceased to exist after the first generation residents. The children of the first generation residents representing different caste groups grew up together. As a result, the production of social space based on caste has been dissolved from the very childhood days.

Factors, like caste, religious affiliation, definitely play a significant role at the time of marriage, be it a case of negotiation or love marriage. In negotiation marriage, parents of the prospective groom or bride go for intra-caste or intra-religious marriage. If otherwise happens, conflict proceeds. The case below is a representative of inter religious marriage in the Complex and the outcome that followed:

....Datta (M, 26, Hindu, Kayastha) had love affair with .....Gomes (F, 23, Christian, Catholic) within the Complex. The father of the girl decided to get her daughter married to a prospective Christian boy to get over the *crisis* (according to the parents). The girl was forced to marry a Christian boy settled in Delhi. The problem didn't end here, rather started. The girl went to her in-laws and started creating problems. The groom's family sent the girl back to her parents and demanded for a divorce. The girl overwhelmingly accepted it so that she can remarry her loved one. The family members of the groom (Hindu) accepted the girl as wife.

Till date, eleven (11) cases of inter caste marriage took place in this Complex; all of them are from the third generation residents of this complex. Majority of these marriages were accepted by the family members. In one case, the parents of a bride said - "*At present, nobody bothers with these things? We had no problem. We only considered the job profile of ..... (M, 32) so that he can keep my daughter happy.*" But surprisingly enough, the bride said "when my father came to know about my love affair with an individual who belong to a different caste, he did not agree. Later, my mother convinced my father citing the job and socioeconomic profile of my husband." These events focus on inner space contradiction of the so called urbanites of today.

The residents of Tangra Complex also manifest a character of class and/or status in a broader sense. Apparently, they try to be radical and/or rational in public, but rarely remain so in private. In public, the residents declare that they all belong to the same status and same family, but a competition exists among the neighbours at a latent level, in terms of consumerism. Apart from the broad definitions of social relationship in terms of family and kin, renovated relationships defined by friendship, neighbours, tenants, domestic helps and residential governmental staffs are also in the network of relations of a particular resident.

To begin with the family, Table- 1 represents the character of family type and size in Tangra Complex (in the three categories of apartments; i.e. 350 sq.ft, 450 sq.ft and 600 sq.ft).

Table: 1. Family type and size of the residents of Tangra Complex

CATEGORIES OF FLAT	FAMILY TYPE					TOTAL	FAMILY SIZE				TOTAL
	NUCLEAR	EXTENDED			IN-COMPLETE		SMALL 1-3	MEDIUM 4-6	LARGE 7-9	V. LARGE 10 & 10 +	
		HOR	VER	MIX							
Slum Clearance Project	103 55.9%	- -	41 22.3%	11 6.0%	29 15.8%	184 100.0%	98 53.3%	86 46.7%	-	-	184 100.0%
Small Two Room	71 50.0%	4 2.8%	38 26.7%	7 4.9%	22 15.6%	142 100.0%	78 54.9%	59 41.5%	5 3.6%	-	142 100.0%
Regular Two Room	64 42.4%	11 7.3%	36 23.8%	10 6.6%	30 19.9%	151 100.0%	78 51.6%	69 45.7%	4 2.7%	-	151 100.0%

From Table 1 it is observed that there is a proportional decrease in number of nuclear families with increased availability of physical space. Most of the nuclear families are found in Slum Clearance Project apartments (350 sq.ft), followed by those in the Small Two Room apartments (450 sq.ft) and in Regular Two Room apartments (600 sq.ft.). The availability of space has definite bearing on this result. The horizontal extended family, shares a direct but proportionate relation with available space. But in the case of vertically and/or horizontal extended families, this trend does not exist; rather, majority of representations of these two categories are from intermediate category of apartment (Small Two Room ; 450 sq.ft.). Financial constrain is the major reason for larger families living in small space. Vertically extended families are maximum in number in the intermediate category of Small Two Room apartments. Compared to the families living in Slum Clearance Project apartments (350sq.ft.), the Small Two Room apartments have some excess space, which can support some more family members. Regular Two Room apartments (600sq.ft.) does not conform the direct proportionate relation between family size and available physical space. At the initial stage of the formation of the Complex, Regular Two Room apartments were allotted to the service holders having high monthly income. In course of time, the people living in this category of apartments were able to

purchase a new residential space. This character is responsible for breaking down of extended families in Regular Two Room apartments. At the time of *Durga Puja* celebration in the Complex, all the residents come forward and participate like members of an extended family. While the male folk of the Complex gets engaged in works related to the construction of pandal, illumination of the Complex and selection and ordering of idols, the females remain busy with the arrangements related to the rituals of the *Puja*. During these days, the *puja* premise becomes a place of *adda* (get-together) for the residents of the Complex; those who are settled outside Kolkata in connection with job return on this occasion. The community feast during one of these days of celebration reinforces the bond among the residents.

The community feeling among the residents becomes pronounced at the time of crisis. I am citing two cases where the residents showed solidarity and prevented untoward incident. In both the instances, collective interest supersedes individual consideration.

Two cases may be cited to illustrate this community feeling of the residents.

**Case: I**

At the time of Indo-Pak war (1971), there was a bombing threat in Calcutta. And Tangra Housing Complex was also under threat. The elders of the Complex kept a vigil to ensure that all the residents are observing the '*black-out*' whenever they were alerted. The windows remained closed and the window-panes were painted black or covered with black paper so that no light of the apartment could spill outside.

**Case: II**

Again, during the time of demolition of Babri Masjid (1992), there was a communal unrest in the city of Kolkata. The Tangra Complex again became susceptible to this communal unrest. For security reasons, curfew was imposed at that point of time. In fact, the day when communal violence started in Tangra locality, people of the Complex belonging to different age categories and sex remained awake the whole night fearing attack on the Complex.

On the third day of the curfew, as a security measure, the local police administration entered the Complex and booked many young men without any valid reason. So, the women of the Complex protested against the police atrocity and '*gheraod*' the police station for the release of this people. Ultimately, the police gave in to their demand and released the arrested people.

At the time of my fieldwork, the Kasba Complex was five years old. The occupants of the Complex were the first generation residents. So, the network of relationship among the residents was still in a formative stage. However, to understand the network formation process, the multifaceted structure defining social relationships among the members of the Complex may be highlighted. The cultural attributes produced in the defined space has been represented by characters representing 'units of differences' among the residents (in multifaceted form), like family structure and function, web of kinship and

friendship formation (both occasional and in everyday life). The importance of the aforesaid features in character formation needs to be acknowledged.

Regarding the 'Unit of differences', covering stratification and beyond, the categorisation or classification of residents of Kasba Complex can be understood from the perspectives of outsiders and residents. The residents of this Complex categorize the occupants of the apartment on three domains: (a) on the basis of residential and ownership status, (b) on the basis of economic affluence and (c) on the basis of caste, creed and community.

*Residential status and ownership status:* There are three types of residents-owner residents, tenant residents and absentee owners. The absentee owners keep their apartments under lock and key. The very existence of these three groups of people contributes to differential process in the construction of social relationship. The owner residents lives here throughout the year, and this became a factor in constructing new relationship. The Complex being constructed in the form of a co-operative society, the membership was distributed among the peers. So, in a number of cases the relationship among the members continued from their previous connections. However, the pattern of relationship among the members took a new shape when they started living together with their families in the Complex. The new owner residents engaged themselves in developing relationships with the new neighbours, who were not known to each other. In the everyday life of the residents (particularly among the senior citizens), mutual visit to each other's apartment became an avenue for interaction. Gradually, this kind of interaction developed among the younger groups. The practice of exchange of food items exists among some of the families residing in the Complex; conforming to the age old tradition.<sup>4</sup> The owner residents have started reconstructing their traditional past, but the starting process is so recent in origin that the character of reproduction has not yet crystallised. The reconstruction process of tradition by the members is manifested through characters of participation in community programs inside the Complex (*puja*, social celebrations), as they would have done in their own house, thereby sharing of personal space with very close friends living in the Complex. However, this feature is found only in a limited number of cases.

In contrast to the owner residents, the tenant residents of the Complex owing to their temporary period of stay usually maintain a formal relationship. The rented sector predominantly comes from the corporate background as their apartments are rented by their respective companies and are allotted to them to keep pace with the transferring nature of job. They remain busy with their private-managerial corporate service and they have very less time for community interaction in the Complex. During short period of holidays, they prefer to return to their native place and spend time with own people. On Sundays and other holidays, these corporate employees tend to stay inside the flat and spend time with the family members rather than with the neighbours

residing in the Complex. These tenant residents are predominantly non-Bengali and most of them believe that they occupy a different space from that of the owner residents. In other words, these residents do not have much belonging with the activities of the Complex and have formed an identity of their own, different from the owner residents.

The absentee owners are infrequent visitors to the Complex. The absentee owners maintain their absentee status for two major reasons, viz. working and living abroad or outside Calcutta and owning houses or flats elsewhere in Calcutta. They tend to maintain a neutral status. There are situations when they become possessive about the affairs of the Complex, while at times they tend to avoid or maintain a status quo. In other words, they are self-oriented and their role changes according to time and space. Since they do not enjoy 24 hours residential status in the Complex, they keep their private space totally secluded from the residents. In short, they maintain a fluctuating space defining themselves in no absolute parameters in terms of residential status.

Observations on the residential and possession perspective of an insider reveal that the Complex has created a new concept of difference, which definitely guides the pattern of behaviour in everyday life. In short, the Complex from the insiders' domain has become stratified, but this difference is new and self-made dictated by the personal space of the residents. The residents of the Complex, irrespective of their ownership pattern or residential status, remain a cohesive unit to the outsiders. The existence of 'they' and 'we' concept among the outsiders has imposed a form of uniformity among the residents in the Complex. Taking together the insider as well as the outsider perspective, the unit of difference is in a flux. The element of stratification in residential and possession domain is a new product of this urban apartment culture as it does not define difference in static, stereotypic terms.

The economic differences among the residents in the Complex are more latent than manifested. Outwardly at least, there is a kind of homogeneity in display because all the flat and land owners are members of the same co-operative society. They all come from a middle class background. Actually, class as an economic parameter is non-existent. Rather a competition is always on to expand the range of the so-called middle-class or the *Maddhyabittas*. This expansion process is going on through the accumulation of property as a standard of consumerism. This also applies to the absentee owners, who keep the flat under lock and key. Thus, the residents of the Complex represent a homogenous group; whatever small difference exists, it is because of its inclusive range, which keeps on expanding among the modern urban middle class society.

Following the aforesaid two characters comes the most traditional form of stratification, viz. Caste-Creed-Community. Although the apartments are predominantly owned/resided by the Bengali Hindus, yet the Complex



represents a degree of cosmopolitanism in real sense; especially with respect to the tenant owners.

To begin with the Bengali-Hindu section, people from different caste groups reside adjacent to each other. The traditional caste oriented residence has been discontinued giving way to that of status-oriented residence. Accordingly, people from different caste groups, like *Brahmin, Kayastha, Baidya, Goala, Aguri, Swarnakar, Muchi* are seen to be living in the Complex. Other than the Bengali population, people from different parts of the country also reside in the Complex; few of them are owners. The representatives of different communities include Punjabi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Oriya, Bihari, Anglo-Indian, Tamil, Kannada and non-Bengali Muslims as well as from North-East India. This exemplifies the extent of cosmopolitanism. It even assumed a global dimension.

Observations on ethnic differences in the Complex reveal a character of dichotomy in between the outer space and the inner self. For the outer space of individual, the urban culture of today has made the residents to discontinue the preexisting concept of difference on the basis of ethnic categories. The interaction attributes in everyday life take minimum consideration of the family background in the domain of tribe-caste-community. From the perspective of economic status, even a neighbour is treated as a stranger. Accordingly, discontinuity in the traditional hierarchical structure has been operative from the very initiation of the formation of the Complex.

In the inside domain of the residents, a character of duality exists which keeps on altering with change in contexts. Sometimes, they recreate tradition or a part as caste based negotiation marriage of children as well as kinship based social ritual. Side by side, they accept inter-caste marriages of sons and daughters or participate in social celebrations of different communities apart from their own. The contradictions exist in such a form that while on one hand they seem to consider inter-caste marriage as a demonstration of modern culture, on the other they refuse to accept inter-religion marriage as it violates the tradition.

In brief, traditionalism in the inside space of an individual still exists, but in the public domain it takes the garb of modernity. Time and contexts define modalities about the manifestation of behaviour conforming to either traditionalism or modernity. Cases reveal that the same individual changes space from time to time.

To write on manifestation and reproduction of the multiple relationship patterns one needs to comprehend how social relationships amongst the individuals in the Complex operate as multiple categories. Once again, following the footsteps of Tangra Complex, the concept of family and kinship has been incorporated in this structure. Moreover, newly produced relationships in terms of friendship, neighbours and residents -maid servants relationship pattern are also taken into consideration.

To begin with the family, Table- 2 represents the character of family type and size in the Kasba Complex.

Table: 2. *Family type and size of the residents of Kasba Complex*

Family Type						
Nuclear	Extended				Incomplete	Total
	V	H	M	T		
169 (63.5%)	79 (91.9%)	-	7 (8.1%)	86 (100%) (32.3%)	11 (4.2%)	266 (100.0%)

V= Vertical Extended; H= Horizontal Extended; M= Mixed type

Family Size				
Small (1-3 members)	Medium (4-6 members)	Large (7 & 9 members)	Very Large	Total
136 (51.1%)	123 (46.2%)	7 (2.7%)	-	266 (100.0%)

Table 2 shows that the most of the families of this complex is of nuclear type. There are few extended families. These are in the forms of vertical extension and mixed extended families represented by parental-in-laws living with bachelor brother-in-law or spinster sister-in-law together with the married couples.

It is observed that half of the families are small sized family followed by that of the medium sized (46.2%) families; few are large sized families. From the above figures, it can be said that the Complex being newly built, represents urban characters in the truest sense. With regard to the family types, the nuclear pattern rules the city life owing to the crunch of physical space and economic affluence of individual families. For the rural urbanites, the preference is for the vertical form of extended family type owing to their cultural tradition of remaining together with parents. The Kasba Complex exhibits the aforesaid characteristics, but the main trend is on self-centered urbanism. After marriage, the siblings settle in another space with their spouses to avoid conflicts with extended family members. Displaying a type of false dignity, giving little space to others and avoidance following a stubborn uncompromising attitude has become the order of the day in urban life; and

the families in Kasba Complex conforms to this tradition. Although space is available for accommodating large number of extended family members, yet economic affluence, status construct, character of self-dignity and isolation remain the barrier. They tend to remain separate from their primary kin and try to project 'self' in their respective small and medium sized families.

Friendship and neighbourhood are the two concepts which have become very much overlapping in terms of residential composition. Some of the residents had friends in their previous places of stay, but in Kasba Complex friendship in the neighbourhood is still in the making. Age, occupation and economic status remain the criteria of friendship in today's life. The basic character of liking and disliking in the private space has given way to status-based friendship in the public life of the residents. The residents are conscious of the dignity of living within the premise of the Complex and accordingly, recreate personality and hide the existing one to match the status symbol prevailing in the Complex. But the aforesaid character is predominantly manifested among the young and the middle aged representatives. A predominant cause of such behavioural existence is that the space of materiality keeps them occupied to the brim which in turn affects time of sharing and creating sufficient spatial distance.

The senior citizens spend their leisure time in the common area of the Complex by chatting and sharing their life experiences. Their retired life has provided them with sufficient time to spend together so as to reduce the individual space existing between them and bring the overlapping character of sharing into effect. Life therefore exhibits differential mode of friendship formation among individuals of different age categories, thereby contributing to multiple character formation.

#### **Observation: Culture and Space Dynamics**

The context of Anthropology of Space in the locale of urban culture in two Housing Complexes in Kolkata points to a number of characters including multiplicity of variables, contradictions and conflicts.

The study defines the character of space as it was created, ruptured and recreated in the venue of the Complex. This process further exhibit characters of conflict and conformity in the domain of a number of variables. These include tradition – modernity dichotomy, public space – private space dichotomy, homogeneity – heterogeneity dichotomy as well as purity-pollution dichotomy amongst the residents of the studied Complex. The concept cannot exist as such; it has to be developed. It is better to write 'the concept of space, as is evident from the present study, operates in a state of flux.' The grey areas of space define that the relativity construct is based on the locale of culture. Space in this locale of urbanism talks of the embodied character of the individuals and these individuals exist in different shades of black and white with no absolute polarity. A sense of contradiction operates within the 'self' of these people and they are always subjected to variability and multiplicity

which operate at every point of time. Understanding this flux, self-contradiction and multiplicity is a difficult task. Although it becomes a herculean task yet we need to put all our efforts in that direction.

To understand the process of urbanism as is evident from the cultural space of the individuals, the starting point lies in the dichotomy of material and abstract forms of existence in the spatial dynamics. There is also a need to distinguish the characters of physical space and cultural space from the aspect of architectural space. In the domain of physical space-cultural space interface, an apartment does exhibit the character of cultural artifact, which exhibits flexibility. Social architecture brings alienation, isolation, and heterogeneity into play. This has further separated the overlapping characters of public and private space on a differential basis.

It becomes evident from the above study that the character of social space in Tangra and Kasba Complex shows multifarious discontinuous spatial existence in a continuous form. A condition of flux develops discontinuously, but of course punctuated with recreations. A rule of violation apparently operates, but it is in a latent or hidden form. We talk of nuclearisation of family as an impact of urbanisation, but the study helps us to locate the embodied space pointing to anti-nuclearisation in a bigger sense. The effort of the primary kin to stay in adjacent residential units is a pointer. The modes of production, rupture and recreation operate in a continuous form, but the whole process is discontinuous. The created traditional rural-agrarian cultural characters of yesteryears in the locale of urban setting are apparently under strain. Further, the new character of the so-called 'modernity' adds to the process of discontinuity in an apparent effort to recreate the past cultural sentiments, practices, and attitudes within the embodied space of individuals. The debate lies on the question of alternative expressions of cultural character at the same point of time or linear progression of discontinuous characters in a continuous fashion. Grey areas still exist between these two, determined by time and space. The culture of today is to be taken as a subject of space that determines the modalities from thought to action in a multiple context ranging from materialism to abstraction. In this regard, it needs to be stated that in such a situation absolute determinism or generalization of culture as a process take the backstage. For a comprehensive cultural understanding in the context of anthropological knowledge formulation, space can be an important consideration.

#### NOTES

- 1 Housing in terms of income group.
- 2 L (M, 24, muslim) [name not disclosed] an active young member of *Durga Puja* organising committee; he also actively participates in his club *Pakhider Sansar* (family of birds) for organising *Saraswati Puja* (Goddess of Learning and Music) every year.
- 3 Resident of Block-V, Flat-1 and Block-Z, Flat-9.
- 4 Case of residents of Srobona A-1 & Srobona D-1; Rohini A-3 & Rohini C-3 etc.

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## **Investment of Remittances in the Villages of Eastern Nepal: An Ethnographic Exploration of Coal mine Workers of Meghalaya**

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**Abstract:** The coal mining industry in Meghalaya has been attracting a large number of migrants from Nepal who work there as labourers. Working in the coal mines helps these Nepalese migrants in earning good amount of money which they remit back home in Nepal. This paper attempts to examine the emic perspective about remittance, in terms of nature of remittances and how these are utilized towards social mobility, towards materializing the desire of escaping from village life to a life in flourishing urban centres of Nepal which are looked up as centres of better employment opportunities. Multi sited fieldwork was carried out among a group of Nepalese coal mine workers who move between Sutnga coal mines in Meghalaya and their home in Eastern Nepal. Data were collected from two districts of Nepal, namely Patlepani in Bhojpur and Bange Bazaar in Sunsari district of the Koshi zone of Eastern Nepal . Fieldwork was done in three phases - December 2012 to March 2013; September 2013 to December 2013 and; from January 2014 to June 2014. Nepalese migrants working in the coal mines of India connect the term “progress” with “earnings” from the coal mines. A person is perceived by his village folks as a successful migrant if he is able to progress by going to the coal mines and for them ‘progress’ means, to move from village to city life.

*Key words :* Migration, coal mine, remittance, progress, fieldwork

*“No progress...it was sufficient for food and to pay debts...we could not progress as our other village brothers who have now migrated to terai belt. Why are you looking here, you have to go to the plains of Bange Bazaar to see the progress from the income of the coal mines (koilakhat) of Meghalaya,”(Words spoken by a returnee coal mine worker in Bhojpur, Nepal; dated 05th October 2013).*

### INTRODUCTION

India is one of the main destinations for jobs for the people of Nepal. The migrants from Nepal come down to work in different Indian states as security guards, milkmen, waiters, drivers, domestic help, agricultural labourers, porters, rickshaw pullers and as government employees (Paudel 1990; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1996; Thieme 2003; Bhattraï 2007; Brusle 2008;). The coal mines in Meghalaya, a state in India’s northeast, have been witnessing a steady flow of migrant workers from Nepal. In the past decades, remittances from these coal mines have significantly contributed to the developments in the villages of Eastern Nepal. Working and living in the coal mines is rather precarious. The nature of the job, as well as living in an ethnic conflict prone area, renders the Nepalese migrant workers more insecure. The families and communities of Nepalese migrant workers back home often have high expectations of them,

of returning home with a fortune for a better life. The migrant workers earn more than what they would have earned in Nepal but for many, this comes with a very high price. Many migrant workers suffer from harsh working environment in the coal mining area. The risk of succumbing to ill health far outweighs the financial returns that they remit back home. Many lose their lives due to accidents in the workplace. However, despite the inherent risks involved in the coal mining exercise, the steady flow of Nepalese migrating to work in the coal mines has been anything but sporadic. In fact, as reported by the migrants, the number of Nepalese migrant workers in coal mines has increased over the years.

Much of the existing literature on Nepalese labour migration to India (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1996; Seddon *et al.* 1998; Dahal 2000; Thieme 2003, Thieme and Muller-Boker 2004; 2010;; Kollmair *et al.* 2006;; Brusle 2008;) concerns economic remittances sent from India to Nepal. Literature on remittances from India to Nepal focuses on its impact on household consumption (Seddon *et al.* 1998) children's education (Thieme and Wyss 2005; Thieme and Muller- Boker 2010), poverty reduction (Subedi 2009; Wagle 2012) as well as discusses undocumented remittances (Seddon *et al.* 1998; Kollmair *et al.* 2006). This article particularly draws attention towards how the remittances are utilized to move or escape from village life to a life in flourishing urban centres of Nepal, which are looked up as centres of better employment opportunities. In this paper, we attempted to analyze the emic perception about remittance. The Nepalese migrants working in the coal mines of India connect the term "progress" with "earnings" from the coal mines. A person is considered by his village folks as a successful migrant if he is able to 'progress'. They perceive 'progress' of an individual when one migrates from village to city life in search of job and is able to earn well to send remittance back home for upward social mobility of the family.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This ethnographic study was carried out in Sutnga coal mines in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya, India and Eastern Nepal from 2012 to 2014 in three phases (December 2012 to March 2013; September 2013 to December 2013 and; from January 2014 to June 2014) . Information was collected through participant observation, open-ended interviews, census schedules, survey and case studies and life histories. Audio-visual aids, like camera and voice recorder were utilised for documentation. Interviews of migrants informed about the core zones of out migration from Nepal to the coal mines in Meghalaya. Thus, multi-sited fieldwork was carried out among a group of Nepalese coal mine workers who move between Sutnga coal mines in Meghalaya and their home in Eastern Nepal. Data were collected from two districts of Nepal, namely Patlepani in Bhojpur and Bange Bazaar in Sunsari district of the Koshi zone of Eastern Nepal in order to collect details about the remittance utilization from migration to the coal mines.



A large number of Nepalese coal mine workers in the Sutnga coal mine areas hail from village of Patlepani in Bhojpur district in Nepal. Most of the villagers here are working in their agricultural fields, while some others have migrated to the coal mines in search of job. Patlepani is a remote area in the hilly terrain of Nepal, quite far from Kathmandu and other major cities. The district has only one town, Bhojpur. Away from the urban, industrial centres, it lacks manufacturing and service providing industries which could generate jobs for the local inhabitants. Development in Bhojpur is seriously challenged due to the absence of basic infrastructure facilities in the areas of higher education, health care, transport and communication, electricity and potable water supply, etc. Located in the eastern part of Nepal, Bhojpur is not easily accessible due to poor network of roads. One has to walk through the hills and cliffs to reach the village. Apart from unemployment, the other major problem faced by the youth till a few years ago, was the threat of Maoist insurgency (1996- 2006). The Maoist targeted the uneducated and unemployed youth who were forcibly recruited into the Maoist camps. Thus, to liberate themselves from the fear of getting recruited into the Maoist camps, a number of youth migrated to the coal mines of Meghalaya (Upadhyay and Ranjan 2017). Further, as Bhojpur has a hilly terrain, practicing agriculture is rather strenuous here. All these factors have resulted in large scale migration of men and women from Bhojpur to the Jaintia Hills coal mines.

If Bhojpur represents a village of poor connectivity, hardships and one pushing its natives out to migrate for greener pastures, Bange Bazaar is the coveted area for settlement, representing affluence.

Throughout the text, the readers could wonder, why do the Nepalese villagers go to work in the coal mines given that it is full of risks, and why not to other parts of India? This is because in Meghalaya, private individuals own coal mines. The area falls under the 6th Schedule of Indian Constitution that grants exclusive land rights to local tribes, Khasi and Jaintia. Very little governmental control can be exercised on the land. The coal mines belong to the land owners who have an autonomous control over the mining operations. In most parts of the state, coal is indiscriminately mined in the most unregulated manner (Tiwari 1996; Impulse 2010) for its commercial use. Crude ways of mining continue to be practiced as these call for minimum investment of money but maximum profit. Many workers lost their lives due to accidents, which frequently occur as a result of unregulated mining. Further, continuous exposure to coal dust results in a high prevalence of many diseases among these migrants. Despite the risks, the Nepalese migrant workers continue to work in the coal mines and do not take up other vocations in other parts of India because the earning here is better and brisker. Some of the Nepalese migrant labourers have become affluent *Sardars* in a short time. Coal in Meghalaya is of a superior quality. It is popularly known as “tertiary coal”, has high calorific value and low ash contents (Chakrabarti and Majumdar

2004; Sahu and Goel 2004) and hence, is in huge demand. This calls for a larger labour force to be engaged in coal extraction. Therefore, *Sardars* with the help of the Jaintia owners take initiative to recruit cheap labour from Nepal by offering them advance payment. Inspired by their predecessors, groups of Nepalese migrate to the mines in waves. Wives of some of the migrants are also actively engaged in coal mining exercise. They usually work as unskilled labour, and are not engaged in heavy work. Thus, easy availability of work, weekly payment system, opportunity of engaging women in mining, flexible work hours, are factors which motivate the Nepalese migrants to work in the coal mines of Meghalaya and not in other sectors in other parts of India.

## RESULTS

### *Nature of remittance*

Not all Nepalese coal mine workers remit their earnings to Nepal. Those who have permanently settled in the Jaintia Hills with their families and made coal mines their home, have no connection left with Nepal. Migrants who remit more amount are mostly temporary or seasonal migrants. The *chha maine* category of workers work for six months, i.e. during the main mining season, from November to April and then return to their villages in Nepal where they stay for the next six months and work in their agricultural field. The money they earn as mine workers is mostly utilised in clearing off debts and in buying land in Nepal.

Table 1. *Age in years and amount of remittance sent*

Amount of remittance sent (INR)	Age in years (n=252)										Total	
	<20		21-30		31-40		41-50		51+			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do not send	11	11.6	32	33.7	26	27.4	20	21.0	6	6.3	95	100.0
1000-20000	4	10.3	15	38.5	11	28.2	11	17.9	1	5.1	39	100.0
20001-40000	2	5.7	15	42.9	11	31.4	5	14.3	2	5.7	35	100.0
40001 and above	1	1.2	35	42.2	23	27.7	21	25.3	3	3.6	83	100.0
Total	18	7.1	97	38.5	71	28.2	53	21.0	13	5.2	252	100.0

Table 1 shows that the highest amount of remittance sent by the Nepalese migrant workers is 40,001 (INR) and above by the participants from age group of 21-30 (38.5%) years. These are mostly *chha maine workers*. The migrants from 31-40 (28.2%) years category come next in sending remittance. This group of workers is mostly *Sardars* (labour supervisor) and experienced workers.. Migrants send highest remittance during the peak mining seasons. *Sardars* are the affluent migrants and remit as much as rupees one lakh and above. Migrant workers of age group 51 years and above (5.2%) remit lesser in number. This is primarily because migrants in this age group have settled

down permanently in the mining area with their families and there are some among the latter who do not remit at all. “Others” who fall in this non remitting group are the ones who have married the migrants from other communities and over time their connections with Nepal have snapped; those who spend all their earnings in gambling and drinking and are left with no earnings to send back; as well as those who met with an accident and decided to stay back in the coal mines ever since.

#### *Medium of Remittance*

Formal channels of sending remittances from India to Nepal are the banks, the most popular one being, the State Bank of India (SBI). Money is also sent through the money transfer agencies, such as International Money Express (IME ) and the Western Union. However, most of the migrant workers use informal channels of remittance, i.e. either carrying the money with them in person to Nepal, or sending it through their friends or relatives when the latter visit the same. Apart from these channels, money is also delivered by labor contractors who charge a certain amount for the service rendered. A system of money transfer, like *hundi* is found to be in practice in the *bazaar* (market) areas of the coal mines. *Hundi* is a traditional method of sending money. The system operates on the basis of trust between brokers in two different countries without official/legal documents (Sherpa 2010). For example, if migrant workers want to remit money through a *hundi* broker in the coal mines, the latter contacts his counterpart in Nepal and asks the Nepalese broker to pay the amount to the receiving person or family. The system carries transaction charges up to ten percent of the total amount delivered.

#### *Frequency and amount of Remittance*

The frequency and the amount of remittance transfer differ widely. The earnings of the workers in the coal mining business vary according to their position in the hierarchy of coal mining exercise. The highest position in this hierarchy is that of the *Sardar*. A *Sardar* is the overall supervisor of the mining activity. Most of the *Sardars* remit more than once a month. The *chha maine* labourers mostly carry their earnings when they return to Nepal after working in the mines for six months, and sometimes send the money through their friends or relatives. The *bara maine* or twelve months labourers remit less frequently and mostly to their parents in Nepal, as their spouse and children live with them in the coal mines. The amount remitted at a time varies from 10,000 (INR) to 1,00,000 (INR) or more.

#### *Patlepani- the Original Village*

##### Second Arab

The Nepalese migrants from Patlepani village in Bhopur district of Nepal migrate to the Jaintia Hills coalmines. To begin with, these migrants leave behind their children and the elderly and come to work in the mines during the main mining season (from November to April). The villagers of Patlepani,

Bhojpur address the coal mining area as *second Arab*. Arabia is looked up as a lucrative place. The villagers believe that the coal mines are equally profitable. A returnee migrant named Gagan Rai from Patlepani, aged 72 years while talking about the days of his youth, says that the coal mining area was considered as *first Arab* because at that time it was the only place 'abroad' where one could travel and earn big money in a short period of time. Coal mine was the only place where one could earn up to 7000 INR or 11, 200 Nepalese rupee per week, excluding boarding and lodging. This was considered a fairly good amount to bring back home to Nepal. Prior to going to the mines, he hardly 'saw' a rupee even after a week's hard labor in the agricultural field. This is primarily because Patlepani is poorly connected with the market area and lack of proper communication and transport between Patlepani and the commercial area has rendered the successful sale of agricultural products extremely difficult. The present generation of youth of Bhojpur calls the coal mines, *second Arab* as they have experienced working in Arabia before migrating to the coal mines. They informed that Saudi Arabia has stringent rules for migrant workers. They are not allowed by their employers to visit their home in Nepal as and when they wish to. For them, coal mine is a better place to work than Saudi Arabia because in the former, workers enjoy rather spasmodic pattern of routine with no regular working hours and no fixed rules and regulations. Wages earned in the coal mines vary according to the number of hours one puts in. In Saudi Arabia, workers need to stick to their fixed routine and work in strict accordance with the instructions of their employers. Committing even a small mistake could render them jobless. They feel more secured and liberated in the coal mines. Gagan Rai further informed that many villagers have 'progressed' after they discovered coal mine area as a place of earning quick money. This has led to a gradual depletion of population in the village. Those who are left there are mostly the elderly, as the youth are either working in the coal mines or have settled in the *terai* (the plains area of Nepal) with the earnings from the mines.

Higher exchange value of the Indian rupee and weekly wage earning system attracts the

Nepalese migrants to the coal mines. With the money earned from working in the mines, Gagan purchased cattle and agricultural land in his native village. He did not buy land and settle in the *terai* because of his strong desire to remain connected with his roots. However, his son who is working as a *Sardar* in the coal mines plans to settle in the *terai* because he aspires to provide good education to his children which he does not hope to get in his village.

#### Patlepani: A Changed Village

In the 1970s, the Nepalese males migrated to the coal mines as seasonal labour to earn a living. They sent their earnings to their home in Nepal to meet the household expenses and to repay the debt. After working for almost six months

in the mines, these villagers would return to their village with some money and gifts for their families. The first generation migrants went to work in the mines, leaving their families back home. In the last thirty years, the people in the village have witnessed many changes brought about by the remittances from the coal mines. One such change is in the food habits of the migrant's family. At one point of time the staple food of the villagers was millet porridge (*kodoko dhedo*) or maize porridge. The soil of the terrain is rocky and there is insufficient rain. Hence, the villagers depended on millet, as millet could easily grow on such a land. However, after migrating to the coal mines they started taking rice and sent the same back home in Nepal. They are now able to purchase rice for daily consumption. While returning from India back home, they buy sacks of rice from the border area. Today, rice is a staple food in the village and millet is used in brewing millet beer and as fodder for the domestic animals. The remittances from the mines are used in agricultural activities, such as purchasing seeds and manures, for plantation of trees, fruits, and vegetables. Some of the villagers have started the business of plantation of *rudraksha* (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*), cardamom, and oranges. Some of the varieties of *rudraksha* are very expensive owing to their demand for religious and medicinal purposes. Other investments include, construction of houses, purchase of land and domestic animals and of equipments for farming operations, and setting up small shops. The villagers also buy gifts, like cell phones, television, and or clothes from Meghalaya for their families in Nepal. The remittances from the mines are invested not only towards family requirements, but also to contribute towards community development as informed by the villagers of Patlepani, Bhojpur. For instance, the migrant workers in the mines pooled a part of their income for the development of their village, like construction of village road from Peple (ward number 8) to Patlepani (ward number 5), provision of solar energy to most of the houses, and supply of potable water.

To migrate from Patlepani is to 'Progress'

The villagers also reported that on account of earning well from the coal mines, they have become wealthy and have progressed (*dhani bhaye ani pragati gare*) in life. Many of them have migrated (*basai sarai*) from this village and settled in the *terai* (plains) area as well as in the city of Kathmandu. For the Nepalese migrants to the coal mines, 'progress' is perceived in terms of becoming rich enough to purchase land in the *terai* and finally settling there. The development that took place in their village, Patlepani as a result of the remittances from the coal mines is not considered as actual 'progress'. 'Progress' is measured in terms of buying land and settling in the *terai*. They often cite examples of those villagers who became *Sardars* (top most position in the hierarchy of coal mine workers) in the coal mines and settled in the plains and cities of Nepal. They particularly talk about the life of a successful *Sardar*, Til Bahadur Karki, now aged 73years, believed to be the first person who migrated from his village

Patelepani to the coal mines. He is looked upon as a pioneer who initiated the trend of migration from Patlepani to the coal mines in Meghalaya. He started working in the mines as a labourer, and earned the nick name of *meriammai* (Oh my mother). Surviving multiple risks which accompany the life in the mines, he worked hard to come up to the position of the *Sardar*. He succeeded in buying land in the *terai*, in educating his children and in permanently settling in Bange Bazaar, in Mahendra Nagar VDC in the *terai*.

He first went to the coal mines in the year 1978 with the help of a middleman. He narrates the story behind his nick name, *Meri Ammai*. Being new to the coal mining area, he was shocked to see the labourers working inside small holes dug into the ground or inside rocky hills. The hole is very small and it is after its size that the mining in Meghalaya is infamously known as *rat hole* mining. He thought he would get crushed if he entered the tiny hole. In fear and dismay, he exclaimed with his hands on his forehead *meriammai, meriammai!* (Oh my mother, my mother!). From then onwards he came to be known as *meriammai* – a name “recognized as institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance” (Bourdieu 1986). After tiding through the initial shock and fear of entering the *rat holes*, Til Bahadur Karki accepted the dangers that lurk inside the coal mines, like, asphyxiation or the roof caving in, and went on to become an inspiration for many of his village people who followed him to the coal mines. As he rose to the position of the *Sardar*, he used his influence to provide jobs to the unemployed folks of his village in the mines.

India and Nepal share an open border and this further facilitates migration between the two countries as people on either side can cross the border without a passport. Yet, in day to day parlance, migrant workers from Nepal suffer harassment at the hands of the bribe hungry police stationed at the border. Til Bahadur Karki tells that he endured many difficulties in hiding from the police and their interrogation while travelling to the mines. There were times when he reached the mines after undertaking a week long journey without food and water, passing through the jungles in order to escape the confrontation with the police. Yet despite going through such ordeals, he continued to work in the mines as he realized that life there is any day easier than what it is in his own village. Earning from the mines helped him to clear the debts incurred by his family during his prolonged absence from home. He continued to work in the coal mines for the next fifteen years. He worked as a *bara maine* in the coal mines. Once he could not return home for three years due to work pressure, but sent money regularly to his home through his relatives and friends. At present, his sons who are working in Malaysia as factory workers no longer allow him to work in the coal mines.

Following Til Bahadur Karki, many of his village brethrens from Patlepani, migrated and earned from the coal mines and are now settled in the plains of Bangein Sunsari district, Nepal. Sunsari district is a hub for internal migration

from Bhojpur. It is a coveted area for residential purposes, well equipped with proper infrastructure and civic amenities. These migrants to Bange Bazaar are identified as residents of Bhojpur, '*Bhojpuretole or Pepletole*' (colonies named after their original village or district). They hold Til Bahadur Karki in deep reverence, as one to whom they owe their progress. He is looked at as one who not only improved his economic status but also earned a lot of goodwill of the people from his village. In this sense, remittances are more than the return a household needs to meet its daily expenses. They stand as building blocks for a community (Cohen 2005). Karki created social capital (Bourdieu 1986) by winning the trust of others in his village who followed him to the mines, and like him settled in Bange.

#### *Change in Occupation*

In Bange Bazaar, one of the field sites in Sunsari district in Eastern Nepal there is a colony named as '*Kami tole*' (dalit colony) whose inhabitants had migrated from Basaigaon village, Dewantar VDC in Bhojpur to the Meghalaya mines around the year 1998. Prior to that, they were working as porters in their village in Bhojpur. As porters, they suffered intense hardships, carrying heavy loads up and down the hills. They say that they worked like *donkeys*. They walked for six to seven days to deliver the luggage to its destination and such an arduous journey fetched them barely 100-200 Nepalese rupees, an earning, too little to run a household. Even now, many unemployed people from this village work as porters. Apart from the strenuous nature of the job, lack of regular or permanent engagement as a porter, further adds to their misery and squalor. People in their own village as well as in the neighbouring ones mostly carry their own belonging. It is only when the goods are extremely heavy that the porters are hired.

After migrating to the coal mines, these porters found working there is comparatively easier as the work entailed lesser hardships and quicker monetary remunerations. This change in profession gave them the opportunity to earn enough to settle in the plains and also take up secondary vocations, like opening up small shops, working in agricultural fields under the sharecropping system (*adhaya*)<sup>1</sup>, etc. They are now in a position to hire porters to carry their belongings when they visit their villages.

The Nepalese migrants living in the coal mine areas informed that while they were working as porters in their village, they were motivated to migrate to the mines by a Nepalese *Sardar* who himself became well established in the mining industry. These Nepalese migrants finally migrated and settled in the *terai* of Bange Bazaar nearly five years ago. Many are still in the process of returning. The returnee migrants to Bange Bazaar have come back after putting in almost thirty years of labour in the coal mines. Investing in buying land in Bange Bazaar is a well planned process. When they first migrate to the mining area, income from the first year of seasonal work is utilized for clearing off their debts and in procuring basic amenities such as clothes and grain, and

other items of household consumption. As they continue to work in the mines, they are able to save more of their earnings from the coal mines, to invest in building a concrete house in Nepal. To materialize this plan, they work very hard during the prime mining season in order to earn as much as they can before the lean period sets in when the mining exercise has to be put on hold. In a week they target to earn at least 10,000 Indian rupees. They informed that there are days when they continue to remain inside the mine, labouring hard, going without proper food, not seeing the sun and abstaining from all leisure and entertainment, in their pursuit of fulfilling their target of earning at least 10,000 rupees in that week. For them, the main motive is to work as much as possible to be able to remit back to Nepal.

Many villagers consider *Sardar* to be an icon of 'progress'.

*Labourer turned into a Sardar- a case*

A dramatic, rags to riches story is unfolded in the narrative of Anjan Pradhan, a *Sardar* controlling more than ten coal quarries in the Jaintia Hills. A Nepalese migrant, he worked as a school teacher in Nepal before coming to the mines, earning a salary of 750 Nepalese rupee per month. The amount was too meager to run a household. One evening, frustrated with his state of deprivation and poverty, he met a friend of his village. The friend was sporting a brand new expensive looking watch. Anjan asked how he managed to buy such an expensive watch. The friend informed him that he had recently returned from the coal mines and offered to take Anjan with him during his next visit to coal mine. He told Anjan that if he works in the coal mines of Meghalaya he could buy not just the watches but also a house in Kathmandu. Encouraged by his words Anjan carrying 1600 Nepalese rupees went to the coal mines of Jaintia hills, Meghalaya, India in 1988 although he had no idea of what he would be required to do there. When he first reached the mines, he was at a loss about how to live in such a place with a completely alien culture and to carry out the tasks related to mining. He being a tall and healthy person, entering the small holes was very difficult. In the first week of his arrival, he could not earn any money. He could not do the tasks related to mining and found the whole exercise to be an ordeal. Gradually, he garnered the determination to start learning to deal with the work and the environment. He first learned the techniques of digging out coal. It was an exhausting experience and at one time he felt like leaving the work and going back to Nepal. He begrudged but continued to persevere and was finally able to dig out and carry one full cart of coal. In those days, the remuneration for extracting one cart of coal was fifteen Indian rupee. This was the price of one cart of coal. He worked hard and started digging out more than seven carts of coal per day. After working for a couple of months, he sent 20,000 Indian rupees to his home in Nepal. As his earnings increased by working in the mines, he started indulging in dressing well, gambling and drinking. His earliest luxuries in the coal mines were a branded wrist watch and a leather jacket.



In 1989 his *malik* (employer, the mine owner), promoted him from the position of a labourer to that of a *Sardar*. The mine owner trusted Anjan as the latter had proved to be a hardworking and sincere worker. He was educated and could easily handle the accounts related to extraction and marketing of coal. While living in the Jaintia Hills, Anjan picked up the lingua franca of the area – Hindi, and also learnt the local language, *Pnar*. He also learnt to drive automobiles to bring machines and other heavy gadgets from the cities to the quarries. His confident and industrious nature made him popular in the mining area. He took the initiative towards the welfare of the Nepalese migrants working in the mines by starting the Nepalese labour association. To break the monotony of the life in the mines, he helped in organizing Bollywood celebrity shows as well as volleyball matches for the workers in the mining area. He informed that providing the means of recreation is important in order to retain the labourers in the mining areas. The drudgery of the mining tasks and being away from home had made many labourers leave the work and return to Nepal.

Anjan also brought his wife to live with him in the coal mines and his two children were born there. His wife started running a small restaurant. Apart from Anjan's income, the earnings from the *langar* (restaurant) also contributed to their household income. Anjan became an influential *Sardar* because he was able to learn the skills required to become a *Sardar*. Like him, Nepalese migrant workers not only earn money but also acquire new forms of knowledge and skills during all phases of the migration process (Valentin 2012).

Anjan is looked up as an ideal by many other Nepalese migrants coming from Nepal. They leave their homes in Nepal and travel to Meghalaya coal mines, reaching the area by taking different routes in order to escape the police at the border. The next thing they learn is the working language - Hindi and *Pnar*. The migrants can hardly speak any other language except Nepali and their own ethnic languages, like Rai, Limbu, Tamang and Gurung . In due course of time they acquire language skills (Dustmann 2000) and learn to speak broken Hindi, *Pnar* and even Assamese. Most of the Nepalese *Sardars* and labour contractors or middlemen (also known as *Sardars* by the workers) can speak different languages apart from Nepalese.

Anjan has four children. All his four children were sent to reputed private boarding schools in Dharan and Birtamod, big cities in Eastern Nepal and are now pursuing their education in the capital city of Kathmandu. Anjan is a very proud father because his children always stood first in their schools and colleges. Now they live in the house he built in Kathmandu. His elder daughter was graduated in business management from a college in Kathmandu and is now heading to Australia for her masters. Anjan informed that he has opened separate saving accounts in the bank for all his children to their secure future. Like Anjan, many migrant workers are educating their children in well known schools in Nepal where English is the medium of instruction. Children of some

coal mine workers are reading in Australia and England on their own expense and without any scholarship. Even in the coal mines area in the Jaintia Hills, English medium schools catering to primary education have been opened by the joint efforts of Nepalese migrant workers and Christian missionaries. Many of the schools are funded by the *Sardars*. Other migrant workers also contribute money to run these schools. Providing good formal education to their children is a priority for the Nepalese migrants. Their children are pursuing higher education in different cities of India like Shillong, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Dehradun and Bangalore.

#### REMITTANCES INVESTMENT

As a *Sardar*, Anjan earns more than 1,00,000 Indian rupees per week. The earliest major investment of his earnings from the mines was in the purchase of agricultural land and a two-storied house in Sarnamati in Jhapa district of Nepal in 1992. After that, Anjan purchased a readymade three storied concrete house in a place called Birtamod in district Jhapa. This place is near to the Nepal- India Border with good transport facility. It also has an airport. In the year 2010, he bought another five storied house in Kathmandu spending one crore Nepalese rupee. He has given these houses on rent for residential and commercial purposes and earns a regular income. He has also invested money in timber trade. Sometimes, Anjan's wife earns more than him in a week. She informed that while in Nepal she would work whole day in the kitchen but as a housewife, she did not earn any money from her culinary skills. However, in the coal mines, she earned well by cooking the same Nepali cuisines as these became popular among the local community, the Jaintia as well as among migrants from other parts of India. As her children were growing up, she stopped running the rice restaurant as she needed to give more time to her family. Now, she sells vegetables from her kitchen garden and brewed liquor at home. Sometimes she brings clothes, bags and other items from Nepal and sells these to the workers in the mines. She also sells the well known Nepali knife (*Khukuri*) to the mine owners and other elites of the local community.

When Anjan and his family go to Nepal, they usually travel by their personal car and take cartons carrying local items such as Jaintia clothes, blankets and in particular Meghalaya gold because it is believed to be of a superior quality. Anjan aims to return and permanently settle in Nepal after some years. He plans to comfortably live out of the rent he receives from his tenants, apart from the income generated through his other investments.

#### *Changing Status*

Anjan was the first person in his family to migrate to the coal mines. Once settled there, he encouraged his kin in Nepal to earn better by coming to the mines. Following Anjan, his two sisters and their husbands, his younger brother, cousins, sister in law and her husband and relatives, also migrated to the coal mines. His brother and cousins are now working as *Sardars* or

second *Sardars* (one step lower than *Sardar* or a *Sardar* in waiting) and their wives are running small restaurants and shops in and around the camp area.

Anjan's is one of the many migration and remittance stories. He did not become wealthy or gained the status of a *Sardar* overnight but toiled hard to as he says, "survive, and succeed" (*bachna ra safal huna*)

Over the years, some *Sardars* have emerged as affluent elites, settling permanently with their families in Nepal. Originally hailing from remote areas of Nepal and starting off as ordinary coal mine labourers, they have risen to the position of the *Sardar* and purchased land in urban centres of Nepal, especially in Kathmandu. The financial condition of other Nepalese migrants has also improved. Those who earlier commuted between Nepal and India by public transport system, such as buses and trains, now travel by their personal vehicles. While they continue to work in the coal mines of Meghalaya, they are also successful entrepreneur in Nepal, such as owners of petrol pumps and restaurants and agents of real estate. Some of the *Sardars* have invested in setting up big hotels and huge commercial buildings in Nepal. Not only the *Sardars*, but even the labourers dream big about their future. The biggest priority is to provide the best to their children. Aspiration (Appadurai 2004) for upward mobility gives rise moving from one occupation to another. The migrant workers attributed this to the utilization of remittances from the coal mines. Young Nepalese men aspire to gain employment as they lack job opportunities in their native village. Once they return home, they plan to migrate to the thriving plains for better education of their children; for setting up a business and also to gain social status. This process does not happen in a day or two. They face a lot of challenges in the process of migration. Yet the Nepalese migrants endeavour to tide over these hurdles to achieve a more secure, stable and comfortable future back home, which is very well explained from the above mentioned life history of Anjan.

#### CONCLUSION

The decision to use remittances is seen as progressive and goal oriented by the Nepalese coal mine migrant workers (Cohen 2001). Movement from the remote confines of the village to a promising urban area is seen as a 'progress'. Remittances are not only in cash but also in kind. Nepalese migrant workers carry different articles from the coal mine area when they go home during festivals (*Dasai/Tihar*). These goods may have little economic value nevertheless they represent the continued connection between migrants and their origin households or families (Cliggett 2000). It is worth mentioning the importance of the goods that migrants send home, the knowledge that they bring and the networks they create (Cohen 2005). These migrants send or bring back the ideas, values, practices and narratives they have been exposed to the host country (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). In spite of facing difficulties, migrant workers are able to earn well. Migrations to coal mines have led to a lot of changes and improvement in living conditions, better

education facilities and reduction of poverty in many interior villages of Nepal. Nepalese migrant workers with their hard work and efforts are able to remit well within a short span of time as well as attain upward social mobility.

Note: The names of the persons have been changed to respect their identities.

#### NOTES

- 1 Sharecropping is done by those who sell their land in the village and migrate to the terai by buying a land sufficient for building a nuclear house. During the off mining season, these coal mine migrant workers work in other's agricultural land for food production for their consumption during that period. The production is divided in equal half's between the owner and the tenant.

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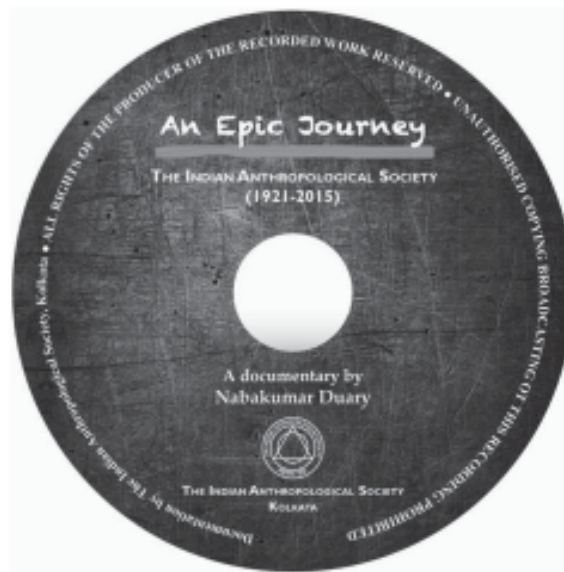
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## FILM REVIEW

### **'An Epic Journey' with Nabakumar Duary**

INDRANIL BISWAS

*Anthropological Survey of India*



In Nabakumar Duary's documentary *An Epic Journey*, we observe simultaneously two broad narratives, one dealing with the history of Indian anthropology and the other covering the history of The Indian Anthropological Society. Reconstruction of its history after six decades of formation of the Indian Anthropological Society through interviews of few octogenarian 'founder members', all of whom are anthropologists, was really a hard task to be used in a film in the form of a narrative. When this review was written, unfortunately we lost some of them, who were associated with the activities of the Society at the beginning. But their memories and accounts will remind the viewers time and again how the effort of a small group of ambitious, die-hard academic squad could give rise to a reputed organization and that too, without any government support. Along with both visual and audiovisual narration of Society's history, the documentary also reveals the academic space available in those days and the responsibilities the academicians shared, specifically during that period when it was emerging as the first recognized professional organization of anthropologists in India. The publication of its Journal, namely, *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society* was taken up in right earnest and it has now earned appreciation and admiration from academicians in India and abroad. When a viewer goes through the pages of several issues of the volumes of earlier years of the Journal bearing names of the writers along with the titles of the papers, it gives us a sense of academic involvement with a world of anthropology which was so extensive at one time.

In the film, the film-maker used archived photographs and some clippings of shots of different human activities to illustrate the wide spectrum of Indian ethnoscape. More

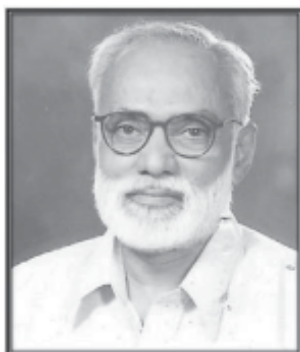
importantly it is to mention here that Dr. Duary could make use of the first issues of Journals like *Journal of Asiatic Society*, *Man in India* and *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, most of which are not easily available, and thus the viewers could easily realize the importance of such publications and the painstaking endeavors of those who had made these Journals internationally known. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) and the American Anthropological Association (AAA), which are more equipped technically on ethnographic documentary filmmaking, have never made any attempt to document visually the history of their own organizations.

In documentary filmmaking, it is really difficult for the film makers to restrain themselves from the greasy way of using various narratives, sub-narratives and counter-narratives parallel with the theme to make their productions more attractive, if not in content but in the mode of presentation. In this documentary, its maker Nabakumar Duary has desisted from following such a course. It appears, that he skillfully avoided this procedure. To deal with the history of anthropology in India, the short clippings used have been edited to give a vintage look probably to keep parity with the frames of other clippings. He has symbolically used a shot of a boat loaded with goods crossing the river and suddenly the viewer is reminded of the philosophically tuned poem of Tagore's *Sonar Tari* (Golden Boat) to relate to the journey of the Indian Anthropological Society. Flawless background music, editing, and befitting voice have also produced a nearly perfect mood of telling the story. Except for some technical flaws like mixing the mid- shots of different resolutions, this documentary is worth seeing by the people, especially those who take a keen interest in the history and development of anthropology in India as reflected in the activities of the earliest known Anthropological Society. From this point of view, this particular documentary by Nabakumar Duary should be acknowledged as the first of its kind.

Title of the Film: An Epic Journey  
Duration: 20 minutes 34 seconds  
Director: Dr. Nabakumar Duary  
Cinematographer: Sanjib Khan  
Assistant Cinematographer: Santanu Paul  
Editor: Sushital Das  
Producer: The Indian Anthropological Society, Kolkata  
Year of Production: 2016  
Price: 100 (INR)



## OBITUARY



### **Born for Anthropology**

#### **Dibyendu Kanti Bhattacharya (June 28, 1938 – December 25, 2017)**

Dibyendu Kanti Bhattacharya was born on June 28, 1938 in Old Delhi. He was the son of Jitendra Mohan Bhattacharya and Manorama. Since age 5, he frequently remained sick and remembered his patients' discussion about his sickness. But he never thought himself to be sick. He has his in Delhi and graduated from Hindu College, University of Delhi. He finished his school education from Bengali Boys Senior High Secondary School in Delhi and Graduated from Hindu College, University of Delhi. In May 1958, he ran away from home and joined the Bhoodan movement under Vinoba Bhave because he wished sincerely to work for the Indian people. During his stay there for 6 months he travelled all over Sholapur district in Maharashtra. Due to his involvement in the movement this, he had trouble in getting admitted to the University of Delhi in the M.Sc. course. On the completion of M.Sc. in 1960 with a first division, he joined the Ph.D. programme and was awarded Ph.D. in 1965. His doctoral thesis titled 'A Study of ABO, RH-HR, MN Blood Groups Among the Anglo-Indians of India with a Note on Some Other Morphological Traits' which was awarded by the University of Delhi. He was the Lecturer at the Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University during 1965-1966. In 1966, he joined as a Lecturer at the Department of Anthropology in the University of Delhi. In 1969, he was married to Pratibha Savarkar, grand niece of Veer Savarkar. In December 1971, he went to Germany with a DAAD Post Doctoral Fellowship and stayed there for 3 years. He also visited Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, and Switzerland and had the distinction of working with Late Prof. Francois Bordes. He became Reader in 1985 and in 1991 became a Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. He was the Head of the Department of Anthropology, Delhi University during the period 1993 -1996. He served as a Visiting Professor Lucknow University, at the Karnataka University, Dharwad and S.V. University, Tirupati, Amity University, Delhi and the Institute of Archaeology, Archaeological Survey of India. He was the member of the UGC's visiting team to evaluate the Tenth Plan of Vidyasagar University, Midnapur, in November 2002. He served as an Associate Editor of *Current Anthropology*, published by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, USA. He was a member of the Anthropological Society of Nippon, Japan, and a life member of the Indian Science Congress Association, Kolkata; the Indian Anthropological Association, Delhi (of which he was one of the founders); the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, Lucknow; the Indian Society for Prehistory and Quaternary Studies, Pune; the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi; and the S. C. Roy Institute of Anthropological Studies, Ranchi. Other than Madhya Pradesh, his major geological areas of interest included the

Chotanagpur region, and West Bengal, though he worked in other areas like Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. He has done extensive field work in Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh with me. We did excavation at Kondapeta Lower Palaeolithic site in Andhra Pradesh. Professor Bhattacharya has spanned a career in Indian Archaeology for almost 40 years. In his career, he has been bestowed with many honours. During his time at the Department of Anthropology in the Lucknow University, he was given an almirah where he found several bones. On asking he was informed that these bones were from a place called Roopkund in the Uttaranchal Himalayan region. After thorough reading on the mysteries of this region he decided to work on this and other materials found from the region. He and others worked on these materials and for National Geographic Society to give a summary on the findings of the Roopkund Mystery in 2001. In 1972, he authored the first of his textbooks on this subject. In 1983 he was awarded D.Litt. from Ranchi University on his work on Paleolithic Europe. Later, this work was published in the form of a book by the Humanities Press. His special interest ranged from Physical Anthropology, Palaeoanthropology, Prehistoric Archaeology, and Human Ecology. He was granted the Panchanan Mitra Lecture award (1993) by the Asiatic Society, Dharani Sen Memorial Lecture award (1997) by the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, D.N. Majumdar Memorial Lecture award at Lucknow (2003) and J. S. Bhandari Memorial lecture award (2015) by the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, Lucknow. He became the President of the Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the 86th Indian Science Congress (1999) held in Chennai. He was also the coordinating author for the Chapter on "Cultural Services" sponsored by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, as a result of which he visited Indiana University, Bloomington and Indianapolis, USA (in January 2003); Frankfurt, Germany (in May 2003); and Czech Republic (in October 2003).

Prof. Bhattacharya was instrumental in restabilising the Indraprastha Museum of Art and Archaeology (first established under the auspices of the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, in 1997), inaugurated by Shri Tejendra Khanna, the then Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Delhi on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2010. The museum has been reorganised, with a central theme 'The Ascent of Man', possessing a rich repertoire of art and archaeological materials of various categories representing different periods. He has written a monograph as the principal author titled 'A Catalogue of Prehistoric Tool', which is a unique demonstration of a rare collection donated by Late Dr. A.P. Khatri to the Indraprastha Museum of Art and Archaeology.

Prof. Bhattacharya was also associated as a subject expert with a Rock Art exhibition titled 'Adi Drshya-A Primeval Vision of Man', a one month long mega event to showcasing the several aspects of Indian and global Rock Art, organised by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Art (IGNCA), New Delhi in collaboration with the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, at Matighar and Twin Art Gallery of IGNCA from 6<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> December, 2012. Prof. Bhattacharya also served as member of the Editorial Board of a catalogue of the Rock Art published by IGNCA and Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi in December 2012. His scholarly aptitude has been reflected in the 'Introduction' part of the catalogue written by him where he has presented a survey of Rock Art of India as well as in the global context.

Prof. Bhattacharya wrote 20 Chapters for *PGe- Pathshala* and recorded 35 Chapters of Archaeological Anthropology in 2016. All these chapters and videos are available in the website of the University Grant Commission. He was a member of World Archaeological Congress, an advisor to UGC, Anthropological Survey of India and UPSC. Prof. Bhattacharya was felicitated with the "Best Teacher Award" on the Annual day of Delhi University. He has done extensive field work in Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh with me. We did excavation at Kondapeta Lower Palaeolithic site in Andhra Pradesh. He has produced 8

Ph.D students, but I am the only one who completed doctoral research on a topic related to Archaeological Anthropology. I have no hesitation in saying that whatever I know about Prehistoric Archaeology is because of Bhattacharya Sir. He published 200 research papers in national and international journals. He was an excellent teacher and a very good human being. He left all of us for Heavenly abode on December 25, 2017 after a brief illness. He is survived by his wife and a daughter. The contributions of Prof. D. K. Bhattacharya to Indian Anthropology will never be forgotten. Truly, he was “Born for Anthropology” and probably could live with it.

Manoj Kumar Singh  
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Delhi-110007

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### **Books in vernacular language**

Devi, Mahasweta 1418B (2011). *Aranyer Adhikar* (Right of the Forest). Kolkata, Karuna Prakashani. [Bengali].

**Book published electronically**

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**Journal article**Article in a print journal

Kar, R. K. 2012. The Concept of Culture vis-à-vis Cultural System. *J. Indian Anth. Soc.* 47: 117-127.

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**Paper presented at a meeting or conference**

Adelman, Rachel 2009. "*Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On': God's Footstool in the Aramaic Targumim and Midrashic Tradition*." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 21-24.

**Website**

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McCutcheon, W. A. 1983. Industrial Archaeology: A Case Study in Northern Ireland, *World Archaeology*. 15: 161-172 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/124649>, accessed on February 23, 2012.

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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*Editorial*

Reflecting on the 47th Annual Conference of the Indian Anthropological Society <i>Rajat Kanti Das</i> ... ..	1
Problems of Cultural Marginalization : A study on impact of post Tsunami relocation of the Marine fishermen in Kerala <i>B. Bindu Ramachandran</i> ... ..	6
Genetic Variation and Population structure: A study on the Tipuris and Hrangkhawls of Tripura <i>Pranabesh Sarkar, Piyali Dutta, Diptendu Chatterjee and Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay</i> ... ..	22
Medical Pluralism and Health: The Challenges and Prospects of Universal Health Protection in India <i>Jesurathnam Devarapalli</i> ... ..	29
Gendered Monastic Spaces: A Study of Annies in Sikkim <i>Swati Akshay Sachdeva and Shomit Chowdhury</i> ... ..	43
Culture and Anthropology of Space: Theorizing the contemporary urban behaviour among the apartment house dwellers in Kolkata city <i>Sankha Priya Guha</i> ... ..	63
Investment of Remittances in the Villages of Eastern Nepal: An Ethnographic Exploration of Coal mine Workers of Meghalaya <i>Rashmi Upadhyay and Geetika Ranjan</i> ... ..	85
<i>Film Review</i> 'An Epic Journey' with Nabakumar Duary <i>Indranil Biswas</i> ... ..	101
<i>Obituary</i> Dibyendu Kanti Bhattacharya by <i>Manoj Kumar Singh</i> ... ..	103