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EDITOR'S PREFATORY COMMENTS

The Indian Anthropological Society (IAS) has completed sixty years of its journey. The official organ of the IAS, Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society (JIAS) has completed, 53rd year of its existence. For a Journal of its kind, it is no less an achievement. In function and purpose, JIAS has all along tried to maintain a set standard. As its mission, it is committed to further the cause of anthropology and ascertain its rightful place in a multidisciplinary context.

From past to the present, biology to culture, simple to complex social formations, small group manifestation to population dynamics, ecology to health and nutrition, village to city, economics to art and folk traditions, community to politics and governance, myth to history, the Journal covers a wide range not simply in disjointed pieces but with a common meaningful exposition. We look at human beings in their multifaceted splendor obscured at times by self-inflicted distractions and degradation of values. We learn and at times unlearn to learn again.

We have, in all these years, cherished the idea of freedom of expression and encouraged scholars to present their views without any inhibition. With the patronage and support from our readers, reviewers and well wishers, we hope that the Journal will grow from strength to strength and will be able to fulfill its objectives when it reaches its sixtieth year of meaningful existence.

EDITORIAL

(Discussions on development, deprivations suffered by the tribal communities, increasing unrest and tribal movements are still relevant. Prof.R. Siva Prasad, a noted Anthropologist , who has been invited to write in our editorial column, has made a quick review of these areas in an effort to keep our attention engaged to the issues involved.   *Editor)*

Why Development and Unrest go together always?

Every election year we hear the political leaders harping on the idea of development. It is a kind of mantra that brings dividends to political leaders, bureaucrats, contractors, industrialists, and you name any, except the people, the intended beneficiaries. Development is also considered as an important element in the reduction of poverty leading to inclusiveness. This rhetoric is more frequently heard after the 1991 economic liberalisation and globalisation in India. It is essential to remember here that the process of economic liberalisation and globalisation are not inclusive and, therefore, we talk about the concepts of inclusive policy, inclusive banking, inclusive planning, inclusive education, and what have we. The gulf between the rich and the poor has widened. Paradoxically, development, instead of reducing, if not eliminating,poverty, it has widened the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. That is the reason why in the sustainable development goals a greater emphasis is laid on the reduction of poverty and to adopt certain policies and programmes by the signatory countries, such as anthyodaya, food security Act, MGNREG Act and Scheme, etc., by the government of India, to mitigate the problems. The paradoxes of development are cutting into the very process of bridging the gap.

Large scale development involves using of natural resources, especially lands in the rural and tribal areas. The demand and even hunger for resources has been the root cause for the unrest in the tribal and rural areas. The most affected by the development are the rural peasants and tribal poor who eke out their livelihoods from these resources. The livelihoods of the tribal and rural communities are interwoven with these resources forming into a cultural matrix. Dislocation of this leads to dismantling of their very cultural matrix and loss of identity and livelihood crisis. The tribals are already affected by the forest laws and many of the forest resources are either depleted or beyond the reach of the forested communities.Today the tribals feel alienated from their habitat and resources.

Always the resources of the tribals are for a grab. This is because the tribals are living in the forested areas with rich natural, including mineral, resources. It is also in these areas large scale dams, mining, industries, national parks, tiger sanctuaries, and other infrastructure projects have been initiated. As a

result, the tribals need to be evicted or shifted 'naturally' from these areas to some other places. As a matter of fact, they are continually being displaced and this does not allow them to settle down and pursue some livelihood. In a way, they are refugees in their own land. Their customary rights over their resources have been denied and government refuses to accede to their rights. Instead, they are regarded as illegal occupants on their own territory. Their resources are regarded and even declared as public or national property and the tribals have never been considered as having any rights in their habitat and resources. Time and again, rights activists have been arguing that the tribals customary rights in their resources should be restored. Enactment of PESA and FRA were regarded as an important step in this direction. However, these exist only on paper and the other Acts either nullify or override them. Many states have not even cared to implement these Acts or legislations. The Supreme Court's Niyamgiri judgement was an exception rather than the rule. In many judgements the principle of eminent domain was upheld. Why this happens always only in the case of indigenous communities is a moot question.

Governments take unilateral decisions with regard to tribals' resources as the governments claim that the tribals have no rights over these resources, and they are treated as trespassers. There is a large-scale invasion into the tribal areas by the non-tribals, business men, and the others. The role of moneylenders still is a big question that has never been resolved. Scheduled Banks never come forward to lend the tribals any loans for want of collateral security. Education in tribal, as is also the case with rural, areas is less talked about the better. The condition of government schools is pathetic to say the least. It is no wonder in Schedule V Areas the prevalence of left extremism is no simple coincidence. It is a result of long period of neglect and failure of governance. It has been pointed out by me elsewhere that the unrest in the Schedule V Areas is because of lop-sided development and it is basically a socioeconomic problem rather than a political one (Siva Prasad 2015, 'The Curse of Lop-sided Development: Left Extremism,in Ajit K. Danda et.al. (Eds.), *Unrest, Insurgency and Beyond.* Kolkata and Bhopal: INCAA and IGRMS). This has been amply demonstrated by the Report on Left Extremism by the Expert Group to the Planning Commission (now NeetiAyog). The Report noted that 'widespread discontent among the people has plagued the Indian polity for some time now. It has often led to unrest, sometimes of violent nature. Over the years, statutory enactments and institutional mechanisms for addressing the various aspects of deprivation have been brought into being. But the experience has been that the discontent and unrest continue to surface notwithstanding such measures. For a large section of the population, basic survival is the problem. ... The Constitutional and statutory agencies entrusted with the task of safeguarding the entitlements of all marginalised groups have failed to provide adequate support' (Report of An Expert Group to Planning Commission. *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas.* New Delhi: Government of India, 2008: 1-2).

The writing is on the wall, as the spread of left extremism in the Schedule V Areas is not a law and order problem and the solution to wean the tribals away from them is to address the problems of the tribals in right earnest by not encouraging the multinational as well as indigenous capital into these areas to exploit the natural resources of the tribal habitats (Siva Prasad, 2018, 'The Cauldron of Development', in M.C. Behera (Ed.), *Revisiting Tribal Studies,* New Delhi: Rawat). This can be a first step to lure the tribals away from all these forces and build their confidence in the systems of governance and the honesty of the governments in their welfare. Otherwise, no one else can be blamed for the increasing unrest in the tribal areas.

It has been widely reported about the increasing resistance and protest movements against the development projects and the enormity of displacement caused by them (Kothari 1996, 'Whose Nation? The Displaced as Victims of Development',*Economic and Political Weekly,* 31 (24), pp. 1476-1485; Padel 2010, 'Mining and Movements – causes of Tribal Militancy',*Social Action,* Vol. 60, pp. 221-238; Parasuraman 1999, *The Development Dilemma: Displacement in India.* The Hague: Institute of Social Studies;Parasuraman and Sengupta 2001,'World Commission on Dams: Democratic Means for Sustainable Ends',*Economic and Political Weekly,* 36(21), pp1881-1891; Fernandes 2000, Pawns in the Development,in Parasuraman and Unnikrishnan (Eds.), *India Disaster Report: Towards A Policy Initiative,* Delhi: Oxford). In fact, it has been estimated that majority (60 %) of the displaced due to development projectsin the country belong to the forested tribal communities. It is, therefore, not a mere coincidence for the increasing unrest in the tribal areas of the middle India (in Schedule V Areas) where most of the displacement has been taking place.

It is pertinent to note that the number of tribal communities has really swollen over time and still continue to swell. There are demands by many to be included into the Scheduled Tribes (STs) list. Many of the communities that are not tribal,which are numerically large and form into vote banks, have been added to the list. This is really a cause for greater dissatisfaction among the tribal communities as members of these groups corner all the benefits to be meant for the STs. The feeling of deprivation increases manifold and it leads them to unrest. Recent agitation by the tribals in Telangana, besides that of the tribals of Chota Nagpur, is a testimony to this. The attempts by the 'state' to rehabilitate the tribal communities from their habitats only further aggravated their problems. Many of them still feel unsettled and continue to experience deprivation.

The displacement actually causes loss of livelihood, identity and alienation. They also lose their age-old (traditional or indigenous) knowledge about their resources that help them in pursuing their livelihoods. Their livelihoods are related to the resources by using their indigenous knowledge. In a changed circumstance their knowledge is of no use as the forest resources that are linked with it no longer exist or they have least access to these resources in their new settlements. Thus, they depend on others knowledge

and resources to earn their living, thereby becoming dependent on the others for their own existence. Therefore, since their livelihoods are tied to the forest resources and loss of resources mean not only loss of livelihoods but even loss of their identity and knowledge. This also leads to alienation from their own resources that they have protected for many generations. Being alienated, they indulge in destruction of the very resources that they have conserved for many generations, as it was their source of livelihood hitherto (Guha, 1989, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya,* New Delhi: Oxford university Press).

If we look into the history, it is quite clear that most of the movements against the colonial rulers as well as the *zamindars* in the past, or in the post-British India against the landlords and the States were by the tribal communities against the injustice meted out to them in terms of eviction from their habitats, denial of rights, etc. Tribal communities were peace loving people and they expressed their dissent only when they are pushed to the wall. The State, the judiciary as well as the bureaucracy have been very unkind to these vulnerable groups and their unrest is always dubbed as unjust. What the State, and even the Judiciary, fails to recognise is their customary rights on the forest areas and their resources. There appears to be no change in the attitude of the governments in the post-British India from that of the Colonial rulers. It is really a pity and shame to call ourselves as a democratic nation and we do not hesitate to use force to put them down. The State does not behave in the same way against the better off who are involved in land grabbing, illegal mining, and other such activities. The nexus and collusion between the State / political elite and bureaucracy is well known and they are ruthless against these vulnerable tribal communities. Development implies eviction, denial of rights, and use of state machinery in case they resist. State stands as a negative element for the tribals. Given such a negative environment, what else can they do, except to rebel.

What is the way out from such a situation? The policies and laws need to be reviewed in favour of the vulnerable tribal communities. By doing so, we are not doing any favour to them. Instead, we redeem the honour of the State and restore justice that is due to them customarily. It, in fact, can help in restoring and conserving our forest resources, thereby helping the environment. In a way, it is in our self-interest to address to the issues of the contradictions of development and unrest among the tribal communities of our country. There lies the solution for sustainable development and in the reduction of poverty.

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The Productive Logic of the Body : An Interpretive Analysis of Aravan Festival

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Abstract: The body has been imagined in manifold ways in a temple festival called the 'Aravan festival' or the 'Koovagam transgender festival,' celebrated in Koovagam, a rural village in Tamil Nadu, India. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Koovagam during the festival season from 2015 to 2017, the paper looks at multiple levels at which the festival addresses the body and illustrates how the festival and its participants problematise body through different experiments of embodiment showcasing the 'productive logic' of the body. Through an interpretive engagement with the materiality of the festival the paper exposes the festival as being reluctant to arrive at a single position with respect to the body; rather it is spinning around multiple positions that are often conflicting-connected at some levels and dissimilar at some other levels. If the idea of the 'integrated body' is a truth, the notion of the 'disintegrated body' is also a truth. The body can be a 'whole' or it may complicate the notion of the whole. The age-old festival appears to illustrate that the body is recalcitrant to any single frame of thought or conceptual tool.

Key words : Productive logic, body, Aravan festival, corpus, ethnography.

INTRODUCTION

There have been plenty of attempts in the academia to understand and theorise 'body'. There is no denying that the body has become an important analytical category for various disciplines like humanities, sociology, anthropology, feminist and gender studies and religious studies.[1] The present paper turns to a specific indigenous tradition in India to understand how it produces diverse and distinct perspectives on the body and contributes significantly to the copious repertoire of the literature on the body.

The body has been imagined in multifarious ways in an 18 day-long temple festival called the 'Aravan festival' or 'Koovagam festival' that occurs annually during the month of April-May in Koovagam a rural village in Tamil Nadu, India. The age -old festival is popularised as the 'Koovagam transgender festival'[2] as it witnesses participation of a huge number of transgender women[3] from all over India. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Koovagam during the festival season from 2015- 17, the paper illustrates the way the festival and its participants problematise body through different experiments of embodiment showcasing the productive logic of the body.

The paper adopts an interpretive approach with the sense that though the festival can reveal itself, that revealing cannot be said to be complete as it leaves certain things unexplained/unrevealed. It means that a ritual may not

only be talking about what it reveals or presents at the visible layer; rather it has several other facets that can only be interpreted. The festival may comprise some keys or hints to make possible the interpretive engagement which is also impacted by the narratives provided by the participants, the historical context of the festival and its way of being conducted.

Mythical background of the festival

The Koovagam temple is dedicated to the deity Koothandavar who is also called Aravan. Aravan is the son of Arjuna, the 3rd Pandava prince, and Ulupi, a naga princess. The Tamil versions of the epic *Mahabharata⁴* and Tamil folklore traditions narrate that at the time of the Kurukshetra battle, a battlefield sacrifice (*kalappali*) to the goddess *Kali* was required to ensure the victory of the Pandavas. Aravan was ready to sacrifice himself, but he had three demands/wishes in return. He wanted to die a heroic death after annihilating several enemies in the battle even after the sacrifice. The second demand was that he wanted to see the battle after his heroic death. And the third wish was that he wanted to get married before going to the altar of sacrifice.

All these three wishes were granted by Krishna. As per the story, his body was recomposed after the sacrifice to fight in the battle. He fought ferociously and died on the 8th day of the battle. Then, the severed head survived in order to see the battle and to fulfill his second wish. For the third wish regarding his marriage, Krishna assumed the form of a female enchantress Mohini, and married him before his sacrifice since no woman was ready to marry Aravan who was about to die. The Koovagam festival enacts the wedding between Aravan and Mohini, and symbolically stages the battlefield sacrifice, multiple deaths and revivals of Aravan. It is the narrative of the third wish and its enactment that attracts transgender women to the festival as they identify with Mohini and consider Aravan as their husband.

STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

The paper presents multiple levels at which the festival addresses the body. At the first level, it brings out the idea of a disintegrated and non-unified body which is complicated at the second level as it illustrates the way certain rituals embody people's desire to have an integrated body. At the next level, we can see how the festival complicates the idea of the whole and part and thus provides an intriguing thought to the way the body is generally understood. The subheadings in the paper discuss these multiple levels followed by a conclusion.

It is impossible to have the body

This section discusses how the festival presents itself as a body and what implications it provides with respect to the notion of the body in that presentation. I make use of the concept of the 'corpus' formulated by the French philosopher Jean- Luc Nancy (2008) to enrich the discussion. A connected reading between the festival and the 'corpus' is proposed to interpret the bodily

manifestation of the festival. In order to arrive at the argument it is important to look at the structuring of the festival from day one to 18 as well as the transformation experienced by the festival over the years, and the following part produces a brief description to that effect.

On the first day noon a representative of the *Vannan* caste, called as *ekali*[5], carries a decorated pot filled with water atop his head and marches across the village with the accompaniment of drum band performed by the *Adi Dravida* community and *nadaswara* by the *Ambattan* caste. Each household, irrespective of caste, receives the decorated pot by offering *puja* to it. Then, women from the household join the procession carrying a pot on their head. This pot contains a mix of cooked ragi and wheat called as *koozh*. The procession circum- ambulates the temple and stops in front of the *Mariyamman* shrine at the back of the main temple. After offering *puja* to Mariyamman by the temple priests/*pujaris* belonging to the *Vanniyar* caste, the koozh is offered to Mariyamman. This ceremony called as *sakai varkal* marks the beginning of the festival.

Every night till the 12th day witnesses a ritual called *swami purappad,* a colourful procession with the deity being carried around the village by the pujaris on their heads on a rotational basis. Standing in the middle of the procession, the pujari takes 3-4 steps forward and then backward rhythmically, gyrating with the deity. As the rhythm of the nadaswara and drums gathers speed, the *attam* (rotation) of the pujari follows suit to a crescendo till the end. In between each attam, the procession stops in front of every house to bless the devotees. And except for the first day, swami purappad is followed by a recital called *paratha prasangam* where a team known as the *paratha pujaris* recites from the *Villi Paratham.*[6]

Leaving swami purappad aside and moving onto the *tali kattuthal* (tali tying) rite happening at Panthaladi[7] on the second day, we see the enactment of the third wish of Aravan, i.e. getting married before his sacrifice. Two men from the Vanniyar community, costumed as bride and groom will 'tie the knot' first which is followed by tali kattuthal between two Adi Dravida men who also appear as bride and groom. The day's ritual ends with a 'marriage' feast in the village for the o*orukar.*[8] After these events, the festival slips into a slow pace since no major events happen apart from swami purappad and paratha prasangam each night and a *ponkal* (ritualistic preparation of rice dish) and cock sacrifice on the 8th evening. The major feature of these days is that it presents certain activities of the oorukar getting ready to welcome the impending crowd. We can also see that the festival scene is slowly transforming; the number of devotees attending swami purappad is increasing day by day, the transgender women joining the festival in ones and twos especially from the 7th day onwards. If it is the smell of camphor that is prevalent in the initial days, on the 8th and 11th it is mixed with an unbearable smell of blood wafting from the temple after the sacrifice of cocks.

A group of *Asaris* (carpenters) are visible around the temple from the 9th day onwards, working day and night. They are entrusted with the task of making the processional chariot and wooden post for various rituals in the coming days. By the time the festival reaches the 11th day, it has changed its colour, tone and tenor. In addition to the two shops in the village that sell petty items, a market has emerged around the village. Circus companies have arrived and started making tents. Transgender women start coming in huge numbers from the 13th morning onwards dominating the scene with celebratory spirit. The festival has transformed from its slow pace to a vibrant mood with different activities happening at different places at the same time especially after the 13th morning: while the deity is painted at the back of the temple after the *uyir palayanam* rite[9], a huge wooden post is being erected on the processional chariot for a ceremony called *kampam niruthal* (post erecting) in the front courtyard, soon to be followed by tali tying[10] that spans for three days from the 14th to the 16th. The pujaris, on behalf of Aravan, tie the nuptial knot around the necks of the devotees. The 14th day tali tying function is meant for the men devotees while 15th and 16th days witness the participation of transgender women. While tali tying ceremony is going on, some transgender women are walking the ramp as part of the beauty pageant in Villupuram, a nearby town, in connection with the festival.

The arrival of transgender women ushers in a number of other participants: the state representatives and various NGOs, who, through various entertainment programmes, aim to make awareness about transgender rights, safe sex and prevention of AIDS. Both national and international media compete with each other to cover the events. In addition to this, the festival also sees another category - interested neither in the *bhakti* aspect nor the infotainment programmes - men from various places coming to meet transgender women as their clients. The 15th night witnesses the sexual union between transgender women and men since the 'tali kattuthal' (tali tying) ritual provides opportunity for transgender women to consummate the marriage. The following is a sight from the festival on the 15th night.

The temple premise is glowing and glittering in various hues in the night of the 15th. On both sides of the road are seen transgender women with heavy ornaments, draped either in *sari* or in *choli* and with their hairs tied with jasmine flowers. Men are approaching them and once they strike a deal, they are seen walking with arms around each other's waist to the nearby fields and shrubs and slowly faded out in the dark. Some transgenders are dancing on the road with erotic body movements grabbing the attention of men. They twist, twirl and turn their bodies wrapped in dazzling colours with singing lines of lust and desire; their eyes lined in black often wink at men and their lips carved in bright red fly kisses to everyone who passes by. Some are seen moving towards the corner of the paddy field where we can see a stall run by TANSAC (Tamil Nadu AIDS Control Society) providing condoms free of cost. Keeping

condoms under their sari, they disappear into the remote corners of the paddy fields. Some of them, who fail to get the privacy of distant shrubs, adjust at the back of the houses in the village. In the dim light, indistinct voices of lust often come out, twining of bodies is vaguely visible.

The tali tying ritual that heralds the mood of revelry comes to an end on the 16th dawn traipsing into the symbolic enactment of the battle of Aravan and his death. The transgender women break their tali, lament the death of Aravan and leave the festival wearing white-symbolic of widowhood. Once the transgender women depart, the media also disappear. On the 17th dawn, the deity gets his *uyir* (life) back through a ritual called as *uyir perunthal* (life revival). This day witnesses an unbearable silence as there are no transgender women left, no media or merchants; a sudden fall from noise, sound, crowd and everything. The rest of the rituals are confined to the oorukar and with them the festival comes to an end.

We have briefly seen the transformation of the festival over the 18 days, and it is equally intriguing to look at the changes experienced by the festival over the years. Radhamma, a transgender woman, who was into her 42nd year of attending the festival when I saw her in 2015, talked about her experience with the festival for four decades:

> I participated in the festival for the first time when I was around 15. The village was then like a dense forest and there was a very small shrine of Koothandavar. There were no shops or proper roads. The festival was exclusive to the Koovagam oorukar and locals. We used to come on the early morning of the 15th, tie the knot, and leave on the 16th. We stayed in the village only for one day. At that time, no one bothered about it.

As per Radhamma's words, the feel, colour and rhythm of the festival changed radically with the hike in influx of participants like pan-Indian transgender women, marketers, media persons, and state representatives. The village is no more a forest now and the temple has undergone a remarkable expansion with a *sreekoil*[11] and a sizeable *verandah*. The festival has experienced certain 'mutilations': One *oorukkaran* told me that large numbers of goats were sacrificed till the late 1980's on the days of ponkal, but it stopped after a ban on goat sacrifice by the state. Now on the days of ponkal, only cocks are sacrificed. I was told that from the second night onwards, people in the village are not supposed to cook food in oil till the end of the festival. Recently the supposed restriction was relaxed and those who come to settle in Koovagam from other places can cook food in oil from the 11th afterwards. The recent relaxation can be read in the light of the growing popularity of the festival that invites a lot of merchants and hoteliers who come from the 11th day onwards. Once lanterns made up of cloth was the only source of lighting, now there are modern lanterns and other sources of lighting arrangement all over the temple. Replacement of the wooden wheels of the chariot with the

iron ones, use of 'Asian Paints' for painting the idol, entry of loud speakers, playing of bhakti songs and films at interval, sounds and visuals from the circus tents - are all changes that have transformed the sense of the festival.

If we read together the transformation of the festival over the 18 days as well as the changes experienced by the festival, it is evident that the festival has always embraced new categories of participants, new events, and actions. Some activities were totally replaced, while some others mutilated. In its structuring and transformation, the age-old festival evokes the idea of the 'corpus' put forward by Jean -Luc Nancy. In *Corpus* Nancy writes:

> A body is an image offered to other bodies, a whole corpus of images stretched from body to body, local colors and shadows, fragments, grains, areolas, lunules, nails, hairs, tendons, skulls, ribs, pelvises, bellies, meatuses, foams, tears, teeth, droolings, slits, blocks, tongues, sweat, liquors, veins, pains, and joys, and me, and you (2008: 121).

He argues that body is an '*open* space, implying, in some sense, a space more properly *spacious* than spatial, what could also be called a place' (ibid: 15). Nancy means that the body can room various elements, and its openness gives way to the coming of new things like replacement of organs or changes in the body. On the basis of the above discussion, we can say that the Koovagam festival is an embodiment of all the changes, additions, permutations, replacements and transformations. The mutilations as well as the entry of new things/people/events indicate that the festival is reluctant to be a filled up space; it is not an empty space either. In its capability of embracing changes/ transformations, the festival escapes from being proper or perfect. It is similar to Nancy's argument that there is no proper body as even 'the filling on teeth' (ibid: 51) will make the body improper.

The oorukar's account of the 14th day does not end with tali tying and kampam niruthal functions listed out in the temple brochure as the main events of the day, but include the evening beauty pageant in Villupuram. Their listing of acts for the 15th day spotlights the propping up of condom stalls by TANSAC at the paddy field near the temple. These recent happenings are described along with the traditional rituals and they claim its space in the corpus of the festival. It indicates that certain foreign elements intrude into the festival, occupy a space and co-exist with other things making it difficult to understand what the foreign elements are.

My field work of three years not only captured the repetitiveness of the festival but differences as well. In the 2016 festival, I saw the intermittent appearance and disappearance of a 'no camera' board in front of the shed where the painting ritual takes place. The painting function appears to follow a rigorous pattern framed by tradition but the appearance and disappearance of the 'no camera board' brings in a new colour to the ritual and gives rise to the question of how the festival engages with modernity or contemporariness. It ascertains that with every year, the Koovagam festival is going though the

process of becoming or it is 'coming -into -presence'[12] - that coming into presence is a constant occurring, denoting the constant becoming of the festival. Then, the corporeality of the festival proclaims that there is no real and original body; rather it brings out the idea of a disintegrated and non unified body. It is equal to say that it is impossible to have *the* body as it is constantly in the process of making. The festival thus provides the idea of a disintegrated and incomplete body.

The desire to have a proper body

We have so far seen how the festival dismantles the idea of a unified body, but it is only a fragment of the entire narrative. This section aims to delineate how the festival epitomizes people's desire to have a unified and proper body.

Krishnan pujari from the village told me that Aravan had 32 bodily marks that made him an ideal sacrificial person. Almost all oorukar I conversed with are aware that Aravan had these marks. When I asked them about these marks, instead of listing out, they endeavoured to talk profusely about the body that they think Aravan might have had. One person told me pointing at the pimples on my face: 'Aravan's face is so fine; he does not have a scar or pimple like these'. Another opined that Aravan is well built, with strong muscles, sturdy legs, wide chest, and thick black moustache. The way each one fantasize the image reflects their desire to view him as an ideal of body perfection. Summing up, this desire is largely each one's craving for a perfect and proper body. A scene from the festival will act as a statement for this desire.

The 14th evening witnesses an unprecedented crowd, especially of men and little boys, on the temple premises. They are carrying the turmeric tali purchased from the nearby stalls and waiting for the tali tying function. A number of them come to tie the knot with the hope of having been cured of diseases since the deity is believed to possess the power to cure ailments. This tying ritual is an enactment of the mythical wedding of Aravan and Mohini. The men who participate in the ritual take the role of Mohini and are supposed to be cleanly shaven. Some men wear women's dress since they consider it as the best way to please the deity.

Krishnan (8), son of Pazhanivel and Radhika, has been brought to tali tying for the last 3 years. Radhika says: 'He was born with an abnormal testicle. He has to tie the tali for normalcy. We believe that it would look normal soon'. Radhika stops when Krishnan's elder sisters make fun of him and he becomes too shy.

Rangaraj (49) hailing from Pookotta district, Tamil Nadu says:

My body is not well. Recently I feel tiredness and come to know that I am having a serious illness (he is not ready to name it). I believe that it is due to the black magic done by my own elder brother against me since he was jealous of my wealth. I tried medicines to no avail. My friends suggested I get the tali to get cured.

Others talked about their paralysed legs, disfigured organs, immature body growth, and they all expressed their hope to get cured by the blessings of the deity. Most of them started their words by uttering *'udambu seriyalle'* before talking about the specific 'issues'. The Tamil word 'udambu' means body and the word '*seri*' can be translated as fine/correct/ideal/perfect while 'seriyalle' means the opposite. 'Seri' or 'seriyalle' is most often alluded in connection with certain norms or standards followed by the society. Then, we can say that the devotees who throng the temple premises with the uttering udambu seriyalle aspire to have a normal/ideal/correct body. There are constructed standards regarding the normal appearance and functioning of the body, and the defects, illness, and disfiguration take the body out of those standards. The aspiration for such a body can't be limited to a biomedical and positive description of the body; rather one's social and cultural milieu has strong bearing upon the way we understand and care our body.[13]

Aravan in the mind of the devotees epitomizes the idea of a normal and perfect body and his body attains the status of what Davis (2006, 4) calls a 'mytho-poetic body'.[14] The stories that they heard about Aravan's body, the imagination/fantasy they added to it, and the larger society they live - all play significantly in constructing the idea of the normal body. The bodily 'concerns' narrated by them shed light on their idea of normalcy and perfection shaped by a matrix of socio cultural and mythical variables.

The festival perpetrates two different realms. The discussion in the first part elucidates that the festival presents itself as a disintegrated and incomplete body. When it comes to the second part, we can see that some rituals and belief associated with the festival not only retain the idea of the body but also reflect our desire to have a normal and perfect body. In another sense, when we see a crowd queuing in front of the temple, uttering 'udambu sariyalle', it articulates the idea of the nonexistence of a perfect body. But the festival brings out the fact that the bodies' vulnerability to permutations, wounds and changes do not desist people from imagining, fantasying and desiring a perfect body (according to the internalized idea). We can't resist bothering about the very change, appearance, beauty and alterations of the body. We will compare our body against ideal standards and we will try every possible step to make it 'right'. The tali tying ritual and the belief associated with it highlight these concerns.

The idea of part and whole

The deity of the Koovagam temple is worshipped in the form of a severed head. The 'head' has become an interesting subject for theoretical engagements. Holdrege (1998) illustrates that the head attains a significant position in the Hindu discourse of the body which goes well with the hierarchal ordering of the body. According to the Hindu understanding of the body, Holdrege states that the Brahmins were considered born from the head (specifically from the mouth) of the divine body and that is cited as a 'natural' reason why they are

given dominance in the Hindu social order. Doniger (1997) draws attention to certain Sanskrit texts that shows the head is given the highest order of purity and is considered to be the site for human rationality. Bataille calls for an 'acepahlic/headless character of existence' (1985, 199).[15] It can be seen as his critique of the notion of the 'principle of the head' which is, for him, 'the reduction of the world to the God' (1985, 199).

In this wide array of literature on 'head' that attributes different meanings and symbolic weight to it, it is intriguing to look at the interpretive scope offered by the head worshipped in the Koovagam temple, along with certain rituals. As per the narratives, Aravan's head survived after his death in the battle in order to fulfill his second wish of seeing the entire battle. Krishnan pujari said that the severed head danced in the battlefield till the victory of the Pandavas and gained the name of Koothandavar (*Kooth* =dance and *aandavar*=lord/deity.) So the head worshipped in the temple is not called the head of Aravan; rather it has a different name (Koothandavar). Krishnan pujari further delineated that the name 'Koothandavar' indicates the head component only, while Aravan as a name denotes the head with other organs forming the 'full' body. It means that in the minds of the oorukar, Aravan and Koothandavar offer multiple potentialities with respect to the body.

When the head is called by a separate name, it gains an identity and an independent existence. It becomes a 'whole'. The head gaining the status of a 'full' entity is evidenced by the way the oorukar talk about Koothandavar. Swami purappad is described as 'Koothandavar *aadi varuvaaru*' (Koothandavar is coming dancing). One woman from the village said, 'look, Koothandavar is like a newly wedded groom now. How happy and energetic he is. It is because his wives (transgender women) are about to come'. These words may point towards many ideas like the distinction between the sacred and the profane, or the deity being conceived in human form. However, the scope here is different. It is not a head with eyes and ears that survived to see the battle, but a complete entity, a whole that is different from the one we are accustomed to. Some oorukar point to certain paddy fields in the village and said, 'it is Koothandavar's land'. They told me that these lands are registered in the name of Koothandavar some decades back and no one owns it. Some families in the village use the land for lease on a rotational basis and make pongal with the first harvest and distribute it to all. Koothandavar/the head is also given the status as a 'legal person'.[16]

When the head is detached from the body of Aravan and attains an independent identity, it complicates the idea of whole or completeness as they are generally understood. Here absence/presence of body parts, the portions constituting the whole or the difference between 'ablement' and disablement in terms of disfigured organs or lack of some organs do not play any role in making something a whole. The head (in the temple) is not the head that can be talked in terms of relation (or in terms of superiority) with

other bodily organs. It escapes from being a part that forms the body which is an escape from the corporeal unity of the body.

The image of the head existing in the temple also offers another dimension of thought with respect to the discussion on the body. Before coming to it, I look at two rituals of the festival that contribute to arriving at those possibilities of thought.

On the 16th day morning, the processional chariot placed on the temple ground stages a function which is described locally as *udal thayarittal*. It denotes the process where different organs get assembled to make the body of Aravan. For the udal thayarittal function, different organs like *pujam*, (hand), *marpu* (chest part) and *kudai* (umbrella)[17] come from nearby villages in trolleys decorated with flowers and flower garlands, with the accompaniment of drum bands and nadaswara. The head also comes in another decorated trolley and gets fixed with other organs. After its completion, the chariot marches through the nearby villages symbolizing Aravan's entry in the battlefield on the 8th day for fighting. By the time it reaches at Panthaladi where the 'tali breaking' function is going on, the decorated chariot and the figure/Aravan on it looks parched symbolising his imminent death. Then the chariot proceeds towards the Kali shrine near Panthaladi where the body of Aravan gets dismembered which is described locally as *udal pirippu (*pirippu= *dismember or tear apart*) symbolising his death.

After udal pirippu, people told me that these organs like pujam or marpu 'run back' to their respective villages. On the basis of the visual that I have seen, this running back means people would carry them on their shoulders and run back howling to their respective villages. The curious thing about them is that in the villages these organs are placed in independent shrines and they are worshipped with offerings and pujas.

The image of a pujam in the shrine or the head in the temple stimulates imaginative possibilities. When it is the image of only a pujam, we can think of it being connected with legs, or fixed on the head. We can imagine how it would be if mouth or nose were parts of it. Or the head may not only be the head of the human, we can think of it belonging to animals. Its possibilities are numerous when it is freed/ torn apart from the organisational principles of the body. It compels us to imagine connections between the organs different from the routine and accustomed ones. The verbs like 'run' used to describe the exit of the organs such as pujam indicate functions that are generally supposed to be performed by organs like legs. It points to the reversal of the idea of the body, its functions and structuring. When the pujam (hand) runs or the head dances taking steps rhythmically they remind us of the statement made by Deleuze and Guattari in their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*:

> Is it really so bad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking

with your tongue, thinking with your brain, having an anus and
larynx, head and lungs? Why not walk on your head, sing with your
sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly: the simple
Thing, the entity, the full Body, the stationary Voyage, Anorexia,
cutaneous Vision, Yoga, Krishna, Love, Experimentation. (1987, 150-
51).

If we read the imaginative potentials offered by the ritual in the backdrop
of the statement made by Deleuze and Guattari, we can see that a craft/
aesthetics is operative in the working of the body which is set by the
arrangement of organs and their functions and connections in a particular
way. When that arrangement is broken up or that particular ordering is
shattered, a new craft/a new aesthetics replaces the existing one and this
dismantling of the prior craft takes the body/organs to new realms and
possibilities offered by the body itself. If the independent existence of the head
or other organs stimulates only imaginative possibilities of dismantling the
accustomed idea of the body, the festival offers some of its participants an
opportunity to undergo real experiments defying the habitual working of the
body. I will analyse some narratives.

I met Sophia in all my three visits. Her parents named her Murukeshan,
and Sophia is the name she used for herself during the festival. Sophia who
works in a chemical laboratory far away from her native place says:

I wish to live a woman's life from my adolescence onwards and I am
no more a man in my mind. But I don't have the guts to disclose it in
front of my family or friends. When I get salary, I buy *sari, davani*,
colourful bangles and then keep it all closed in my suitcase. When
the festival comes I will bring my ornaments and costumes and change
it at the village. I hate my beards and hairs on my body. As soon as I
come here, I throw away my pants and shirt; shave, wax body hairs, do
threading and facial myself, and wear the sari. I will go to my office
only when I grow my moustache and hairs.

I saw a person beautifully dressed up in a *sari who* introduces him/herself
as Biju from Kerala. He lives the life of a man with his wife and two children.
Biju says:

I do not have any problem in living with my wife. I love her, and I am
satisfied with her. But, I have a constant feeling to experience how it
feels like being a woman, having her desires, and living like her,
though I am aware that I can't experience it completely. But if I open
up my mind, I will be called abnormal. This irrepressible wish brings
me here. I am coming here for the first time and I have all the inhibitions
of coming here like this (wearing bangles, chains, long hairs, Kerala
traditional *sari*). I think, I am both a man and a woman and I want to
live both the lives.

For Sophia and Biju, the festival offers a kind of space where they are able to play with their 'hidden' selves. Their actions at the festival seem to mean that they free themselves from the 'limits' attributed to the body, and when freeing the limits, they reach a realm where they can experiment and enjoy the unexploited potentialities of the body. It is a push on the body to new connections, affects and assemblages. The body moves according to the tune played by the socio cultural codes operative in the society. It defines the expectations of the body, decides its movements, and delineates its feelings and behaviours. It precludes the unrestrained flow of body which is a really a pool of possibilities and potentials. Sophia and Biju and several others like them unlatch this pool and let the body flow into unrestrained realms. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call these potentialities which are hidden and unexploited as 'body without organs (BWO)'. Here 'organs' stands for the organisational principle giving shape to the organism and BWO is a call to dismantle the organs in order to activate the virtual potentials of the body.

By getting facials, shaving off beards and moustache, waxing body hairs, bedding with men, they are experimenting with their body so as to relieve it from its habitual actions, accepted effects and accustomed behaviours. These experiments show that these possibilities, affections and movements are imminent to, not transcending, the body. But they become imperceptible in the accustomed working of the body and hence needed to be activated as argued by Deleuze and Guittari. Biju's words that 'he' is both a man and a woman and wishes to experiment both the lives is a clear indication that body can't be restricted to any fixed form, structure and movements.

Sophia and Biju are experimenting with the 'other' in them, enjoying the pleasure of bringing out their 'double selves '. This process of activating the unseen realms transform one's connection with oneself. While the dismembering ritual (udal pirippu) and the independent existence of the body 'parts' play up these possibilities imaginatively, the participants are making experiments on embodiments that transgresses the limits of 'organism'.

CONCLUSION

The interpretive engagement with the Koovagam festival has brought out wide scope in approaching the notion of the 'body'. Spivak (1994) argues that the ideas embedded in Nancy's *Corpus* are not new to Indian theology or philosophy. Spivak offers a critique to the Christian/monotheist frame within which Nancy formulated his major arguments in the *Corpus*, and argues that the 'polytheist everyday' of Hinduism or the *'dvaita-advaita'* (dual-non dual) character of the everyday existence negates the idea of the 'absolute' and of the 'single origin'. It points towards the existence of a 'corpus' in Indian theology though not encapsulated in a particular word/name. Spivak's argument is formulated on the basis of the *Vedanta-Upanishads* philosophy of Hinduism, and through Spivak's *Response to Nancy*, we can see that a

great tradition[18] was responding to another great tradition. We have seen that the age-old Koovagam festival celebrated in a rural village appears as a 'corpus'. But, the peculiarity of the festival is that it does not stick to any single idea with respect to the body, rather it offers different ways of thinking the body.

The Koovagam festival does not belong to the great tradition; rather, it is seen as being characterised by the constant move between the great (Brahmanical/Sanskrit) and the little (indigenous/local) traditions. It is curious to see that the scheduling of the festival for 18 days not only resembles the 18 day -long Kurukshetra battle but also the structuring of the Sanskrit epic in 18 *Parvas*.[19] The secret *palayana* mantras uttered in the backdrop of certain rituals also seem to be influenced by the Sanskrit tradition. At the same time the inclusion of the ritual paratha *prasangam*[20], the incorporation of a number of regional and Koovagam specific stories along with the story of Aravan depicted in the texts like *Villi Paratham* and the selection of non Brahmins as pujaris also illustrate deviation from the Sanskrit/Brahmanical traditions. The interaction between the Sanskrit/Brahmanical (great tradition) and the indigenous (little tradition) seems to influence the materiality (participation, experience and performance) and immateriality (folks, myths) of the festival and also offers fluidity to the festival in its operation. This fluidity can be interpreted as an explanation for the festival's presentation of multiple perspectives regarding the body. The festival is spinning around many positionalities with respect to the body.

One remarkable thing about the festival is that it has swami purappad ritual for the first 12 nights consecutively and the continuous spinning of the head would arrest our sense even after its completion. While the head is spinning, it does not appear to like to be grounded, to stand at a fixed position. Likewise the festival is incessantly spinning around the idea of the body taking a vertiginous position without arriving at a point to rest or at a center to hold on. The vertiginous angle of the festival or its groundlessness in terms of addressing the body reflects the impossibility to define the body. If the idea of the disintegrated body is a truth, the notion of the integral and unified body is also a truth. It can be a whole or it may challenge the whole. The body is recalcitrant to any single frame of thought, conceptual tool or disciplinary engagement and this is the productive logic[21] of the body that the festival appears to illustrate.

NOTES

1   For discussions of how religious studies understand 'body' see, Brown (1988), Malti-Douglas (1991), Law (1995), Coakley (1997), Doniger (1997), and Holdrege (1998). For Anthropology, see, Douglas M (1966), Benthall J and Polhemus (1975), Blacking (1977), Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), and Asad (1997). There are works that attempted to explore the relation between the body and society. See for example, Freund (1988), Dissanayake Wimal (1993) and Shilling Chris (1993). For Feminism and gender studies, see, Bordo (1993), Butler (1990, 1993), Irigaray Luce (1993), and Grosz (1994). It is

impossible to neglect the works of scholars like Merleau- Ponty (1962) and Foucault (1976, 1984) who have been influential for bringing the body into the front of academic discourse.

2 As per the brochure brought out by the temple administration at the time of the festival, the festival is called as Koovagam *thiruvizha* (Koovagam festival). At the same time there has been different ways through which the festival is produced as 'Koovagam transgender festival.' The recent entry of the state representatives, various NGOs and national and international media is contributing to such a production. The banners and posters announcing the programmes of the state and NGOs carry the title 'Koovagam transgender festival' which in turn reflects the idea that it is due to the participation of transgender women that they are attracted to the festival. For the outside world the festival is now called as 'Koovagam transgender festival.'

3 I use the term 'transgender women' throughout to refer to people who have experienced a transition from male to female. They are called differently in different parts of India for instance they are called as 'Aravanikal' or 'Thirunangaikal' in Tamil Nadu while a term called 'Mangalamughi' is used to refer to them in Karnataka. Such regionally available terms will not work for the present discussion since the festival has their participation from all over India.

4 Aravan has a less significant portrayal in the epic *Mahabharata*. It depicts his birth as the son of Arjuna and Ulupi, and death in the Kurukshetra battle, but does not mention his battlefield sacrifice. For an understanding of the story of Aravan (Iravan in Sanskrit) in the epic, see Roy (1887: 239-43). But Tamil versions of the epic like *Villi Paratham* provide a detailed depiction of Aravan as a brave hero.

5 The village Koovagam is made up of five different castes-Vanniyar, Adi Dravida, Ambattan, Vannan and Asaris-that have significant role in the festival as well. Ekali is a term used to refer to people belonging to the Vannan (also known as Vannar) caste. Their main business is laundry.

6 *Villi Paratham* is written by Villiputuralvar in the 14th century and is an expansion of Parata Venpa, the earliest known Tamil version of the epic written in the 9th century (Hiltbeitel 1988).

7 Panthaladi is a grove full of different trees, and is 2 KM away from the Koovagam temple. Some rituals occur here.

8 I think the term 'villagers' is not apt to refer to the residents of the village as it carries derisive connotations. The only feasible way to address the problem is to look at how they speak of themselves. They use the Tamil word 'oorukar' to introduce them or talk about someone from the village. 'Oorukar' is plural while *'oorukkaran'* is singular.

9 The ritual is meant to transfer the uyir (life) of the deity to a pot and then the deity is taken for the painting function. The old painting is peeled off and the deity is painted afresh. Painting ritual precedes the ritualistic enactment of Aravan's battle and death.

10 The festival has two types of tali tying ceremonies. The first one falls on the second day that is confined to the representatives of two castes while the second one is meant for the male devotees and transgender women. Women devotees do not participate in the ritual.

11 The Sreekoil/Sreekovil is a building in which the deity is placed. It is an elaborated structure that includes doors and proper seat for the deity.

12 'The birth to presence' or 'coming- into- presence' is an idea propagated by Nancy (1993), which is premised on the distinction between representation and presentation.

Nancy's argument is that representation provides fixity to something while presentation exceeds fixity and is a 'constant occurring'.

13 I made the argument keeping in mind how people in some parts of Tamil Nadu look at diseases like chicken pox. From my talk with the locals in Koovagam, I came to know that they don't consider it as a disease; rather, it is looked at as a blessing by the goddess called Mariyamman who have a shrine in Koovagam adjacent to the temple of Koothandavar. Chicken pox is not considered as something that hinders 'the normal' appearance and functioning of the body. It points to the fact that even though there are generally accepted standards regarding the 'normal' appearance/functioning of the body, it is impossible to negate the influence made by one's particular social and cultural background in understanding the body.

14 By 'mytho-poetic body', Davis (2006, 4) means the body of the mythological gods. Such bodies are considered ideal.

15 The slashed word 'headless' is added by the researcher. The Greek word 'acephalis' means headless.

16 It reminds Radich's (2016) mentioning of how Buddha's relics attained the status of a 'legal person' that holds property.

17 Umbrella that is placed on the head of Aravan is talked by the oorukar as one of the body parts of Aravan. Ezhimalai and Krishnan Pujari told that the umbrella attains the status of a body part because they are making the body of a war hero. For them, such embellishments are essential to make the body of a warrior who is parading on the chariot and fighting.

18 I follow Singer's notion of the great tradition (1972). For him, great tradition is 'a learned and literate tradition, preserving the dominant systems of thought and value of a civilization' (1972, 55). It denotes the formal and conventional religions, and the dominant values and ideas propagated by them. When it comes to the Indian tradition, the great tradition is characterised by the epics, Sanskrit texts, and the Brahmanical ideology. He contrasts the great tradition with the little tradition which is informal, local folkloric (1972).

19 *Villi Paratham* is structured in ten Parvas while the Sanskrit epic has 18 Parvas.

20 Sundaram opines that paratha prasangam is a feature of the village level festivities in Tamil Nadu and it does not use Sanskrit verses (2014,148).

21 I am obliged to Heidegger for the term 'productive logic'. He uses it to illustrate the way certain beings/things/regions reveal their 'Being' (1996). In the light of the festival, we can say that the body seems to reject any single conceptual frame to make sense of it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Insight into Priority Based Research Areas in Biological Anthropology in the New Millennium

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Abstract: The 96th Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) was held in Shillong, Meghalaya in the year 2009. This article contains the presidential address delivered in ISCA's section of Anthropological and Behavioural Sciences. It offers insights into three basic domains of anthropology considered to be important areas of research in this new millennium. These are namely (i) human evolution, (ii) human growth and maturation and (iii) anthropometry. This article contends that researches conducted in these areas would in future prove useful to the biological anthropologists and further the welfare of man.

Key words : Human evolution, human growth and maturation, anthropometry

The onus of delivering a presidential address is not an easy one. This particular section is inclusive of several important disciplines. To be honest I do not consider myself competent to present a transdisciplinary approach of specialized knowledge of all these disciplines. Therefore, relying on the good faith of knowledge accumulated over four decades, I wish to concentrate on certain relevant areas of Biological Anthropology. I will not engage in the controversial debate of an integrated/holistic approach or disintegration of anthropology. But I do firmly believe that each subdiscipline of anthropology has achieved so much specialization and advancement that the idea of integrated anthropology would be difficult to contain in near future.

Biological Anthropology consists of the following four basic premises namely (1) human evolution, (2) human genetics and variation, (3) human growth and maturation and (4) human adaptation. There are wide scopes for developing deeper insights into these premises, provided, in addition to existing knowledge newer specialized methodologies, techniques and analysis of other disciplines are adopted and utilized. Under this situation, it appears to me that newer insights in understanding human evolution, advances in human growth researches and use of anthropometry are to be taken into consideration on the basis of priority in the context of Biological anthropology in this new millennium.

Attempts to understand three aspects, origin, evolution and migration in the studies of human evolution have been made analyzing a large body of fossil evidences from the past. Evidence of Homo erectus, Archaic Homo sapiens, Neanderthals and early modern Homo sapiens appeared in the fossil records from different continents ranging 1.8-0.3 million to 1.30,000-60,000 years ago. But till date, this problem of origin of man remains unresolved.

Fortunately, application of genomic analysis has revolutionized our understanding on the questions of human evolution. Adoption and changes in methodology specially ancient DNA analysis has largely directed in yielding results with more efficiency, confidence and reliability. The evidence from DNA sequencing elucidated much in understanding human evolution. Comparing ape and human DNA sequences indicate their relationships and divergence in the phylogenetic tree.

Migration or movements of the present day populations could be appreciated by comparing DNA sequences (mitochondrial, Y-chromosomal, autosomal, etc.). The current knowledge on information of Y-chromosome polymorphism and geographic distribution of Y-specific markers among different contemporary populations have been accumulated. Further Y-chromosome haplotype consisting both binary and microsatellite polymorphisms have been found to be powerful tools in understanding of population structure and relationship between groups (Kobyliansky, 2004). Analysis of Neanderthal mitochondrial DNA sequences reveals that Neanderthals are unlikely to have been directly ancestral to modern human and support the "Out-of-Africa" or "Noah's Ark" model of human origin.

Researches on molecular relatedness and genetic diversity in the Indian populations using microsatellites have been initiated and reported by scholars belonging to a few research institutes from eastern and southern India. More works in this line are desirable in this new millennium. The University Departments of Anthropology all over India need to take up initiative in this direction.

The study of human growth and maturation and body composition has a long history since ancient times through Renaissance period to the present day. The initial development of this discipline (interchangeably reckoned as "auxology") was made possible by the contributions of many workers from different parts of the world; to name a few Montbeillard (1759-1777), Scammon, Godin, Boas, Krogman, Galton and others. In the 20th century a number of globally reputed researchers like Tanner (1981), Roche, Garn, Malina, Johnston and others have further extended human growth study. Subsequently, the discipline has been enriched with the unique contributions from different disciplines like Physical anthropology, Pediatrics, Biochemistry, Physiology, Statistics, Mathematics as well as Psychology. Tanner (1981) reviewed that the major motivations or impulses behind all growth studies are social inequality, public health, human evolutionary process, gene-environment interaction and clinical science. The popular phrase "Growth as a mirror of condition of society" is his conclusion.

The ethnic, environmental and cultural heterogeneity of Indian people offer diverse opportunities for undertaking auxological research surveys. Particularly in anthropological context, the influence of genetic and environmental factors with their interactions responsible for the variation in

the measures of growth, maturation (pubertal,dental and skeletal) and body composition have yet to be investigated. This is due to lack of infrastructural support and facilities required for conducting these studies in our country and also partly due to lack of social awareness. One study recently undertaken in our neighbouring country, Nepal, is in progress. It is expected to generate some new insight on gene-environment interaction in human growth. The traditional genetic-epidemiological analysis method used in measures of growth and development is not potential enough in the post-genomic era. Linkage analysis and association studies are found to be two complementary strategies used to identify genes which explain variability in complex traits like growth and development. In the present millennium findings from linkage and association studies need to identify specific genomic locations and allelic variants of genes influencing variation. Simultaneously, auxological investigation of public health importance that emerges out of social impulse should be given a high priority. This is because of the changing socio-economic scenario of the population of the country as a whole taking into cognizance the increase in the magnitude of difference between urban and rural areas.

In the Indian context auxological researches using varying approaches have been conducted by Physical Anthropologists, Pediatricians and Nutritionists. Anthropological auxology researches have been largely conducted on Northern Indian children. Further investigations to know the auxological profile of the rest of the country should be continued with homogeneity in techniques of measurements, sampling strategies, age grouping by the use of sophisticated advanced statistical methods. Since mostly cross-sectional studies have been persuaded with fragmented age ranges, these are largely insufficient to reveal required information on gene-environment and their interaction with growth. This is because growth is dynamic process from prenatal period to adulthood. All the published studies, in general, reflect average growth in relation to national and international norms. Routine nutritional surveys up to preschool years with minimum anthropometric measurements in different socio-economic, dietary and familial situation are issues that need to be reflected upon to comprehend the country's growth situation in the global perspective. Such surveys should be uniformly performed in all states with homogenous protocols to judge the reliability and quality of growth data required for Health Policy Planning.

However, a few long term longitudinal studies have been reported from this country. One such study is family based, carried out in West Bengal. The other is a twin based study carried out in Punjab. The West Bengal study, popularly known as Sarsuna-Barisa Mixed Longitudinal study, was carried out on the children from 6 months to 20 years for 26 body measurements of the siblings. This valuable archive of growth data provided the first opportunity to estimate the adolescent growth spurt characteristics by the application of mathematical model namely Preece-Baines 1 (i.e., APHV and APV of other body dimensions).

Subsequently, this archive produced a number of papers of familial resemblance of growth curve parameters and heritability for large number of body measures and their constituents. The magnitude of ethnic variation in sex dimorphism is known from the results generated through the parameters of growth curve estimated from the same model. The second is a twin based longitudinal study conducted on Punjabi children (north India) that provides us information on genetic control on various characteristics of pubertal maturation. In western India, Agharkar Research Institute has conducted a project on longitudinal study of children from Pune noting the relation of nutritional status and growth. In southern India, the National Institute of Nutrition(NIN) undertook several longitudinal investigations of growth velocity of children from Hyderabad in relation to their nutritional status. Longitudinal studies of shorter duration are also available that reflect variation in growth velocity of body size and its constituents which are of pediatric value. The Anthropological Survey of India has recently initiated large scale public health programme on Growth and Development of North East Indian children. The results yielded out of it would help to generate valuable data necessary to evaluate the public health situation especially among the tribal populations of this region in relation to their physical and socioeconomic environments.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) initiated a growth survey after independence of the country. Subsequently, similar surveys from states were sponsored by the ICMR to update the growth norm values for certain age periods and traits. It is important to mention that World Health Organization (WHO) has recently developed universal growth standards for the children that include Indian population sample and samples from other developing countries. Construction of universal standards for the adolescent groups are in progress. The application of ethnic specific growth norms or one universal standard or one national standard coexists. Indian auxologists are still to arrive at a consensus on this issue. However, nutritional surveys of the preschool ages with minimum anthropometric measures in different socioeconomic, dietary conditions, household and maternal physical traits are matters of interest reflecting the country's situation in the global perspectives. Unfortunately, this has not been performed in all states with uniform protocols.

Since a country's socioeconomic progress is generally reflected from children's growth pattern, Tanner remarked that 'Growth reflects material and moral conditions of the society'. In the era of economic globalization to which the country is a partner since 1991, now is the appropriate time for the introduction of countrywide growth studies (by opening a number of Research Institutes). Epidemiological transition which is a part of globalization has several facets like demographic, socioeconomic, disease patterns and ways of life style. The transition has already manifested many detrimental effects on the health of the population for e.g., the emergence of obesity and increasing

prevalence of metabolic disorders and associated syndromes. India, therefore, is experiencing a double burden of malnutrition and obesity. Large scale auxological investigations through monitoring will be necessary to generate base line data on these new issues of health burden. This requires co-ordinated researches with physiologists, nutritionists, biochemists and epidemiologists to contribute to the health situation and the health policy in India.

Anthropometry, the science of measuring different parts of the human body, takes into consideration the task of quantifying variations in body size, shape and composition. In 1995, the World Health Organization adopted and recommended several measurements to examine the nutritional status of large populations of a community. Some of the important body measurements used were height, weight and upper arm circumference etc. Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM) was detected among children who are shorter than the recommended height-for-age of normal children in the population under study.

Significantly, this system of measuring the human body is absolutely non-invasive and inexpensive. The International Biological Programme (IBP) has also recommended the use of technique of anthropometry. The selection of the anthropometric measurements depends on the purpose for which they are to be used (WHO, 1995). An instrument known as Skinfold Caliper is used to measure subcutaneous fat. Because the thickness of two layers of the skin is only about 1.88 mm, most of the thickness of fold of a skin represents subcutaneous fat. Because subcutaneous fat may represent upto 50 per cent of the total body fat, the measurement of skinfold thickness can provide a useful technique for the estimation of body fat. Body fat and degree of obesity are nowdays determined by a digitally operated electronic device called Body Fat Monitor, which estimates body fat percentage by measuring body's electrical resistance by what is known as the Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis (BIA) method. Body fat percentage is the percentage is body weight that relates to body fat mass or obesity which is emerging as one of the major health issues in the new millennium. Obesity may be defined as the degree of storage of excess fat associated with clearly elevated health risk. Anthropometrists opine that the distribution of fat or fat patterning in the body is emerging as a great concern today. The topography of body fat is related to the risk factor of hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular and coronary heart diseases. Epidemiological and clinical investigations have revealed that the number of anthropometrically measurable attributes of the body can be related to the risk of developing metabolic disorders and various illness. Generalized obesity results in alterations of total blood volume and cardiac function whereas distribution of fat around thoracic cage and abdomen restricts respiratory excursion and alters respiratory function (Kopelman, 2000). The inra-abdominal visceral deposition of adipose tissue, which characterizes upper

body obesity, is a major contribution to the development of hypertension, elevated plasma insulin concentration and insulin resistance, type-2 diabetes milletus and hyperlipidemia (Kopelman, 2000).

Even though modern techniques like magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computerized axial tomography (CAT), Bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA), dual ergy X-ray absorpitiometry (DEXA) are available, anthropometry still remains the most universally applicable, inexpensive and noninvasive method available to assess the size, proportion and composition of the human body (Wildman and Medeiros, 2000).

In recent years, anthropometric indicators such as waist circumference (WC) and Waist-hip ratio (WHR), concity index (CI) etc. are repeatedly shown to be simple yet powerful predictors of common adult chronic conditions such as coronary heart diseases (CHD), non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM), hypertension (HT) etc. Studies in general have shown that individuals with high proportion of abdominal fat as measured by WC, WHR, CI etc. display significant changes in their plasma lipid and lipoprotein concentration.

South Asians (including people of Indian origin) have more centralized distribution of body fat, with thick trunk skinfolds and markedly higher mean WHR for a given level of BMI compared to Europeans and recorded highest rates of coronary heart diseases worldwide (Enas, 2000; Ramachandran et al., 2001). In India also rates are rising (Gupta and Gupta, 1996; Yajnik, 2000) and CHD has been predicted to rank first among the causes of death in Indian population by 2015 (Reddy et al., 2002; Yajnik, 2002)

The association of central obesity with metabolic risk factors is not the same in all ethnic groups. Since vast ethnic heterogeneity prevails in India, it would be worthwhile to study other populations to determine whether the trend is observed among them also. There is paucity of data on the association of central adiposity and metabolic rask factors of CHD among various ethnic groups in India. In this context, organizations such as ICMR, AnSI and Biological Anthropologists from Indian Universities and Research Institutions need to work together to fulfill this aim.

Global economic and environmental changes have paved the way for unprecedented urbanization. This has dramatically revolutionized life style pattern of the common people both in developed and developing countries. In the context of deliberation of present lecture, I considered three premises of biological anthropology based on priority. The understanding of human evolution is a basic and fundamental question since time immemorial. The other two (a) advances in growth researches and (b) use of anthropometry are important aspects concerned with the progress and development of a country. As it appears the utility of growth researches is underestimated and overlooked as also the importance of the role of anthropometry is still to be realized for the benefit and welfare of the people of India in this new millennium.

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Common Childhood Morbidity and Treatment Seeking Behaviour in an Indian Megacity: A Case Study of North Kolkata

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Abstract: Despite impressive progress in the economic front, child health and nutritional outcomes remained far from satisfactory in India. At the same time, the rapid and continuous increase in India's urban population and the concomitant growth of population residing in slums has resulted in overstraining of infrastructure and deterioration of public health. Against this backdrop, the present study aimed at assessing the factors affecting common childhood morbidity (acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea) among children of 6 to 11 years of age in urban settings and also attempted to explore treatment seeking behaviour in the event of such ailments. It is a cross sectional study conducted among 251 urban children of slums, non-slums and squatters of North Kolkata. An age-specified stratified random sampling technique was used to select study participants. The prevalence of ARI (33.3 per cent) and diarrhoea (40.5 per cent) are more among the children of squatter compared to slum (15.8 per cent) and non-slum (7.9 per cent). Low educational level of parents, housing materials, poor hygiene practices (such as, defecating in the open or taking temporary latrine), using fire wood for cooking were significantly associated with children being more prone to diarrhoea and ARI. It was also revealed in the study that the respondents have attributed cost as the main factor for selecting health care services; other factors include waiting time in the hospitals, doctor patient ratio, distance and accessibility, cleanliness, behavior of the staffs, timing and severity of illness. Improvement in living conditions, providing adequate health education to parents and improving health care facilities will address some of these issues.

Key words : Indian Megacity, 6 to 11 years, Residential status, Morbidity, Treatment seeking behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Globally, infectious diseases have been identified as the major threats to child survival (WHO, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2014) leading to 14 to 17 million child deaths each year (48 per cent of premature deaths and 63 per cent of childhood deaths) and affecting another 50 million (WHO, 2008a). In developing countries, communicable diseases among school aged children is a major concern (Oyibo, 2012; WHO, 2013). Africa and South Asia together listed to about 90 per cent of children suffering from acute respiratory infections (ARI) and diarrhoea with India in the top list with about 28per cent of all deaths due to pneumonia and diarrhoea in 2010 (Black et al., 2010). Despite significant economic growth during the two decades, India continued to show a very unsatisfactory performance with regard to child health and nutritional outcomes. With more than 36 per cent of the burden of childhood diseases, India was ranked second

only to sub-Saharan African countries by The Global Burden of Disease Study and identified ARI and diarrhoea as the common morbidities among children (WHO, 2013; Liu *et al*, 2014). However, in India, child mortality has been reduced to a great extent (Gupta *et al.*, 2009), but still large number of children are suffering from these two diseases and those at a greater risk are often not being identified and reached (WHO/UNICEF, 2013).

A growing body of literature suggests that childhood circumstances have lasting effects on healthy life in the later period (Pakpahan *et al.*, 2017). WHO (2017), in addition to malnutrition identified other risk factors like poor housing, unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene, crowding and indoor pollution due to smoke from solid fuels for child's illness. Unventilated dwellings and severely polluted air are also the reasons for respiratory infections (Fry *et al.*, 2010). Chaudhari et al. (2009) in their study found that two third of slum children had cough, while only half of middle income group children suffered from cough. Mondal *et al.* (2016) in a study on primary school age children of North Kolkata found that the principal causes of morbidity among children are respiratory infections, diarrhoea, skin infections, acute pharyngitis and dental caries. ARI and diarrhoea are higher among children belonging to low socioeconomic status (Kumar *et al.*, 2015; Singh and Singh, 2014). Moreover, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea that contributed to the bulk of child morbidity are more among the children who are undernourished or are severely underweight (Dey and Chaudhuri, 2012).

Childhood illness and health seeking behaviour are the major concerns among epidemiologists and social scientists (Goldman and Heuveline, 2001). In low income settings, child's health and survival mainly depend on parent's selection of health care services (D'Souza, 2003). Studies suggest that, health seeking behaviour, especially in developing countries depends on socio-economic status, women's autonomy, culture, physical as well as financial accessibility, severity of disease and health service issues (Shaikh and Hatcher, 2005; Stephenson and Hennink, 2004; Webair and Gouth, 2013).

There is a huge body of literature on the morbidity profile of children belonging to preschool age compared to that of mid childhood age group (6-11 years). Set to this above context, the present study aimed to assess common childhood morbidity (acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea) and its concomitants among children of 6 to 11 years of age in a megacity, namely, Kolkata. Further, the study also attempted to investigate the treatment seeking behaviour of studied children.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study site

Kolkata is a densely populated megacity with more than 13 million inhabitants, ranks among the top ten most populous cities in the world and

third populous city in India after Delhi and Mumbai. The city is divided into 144 administrative wards. According to Census of India (2011), about one third of the population of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) lives in slums. The proportion of slum households to total households in Kolkata is 29.6 per cent. The study covered three municipal wards of North Kolkata (ward nos. 29, 31 and 32) consisting of non-slums, slums (both notified and non-notified) and squatters (Figure 1). The underlying reason behind such selection was to capture adequate socio-economic heterogeneity and significant variation with respect to health awareness, accessibility to health care facilities and health conditions among the slum, squatter and non-slum dwellers. Moreover, non-slum areas themselves manifest considerable heterogeneity in terms of standards of living.

Narkeldanga (ward number 31) is one of the areas in North Kolkata where large and old slums are concentrated. It is among the oldest, largest, most degraded and poorly serviced slums of the city. Apart from these, the rest of the areas have witnessed a proliferation of high rises, inhabited mainly by people belonging to higher socioeconomic group and to certain extent by middle and lower socioeconomic groups. The study area comprises the Ghore Bibi Lane slum and two non-slum areas that include people from lower and higher socio-economic status.

The study area of ward number 32 consists of non-notified slum (Hathat coloney), an area adjacent to Bidhannagar railway track and a non-slum area nearer to it. Squatters along Canal West Road (ward number 29) were also selected for the study. The settlements are located on both sides of the embankment of the canal stretching from Baghbazar to Beliaghata Railway Bridge.

Ward numbers 31 and 32 are predominantly inhabited by Hindus, whereas, ward number 29 comprises of both Hindu and Muslim populations who are residing there for the past several years and those who have migrated from neighbouring country (Bangladesh) and states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha) and from the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal.

Data collection

To find out the children of specified age group, a houselisting operation was carried out in the three study sites, i.e. non-slums, slums (notified and non-notified) and squatters. A total number of 1080 children (aged < 14 years) were identified from these households. In the second stage, we identified 534 households that have at least one child aged 6 to 11 years ((162 in non slums, 223 in slums and 89 in squatters). An age-specific stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the study participants, i.e. 251 children (76 from non-slums, 133 from slums including 100 from notified, 33 from non-notified and 42 from squatters) and following this method, a list was prepared for households to be surveyed (Figure 2). Two structured and semi-structured questionnaires were prepared that include a household questionnaire and a

questionnaire on child health related issues. The questionnaires were pretested and then administered among study participants. Written informed consent was taken before administering the questionnaires.

To supplement the information obtained from quantitative survey, four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and eight open-ended In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted among women and men in the study areas. The focus group consisted of 6 to 8 persons from a homogeneous group including both male and female. The FGD's consisted of two groups: Group A consists of those who prefer to avail public health facilities and Group B consists of those who prefer to avail private health care services and who after using the public treatment facility had preferred private facilities for the same disease in both slums and non-slums. Apart from these, in-depth interviews were conducted among the parents whose children experienced a recent episode of ARI and diarrhoea. All FGDs and IDIs were recorded and the *verbatim* were transcribed.

Analytical models

To identify the determinants of common childhood morbidity among children, binary logit model was used. Logit regression analysis is especially useful for categorical distribution of responses on the dependent variable with one or more of the independent variables. The model is specified as (Bhaumik, 2015)

$$P_i = P(Y_i = 1) = F(Z_i) = \frac{1}{1+e^{Z_i}} \qquad (1)$$

Where, P_i is the probability of $Y_i = 1$; $F(Z_i)$ is the CDF of cumulative logistic function; $Z_i = á + âX_i$ is the predictor variable; e is the base of natural logarithms = 2.71828.

The marginal effects for logit model is computed as,

$$\frac{dP_i}{dX_i} = \frac{dP_i}{dZ_i} \cdot \frac{dZ_i}{dX_i} = \frac{e^{-a-\beta X_i}}{\left(1+e^{-a-\beta X_i}\right)^2} \cdot \beta_i \qquad (2)$$

The marginal effects, derived from logit regression model is an alternative metric defined as change in independent variable holding all other variables in the model as constant. It is virtually indistinguishable and provide a more useful interpretation of the relationships between the dependent and independent variables than direct interpretation of probit or logit regression coefficients or their exponential form (odds of logistic regression) (Bogard, 2016).

The study estimated three models to analyze the factors affecting morbidity among children (Table 1). The models include a number of factors which would have considerable influence on common childhood diseases. Spatial variables include areas of residence [categorized as non-slum and slum (including squatters)];demographic variables include age groups (categorized as 6-7, 8-9 and 10-11), sex of the child (categorized as male and female), number of siblings, mother's age at pregnancy (categorized as <= 20 years and >20 years),

size of the child at birth (categorized as small, medium and large), birth order and birth interval of the child (categorized as 1st birth order, > 1st birth order with interval > 24 months and > 1st birth order with interval < 24 months). Socio-demographic factors include 'religion/caste', where the two variable religion and caste are pooled together to form a single variable (categorized as Non SC/ST Hindu and SC and ST Hindu/ Non-Hindu), mothers' education (categorized as illiterate, primary, secondary and above), mothers' occupation (categorized as white collar workers, blue collar workers and non-workers), quintiles of per capita household expenditure (categorized as high and medium/low), mothers' exposure to mass media (categorized as regular/ often and irregular /never). The variable 'mothers' exposure to mass media' was created from four categorical variables namely, 'read newspaper/magazine at least once in a week', 'listened to radio at least once in a week', 'watched television at least once in a week' and 'accessed internet at least once in a week'. Health and hygiene variables include crowding (categorized as <= 3 persons and > 3 persons), treated water before drinking (Yes, No), separate room for kitchen (Yes, No), sanitation facility (categorized as private toilet, shared/community toilet and open), type of toilet (connected pour flush latrine and pit latrine, open), drainage type (categorized as no drainage, open drain, covered drain) and garbage disposal facility (Yes, No), primary cooking fuel (categorized as biomass fuel, kerosene oil stove and gas).

Both diarrhoea and ARI are subject to seasonal variations. The incidence of ARI is more in winter and pre-winter, whereas incidence of diarrhoea is more during summer months and rainy season (Karrar and Omar, 1981; Ahmed *et al.*, 2008). Since the survey for the present study was conducted during winter months (December and January) the percentage of children having diarrhoea was found substantially low, hence the variable diarrhoea is replaced by diarrhoea/ ARI in order to avoid non-zero cell in regression models. Additionally, a logit regression analysis was carried out to understand factors affecting ARI only, and Diarrhoea/ARI.

<center>RESULTS</center>

Sample characteristics

Table 2 presents sample characteristics of the study population. Boys are found to be somewhat higher in the sample compared to girls (51.4 per cent). About half of the participants in slums are SC/ST Hindus (52.6 per cent), whereas majority of the participants in squatters are Muslims (57.1 per cent). In squatters, most of the mothers are found to become pregnant below 20 years of age (85.7 per cent) followed by 64.7 per cent in slums. Most of the mothers in squatters are illiterate (88.1 per cent), whereas in slums most of them are educated below secondary level (54.9 per cent) and are more educated than their spouses (not shown in the table).

Table 3 depicts the housing condition of the studied households. It can be ascertained that almost all the families in non-slum areas live in pucca

houses. Whereas, 59.4per cent of the residents in slums live in semi-pucca houses and 28.6per cent in kuccha houses (mostly in non-notified slum). Most of the residents in squatter lives in houses made of bamboo and plastic sheets. 91.7per cent of the households in slums and 48.7 per cent in non-slums use shared toilets; whereas 58.6per cent of the households in squatters use community toilets (pit latrines). 48.7per cent of the households in non-slums treat water before drinking, whereas the households belonging to slums and squatters drink water collected from public drinking water sources without any treatment. Most of the households in non-notified slum use kerosene oil stove for cooking (not mentioned in the table). Majority in squatters use biomass fuel, i.e. firewood and charcoal (57.1 per cent) for cooking. 48.7 per cent of the households in non-slums have garbage disposing facilities, while none of the households in slums and squatters have any garbage disposal facility. These households generally use to dispose the waste in the vicinity.

Prevalence of acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea by area of residence

Table 4 presents the prevalence of ARI and diarrhoea/ARI among urban children based on area of residence. It is evident from the result that area of residence is associated with the prevalence of ARI and diarrhoea/ARI among children. Children of squatters are at a higher risk of suffering from ARI, i.e. 33.3 per cent compared to their counterparts in slum and non-slum areas. Moreover, children living in squatters are also at a higher risk of suffering from diarrhoea/ARI (40.5 per cent) than the children of slums (18.8 per cent) and non-slums (10.5 per cent).

Econometric analysis

Logit regression model was used to identify the factors affecting common childhood morbidity (Table 5). In Models 1 and 2 it was observed that place of residence have a significant effect on morbidity. A child belonging to slum is found more likely to be prone to ARI and diarrhoea/ARI than their counterparts belonging to non-slum areas. However, the effect of residence became insignificant when variables related to health and hygiene was incorporated in Model 3.

Birth order and birth interval of children have a significant positive effect on morbidity among children in Model 3. Children of first birth order are 13.42 per cent less likely to be affected by ARI and such likelihood increases to 14.78 percent for children of higher birth order with birth interval less than 24 months. Similarly, it was found that children with no siblings are less likely to be affected by ARI compared to children having four siblings. Children who were born to mothers (<20 years of age) are more likely to be affected with ARI and diarrhoea/ARI than the children who were born to mothers beyond 20 years of age. The results are consistent in Models 1 and 2; only the degree of association varies.

Sanitation facility has a significant positive effect on the prevalence of diarrhoea/ARI among children. Children who defecate in the open are more

likely to be susceptible to diarrhoea/ARI (23.4 percent) and this likelihood decreases to 8.4 percent and 5.5 percent if the child uses shared or community toilet and private toilet respectively.

In an open ended IDI with a squatter participant (age 34 years, domestic helper in her profession) affirmed:

'*We have spoken to local politicians several times and have requested them to set up some toilets for the jhupris of Rajabazar, but was of no use. Toilets have been built across the city except along Rajabazar Canal West Road. But, the scene finally changed when an NGO working in the area constructed seven pit toilets made of bamboo and corrugated thin sheet panels*'.

The study found that only the adults use these toilets. The children usually defecate in the open.

Children who take treated water for drinking are (7.6 per cent) are less likely to suffer from diarrhoea than the children who drink untreated water. Similarly, children living in households where there is a separate kitchen are (6.4 per cent) less likely to be affected by ARI. Children living in households where biomass fuel is primarily used for cooking (32.2 per cent) are more likely to be affected by ARI than those children who live in households where gas and/or kerosene oil is used as cooking fuel.

In an IDI conducted with a Muslim woman (age 28 years, rag picker in her profession), who lives with her husband and five children at the farthest end of the Canal West Road in a single room made of bamboo and thin plastic sheets with no electricity asserted:

'*My children often suffer from breathing problem. The doctor said it is all because of the smoke filled environment and advised to leave the place immediately.*'

Garbage disposal facility also has a significant positive effect on the prevalence of diarrhoea/ARI among children. Children living in households where there is no facility of garbage disposal (10.8 per cent) are more likely to be affected by diarrohea/ARI than those children who live in households where garbage disposal facility is available.

Treatment seeking behaviour

In slums, public health service was availed by 61.9 per cent children suffering from diarrhoea and 75.0 per cent of the children suffering from diarrhoea/ARI, whereas, in non-slum areas about 66.7 per cent and 50.0 per cent of the respondents preferred private health care facilities treating both ARI and diarrhoea/ARI respectively for their children. In squatters, 35.7 per cent and 33.3 per cent of episodes of ARI and diarrhoea/ARI were not at all treated. A higher episode of both diarrhoea/ARI and ARI among males was treated by private practitioners compared to that of females. In most of the cases girls were taken to the public health centers for treatment (as revealed in the FGD) (Table 6).

In the present study, most of the respondents, mainly of slums stated cost to be the main factor contributing to the selection of a dispensary or hospital; since, in slums most of the respondents were daily wage earners.

In an FGD conducted among the resident of slums who prefer public health care services (hereafter Group A) asserted:

'Although visiting government hospitals are time consuming, yet those are far better compared to the private hospitals in terms of cost involvement. The private hospitals are just running business in the name of treatment.'

An open ended IDI with a resident of non-slum (age 31years, a mother of 11 years old child) affirmed:

'When needed, we always use to visit government hospitals. We can't even think to avail private treatments; they are so expensive.'

According to the respondents of Group A:

'Even though government hospitals do not provide all the services properly, but we are helpless. Private hospitals simply takes the opportunity to loot the patient. They are too expensive for us and hence we can't even think of visiting there.'

An FGD conducted with participants of non-slums who prefer to avail private health care services asserted (hereafter Group B):

'In private hospitals, doctors give lots of attention, listen and detect their patients carefully. Whereas, in government hospitals patients are not treated according to their expectations.'

An open ended IDI with a resident of slum (age 38 years, daily wage earner, a father of 11 years old child) affirmed:

'One just need to visit the general ward of government hospitals to know how pathetic the condition of the patients. Last time, for seeking medical advice for my child's ailment, I found it to be disgusting. There was a huge rush of patients, which adds worry to the patient party as well as the patient.

Participants of Group B opined:

'In government hospitals, you will find patients lying on the floor'

An open ended IDI with a resident of non-slum (age 28, mother of a 9 years old boy) affirmed:

'In government hospitals, the arrival time of the doctor is not proper as most of them remain busy at their private clinics. So for health concern, private hospitals are much better than public hospitals, especially during emergency.'

In the present study, majority of the respondents have stated the services provided by public hospitals to be poor. Although services in government hospitals are free or are provided at concessional rates, yet long waiting time, inadequate infrastructure, and irresponsible behaviour of staff (sometimes), poor standards of cleanliness and hygiene are some of the factors that

contribute to the dissatisfaction of patients. On the other hand, proximity to place of residence, quality of sanitation and hygiene, polite behaviour of staff, quick services and convenient timings collectively contribute to high level of satisfaction among people with the services offered in private hospitals and clinics.

DISCUSSIONS

Management of child mortality is still a challenge in the developing world. The present study was aimed at assessing the effect of socio-demographic, economic, and health and hygiene related factors on morbidity among children of 6 to 11 years of age and patterns of treatment-seeking behaviour among their parents in an urban megacity. The study reveals that prevalence of ARI and diarrhoea/ARI is more among the children of squatters followed by slums.

In the present study, number of siblings was found to have a significant positive association with the likelihood of a child to suffer from diseases. This confirms the earlier findings that children with more number of siblings are more prone to diseases (Mane *et al.*, 2016). Mother's age at pregnancy was found to have a significant effect on the nutritional status of the child. Studies suggest that, young childbearing mothers, generally below 19 years of age are more likely to give birth to preterm child, or may give birth to child who remain undernoursihed or may have an increased chance of death of the child before completing the first year of life. (Paranjothy *et al.*, 2009; Condu-Agudelo *et al.*, 2005; Markovitz *et al.*, 2005; Sharma *et al.*, 2008) because of behavioural, social, and biological factors. For example, younger mothers may breastfeed their child for a shorter duration than older mothers (Legrand and Mbacke, 1993; Wambach and Cole, 2000) and are less likely to attend to their infant's needs. They mostly belong to lower socio-economic status, have less years of schooling, and less stable partnerships than older mothers and hence the nutritional level of their children is far below expectation (Schroll and Hediger, 1993).

In the present study, mother's education was found to have a significant positive association with the child for being prone to diseases. Studies have estimated that parental education plays a significant role in child health (Behrman and Deolalikar, 1988; Strauss and Thomas, 1995). It has even been argued that children of educated parents are less prone to diseases, because they adopt better child-care practices (Mosley, 1985). Additionally our study found that mother's exposure to mass media significantly affects the prevalence of diarrhoea/ARI among children. Studies reveal mothers' exposure to mass media, plays an important role in educating women about how to keep their children protected from infectious another strong determinant for the diseases (Ghosh, 2006). Per capita household expenditure is strongly associated with the prevalence of ARI and diarrhoea among children (Patil *et al.*, 2009), as

well as for being underweight (Bermudez *et al.,* 2012; Campbell *et al.,* 2010; Sari *et al.,* 2010; Mauludyani *et al.,* 2014).

Global burden of diarrhoea could be reduced by improving domestic hygiene (Bender and McCann, 2000). Repeated episodes of diarrhoea contribute to undernutrition by impeding nutrient absorption which leads to a vicious cycle. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 50per cent of undernutrition among children is caused due to infections resulting from inadequate sanitation or insufficient hygiene and unsafe water (WHO, 2003). Indoor household pollution (exposure to smoke mainly due to cooking fuel used) contributes to the prevalence of ARI among children and adults as well (Savitha *et al.*, 2007, Dherani *et al.*, 2008; Kristensen and Olsen, 2006). Firewood and charcoal are the principal sources of fuel for the residence living along Rajabazar Canal West Road. Most of the households are single roomed within which they cook and live. So, the indoor air pollution affecting the health of the household members are high. Additionally, our study found that garbage disposal facility also has a significant positive effect on the prevalence of diarrhoea/ARI among children, as found in another study (Kjellstrom *et al.*, 2006).

Child morbidity is still a challenge in developing countries. Nowadays, studies on treatment seeking behaviour are given more priorities by epidemiologists and social scientists to deal with child morbidity (UNICEF, 1995; Ward *et al.,*1997).

Empirical evidences suggest that failure of public sector in disbursing duties is one of the main reasons behind the growth of the private sector in India (Curristine *et al.*, 2007). In our study we too found that most of the people living in non-slums and few in slums prefer to visit private hospitals over public hospitals due to inconvenience.

It was revealed in the study that the respondents have attributed cost as the main criterion for selecting health care services; others include waiting time in the hospitals, doctor patient ratio, distance and accessibility, cleanliness, behaviour of the staffs, timing and severity of illness.

Improving living conditions, providing adequate health education to parents and developing the quality of health care delivery facilities may reduce the burden of child morbidity.

Some of the limitations of the present study must be acknowledged. To note, this study has been conducted in three municipal wards of North Kolkata, which is dominated by a particular religious community and thus rendered to a homogeneous sample. The estimated results could vary if we would have considered adequate representation from all communities in our sample. Also to note the entire analyses was based on information of only 251 children and thus cannot be generalized. The study was conducted during the pre-winter and winter months and hence the incidence of ARI and diarrhoea may be affectd bu seasonal Bias.

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Table 1. *Variables tested for significant association with child morbidity in Logit Regression Models 1–3*

Models	Descriptions
Model 1	Spatial factor: area of residence
	Demographic factors: age groups, sex of child, number of siblings, mother's age at pregnancy, baby's size at birth, birth order and birth interval of the child
Model 2	Socio-economic factors: *religion/caste*, mother's education, mothers occupation, per capita household expenditure, mother's exposure to mass media
Model 3	Health and hygiene: separate room for kitchen, water treated before drinking, sanitation facility, primary cooking fuel, drainage facility, garbage disposal facility

Table 2. *Sample characteristics*

Background characteristics	Non-slum	Slum	Squatter	Total
Age-group				
6-7	31 (40.8)	54 (40.6)	18 (42.9)	103 (41.0)
8-9	15 (19.7)	30 (22.6)	12 (28.6)	57 (22.7)
10-11	30 (39.5)	49 (36.8)	12 (28.6)	91 (36.3)
Sex				
Male	36 (47.4)	70 (52.6)	26 (61.9)	132 (52.6)
Female	40 (52.6)	63 (47.4)	16 (38.1)	119 (47.4)
Religion/Caste				
Non SC/ST Hindu	52 (68.4)	63 (47.4)	-	115 (45.8)
SC&ST Hindu/Non-Hindu	24 (31.6)	70 (52.6)	42 (100.0)	136 (54.2)
Number of siblings				
≤ 1	61 (80.3)	99 (74.4)	27 (64.3)	187 (74.5)
>1	15 (19.7)	34 (25.6)	15 (35.7)	64 (25.5)
Mother's age at pregnancy				
≤ 20	13 (17.1)	86 (64.7)	36 (85.7)	135 (53.8)
>20	63 (82.9)	47 (35.3)	6 (14.3)	116 (46.2)
Mother's education				
Illiterate	26 (34.2)	60 (45.1)	42 (100.0)	123 (49.0)
≤ Secondary	17 (22.6)	73 (54.9)	-	95 (37.9)
>Scondary	33 (43.4)	-	-	33 (13.2)
Work status of mother				
White collar	12 (15.8)	-	-	12 (4.8)
Blue collar	8 (10.5)	61 (45.9)	34 (81.0)	103 (41.0)
Not working	56 (73.7)	72 (54.1)	8 (19.1)	136 (54.2)
Total	76 (100.0)	133 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	251 (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage

SC: Scheduled Caste

ST: Scheduled Tribe

Table 3. *Housing characteristics/ health and hygiene*

Background characteristics	Non-slum	Slum	Squatter	Total
House type				
Pucca	76 (100)	16 (12.0)	-	92 (36.7)
Semi pucca	-	79 (59.4)	-	79 (31.5)
Kuccha	-	38 (28.6)	42 (100)	80 (31.9)
Crowding				
≤3 persons per room	57 (75.0)	59 (44.4)	4 (9.5)	120 (47.8)
>3 persons per room	19 (25.0)	74 (55.6)	38 (90.5)	131 (52.2)
Separate room for kitchen				
Yes	62 (81.6)	46 (34.6)	-	108 (43.0)
No	14 (18.4)	87 (65.4)	42 (100)	143 (57.0)
Water treated before drinking				
Yes	37 (48.7)	4 (3.01)	-	41(16.3)
No	39 (51.3)	129 (97.0)	42 (100.0)	210 (83.7)
Sanitation facility				
Open	-	4 (2.01)	9 (21.4)	13 (5.2)
Community/shared toilet	37 (48.7)	122 (91.7)	33 (78.6)	192 (76.5)
Private toilet	39 (51.3)	7 (5.3)	-	46 (18.3)
Type of toilet facility				
Connected pour flush latrine	76 (100.0)	129 (97.0)	-	205 (81.7)
Pit latrine	-	-	33 (78.6)	33 (13.1)
Open	-	4 (2.0)	9 (21.4)	13 (5.2)
Place of bathing				
Open	2 (2.6)	15 (11.3)	42 (100.0)	59 (2.4)
Community/shared bathroom	37 (48.7)	112 (84.2)	-	149 (59.4)
Private bathroom	37 (48.7)	6 (4.5)	-	43 (17.1)
Drainage type				
No drainage facility	-	14 (10.5)	28 (66.7)	42 (16.7)
Open drain	1 (1.3)	14 (10.5)	14 (33.3)	29 (11.6)
Covered drain	75 (98.7)	105 (79.0)	-	180 (7.2)
Primary cooking fuel				
Biomass	-	10 (7.5)	24 (57.1)	34 (13.6)
Kerosene	25 (32.9)	56 (42.1)	18 (42.9)	99 (39.4)
Gas	51 (67.1)	67 (50.4)		118 (47.0)
Source of lighting				
Electricity	76 (100.0)	119 (89.5)	-	195 (77.7)
Kerosene/other oil		14 (10.5)	42 (100.0)	56 (22.3)
Garbage disposal facility				
Yes	37 (48.7)	-	-	37 (14.7)
No	39 (51.3)	133 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	214 (85.3)
Total	76 (100.0)	133 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	251 (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage

Table 4. *Morbidity among children of urban settings*

Morbidity	Non-slum	Slum	Squatter	Total
ARI	6 (7.9)	21 (15.8)	14 (33.3)	41 (16.3)
Diarrhoea/ARI	8 (10.5)	25 (18.8)	17 (40.5)	50 (19.9)
Total	76 (100.0)	133 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	251 (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage.

Table 5. *Logit regression model identifying factors affecting morbidity among children of 6 to 11 years of age in urban settings (marginal effects in percentage)*

Background characteristics	ARI			Diarrhoea/ ARI		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Area						
Non-slum	2.0	1.5	9.3	1.45	0.7	2.5
Slum	21.6***	23.3**	18.9	11.04**	15.1*	10.2
Sex						
Male	16.8	17.0	15.7	7.04	7.1	6.6
Female	18.5	18.4	19.9	9.81	9.9	10.9
Age Group						
6 to 7 years	20.2	21.0	21.7	5.62	6.2	6.3
8 to 9 years	16.4	16.8	15.4	8.81	9.1	10.0
10 to 11 years	15.1	14.1	14.7	11.48	10.5	10.2
Baby's size at birth						
Small	18.3	15.9	13.4	6.51	5.3	5.6
Medium	20.3***	20.3*	21.0*	10.32**	11.1	11.3
Large	9.1	14.1	20.1	7.04	9.2	11.3
Birth order/interval of the child						
1st birth order	11.7	13.3	13.4	4.69	5.0	5.3
> 1st BO/ I>24 months	15.6	14.6**	14.8*	8.95**	8.1	8.7
> 1st BO /I <24 months	26.7*	26.5	26.1	11.74	12.2*	10.8
Number of siblings						
0	9.2	11.8	11.4	5.29	5.3	5.6
2	20.0	18.9	19.3	9.41	9.3	9.1
4	35.9**	28.0*	31.3*	15.85*	15.4	14.5
Mother's age at pregnancy						
≤ 20 years	21.0	19.6	20.8	10.87	10.3	8.6
>20 years	12.5**	14.4**	16.0*	5.34**	6.1*	6.2*
Crowding						
≤ 3	8.8	6.6	6.3	6.5	5.8	6.1
>3	18.1	18.4	18.4*	16.4	17.6	17.7
Mother's education						
Illiterate		25.0	21.7		12.7	10.6

Secondary	10.6***	13.7*	4.7	5.9
> Secondary	6.8	2.08	2.3	1.6*
Mother's occupation				
Blue collar	51.6	35.0	39.3	39.7
White collar	18.9	17.4	10.9	9.5
Not working	16.3*	15.2*	6.6	7.2
Mass media exposure				
Yes	16.2	15.2	5.4	6.4
No	23.6**	18.2**	21.8***	14.7**
Per capita household expenditure				
Low	23.0	21.3	10.7	9.3
Medium/ High	11.0**	13.1	5.6**	6.9
Religion/Caste				
Non SC/ST Hindu	22.1	24.5	8.2	7.3
SC & ST Hindu/NH	15.9	15.5	8.7	8.9
Sanitation facility				
Open		18.2		23.4
Share/community toilet		11.4		8.4**
Private toilet		8.1		5.5***
Separate room for kitchen				
Yes		2.9		1.8
No		9.3**		8.2
Treated water before drinking				
Yes		-		2.4
No		-		10.0**
Primary cooking fuel				
Biomass		41.9		36.42
Kerosene		9.6***		8.2*
Gas		6.3**		6.1
Drainage facility				
No drainage facility		25.1		11.3
Open drain		21.1		8.6
Covered drain		10.8**		4.2*
Garbage disposing facility				
Yes		16.4		1.5
No		17.7		12.2**

Note: *p-value<0.05; **p-value<0.01; ***p-value<0.001

NH: Non-Hindu

SC: Scheduled Caste

ST: Scheduled Tribe

BOI: Birth order with interval

Table 6. *Treatment seeking behaviour based on place of residence*

Treatment seeking behavior	Non-slum ARI	Diarrhoea / ARI	Slum ARI	Diarrhoea / ARI	Squatters ARI	Diarrhoea / ARI
No treatment/treated at home	-	-	-	-	5 (35.7)	6(35.3)
Public	2 (33.3)	3 (37.5)	13 (61.9)	16 (64.0)	9 (64.3)	11 (64.7)
Private	4 (66.7)	5(62.5)	8 (38.1)	9(36.0)	-	-
Total	6 (100.0)	8(100.0)	21(100.0)	25(100.0)	14 (100.0)	7(100.0)

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentage
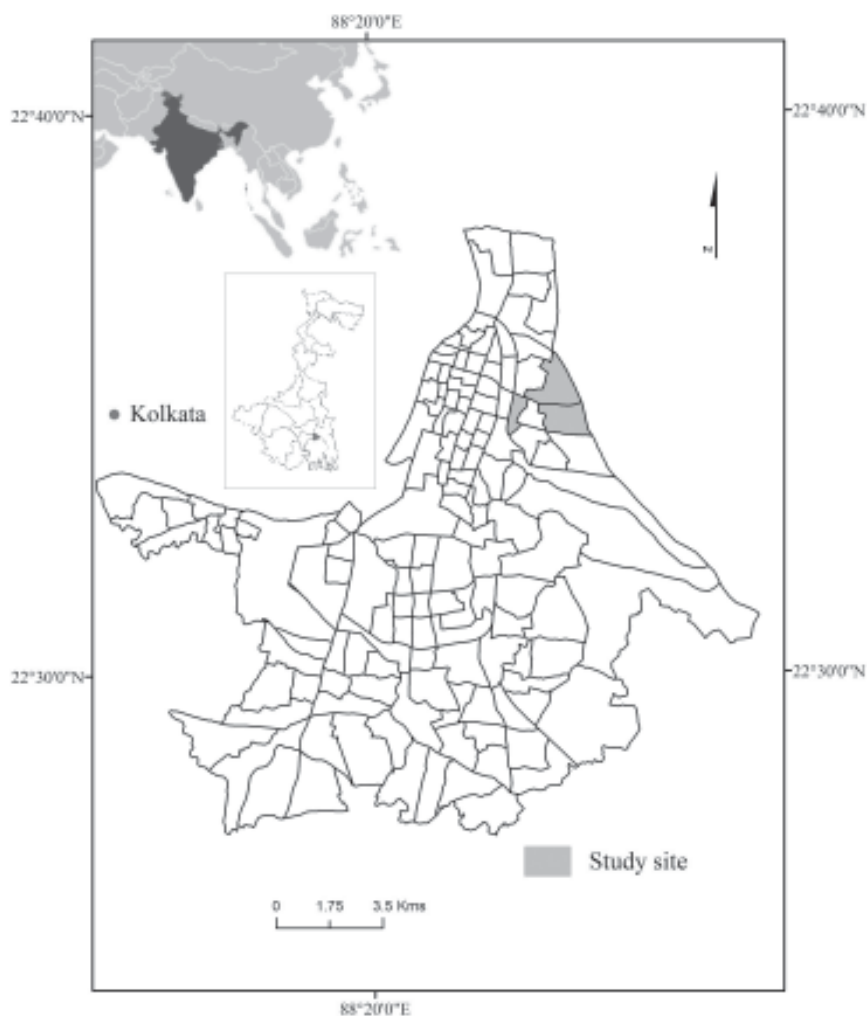
Figure 1. Location of the study site
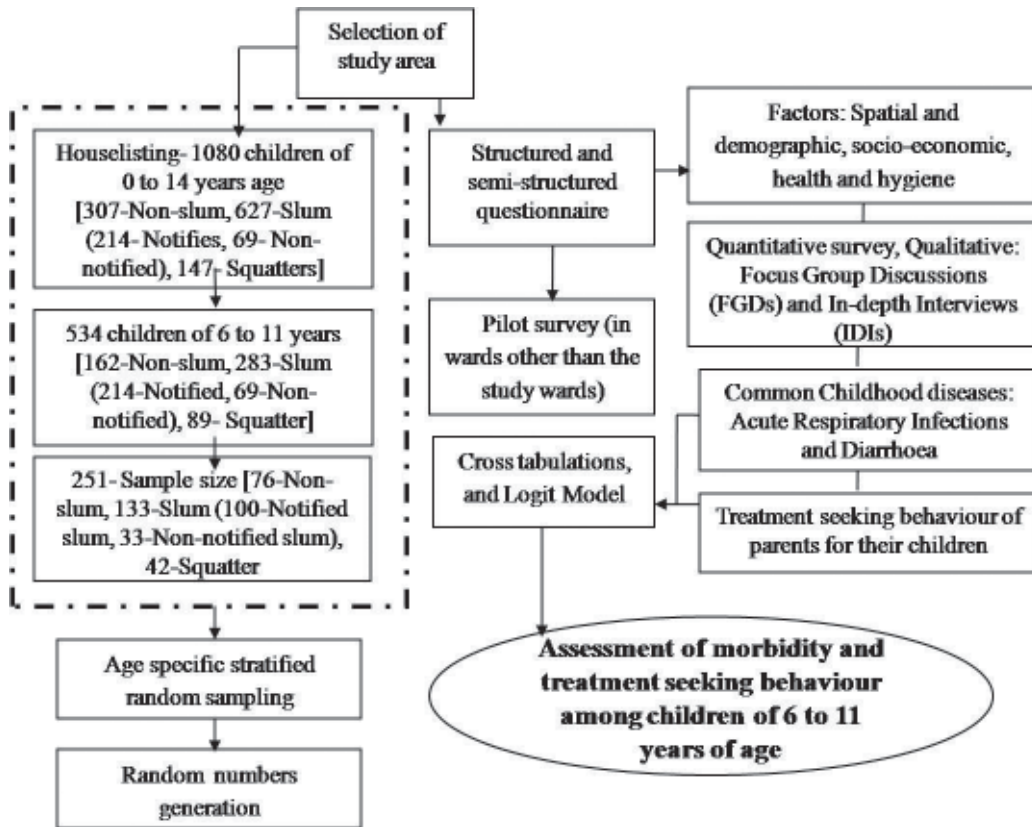
Figure 2. Methodological flow chart of the study

Mapping Polarisation: Four Ethnographic Cases from West Bengal

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Abstract: Religious polarisation is on the rise in India especially after the BharatiyaJanata Party led National Democratic Alliance assumed power of the center in 2014. West Bengal with instances of numerous riots during the partition of the country has a history of peasant uprisefollowed by party-mediate public transactions for more than three decades. With party becoming the major mediating mechanism the state presents a picture of being relatively immune to riots and primordial identity issues. However, of late, there has been a significant rise in the number of riots and identitypolarisation. We have studied four major cases of religious polarisation and riots since 2015 to reflect on how identity issues are propagated through a mix of invented traditions, hoax and use of dubious means like employing goons and in what ways riots pay electoral dividends to the political parties.

Key words : Politics, Identity, Riot, Conflict, Communalism

INTRODUCTION

West Bengal, one of the 29 States of India, has seen identity-based polarisation in 1930s and religious riots during the partition of the country in 1947 (Bose 1986; Das 1991). Different scholars have studied them as clashes between traditionalists and fundamentalists within Islam,as a social class conflict, and as an outcome of economic inequalities increasingly taking an organised form (Das 1991). However,radical leftist movements known as Naxalite movements in 1970s pushed religious identity issues at the backseat (Pal 2017). With repeated failures of state governments and presidential interventions, finally in 1977 Communist Party of India Marxist (CPIM)- led Left Front (LF) assumed power to rule the State for more than three decades. Inthe year 2011,Trinamool Congress (TMC) in alliance with Indian National Congress (INC) dislodged them. TMC then came out of the alliance and continued to rule the state till now. During their tenure, it was LF who promoted party based political mediation in public affairs. It suppressed other competing channels of public transactions including those linked with primordial identity issues. Such mediation is termed as 'Party Society' (a modified version of Chatterjee 2004 by Bhattacharyya 2009, 2016) and systemic misrecognition where people were made to recognise party as an alternative and accessible form of government for all practical purposes (Nath 2018). Das (2005) tries to show post Babri Mosque demolition-led Calcutta riots in 1992 as symptoms of the subsurface continuation of Hindu-Muslim fissure. In a much recent ethnographic work, Roy (2014) reports continuation of such a trend in everyday life of the people in West Bengal. Chatterjee (2017) reports

construction of geographical, social and mental boundaries between the Hindus and Muslims in Kolkata – the capital city of the State of West Bengal.

LF's defeat in 2011 has led to a steady disappearance of the party society withgradual disintegration of LF organisations. TMC in its second term in 2016 consolidates their support base even in places which used to be considered as the LF bastions (Nath 2017). Two years before that, in 2014 there was another major shift in the national politics when the INC led secular democratic United Progressive Alliance suffered defeat in the hands of BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance. Mr. NarendraModi became the Prime Minister of India from Varanasi – the holy city of the Hindus,in preference to his home ground of Gujarat. It was symbolic of the eventual rise of pro-Hindu politics in India. Policies like beef ban, incidents like lynching of Muslims and murder of dissenting voices are symptoms to the beginning of a non-secular India (see also Guha 2016). Although West Bengal remained immune to religious riots for nearly three decades, the State also began to show a significant rise of identity polarisation andoccurrence of riots (Figure 1). These have intensifiedfurther since October 2016 (Purakayastha 2018).
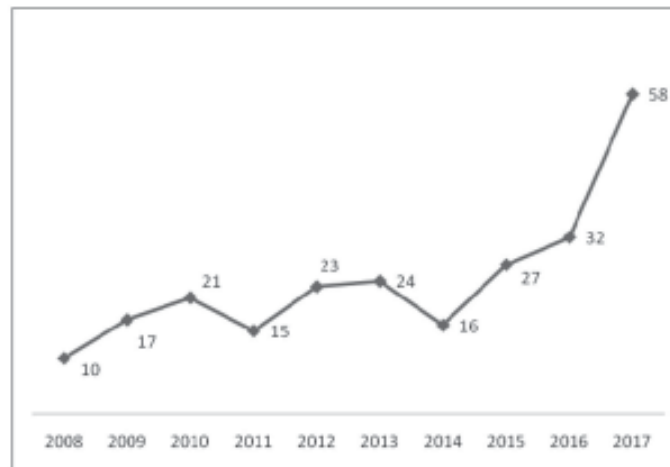

Figure 1 Number of riots in West Bengal since 2008 (Source: Replies to Parliament[1])

Policy context of the political change shows TMC thrusts on two major areas:(a) the farming sector and (b) the cultural sector.Both the farming sector, dealing with the principal occupation of the people and the Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs (MICA) looking after fairs, festivals and the like experienced roughly 6 times increase in fund allotment. In terms of hike, MICA occupies the second position after farming(GoWB 2017, Nath 2018). Furthermore, the state is also providing a monthly honourarium to the *Imams* and *Muezzins*which is often seen as instances of Muslim appeasement. In 2018, TMC for the first time promoted *Ram Navami* rallies, which have been initiated

originally by the BJP affiliated pro-Hindu organisations (ToI 2018). The State has also given a grant of Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 28,000/ toDurgotsav organisers (India Today 2018).Such initiatives are seen as TMC's desperation to maintain a balance in appeasing both Hindus and Muslims to ensure electoral support. Placing these initiatives in context of resurgence of riots wouldsignal an alarmas it signifies recalling people's dreadful experiences and historians' perceptions that with such riots communalization in India could have been even worse (Guha 2016). Needless to say, these initiatives in West Bengal have the potential to question the secular foundation of the country. We argue that these political and policy initiatives require through unbiased academic attention. It is important to contextualise them with the recent resurgence of identity polarisation. While scholars try to see promotion of identity polarisation through cleavage formationover time (Laitin and Posner 2001; Thapar 2014), that has close linkage with instrumental violence for electoral gains (Brass 2005, Pai 2013, Wilkinson 2004), there is a significant lack of understanding of how such constructs are manufactured at local and micro levels. For constructivists, it is the content of social category and construction of boundary rules between ethnic groups that consolidate categories. Such consolidations result in strengthening of organisational base (Fearon and Laitin 2000, Brass 2005). Most of the studies along this line focus on stereotyping identity construction and riot affected existence (Banerjee 2008; Robinson 2005; Gupta 2011; Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012). However, the process of identity consolidation and the mechanism of creating riots are fairly understudied (Chatterjee 2017).Nath (2018) theorises on the use of cultural apparatus as 'cultural misrecognition' – the mechanism of diverting people's attention from the issues of service delivery to primordial identity issues. Such a theorisation is quite apt to explain the political inclination on identity issues in West Bengal at the expense of issues of delivery of public services. Apart from Berti, Jaoul and Kanungo's (2011) compilation on ethnographies of Hindutva as cultural and artistic expressions, charismatic personification and narratives of resistance, there is a virtual absence of academic inquiries dealing with the ways identity consolidation takes place through riot-like incidents. Based on such an ethnographic research, this article is an attempt to map apparently chaotic but subtly planned development of identity politics in West Bengal. We have studied four major conflicts in West Bengal since 2015 to identify some of the core dimensions of manufacturing such forms of violence. The justification for studying riots in West Bengal is twofold(a) the State has seen virtual absence of riots and identity based political mobilisation for more than three decades, hence, studying them would help scholars to theorise and throw light on the ways in which such polarisationsare promoted afresh;(b) because of its contemporary nature, the study of these issues reveal contemporary mechanisms of promotion of identity polarisation especially through hoax and post-truths. In this paper we have made an attempt to unravel some of the structural mechanisms and major dimensions of sucha resurgence through ethnographic case studies.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our ethnography centres on the core issue of resurgence of riots and hence transcends 'local' boundaries in the 'classic' sense of ethnography. It can be called as an example of 'multi-sited ethnography', which is "a response to empirical changes in the world and therefore to transformed locations of cultural production" (Marcus 1995: 97). Although the idea of 'total immersion' in the field context continues to dominate much of the ethnographies, it often becomes difficult to practice in multi-sited ethnographies (Marcus 2007). Anthropologists sometimes are not in a position to do immersion based ethnography on issues of violent conflict, such as riots (Wood 2006). For this reason, it was impossible for us to explore the dimensions of 'agency', linked to the riots in West Bengal. We have rather explored the nature of events as they have unfolded themselves by making repeated visits to the riot-affected regions and holding conversations with different actors. We have interviewed eyewitnesses, riot affected people, local influential personalities, political leaders and workers and persons in local administration. In each of the cases we have made an immediate visit after the riot, mostly within a week at places where entry was permissible. We could visit places bound by administrative restrictions only when such restrictions were lifted. We repeated such visits usually in every fortnight until the impact of riot slowly faded and something new happened in some other places. For Kaliachak, Dhulagarh, Naihati-Hajinagar, Baduria-Basirhat we have made five, twelve, eight and thirteen such visits respectively. Interviews and group discussions were conducted in both formal sessions and informal discussions to explore the constructs and stereotypes associated with the polarised public sphere and map the mechanisms of polarisation in a State which has rather been immune to such identity based mobilisation of public sphere for more than three decades.

TMC'S POLITICS AND PRIMORDIAL IDENTITIES:

With few exceptions like the then transport minister Lt. SubhasChakrabarti, LF leaders could maintain some distance from the religious festivals. TMC, on the other hand, has a history of promoting and patronising *Durgotsav,* the most important festival of Kolkata. Different club organisations including most, if not all, of the best prize winners in organising the festival have TMC leaders and ministers as their honourary presidents and patrons. The Chief Minister herself inaugurates several Durgotsav every year,which has prompted Daniyal (2017) to brand*Durgotsav* asa government festival. While giving honourarium to the Imams and Muezzins was projected as TMC's Muslim appeasement programme, patronising 'Durgotsav' through funding, organising carnivals and giving awards are only expected. Not only doTMC's Hindu leaders participate in *Iftar* wearing Muslim stereotypical dresses,its Muslim leadersalso patronise'Durgotsav'. Festival centred politics has become one of the important

political mechanisms for TMC (Sircar 2017, Nath 2018). One can see it as a successful model of politics of control through cultural alignments termed as 'cultural misrecognition' by Nath (2018), which is working parallel to service delivery driven policies like 'Saboojsathi', subsidised food grain distribution and United Nations award winning 'Kanyashree' scheme. TMC's interface with identity issues apparently promotes *Sarva Dharma Samabhavawith* no discrimination based on faith (Madan 2010). However, because of lack of conceptual clarity associated with 'Sarva Dharma Samabhaba' these acts are easily interpreted as community-based appeasement policies (see Bhargava 2010). Although Sircar (2017) argues TMC is careful of not to be brandedas a party which patronises one religion over others, several post-truth[2] hoaxes systematically identify TMC consciously following a policy of Muslim appeasement.

THE FOUR CASES STUDIED

The broader stereotypic perception about TMC as a Muslim appeaser has several localised connotations. Much of what appears as Hindu-Muslim polarisation in recent past and the resultant riots can be seen as differential manifestations of (a)an organised movement towards creating polarisation and (b) attempts to mobilize against TMC and its alleged Muslim appeasement policy.We present below four cases to map the nature of polarisation and the background mechanisms of riots in recent times in West Bengal.

> **Case I:** The attack on Kaliachak police station, Maldah on January 03, 2016 made the stereotype of Muslim terroran 'established fact' in common perception in West Bengal. With wide media attention Kaliachak became a household name to represent Muslim atrocities on Hindus. It was one of the first incidents that made Hindu-Muslim discourse back to the discursive sphere of West Bengal. Because of television footage and Muslim majority in Maldah district of West Bengal, the attack was seen as an outcome of communal violence and a fight between Hindus and Muslims.[3] During the study we talked to the local people residing adjacent to the police station. Two issuescame to the fore. First, two distinct groups of Muslims came on 3rd January to visit the police station. The first group was that of a Muslim organisation of repute, namely,*AnjumanAhleSunnatulJamat* (ASJ). ASJ was carrying all necessary permission to protest. They staged a protest against the alleged derogatory remarks made by AmaleshTewari, a leader of Hindu Mahasabha – a pro-Hindu organisation attached with *Viswa Hindu Parishad* (VHP). Inclusion of women and children in the protest movement indicates that they had no intention to spread violence. A second group of Muslim men suddenly came within an hour. They started vandalising the police station by hurling crude bombs and firing bullets from country made pistols. Vehicles including several State Government-run Busses were set ablaze. In a group discussion with some of the police officials we

were told that local goons attempted to destroy police records against some of the notorious criminals. While ASJ happens to be one of the major Muslim organisations in the region having considerable influence on local Muslims through religious hegemonic apparatuses, another organisation *Idara-e-Saria* (IS) is also marking their presence felt in the region. Some of the local Muslims reflected that the violence was an outcome of theconflict between the two competing organisations to gain control over the local Muslims. ASJ's popularity and strategy to launch protests against AmaleshTewari was perceived as a threat to the IS as they could not launch similar protests on time. It was an attempt on their part to hijack the show. The protest turned violent because of the involvement of local goons. Through our repeated group discussions with a variety of people it was amply clear that the Kaliachak violence didn't have any communal intention. While media reported it as a political clash (Chakravarty 2016), several videos and images were circulated through social media with a provocative footnote from Hindu *JagaranManch* – another pro-Hindu wing of VHP. One of the messages claimed that with the help of TMC, Muslims were turning West Bengal into a 'Pakistan', which clearly indicated at the process of Islamisation of the State through terror. Handbills were distributed in different places of Maldah carrying the same message. Consequently,Kaliachak could successfully be communalised in popular perception of a large section of the people in West Bengal.

Case II: Dhulagarh, Howrah saw a local conflict between Hindu and Muslim youths over share of extortion moneytook a communal turn. It lasted for weeks in December 2016 and January 2017.At Dhulagarhthere is a stark economic inequality between Muslim Jari manufacturing unit owners and others. These owners over the years have acquired considerable wealth and they employ local Muslims and Hindus as labours. A form of ghettoisation of both Hindus and Muslims has started operating in the area which shows clear geographical and corresponding social divide. Despite being economically dependent on each other, these neighbourhoods follow mutual avoidance in terms of identity demarcation and 'cultural' practices. *"It is not that we don't go to their festivals like Eid-ul-Zuha, but only a few amongst us are interested in makingfriendship with them; their Islamic Jalsa always says nasty things about us. Admittedly, they are more religious minded and we are not!"* – one of the local youths confessed (in personal interview in February 2017). Our group discussions among the villagers of Munshirhaat, one of the epicentres of violence in January 2017, held a week after the curfew was lifted could reveal the extent of mistrust, shame and fear between the two communities. One of the villagers in a personal interview in January 2017 reflected *"we are ashamed of what had happened, we don't know how we are going to show our faces to Hindu brothers... it is the*

outsiders who looted, vandalised and set fire to properties..." In several group discussions and informal conversations we could find out that the conflict originated from the share of money extorted from a property transfer. Allegedly, Muslim youths already took money from a Marwari merchant who bought a land from one of the local Bengalispeaking Hindu families. With such information on extortion money, members of a local club run by the Hindu youths felt deprived. The club itself is located just by the side where the property is in existence and both Hindus and Muslims use that place as the playground. *"We play separately within the land and there was never any conflict between us. They wear their traditional lungi while playing and we don't find it comfortable to play matches with them"* (as one of the club members told in March 2017). On the day of *Milad-ul-Nabi* celebration, local Muslims decked the region with Islamic flags. Someone put a flag near the Hindu club and the rumour spread that the Hindus had torn down the flag. Immediately fights between the two broke out. Several houses in Hindu localities were set ablaze; shops and Jari manufacturing units were looted.

"Astonishingly, while the rumour spread at around 10:00 am the violence started within 30 mins. Within an hour houses were completely burned down, shops were looted. Perpetrators hid their faces. I am sure they were all outsiders... it was a planned attack – oneof the old Muslim women recollected in a group discussion in March 2017. With several injuries, even after deployment of Rapid Action Force the region continues to remain disturbed.

Case III: The third case study is from Naihati-Hajinagar of North 24 Parganas district. Actually, here our research on the mechanism of identity consolidation started years before the conflict took place in 2016. We have seen the development of pro-Hindu group organising stick fight practice sessions, physical training camps and *Ganga Aarati* since 2012. The organisational move through these activitiesis meant to make Hindutva an everyday feature among the practitioners. As we come from that region, we can tell with certainty that these rituals are recent imports and are examples of what is theorised as 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Similarly, widespread inventions Ram Navami rallies represent the flagship of aggressive Hindutva and violence. In Naihati-Hajinagar the tension continued to rise as Hindus and Muslims in their Ram Navami and Muharram rallies displayed arms to intimidate each other. These are clear indications of religion-party interface. People argue that local Members of Legislative Assembly(MLAs) of Hajinagar and Naihati assembly constituencies regularly attend religious programmes organised by the two communities. On 15th August 2016, a Muslim youth allegedly tore down Indian National Flag in the evening and was beaten up by the Hindus at a place known as Karbala crossing. As a fall out,

communal tension at different places near Karbala crossing grew, but before it could take an ugly turn the situation was managed by the timely police intervention. Such prompt reactions by the communities indicatedexisting Hindu-Muslim divide. Communal conflict at a much wider scale happened with State's notification of stopping Durga idol immersion processions on the day of Muharram in October 2016. Such a notification was projected as an example of Muslim appeasement. Following the notification, there was an increase in the intensity of identity consolidation. One could see Muharram rallies becoming larger and more intensive. On the next day to Muharram,allegedly someone from the Durgotsav idol immersion procession nearby threw a stone aiming at one of the local *Mazars*. Immediately a Hindu Muslim fight started. Several local shops were looted. Witnesses to the event reported that there were outsiders who actually started destroying and looting the shops.Soon a series of incidents followed signifying revenge and counter revenge by the two communities. One of the Muslim shop keepers in February 2017 reflected:

> "It was not needed for our CM to become "MumtazBegam." Muslims are already supporting her. Had there been arrests of hooligans there would not have been any conflict between Hindus and Muslims relating to their processions... We know people who work both for the TMC in the daytime andRashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh (RSS- the largest Hindu organisation) in the night."

Mamata Banerjee, the TMC supremo and Chief Minister of the State has been called 'Mumtaz Begum'meaning thereby that she is a Muslim appeaser. It is one of the popular connotations being promoted lately. Within a few weeks of the conflict a couple of peacekeeping rallies were convened by the two MLAs of the region. These rallies could only further consolidate the process of polarisation between Muslims and the other by the Hindus.

Case IV: The Baduria-Basirhat violence from the same district within a few months indicates continuation of cleavage. It is arguably the second longest duration of ethnic violence in recent past in West Bengal, the first one being the Asansol-Ranigunj riot centring on Ram Navami in March-April 2018. It started on July 2, 2017 because a derogatory Facebook post on Prophet Muhammad and Kaaba Sharif by a boy studying in his plus two standard. It was shared by many and eventually became 'viral' online. The boy was arrested. However, the tension continued to spread in vast areas of the district of North 24 Parganas for weeks amidst a series of violence and counter-violence. Being an orphan, the boy used to stay with his uncle's family. On 2nd July a group of Muslims vandalised his uncle's house. Their neighbours belonging to both Hindu and Muslim

communities tried to protect the house. They failed as the group mainly composed of outsiders armed with iron rods. On 3rd July there were several large-scale organised moves by Hindus and Muslims against each other at different locations in and around the twin towns of Baduria-Basirhat. It resulted in destruction of several houses belonging to both Hindus and Muslims. Two important centres of conflict were that of Tyantra and Tentulia, the two adjacent villages of Hindus and Muslims respectively. A middle-aged Hindu gentleman Mr. KartikMondal was killed by the rioters in Tentulia which further aggravated the violent situation. Even the Rapid Action Force had to recede. A tear-shell hit one of the local Muslims who were taken to the hospital by KartikMondal's son in the same ambulance in which he took his dying father. It remains as an example of Hindu-Muslim solidarity. In several interviews in September and October 2017KartikMondal's son continued to repeat that *"such violence between the two communities are unprecedented... a major cleavage of mistrust is now solidified."* In a group discussion in November 2017 one of the villagers argued,*"because religious training supported by TMC and BJP are on the rise, the youngsters are becoming violence prone... the outsiders can only launch an attack when there is some involvement from within the community."* While Basirhat town has a Hindu majority, many of its adjacent regions have pockets of Muslim concentration.Conflict between these two communities continued for weeks together. People belonging to both the communities reflected that while there were outsiders involved in promotion of riots, known faces were also involved in each of the organised attacks.

Following is a broad comparison of the core issues from the four cases we have just discussed:

Issues	Kaliachak	Dhulagarh	Naihati-Hajinagar	Baduria-Basirhat
Organisation base	Organised use of goons. Competition between two similar organisations	Hindu and Muslim organised move, and use of goons	Pro-Hindu organisations	Organised. Revenge and counter revenge among the ghettoised neighbourhoods
Nature of event	Pre-decided date opportunism	Festival and procession linked	Festival procession linked	Facebook post
Mechanism of spread	Media and Social media	Social media	Social media	Hoax and social media
Stereotyping	Muslim terror	Muslim terror	Muslim appeasement by state	Muslim appeasement by state

| Cultural cognitive institutional dimensions | Hindu minority & identity under threat | Hindu-Muslim fissure, mistrust. | Perceived threat and participation in communal organisations | Prominent mistrust. |

Table 1 Core issues from the five cases (source: field data collected by authors)

As West Bengal has been passing through a series of religious conflicts in recent past, an analysis of some of the recent election results shows rise of BJP in the State (Figure 2).
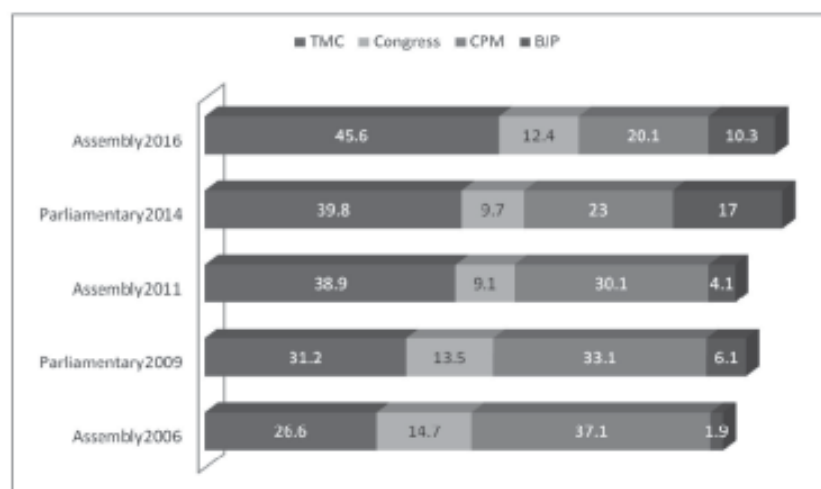

Figure 2 Percentage of vote shares by major parties in some of the recent elections in West Bengal (Source: indiavotes.com)

Figure 2 shows that although there is a fall in the percentage of voting for BJP in assembly election in comparison to the last Parliamentary election there is a substantive rise of BJP's popularity.The Panchayatvotes in 2018 makes BJP the nearest opposition to the TMC. It is clear that there is a substantive fall of left forces who during their tenure did successfully control the identity issues in politics. There seems to be a clear association with figure 1 and 2 in terms of identity based mobilisation and an associated rise BJP and perhaps TMC as well (as also noted by Pai 2013).

CONCLUSION

West Bengal is experiencing an increasingly organised form of identity based political mobilisations which is both ontologically and epistemologically different from LF promoted party society. Four important dimensions of subtler mechanisms of identity politics are coming out of this paper, first, the organisational aspect of identity mobilisations; second, the stereotyping of ethnic groups especially the Muslims; third, invented traditions and misrecognitions in action; and, fourth the uses of hoax and post-truth as a political strategy. Each of these issues requires further elaboration. Still the

issues are ample enough reasons to think that recent riots in West Bengal are not the direct outcome of 'natural' incompatibilities between the two communities. In each of the conflicts, organised outsiders, most often backed by known hooligans, played a crucial role. It indicates the existence of hooligans to be used by forces which havestrong organisational base in the State. While there are already existing organisations fuelling such conflicts, people's experiences of violence make them seek shelter under the canopy of those organisations functioning along the line of religious identity. Consequently, it is only a matter of time for the common people to join one or the other forms of identity based organisations. In fact, more recent aggressive riots in Ranigunj-Asansol of PaschimBardhaman district in 2018 suggest further consolidation ofidentity politics. Clearly, the construction of stereotypes surrounding religious identities is quite in progress in West Bengal. Such constructs frequently link violence with Muslims citing examples from global Muslim organisations like Islamic State and erstwhile Al-Qaidaand Taliban militants. Several organisations like Hindu JagaranManch are systematically using and projecting such Muslim stereotypes as Islamic State militants executing innocents simply because they were not willing to side with them. Furthermore, religious festivals including Islamic Jalsa, Ram Navami rallies, Ganga Aaratiare no less important in identity consolidation through invention of traditions. As the ground for religious consolidation is prepared with identity being perceived through invented traditions, riots are held with the purpose of creating organised hatred, mistrust and permanent cleavage. Meanwhile, BJP with a pro-Hindu image has been making concerted efforts to ensure electoral gains in West Bengal. In the process, it contributes to identity-backed politics by following its own course of creating symbols or markers of polarisation.

Such identity consolidation and related political practices are making a comeback once again in smaller but significant forms in West Bengal. The comeback must not be seen as a simple resurgence of primordial sentiments linked to any particular political party like TMC with its public image as a Muslim appeaser or BJP basking on its pro-Hindu stance and self-imposed glorification of Hindu tradition. It is rather a complicated process, linked with grassroots politics, policy preference and increasing religiosity of the country at large. West Bengalis passing through a process of strategic utilisation of misunderstood policies and practices to fuel polarisation. While there is a prominent role of hoax and post-truth narratives spread through social media, political goons are used in fermenting violence and counter violence. Such incidents then enter into the loops of discursive sphere and take an automated form of further consolidation of identities and continuation of violence. It results in creating a disturbed present to be referred to in near future suitably mixed with even more hoax and rumours.

There is fuzziness in the Indian form of secularism,as the concept of*Sarva Dharma Samabhava*(treating each religious as equal) is discussed by scholars

like Bhargava (2010), Madan (2010), Thapar, Noorani and Menon (2016). Our study shows themanner in which policy and practicesassociated with supposedly *Sarva Dharma Samabhava*approach are misrepresented (perhaps misrecognised too)and then misused in distorted forms by communal forces to expand their support base by taking recourse to post-truth hoax. The whole approach may be a deliberate play for narrow, immediate gains at West Bengal, therefore, is now at a crucial juncture when it is experiencing the increasing prospect of shrinking of space for the truly secular and democratic forces to operate in the political arena.

NOTES

1   The calculation is based on data gathered from these websites linked to the Parliament of India

http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/14/AU590.pdf

http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/12/AU3586.pdf

http://164.100.47.193/Annexture_New/lsq16/3/au1606.htm

http://164.100.47.193/Annexture_New/lsq15/13/au6502.htm

http://164.100.47.193/Annexture_New/lsq15/5/au2545.htm

2   Post-truth was chosen as word of the year by Oxford dictionary in 2016. It refers to issues or circumstances which undermines objective facts in forming public opinions and uses emotions and personal beliefs.

3   Malda as per 2011 census consists of 1621468 Hindus and 1636171 Muslims. Source

http://malda.gov.in/Disprof.htm accessed on January 05, 2017.

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Dr. Bhupendranath Datta: Remembering a Great Scholar in Indian Anthropology and Sociology

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Abstract: Dr. Bhupendranath Datta is almost a forgotten name in Indian Anthropology and Sociology. He is normally remembered as a Marxist intellectual and a great revolutionary. But what we ignore is his valuable researches in different fields of Anthropology and Sociology, and that also in the very formative phase of both these disciplines. However, his academic contributions are often cursorily remembered, referred, or denied entirely. He has hardly any place among the anthropological and sociological thinkers in India, even when he was an authority in Marxist social thinking. So far, not many serious efforts have been made to assess the value of his works form theoretical, methodological and empirical points of view. The present paper is a preliminary attempt to look into some of these aspects. It also shows how much Bhupendranath Datta, as a scholar did to enrich our knowledge, through his substantial research and writings on different topics having considerable relevance in the domain of Indian anthropology and sociology.

Key words : Varna, race, caste, class, class-conflict, feudalism, social transformation, Marxian dialectics, radical sociology.

I

Dr. Bhupendranath Datta (1880-1961) was the youngest brother of illustrious Swami Vivekananda (Narendranath Datta). Politically he is much more known for his socialist thought and revolutionary activities. Bhupendranath is remembered more as a great Marxist thinker and founder of Marxist school of thinking in our country. Dr. Dutta was a great contributor in interpreting Indian history in the Marxist dialectics. But his role as a pioneer of Marxist thinking is either cursorily remembered or is denied entirely (Mukherjee 1979:1).

Bhupendranath Datta is unfortunately a least quoted rather a forgotten name in Indian Sociology and Anthropology. Ramkrishna Mukherjee considered him as one of the pioneers of Indian sociology. He observes that Bhupendranath had examined Marx's and Weber's view on Indian society at a time when neither of these two was popular with the general run of social scientists (Ibid. 32). He wrote and contributed incisively to Indian social thinking in the very formative phase of Indian sociology. According to Mukherjee, 'Bhupendranath viewed sociology not only as an investigation of social problems but as a critique of the society and as an instrument of social transformation. He therefore, may be regarded as a pioneer not only of sociology but also of radical sociology of India' (Ibid. 4).

As an intellectual he was interested to study Indian society and culture from divers perspectives. The finding of his studies have been put down in several books dealing with history of 'social polity', 'land economies' and 'law of inheritance' in India. The list of publications of Bhupendranath Datta [Roy 1388(B.S)] clearly reveals that how much he has contributed seriously in different fields of Anthropology and Sociology in India. However, so far barring a few (Mukhopadhyay 1981, Chattopadhyay 1994, Ghosh 2002, and Bhattacharya 2013*)*, his contributions, particularly to Indian sociology and anthropology, have been least explored by contemporary researches. The present paper intends to review briefly some of his works and thoughts in the context Indian society, economy and polity.

<center>II</center>

Bhupendranath did an extensive research on social polity and land economies of India. Professionally he was trained in Sociology and Anthropology, and later became famous for his several historiographical accounts. In 1908, after a year of rigorous imprisonment for his anti - British stand and writings, he left India for long seventeen years. During that time, he as a student in different American and German Universities studied various subjects like sociology, anthropology, history, indology etc. In course of time he had developed scholarship in the fields not only of Sociology and Anthropology but also in History, Philosophy, Religion, Economics, Art and Literature, Marxism, Communism and so on. He had also considerable command over several foreign languages. As a revolutionary and political organiser at peasant fronts, he personally came in close contact with the Indian rural masses and experienced their deplorable life situations.

Bhupendranath Datta for his doctoral degree in Anthropology at Hamburg University (1923) did an intensive study on the main features of racial elements of the populations found in Afganistan, Beluchistan and Hindukush regions located at the north-western borders of India. At some point, in this study, he initiated a work in the framework of comparative sociology while keeping India at the core of his mind. To him, both from linguistic and anthropological points of view we cannot ignore the importance of Hindukush region in tracing the socio-cultural history of India. Probably Bhupendranath was the first person to anthropologically explore the racial background of the original inhabitants of Beluchistan and classified them into different 'bio-types'. He then compared those racial types with the Indian population and came to the conclusion that because of considerable admixture of Indian people with the alien population it is difficult to trace the unique racial identity of it. Bhupendranath regularly published most of his observations in the pages of the esteemed Anthropological periodicals of that time namely *Man in India*; *Anthropological Papers* and *Journal of the Department of Letters,* Calcutta University between 1935 and 1942 (for more detail see Ghosh 2002: 228-249).

III

In his sociological investigation on Indian society, Bhupendranath identified the following areas as his main fields of enquiry. During his stay in America and Europe he made a comparative study on the origin of class and caste in India. He expressed doubts about the indological interpretations where caste has been identified as a peculiar social phenomenon, and as the resultant institution arising out of struggle between the white 'Aryan' and the black 'non- Aryan' of India. He was in opinion that the discovery of the ruins of the so- called Indus valley civilization and its anthropological finds were sure to modify this view (De 1981:47). As an alternative thesis he came out with the proposition that the Indian caste system got an economic basis. Hence, those economic basis leadings to its political expressions have to be discovered in order to find out the genesis of the caste system in India. Bhupendranath's exploration in the study of the Hindu social formation and transformation is embodied in his *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (1944) later published in Bengali in three volumes titled *Bharatiya Samaj Paddhati* between 1946 and 1953.Some important findings of which are discussed below.

In view of Bhupendranath, Indian society, from the very ancient times, was an unequal society, the tradition of which was built upon economic exploitation, social oppression, and cultural and spiritual domination of the masses by the ruling classes. He discarded the racial theory of caste and class formation in India and said that neither the Varna nor the caste system was the original Indian system. The Indian Varna distinction had no any anthropological significance as advanced by some western scholars while dividing mankind into different races. To Bhupendranath, it was rather class struggles that led to the development of castes.

Thus in the Vedic days the Kshatriyas and Brahmins did not live as castes. They were living as classes and not stereotype hereditary castes, each trying to overwhelm the order to gain economic and social privileges. Moreover, the ancient India witnessed several class conflicts between different social strata and status groups. He further observed that there had been class conflicts even in Vedic periods due to which power at times passed from the hands of the warrior class to the priestly and sometimes to the working class. He had shown how class struggles and political and economic power eventually determined the positions of the different social classes. On the basis of his explorations of social class struggle from ancient texts, Bhupendranath would claim a reconstruction of Indian social history on a new line (Banerjee 1981:222).

The modern Indian *jatis* (castes) according to Bhupendranath, developed only when the occupational groups, particularly with the decline of Buddhism and coming of Muslims became a social reality (Ibid., 217). This since the eleventh century AD, as attested by the epigraphic records, turned into modern caste by 'connubial' and 'commensal' restrictions/ prohibitions amongst one

another. Hence the taboos and the notions of purity and exclusiveness emerging from them are to be regarded as works by which a group of men used to safeguard its class interests. In this process the question about food and contact of taboos became an integral part of the Hindu social organisation. Again the class character of different social groups gave rise to perpetual class-conflicts.

Looking into the Vedic ethnology critically Bhupendranath came to the conclusion that the Vedic people were not composed of a special biotype but an ethnic group of linguistic- cultural unity. However, he did not deny that various ranks on the basis of Varna distinctions were very much visible in the Vedic and post-Vedic periods of Indian history.   They were only occupational groups. In course of time, each occupational group gradually organised and consolidated itself into a *sreni* was virtually a prototype of 'guilds' i.e., the associations of people with similar interests or pursuits in the medieval Europe. Thus such groupings of people following same occupation began becoming hereditary in the families followed by certain rules and customs to regulate its conduct. With the calling now becoming hereditary and being associated with several prohibitions, prescriptions and other rules restricting its social intercourse, every guild over the period was gradually transformed into a Jati or caste (Datta 1944:356).

Since the guilds were now of numerous types, the four fold Varna division simply broke down and at that place evolved many castes. The final crystallisation of caste, according to Bhupendranath, took place with the culmination of Indian feudalisation (Mukhopadhyay 1981: 248). Bhupendranath, therefore, succeed in liberating the study of caste and class from conventional idealistic approach, and in placing it on a historical materialistic foundation (Chattopadhyay 1994:174).

Studies in Indian Social Polity (1944) are a fundamental contribution of Bhupendranath to the study of Indian social system in general and caste system in particular. He strongly negated the racial theory behind the origin of caste in India and considered it as a myth. He had shown that no pure racial (bio) types were seen among the different castes. He had also contested the fallacy of divine origin of the caste system. According to Bhupendranath, Indian caste system was rooted in the economic foundation and complexities of Indian social classes. It has been observed that most of the Marxist theories of caste in modern India have taken the cue from the Bhupendranath's proposition regarding Indian caste system (Mukhopadhyay, op cit., 252). He put forward a sociological explanation of how class differences and not caste, developed in the Vedic times with the complex farm of division of labour (Chattopadhyay, op cit., 174). From the sociological point of view we could hardly ignore his highly original contribution in the field of class and caste studies from historical perspectives based on the theoretical premises of dialectical materialism. That also occupies an impotent place in the construction of social history of India.

IV

In study of Indian society and culture by Bhupendranath,the peasantry occupied and important place. He also considered peasantry as the main stay of Indian civilization (1952:244). But they had been subjected to severe economic exploitation, and social and cultural oppression through ages. They were tied to the bonds of slavery and degradation, and received unequal treatment in the hands of ruling classes. Bhupendranath identified much revolutionary potential among the Indian peasants. So we witnessed several peasant revolts and movements in pre-independence India. At the same time he thought about their economic emancipation through a radical transformation of Indian agrarian structure. The problem of Indian peasantry, as perceived by Bhupendranath, cannot be addressed properly unless it is examined carefully in the context of historical process like growth of feudalism in India, caste and agrarian structure, and the pattern of oppression faced by the Indian peasants for ages (Mukhopadhyay, op cit., 241-242).

Bhupendranath Datta contributed significantly in the study of nature and development of feudal society in India in historical- materialistic frame of reference. At the outset he made a point clear that Indian feudalism was not a prototype of western feudal system. In his well known treatise titled *Dialectics of land Economics of India* (1952) he provided a thorough account of the exploitation of the peasantry and rural masses. In this comprehensive study he had tried to apply not only the general principles of Marxism but also his profound knowledge of the history, sociology and anthropology of Bengal to the land question in India. He observed that to understand the Bengal peasant one has to understand his social status. It is found that in Bengal the poor peasant has quite often been a representative of low caste, and the exploited agriculturists fall generally in the categories of Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes. Hence quite often agrarian class struggle has assumed the character of class conflict (Sehanavis 1981:211). To Bhupendranath, feudalism in India has provided an ideal social environment for oppressing and exploiting peasantry (Mukhopadhyay, op cit., 244).

V

Bhupendranath was equally interested in the study of religious institutions in India. He observed the important role played by religion in the societies of the ancient and medieval periods. That led him to investigate sociologically into the origin of the religious beliefs and ideas (Mukherjee,op cit.,41). In his opinion, religion in India gradually helped in maintaining the caste system through an intricate mechanism where the state power combined with priest-craft used religion to exploit the people and to keep up the socio-economic order (Datta 1944:456).

The basic aim of the religion, according to Dr. Datta, was to promote a sense of faith and morality which served as the support for social action of the

group of men, but as a society developed and evolved complex social structure, religion ceased to exercise its function, inculcate conservatism and fanatism. It ultimately turned into a barrier to social action and therefore to social change [Datta 1333 (BS) cited in Chattopadhyay, op. cit, 421]. In his view, historically religion had been widely used by the ruling classes to exploit the working classes making them blindly faithful to the empty dogmas and dead conventions, and in contesting unequal social order. However, the protesting religions like Buddhism, and several other progressive religious reform movements came forward as a guide to action for oppressed classes (Datta 1954: 263).

With reference to progressive religious movements, he observed that the Vaisnava movement was the movement of the masses. The Vaisnava religious leaders ruled out 'dont touchism', 'fanatism' etc., and at the same time accepted the marginalised section of people with love. In this movement Sri Chaitanya helped very largely to emancipate the so- called lower classes or castes from the social evils and prejudices under which they had been living in our society over ages. But Bhupendranath was not all that ready to accept this movement as something a 'revolutionary' one. The Vaishnava movement, according to him, failed to bring substantial structural change in our society because it remained confined within its religious fold and had no politico-economic influence or messages to the socially disadvantaged and culturally oppressed poor people [Datta 1349 (B.S) and 1945]. Despite all these limitations, the rise of Chaitanya phenomenon was, according to Bhupendranath, a great blow to Brahmanical supremacy.

VI

The findings of Dr. Datta's research on the institution of law have been put down in his book titled *Hindu Law of Inheritance: An Anthropological Study* (1957). Following the trails of Henry Maine's theorisation of *Ancient Law* (1861) and L.H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1870), Bhupendranath was driven to study the origin of Indian law. But while reading the history of Cultural Revolution, he came to the conclusion that civilization never had a unilinear development the world over. So the Indian history of legal institutions cannot blindly accept the dictum neither of Maine nor of Morgan.

According to Bhupendranath, though the Hindu Succession Act (1956) fuses both the *Mitakshara and Dayabhaga* system of inheritance, never the less the Act does not unify all the legal systems, customary or written into one 'Hindu' code. He further observed that, though the Act has given females the right in paternal property, yet it has retained the co- parcenary under the *Mitakshara* joint family system, which excludes women from the right to inherit and control joint property. Thus the residue of the tribal features of *Mitakshara* still remains there. Hence in the matter of laying stress on agnatic succession, the old sprit of preferring the succession within the *sagotra* (same clan) is

preserved negating the *sapinda* i.e, the propinquity theory of *Dayabhaga* (Datta 1971:135-136).

Bhupendranath Datta was a great advocate of comparative sociology. He noted with dismay that so far no comparative study of Indian social system with those of the classical countries has been made. He urged upon to advance such studies on the light of modern knowledge of anthropology and sociology (Datta 1971:160).

VII

Dr. Bhupendranath Datta is unfortunately a least known scholar in Indian Anthropology and Sociology. In the preceding sections an attempt has been made to highlight some of his original contributions to study Indian society and culture. Theoretically and methodologically he applied Marx's historical materialism in his study of Indian social structure and change. He prepared a preliminary ground for the future anthropologists and sociologists to advance research on the evolution of Indian society, economy and polity. Dr. Datta wrote substantially on Indian anthropology and sociology both from biological and cultural point of view. But his writings are mostly remained unnoticed among the scholars of present generation. So far there is hardly any critical assessment on Bhupendranath's anthropological/sociological works and thinking.

Bhupendranath came up altogether with a new sociological and anthropological approach and interpretation of the formation of 'Hindu Social Polity' that was entirely different from the orthodox indologists. He was in view that in the process of evolution of Indian society the Varna and Jati (caste) system got an economic basis. The society, therefore, witnessed a consistent struggle among these social orders, each trying to over- whelm to other to gain eco-political and social privileges. Bhupendranath had shown that Indian society from the ancient times was an unequal and disharmonic one. He asserted that all characteristics of a feudal civilization were present in the medieval period of Indian history. At the same time the peasantry, which is considered as the main stay of Indian civilization had been subjected to severe economic exploitation, socio-cultural oppression and political repression over ages. But he also identified much revolutionary potential among the Indian peasantry and thought about their economic emancipation through a radical transformation of Indian agrarian structure. To Bhupendranath, religions came just handy to the ruling class and in making the poor and oppressed remain faithful to the empty dogmas and in accepting their unequal social placement without any protest. Bhupendranath's exploration of 'Hindu law of inheritance' is basically an anthropological study of the institution of law in India from structural-functional perspectives. He was in view that the Indian /Hindu legal institutions retain a unique feature of its own which is quite different from the western patterns.

As a pro-Marxist, Bhupendranath viewed sociology not only an investigation of the social problems, but at the same time a critique of society and as an instrument of social transformation. Therefore he may be regarded as a path finder not only of sociology but also of radical sociology of India. Today, the major contributions of Bhupendranath Datta need to be looked afresh and proper evaluation in the light of modern anthropological and sociological theories, approaches and methods.

NOTE

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Place-Identity and its Significance for a Heritage City: The Case of Puri, India

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Abstract: Cities as living systems are in process of continuous evolution- negotiating with their past and present in pursuit of satisfying contemporary needs and aspirations. Religious and cultural beliefs defining traditional Indian communities, through their cultural manifestation in the city spaces over the years have given cities their distinct identities. These are gradually getting homogenized leading to loss of meanings, associations, attachments, memories and identities. On the other hand, heritage conservation has gained significant emphasis on both international and national agendas. Thus evolving a strategy to intervene in transforming heritage cities with focus on 'Place-Identity' is very essential. In this endeavor, the paper conceptualizes the theoretical construct of 'Place-Identity' through literature and identifies parameters affecting it. To ground the theoretical inferences, the case of Puri is considered. An array of research methods like mental maps, essays and questionnaire surveys have been used to document and interpret how people of various age-groups perceive their city. Choropleth maps of 'Place-Identity' are generated for different age-groups with the help of GIS. Analyzing the 'Place-Identity' maps indicates the fluidity of the construct of Place-Identity and the parameters which contribute to Place-Identity formation in different age-group of residents. The paper concludes by stating the significance of incorporation of such studies for grounding interventions in heritage cities.

Key words : Place-Identity, attachment, memories, Traditional Indian Cities

INTRODUCTION

In a country like India where in many places people's lives are centered around religious and cultural practices, the physical spaces of manifestation of culture have deep embedded meanings and associations. The innumerous forms of these practices in different parts of the nation have enriched places with unique flavours. In this era of globalization which has transformed places, homogenizing the cultural fabrics, many places still exist in India which are a repository of age-old cultural practices where religious and cultural beliefs have defined communities and through their cultural manifestation in the city spaces, these communities have over the years given cities their distinct identities. In the process of evolution, such cities are negotiating with their past and present in pursuit of satisfying contemporary needs and aspirations. The dynamics of such negotiations in the last few decades has lead to transformations in age old traditions of many Indian cities. Cities are gradually getting homogenized in this era of rapid transformations leading to loss of meanings, associations, attachments, memories and identities. On the other hand, heritage conservation has gained significant emphasis on both

international and national agendas. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN General Assembly emphasizes on sustainable development of heritage cities by "strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage" (UN DESA n.d.). The HABITAT III conference held in Quito in October 2016, deliberated on 'Socio-Cultural Urban Frameworks - role of culture for sustainable urban development' in which they acknowledged the role of socio-cultural dimensions as an essential consideration to ensure that cities of tomorrow are people-centered, inclusive, livable and resilient (UNESCO 2016). HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme has been launched by the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India in 2015 (MoUD and NIUA 2015) "to undertake strategic and planned development of heritage cities aiming at improvement in overall quality of life with specific focus on sanitation, security, tourism, heritage revitalization and livelihoods retaining the city's cultural identity." Thus evolving a strategy to intervene in transforming heritage cities with focus on 'Place-Identity' becomes very essential at this point of time to disentangle these vulnerable places from the flames of placelessness and harvest their cultural identities.

Objective

This paper attempts to document the changing trends in Place-Identity of traditional Indian cities by studying the case of Puri and identify elements in the built fabric that continue to add to the sense of Place-Identity across age groups. It answers the questions of: What is 'Place-Identity'? Why and how is it changing across age groups? and How the parameters contributing to 'Place-Identity' in traditional Indian cities can be recognized to make them a part of the intervention process?

METHODOLOGY

The paper conceptualizes the theoretical construct of 'Place-Identity' through literature review and defines parameters affecting it in the context of traditional Indian cities. To ground the theoretical inferences in a real city, the case of Puri, Odisha which is one of the cities identified under the HRIDAY scheme is considered. Due to the exploratory nature of the research and the need for in-depth and contextualized data, an array of research methods like mental maps, essays and questionnaire survey have been used. These methods are used to document and interpret how people of various age-groups residing in the city perceive their city. The perceptions such gathered are classified into attributes of measurable value and are spatially referenced to the tangible and intangible elements of the city. To visualize this qualitative aspect of the city, choropleth maps of 'Place-Identity' of the city has been generated for different age-groups with the help of GIS as a tool. These maps showing places of strong and weak identities with colour progression have been compared to identify elements which continue to add to the sense of 'Place-Identity' across age groups, elements which have stopped adding to the sense of Place-Identity and new elements

which are now creating strong identities. The paper investigates the rationale behind such trends. Analyzing the 'Place-Identity' maps by overlapping it with various other layers of the city like the formal, informal and temporal activities, building use map, etc. indicates the patterns of identity formation. The inferences from such research can guide future developments / interventions in traditional cities of India to sustain and reinforce its 'Place-Identity'.

LITERATURE REVIEW- Decoding the construct of 'Place-Identity'(PI)

'Place' as a construct has been probed into in literature from multiple perspectives and the processes in which people draw meanings from spatial configurations has been researched extensively. Various contexts of urban environments play role in shaping the way one identifies with the place. These processes of creation of people-place ties have been typified under various terminologies like 'place attachment', 'Place-Identity'. 'place memory', 'place realization', 'place meaning', 'sense of place', 'place creation', 'place intensification' and likewise by researchers. Comparing numerous literature sources, we see that these typologies of people-place relationships have multiple overlaps, are co-created and not mutually exclusive in nature. Accumulated meanings of place, passed on through generations, negotiated, partly eroded and transformed are the basis of a continuum of people-place ties forming 'Place-Identity'. The theoretical construct of 'Place-Identity' and process of its formation have all defined and refined by many scholars (Proshansky, 1978; Stokols and Shumaker, 1981; Breakwell, 1983; Twigger-Ross and Uzzel, 1996; Canter, 1997; Habraken, 2000; Speller et al., 2002; Hague and Jenkins, 2005; Southworth and Ruggeri, 2010 and Sepe, 2013). For this research, the theoretical construct of 'place-identity' is categorized based on its perception, interpretation and construction into three processes of cognition, affection and behavior (as can be seen in Figure 1) i.e. 'Place Meaning', 'Place Attachment' and 'Place Experience' which have been sieved through literature study.
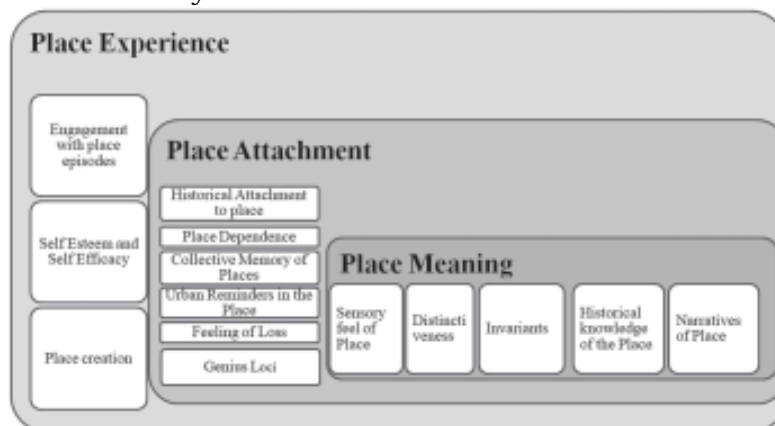

Figure 1: Parameters affecting Place-Identity (PI)
Source: Developed by Author from Literature Review

Perceptions, comprehensions and sensory experiences help in acquiring spatial information through multiple sources of oral and written histories, composition and form of built fabric and multiple experiences one has of it. The process of spatial cognition giving 'meaning' to spaces is the first process of formation of Place-Identity and is affected by majorly five aspects: (i) sensory cognition of place, (ii) distinctiveness making sense of place, (iii) invariants connoting place continuity, (iv) historical knowledge of the place, and (v) narratives of the place as can be seen in Figure 1. Place Attachment is the second process of developing affective or emotional ties to a place. Low (Altman and Low, 1992) describes place attachment as people-place relationships, formed as a result of culturally shared affective ties with the physical setting due to individual as well as collective meanings imparted to any spatial element. Place Attachment has been described using analogous terminologies, like 'topophilia' (Tuan, 1974), the levels of 'insideness' and 'outsideness' of an individual to a place (Relph, 1976) or through the construct of 'rootedness' (Tuan, 1980). Six aspects which cohesively affect the attachment to a place have been sieved out of literature studies comprising of Schulz (1980), Hayden (1997), Liu and Hilton (2005), Lewicka, (2008), and Cross (2015). These are: (i) historical attachment to place, (ii) place dependence, (iii) collective memory of places, (iv) urban reminders in the place, (v) feeling of loss, and (vi) genius loci or spirit of the place. The place meaning and attachment one gathers for a place translates into a behavior pattern of human beings in the place. Why a person chooses to do a certain thing in a place or how one plans to experience an occurrence depends a lot on these two processes mentioned. People decide whether to participate in the events of the city, choose between types of intended experiences, evaluate their place in comparison to other places, and also many a time participate in the city building process. Hence, the process of Place Experience has been typified under three aspects: (i) engagement with place episodes, (ii) self esteem and self efficacy and (iii) place creation. These parameters identified through literature review which affect Place-Identity has formed the basis for designing of the pre-coded questionnaire used for the structured ethnographic interviews conducted in the case of Puri.

DOCUMENTING AND MAPPING 'PLACE-IDENTITY' OF PURI

From preliminary studies and pilot surveys done to understand the association of people with places, an array of research methods were proposed to document the PI of Puri. With a population of merely 2, 00,564 (Census, 2011), this town has sustained its identity of being a festive city dedicated to the
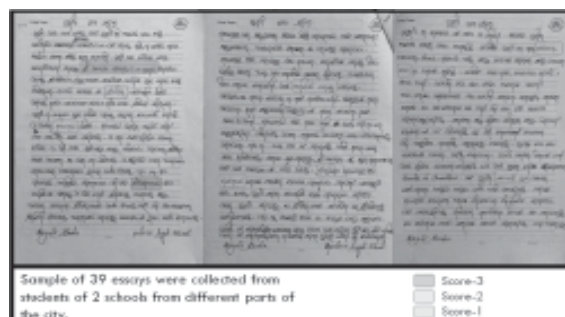
Figure 2: Scoring of elements from Essays
Source: Author

worship of Lord Jagannath. 'Place- Identity' being fluid in nature changes across age-groups and generations. To document the trends of this change, five age groups (below 20, 20-32, 33-45, 46-58 and above 58 years of age) were identified.

For documenting the perception of the place for age group of below 20 years, essays and drawing competitions were held in two Government schools located in different parts of the city. As the medium of instruction in both schools was Odia language, the essays were asked to be written in Odia. The elements (both tangible and intangible) referred to were documented and ranked as per their significance in the drawings/ essays as can be seen in Figure 2 which shows a sample of an essay collected. Identity scores thus collected were attributed to various elements of the city spatially using ArcGIS. This was done by making a grid of 150m x150m on the map of Puri and attributing scores to each grid based on the elements in the grid. Further, to generate choropleth maps, Inverse distance weighted method was followed. "Inverse distance weighted (IDW) interpolation determines cell values using a linearly weighted combination of a set of sample points. The weight is a function of inverse distance. This method assumes that the variable being mapped decreases in influence with distance from its sampled location" (ESRI, 2016). Using this method, the PI map generated for age group below 20 years is as seen in Figure 3. The PI map clearly indicates concentrations of identity elements along the processional path of Rath Yatra and the sea beach.
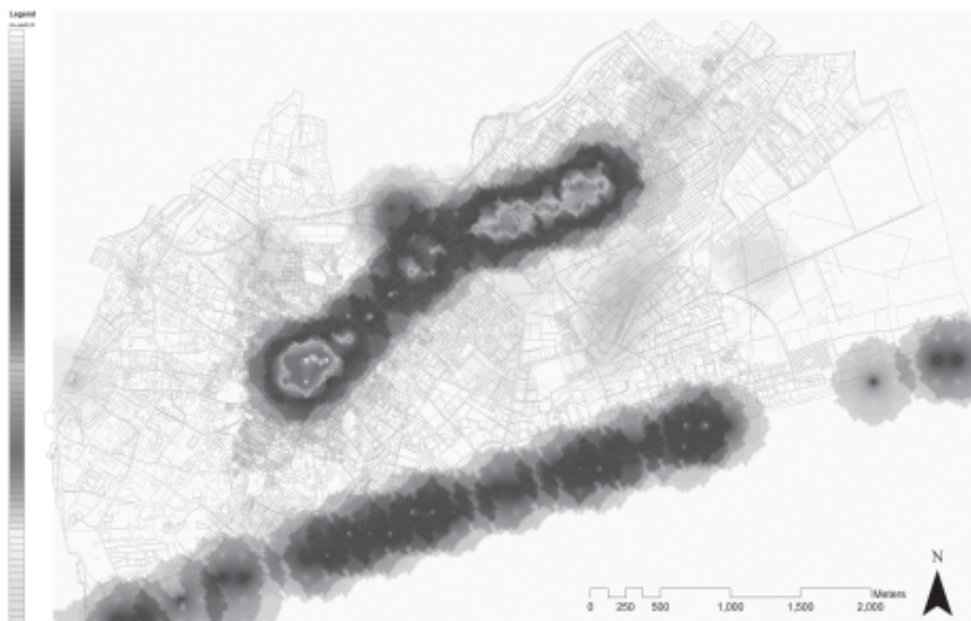

Figure 3: Place-Identity map for Age-group below 20 years
Source: Generated by Author using ArcGIS (Nanda and Khare, 2019)

For the age-groups of above 20 years, pre-coded questionnaire survey was conducted taking a sample of 20 persons from each age-group representing both genders. A set of fourteen questions were framed such that each question could help in extracting PI elements pertaining to one parameter as can be seen in Figure 4 which shows a part of the questionnaire. The results from the survey were mapped spatially as was done for the age-group of below 20 years. Figure 5 shows the PI maps for the various age groups.

Figure 4: Pre- Coded Questionnaire sample
Source: Author
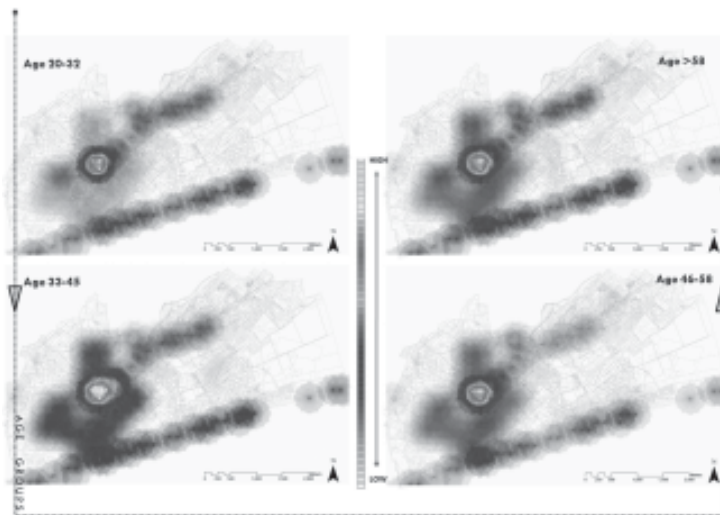
Figure 5: PI Maps of Various Age Groups
Source: Generated by Author

The sensory aspects of the place being very intangible in nature were mapped by the author with reference to discussions with the people of the city, personal blogs of residents, social networking sites and personal observation. The pattern of collective sensory map (Figure 6) was also found to have similarities in patterns with- the PI maps created for various age groups.

Figure 6: Sensory Map
Source: Author

ANALYSIS

Figure 7: Comparative graph showing PI formation factors of various age groups
Source: Author

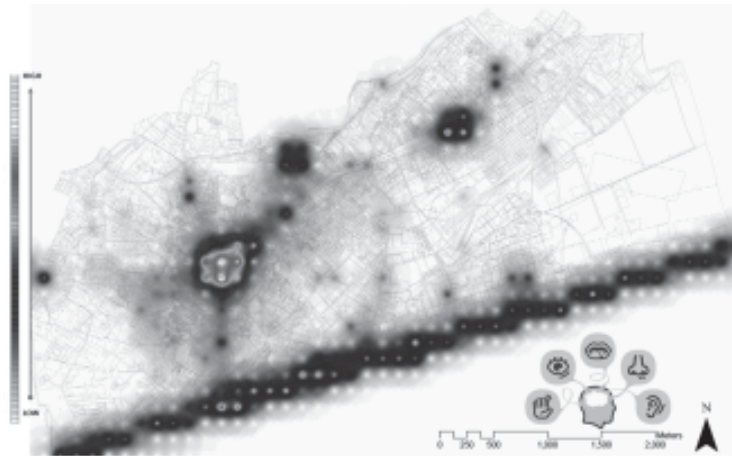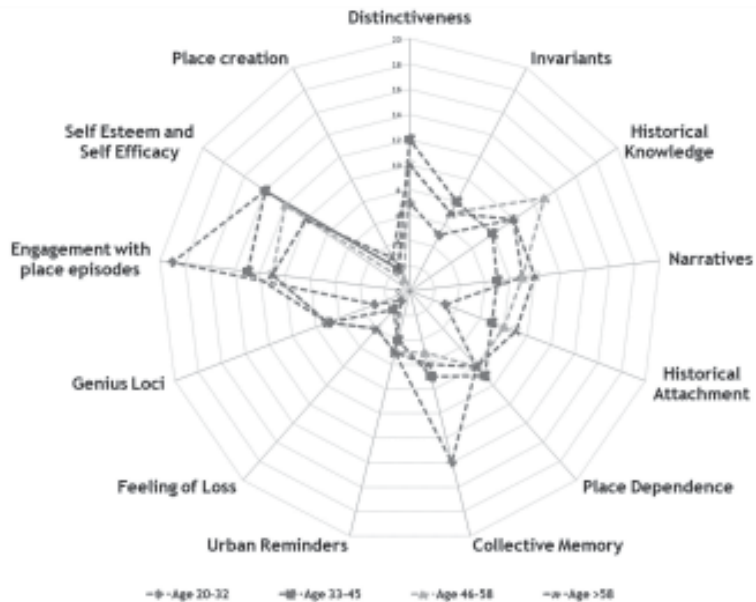Firstly, a probe was attempted to find reasons for PI formation in various age groups (Figure 7). It is seen that at a younger age, the factors which help in formulating PI are mainly awareness of history (through books / narratives), participation in events, narratives and socio-economic resources of the city. As one elevates to a higher age and has more exposure to the outside world, a sense of self-esteem is developed. They begin to appreciate things which are distinct to the place or value things which have retained their essence from a long time. They realize the sense of place created by the built environment which strengthens their association with the place. By the age of around 50, people generally become more aware of the history and the eldest people as can be seen in the graph have a very balanced sense of identity, equally formed by the various parameters stated. It is also noticed that out of the various parameters extracted through western literature review, some do not have significant roles in almost all age groups like: feeling of loss and place creation. A new parameter i.e. 'nomenclature of various elements' was found to play a substantial role in formation of PI. Names such as 'Bada Danda' (meaning the grand road leading to the Temple) have direct links to the nature of the elements and thus play a significant role in formation of PI.

Secondly, PI maps were overlapped with the various other maps to analyze reasons of PI formation spatially. When overlapped with the map showing processional routes and places of performance of festivals (Figure 8), we find a strong connect in the patterns of both. This indicates a strong relationship of event spaces and 'Place-Identity'.
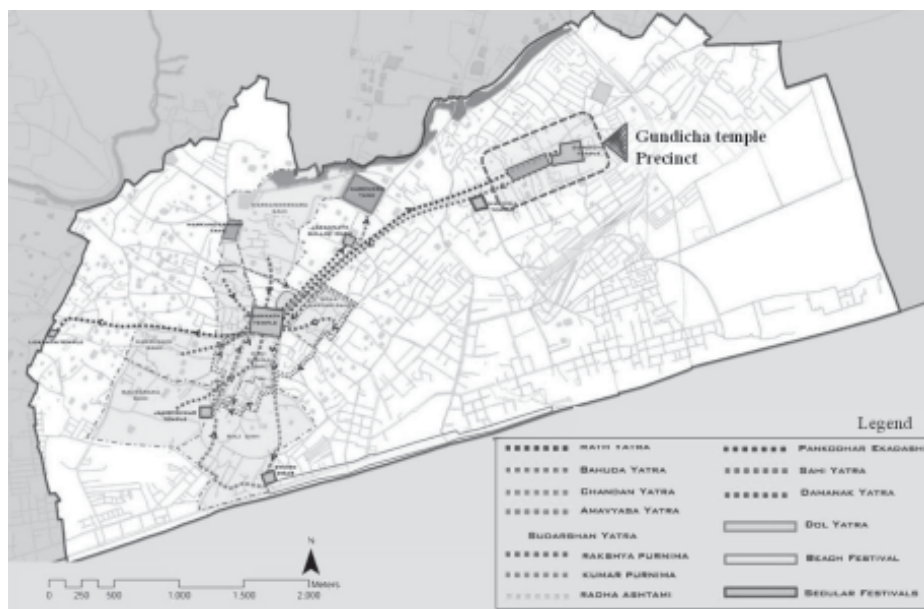

Figure 8: Map showing processional routes and places of performance of festivals
Source: MoUD and NIUA (2016)

Further overlaps were done focusing on the processional path of Rath Yatra which showed strong identity characteristics across age groups. It is observed that though the entire stretch of 2.7 kms had significant contribution to identity formation, some parts like the Jagannath Temple precinct, the Narendra Tank and surrounding areas and the Gundicha Temple precinct showed consistently high values across all age groups. For further analysis and considering the scope of the paper, one such area i.e. the Gundicha Temple precinct as demarcated in figure 8 has been taken up for detailed exploration.

Analysis of the Gundicha Temple Precinct:

Gundicha temple is considered to have a great significance due to the festival of Rath Yatra when Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are driven on enormous wooden chariots to this place where they stay for eight days before returning to the Jagannath temple. There are many legends associated to this temple. In certain texts and narratives, it is referred to as Lord Krishna's aunt's place and in others it is said to be the home of the queen of King Indradyumna who is considered to be the founder of the Jagannath temple. Otherwise an everyday space with all kinds of daily activities, this place gains prominence on the nine days of Rath Yatra festival as can be observed by comparing figure 9 and figure 10.

Figure 9: The Everyday Formal and Informal activities
Source: Author

Apart from the Gundicha Temple which is the focal point of this precinct, this area considered for detailed exploration includes the Badashankha Market, Saradhabali, Bholanath Vidyapeeth, the City Bus Stand and Nursingha Temple in a uniform residential surrounding which imparts a sense of similarity in the built environment as can be seen in Figure 9. For an outsider, passing through this place on a non-festive day is like entering utter chaos due to the intensity of the diverse activities thriving in the place. This is the culmination of the grand road which expands to a width of 110 meters at this stretch and is filled with informal shops. This width of the road is maintained to house the occasion of Rath Yatra. This is the place where people have memories of coming

in contact with the Lord and climbing on the Raths (Chariots). However, this is not the only reason for its identity formation. Having the bus stand, this place acts as an entry point to the city as well as an important transport junction. A major road connecting Puri to Konark and Bhubaneswar joins at this junction which also adds value to the precinct.
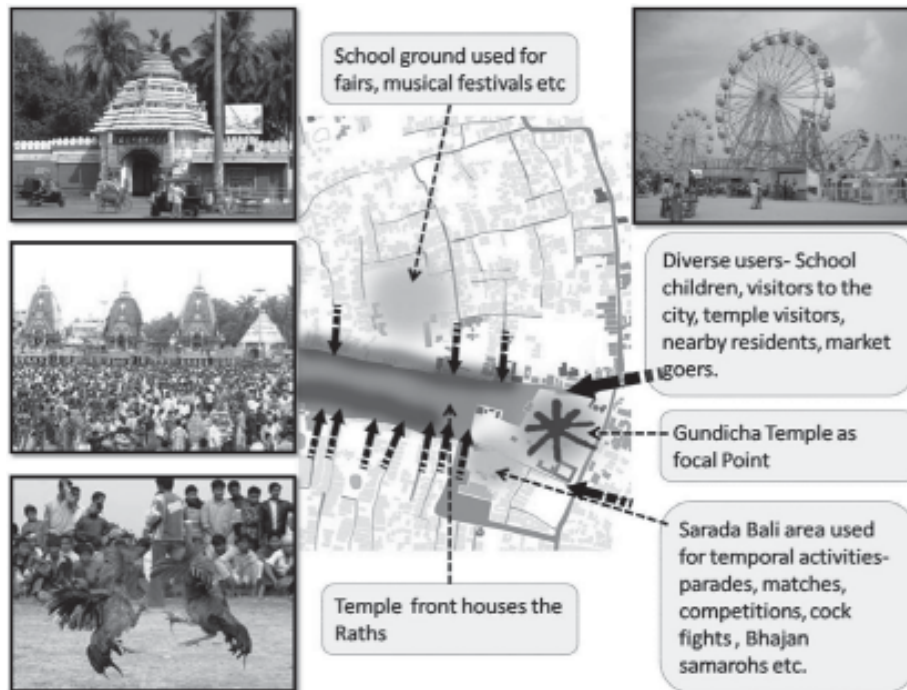

School ground used for fairs, musical festivals etc

Diverse users- School children, visitors to the city, temple visitors, nearby residents, market goers.

Gundicha Temple as focal Point

Sarada Bali area used for temporal activities- parades, matches, competitions, cock fights, Bhajan samarohs etc.

Temple front houses the Raths

Figure 10: Factors affecting Place-Identity in the Gundicha Temple Precinct
Source: Author

Discussing the spatiality of the precinct, narrow lanes leading to a vast space brimming with activities at all times of the day automatically changes the visual and experiential quality of the precinct. Set in a largely residential context as can be seen in figure 9 in the centre of the city, this is a place of everyday encounter. Being both a hub of day-to-day activities with high value of place dependence for residents because of the presence of schools, market spaces, etc. and a reminder of the great event of Rath Yatra, people have a strong blend of temporal and everyday ties to the place. Figure 12 shows how the Gundicha temple forms the backdrop of various everyday activities reconnecting people to the heritage on an everyday basis. As can be seen in Figure 10, there are a number of open / public spaces in the precinct which includes the area in front of the temple, the Saradhabali, and the ground of Bholanath Vidyapeeth School, each having a very distinct interface with the built, but connected spatially and visually to each other giving a notion of a cohesive whole. These are also places where people encounter numerous

secular events like music and dance concerts, bhajan samahrohs, fairs, parades, cock fights etc. in contrast to everyday essential activities like vegetable market and informal shops. Figure 11 summarizes the spatial aspects which are characteristics of this precinct and help in imparting it a high degree of Place-Identity. Figure 13 graphically shows the various reasons of people-place ties in this precinct derived from the questionnaire survey. The dominating parameter in this case as is clear from the graph is the memory of participation in various events supported by other attributes such as place dependence, awareness of history and narratives of the place.

- Change Of Scale
- Everyday Encounter
- Highly permeable Event Space
- Flexibility of Space
- Place Dependance
- Open Space Network
- Urban Reminder
- Sameness Of Ordinary
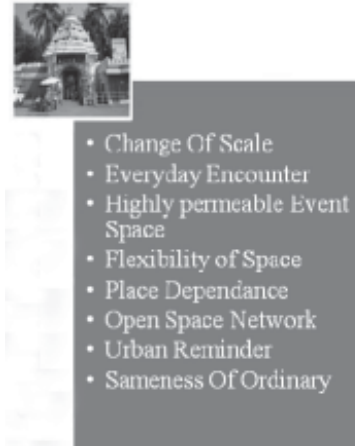
Figure 11: Spatial aspects of the Gundicha temple precinct

Figure 12: Urban Reminder in the Everyday Setting
Source: Sketch by Author

Parameters affecting Place-Identity

1. Historical Attachment to place
2. Narratives adding to Place cognition
3. Engagement with place episodes
4. Place Dependence
5. Historical Knowledge of the Place
6. Urban Reminders in the Place
7. Collective Memory of Places
8. Invariants connoting Place Continuity
9. Feeling of Loss
10. Distinctiveness making Sense of Place
11. Genius Loci or Spirit of the Place
12. Place creation
13. Self Esteem and Self Efficacy

Figure 13: Evaluation of parameters affecting PI in Gundicha Temple Precinct

INFERENCES FROM THE CASE STUDY

Table 1: Strategies for intervention in Tradition Indian Cities:

Holistic approach

- First and foremost, it is extremely important to consider any precinct in a holistic manner considering its importance in both the city and neighbourhood level.
- Designing a place for multiple stakeholdes helps in formation of place ties with a larger resident population. but care must be taken on the compatibility of the diverse functions proposed.
- The movement patterns of the people, the built forms, functions/ activities and open spaces all need to be designed for in a cohesive manner.

Signifying Places

- A place of historical/ religious importance gains significance when various temporal activities are held in the precinct.
- To facilitate this, public buildings with open spaces accessible to all can be proposed in the vicinity.
- Functions which require spill-over spaces for temporal activities might be considered like educational institutes, clubs, museums, community halls, cultural centres, etc.

Network of Open Spaces- an important consideration

- A strong focal point helps in giving a sense of enclosure and identity by giving a background to the open spaces or letting the open space form a foreground to the visual marker.
- Permeability- both visual and physical increases the use of such open spaces.

Accessibility

- Accessibility of places is an important factor which affects association of people to places. So, the movement pattern must be designed to direct the residents to/by the places whose identity needs to be reinforced.

Experiencing places

- First and foremost way to increase the PI of a place is to make it legible/ identifiable.
- A multi-sensual experience makes a place memorable and thus needs to be worked on.

'Structure of the Ordinary' (Habraken 2000)

- The ordinary/ the not so significant places in between the significant built/open elements give a background to the extra-ordinary and thus needs to be addressed to.
- Form based codes can be laid out to address to the built environment around significant structures.

Similar explorations were done for various precincts of the city having high value of PI across age groups to understand reasons behind sustenance of identity at some places only. Spatial aspects contributing positively to Place-Identity of the residents were analyzed for each precinct to come up with perspectives that can be considered while formulating strategies for intervention in such cities to sustain / reinforce PI. Table 1 elaborates six key points that can be considered during intervention in such heritage precincts which were inferred from the analysis of the spatial aspects of high PI precincts.

CONCLUSION

The paper thus establishes a process for documenting the qualitative construct of residents' formation of Place-Identity in any heritage city. Pre-coded questions formed on the basis of an extensive literature study by deconstructing the concept of Place-Identity into fourteen parameters affecting it is a contribution to the existing body of knowledge. This questionnaire can be directly used for conducting such surveys in any heritage city. Spatial mapping of PI values using GIS demonstrates a new method of mapping, thereby making it easier to visualize and compare across age groups this qualitative aspect of the city. Reaffirming the concept of fluidity of the construct of Place-Identity as mentioned in literature through analysis of responses of various age groups, the paper establishes the need to develop a strategic framework for intervening in heritage cities. The process proposed and the strategies formulated by analysis of the spatial aspects of high Place-Identity precincts are a step to develop a comprehensive strategic framework which can be used for intervention in Indian Heritage cities.

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Situating the Menstruating Women in the Context of Assamese Hindu Society

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Abstract: In many societies where menstrual taboos are considered vital, it is validated with religious and mythological explanations to which members of the society are found to be submissive. Adherence to social norms of menstrual behaviour by a woman is assured in the society by attaching a notion of pollution to their moral values. This notion of pollution is laid down in the life of girls from the very onset of their menarche. It is so deeply ingrained in their minds that deviation is unacceptable not only to their morality but also negatively remarked in the society. It is adherence or deviation that, further, acts as the factor determining her status in the society. The present study explores this aspect of menstrual taboos that have undergone changes due to participation of women in the economic responsibilities of the family, from the perspective of an Assamese Hindu society. Case studies have been collected from 98 working women within menstruating age group of 20-46 years in Guwahati Municipality area of Assam. These women are making out a living from the unorganised sector not by choice but from compulsions of family financial conditions. Living in an Assamese Hindu society, where menstrual taboos are seen as means of restricting the 'pollution', these women were found to adopt individual strategies in dealing with their moral 'sense of pollution' while continuing to work as they cannot afford to lose their daily wages/earnings during menstrual periods. However, it has been found that the Assamese Hindu society does not welcome such changes of menstrual behaviour, even in an urban setting where relaxation of norms is often reported. In turn, women abstain from participation in social gatherings consequently, devoid of a social life due to a natural phenomenon of womanhood.

Key words : Status of woman, menstruation, menstrual taboos, menstrual attitude, working women, Assamese Hindu society.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation, athough a physiological process, yet is shrouded within a complex socio-cultural construct. Montgomery (1974) pointed out that 'without proper understanding of the underlying biological basis, menstruation can look quite threatening. It seems to be a recurrent bleeding, every twenty-eight days, without any apparent wound or injury. Because the cycle mirrors that of the moon, the process appears supernatural. Further confusing is the fact that menstruation disappears during pregnancy, and stops at middle age' (ibid: 143). From medical point of view, menstruation is understood as the shedding of some portion of uterine tissue that has developed in preparation for the implantation of a fertilized egg. The socio-cultural perspectives that

may be traced through various religious and mythological elaborations, directs towards a notion of pollution assigned to the phenomenon. This notion of pollution is found to be dominating in many societies across the globe. In Iran, for example, Good (1980: 149) points out that 'menstrual blood (and the blood of childbirth) is not only physically polluting to the body but is considered ritually polluting as well. Menstrual blood is one of ten or twelve categories of *nejasat* (dirt/uncleanness) items, that are ritually unclean, including faeces, urine, and the sweat of sexual exertion' (Liamputtong:: 2010:171). In similar line, Douglas (1966) forwarded the theory of symbolic interpretation of menstruation from purity perspective that depicted: 'all bodily emissions, even blood or pus from a wound, are sources of impurity'. Menstrual blood, like certain other bodily substances (saliva or semen) becomes polluting when it departs from the bodily bounds of the natural order. Hence, menstruation is symbolic 'matter out of place' as such it becomes a 'pollutant' which is thought of as dangerous to social order (ibid: 34). This state of pollution is validated through religious and mythological narrations, suggesting menstruation to be the result of curse and hence, is regarded impure and dangerous. In the following paragraph, mythological explanations on menstruation existing in the society are given and since the paper concentrates on a group of Hindu participants, discussions is limited to the Hindu mythological explanations only.

In the Hindu mythology, menstruation is referred to as '*Rajaswala Dosha*'. Women got this *dosha* (curse) when Lord Indra (the king of gods) severed the head of Vishwaroop-acharya (the second teacher of the gods). Since, Lord Indra killed a Brahmin he got '*Brahmahatya dosha*' (curse from killing a Brahmin) and was liberated from the *dosha* by distributing it amongst *prithvi* (land), *samudra* (water), *vriksha* (tree) and *stree* (women folk) (Swami, 1975). It is believed that women from that day onward have started menstruating every 28-30 days. Such narrations authenticate the belief that menstruation is the result of *dosha* or a curse and hence menstrual blood is considered to be impure (Smith, 2000). Women, who are the bearers of the discharge, the curse, the danger and the impurity, are in turn subjected to severe restrictions' (Leslie:: 1991:17). Similar views on impurity and pollution can be drawn from the Indian Yogic Philosophy that talks about three *gunas* (or qualities): *tamas* (black), *rajas* (red) *and sattva* (white). Anything that is excreted from the body viz. sweat, blood, and tears are considered toxic and are classified under *tamas. Tamas* is darkness or obscurity, hence for the traditional Hindus, touching a menstruating woman is considered a '*Tamasic*' (inappropriate) act (Bhartiya:: 2013:524). Such views are carried forward and kept alive through traditional practices in the society. For example, among the Nepali-Chetris, pre pubescent girls are believed to be pure so much so that they are worshipped as "incarnations of goddess Durga" (Bennet:: 1983: 235) however the moment menstruation occurs, the purity ceases to be a part of their bodies and they are no longer considered pure. The notion of purity and pollution associated

with menstruation is so strong that menstrual blood is believed to be dangerous to the point that women are considered like "female dogs." posing strong danger for "initiated males" (ibid:: 1983:215). Hence, across different cultures of the world, we find some proscriptions for the menstruating women, like exclusion of menstruating women from participating in cooking and other household works for fear of contamination or spoiling the sanctity of holy places. For instance, in Egypt, Indonesia, Yugoslavia and parts of India, it is inadvisable for menstruating women, to visit female friends or relations, temples and ritual places (Snowden and Christian, 1983). In India, besides these restrictions, Kothari (2010) also talks about the belief and practices in handling pickled food (such as *achaar* and *murabba*). It is believed that pickled food if handled by menstruating women would quickly spoil or destroy its shelf life. Though, such beliefs have grown in the Indian society without any serious attempt of verification or scientific validation, Douglas (1966) suggested that 'societies give conformity to such rites and practices which are there to minimize the 'dangers' people might encounter, by associating pollution to their moral values". In doing so, religion play a crucial role having undoubted influence on political, social and cultural aspects of societies. Norris (2017), observed the strong positions of religion with regard to features of the society in which they exist, and commented that, these positions can change the way people act and feel. Thus, the notion of impurity is validated through religious terms and is distinct in the form of taboos observed in Hindu society (Dumont, 1998).

Menstrual taboo as a practice emerged in connection with religion and continues to function within Indian culture. It has survived for thousands of years, despite legal, political, and social changes that took place in India during the 20th and 21st century. For instance, the age old tradition in Kerala's *Sabarimala* temple still exist where women of menstruating age (10-50 years) are banned from entering the temple due to the notion of impurity associated with menstrual cycle. Even the Supreme Court verdict in August 2018 that ruled 'women, irrespective of age, can enter the *Sabarimala* temple' received mass protest. In the Hindu culture, menstruation is still considered as impure (Norris, 2017: 9), and menstrual blood (which is believed to be the result of punishment from deity) pollutes the sacred. A non-compliance to this proscription is considered as an offence (ibid :16). The adverse impacts of menstrual taboos, more particularly on adolescent girls have been shown in many studies. For example, SOS (2014) reported that the dropout rates of adolescent girls from attending school increases with the attainment of menarche. Similarly, the days of menstruation also become a problem for the female teaching community (Stefanie, 2008). Thus, menstrual cycles are something to be managed in a way that they do not come in the way of their being trained for the workforce (through schools and colleges) and especially when they are in the workforce itself (Kalawar, 2015). So, empirical studies covering the aspect of menstrual taboos pertaining to working women would contribute in pushing the frontiers of knowledge in this field.

Hence, the present study attempts to

1. explore the menstrual behaviour of working women and
2. understand how working women are coping with the traditional norms in the wake of their economic role in the family.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study concentrates on a group of Assamese Hindu women, aged between 20 and 46 years, presently working in the unorganised sector. The participants were selected from Guwahati Municipal area, Assam and fieldwork was conducted during July to October 2015. For the study 100 women were initially approached in areas of their economic activities such as market places, roadside stalls, pavements, Apartments, private residences, construction sites etc. Out of this, 98 participated by willing to share information on their experience of menstruation. They were mostly engaged in domestic work, piece rated work, street vending such as fast food or vegetables, petty trading and construction works. All the participants were menstruating at the time of data collection, except three who reached menopause of late. These three participants were included in the study so that they can share important information relevant to the study. Data were collected through individual interviews as well as through group interviews aided by semi structured open ended schedules. Each interview lasted for 45 to 60 minutes. Utmost care was taken in deciding the place and time of interviews, basically guided by two concerns. First, as the participants were working in the unorganized sector that is characterized by earning on daily/timely basis, rush hours of business were avoided for interviews. Secondly, keeping in mind the sensitivity of the subject matter, isolated places were selected for initiating a convenient discussion. Aspects such as knowledge and beliefs on menstruation, attitude towards menstrual taboos, present practices, changes and societal attitude towards these changes were specifically covered. On the other hand, general information such as educational qualification, marital status, types of economic activities of the women respondents were covered to get an overview of their current socio-economic status. At the beginning of the data collection, respondents were clearly informed about the purpose of the interview and encouraged to talk anything about menstruation. This usually started with a topic on menstrual disorder or regularity of periods by the respondents which was later, guided by the researcher by putting questions on specific aspects of the subject matter. Along with hand written notes, interviews were mostly recorded using 'recorder' application (available for free downloads on cell phones). This was helpful in transcription of specific live comments given during interviews. Later, the recordings were carefully listened to and computer typed the relevant discussions that were intended to be used. In addition, handwritten notes supplemented further interpretation. For analysis of socio-economic data, MS Excel was extensively used. Case studies noted

in the process of data collection were directly stated in the findings, aligning with a particular aspect in discussion. However, names of the informants were not mentioned in the case studies as was desired by the respondents, perhaps due to sensitivity of the phenomenon in the society. Hence, going by the ethical codes of research, names were withdrawn from the document. Secondary sources like the internet, library, publications in the form of books, journals, reports, periodicals were consulted for reviewing related studies.

<div align="center">RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</div>

Before navigating into the detail discussion on menstrual behaviour, a glimpse into the socio-economic background of the participants would be pertinent to understand their living conditions. Regarding marital status, it was found that 89% women were ever married out of which 12% were widows or presently separated from their husbands. Another 11% respondents were never married women. Due to financial instability in the family, these women have stepped out of their traditional homemaking role in search of economic sustainability thereby entering the unorganized sector in the city. Though meager, their income is vital to the family that accounts for 70% of these women earning as additional contributor to the family income and 30% were the sole earners. They displayed a low level of educational status. It was found that 48% never went to school, followed by 33% who studied till primary level (up to class V) while only 9% reached the secondary level (up to class X) and another 9% matriculated or graduated. It was the economic instability of the family, coupled with low educational level that they ended up entering the unorganized sector which is growing rapidly in urban centre like Guwahati. Mostly hailing from rural areas of Assam, they still cling to traditional beliefs around menstruation and menstrual behaviour.

Views on menstruation of the women under study are largely guided by the cultural belief system of the Assamese Hindu society. They strongly believed menstruation as the 'polluted state' of women and taboos are considered as means of restricting this pollution that women incurred during her menstrual periods. Such views are laid down upon a girl from the very onset of her menarche. Paradoxically, on the positive side first menstrual period is also seen as sign of fertility and celebrated with ritualistic ceremonies in some parts of the state. During this time, her process of socialisation begins with rituals where she is oriented about the menstrual behaviour to be followed in her subsequent periods. Abiding by the norms is considered to be directly related to a blissful marital life of the girl and prosperity of the family. They believed everything around, especially sacred things or places should be kept secluded from pollution through a menstruating woman. In this line, a woman street vendor selling from a makeshift stall expressed about her pollution state as follows:

'During menstruation, I become polluted so it
is not good to touch my stall and hand out stuffs to

customers.......*nijore beya lage* (I feel bad)' (Occupation:
Petty Trader, Age: 32 years, Educational Level: Never
went to school)

Besides this, taboos pertaining to religious activities are strictly followed by all the women respondents. A woman selling flowers and religious items outside a temple in the central part of the city said:

'I usually help my husband in the stall......but, during
menstruation I strictly follow the taboos and do not
come to the stall or touch any items. I do not want to
pollute the sacred religious items which are offered
by the devotees at the temple.....I will be cursed if I
sell polluted items' (Occupation: Street Vendor, Age:
28 years, Educational Level: Primary level)

The fear of polluting the sacred and pulling in bad omen, as evident from the above case study, is very intense in an Assamese Hindu woman. So much so that she never dare to deviate and stringently avoid praying, visiting religious places or attending social functions during her menstrual periods. Without a doubt all women, vending in religious items observe complete seclusion at work during menstruation and skip work for five to seven days till their menstrual course is over.

As ideal believers, all women expressed preferences to skipping work at least two to three days during menstrual periods. '*Manile bhal hoi*' (observing taboos are good) was commonly expressed by almost all the respondents. It was widely believed that menstrual taboos are based on ancient wisdom carried forward for generations so, must not be deviated in any form. Every woman assured a self controlled menstrual behaviour and was found to be morally obliged to comply with the norms. At the same time, it was also found that usually elderly women in the family take it to their moral duty in reinstating the moral values especially with the younger ones. In households having mother-in-law or grandmother, strict rules of menstrual restriction were still observed. Here, husband or male member of the family play an important role by substituting at work for the women concerned but not always. An Assamese woman hailing from a rural area (in Morigaon district) who used to travel to the city on a daily basis to sell fresh local vegetables in the market narrated as follows:

'We should observe taboos during *mahekiya* (Assamese
term for menstruation)....especially women like us
who travel daily should avoid stepping into the vehicle
during menstruation. A vehicle is considered sacred
which is associated with our Hindu God '*Lord
Vishwakarma*', so we must not pollute it during our
menstruation...I do not come to the market during my

> periods. My mother-in-law does not allow me to go out of the house and insists on observing the taboos. During the time, my husband would take charge of my duties if he is free (Occupation: Vegetable Street Vendor, Age: 32 years, Educational Level: Primary level)

However, skipping work due to menstruation was not a common phenomenon in the study sample. Observing taboos during menstruation is subject to fulfilling certain conditions. Women who had migrated to the city life found it difficult to observe elaborate taboos similar to what they had been following in the villages. An Assamese food vendor selling cooked food through a cart in the eastern part of the city said:

> 'We live in a two room rented house with limited space. During my periods, I totally avoid cooking or even touching the gas stove. My daughter would cook food during those days. I take bath every day and avoid touching anything in the house as far as possible. But due to limited space here in the city, complete seclusion is not possible. On the third day, I finally wash my bed clothes and take bath with hair wash. Then I am clean to touch anything in the house.......

> At my food stall, I do not observe these taboos. During menstrual periods, I take bath properly and open my stall. I have to cook as well as serve food to the customers. I cannot keep my stall closed due to menstruation. After my husband fell sick, I have been looking after my family. I have to take care of food and education of my children, treatment and medicine expenses of my husband and so on. I keep my stall open regularly every day' (Occupation: Street food Vendor, Age: 42 years, Educational Level: Secondary level)

In absence of a substitute to do her daily works, observing menstrual taboos was not possible for this woman. Similarly, another Assamese woman who sells goods from a makeshift stall by the roadside said that she used to observe all taboos around menstruation in her village before marriage. But after being married at the age of 12 years, she came to the city with her husband. Few years later, due to family economic constraints she started the stall where she sits from early morning to late in the evening. She has two school going sons. She said:

> 'If I do not cook during my *mense*, I have no one at home who would do the work. I have to do all the household chores from cleaning to cooking and then

send my children to school before leaving for my stall in the morning...I know taboos should be observed during menstruation, *parile manibo lage* (if possible, taboos should be observed) but I have no choice. If I get my *mense*, I take bath with hair wash immediately and continue with my usual chores. Before bath, I do not touch anything. After taking bath, I feel I have cleaned my pollution and with that feeling I am able to do all the household chores and come for work' (Occupation: Petty trader, Age: 28 years, Educational Level: Never went to school)

In urban areas, due to limited space and absence of substitutes to do the daily works of a menstruating woman, deviation is inevitable. Relaxation of taboos in the urban areas has been reported by Garg, Sharma and Sahay (2001), due to lack of social support mechanism that was available in extended families filling in for each other in the rural areas. Moreover, in the present study whole time involvement of the women in economic activities was also found to be a reason for deviation. They were mostly earning or being paid on daily work basis without provision of leave in the unorganized sector. Hence, skipping work even for a single day meant loss of earnings or wages. Since menstruation is a regular and recurring event, they were not in a position to afford losing off their wages every month due to this phenomenon. Their family survives on their earnings and therefore, out of economic compulsion women continue to work deviating from the social norms during menstrual periods.

Despite their practical situations, the notion of pollution still lingers in the minds of Assamese Hindu women. Constant efforts were put to deal with the sense of pollution and in attempt to do away with it they adopted some coping strategies. They undergo a 'purification' ritual every morning during their menstrual periods by taking bath with hair wash and washing all clothes used or touched by her. This ritual was traditionally performed on the third day of menstrual course, after which they are declared ritually clean to touch or move around. The working women under study performed this 'purification' ritual daily during their periods before going for work. In lieu of observing elaborate taboos, this strategy commonly worked for the Assamese Hindu women by giving them a feeling that they had cleaned the pollution by literally cleaning the menstrual blood and everything that they had come in direct contact during their period of pollution. This gave them confidence to continue working during menstrual periods, at the same time dealing with the moral sense of pollution.

While such coping strategies were acceptable to the family, at the society level, this was never an easy matter of acceptance. It was found that women who were unable to observe menstrual taboos were looked down upon and subjected to verbal abuse, many a times. In social gatherings, they faced

negative treatment. A domestic worker narrated her experience while visiting a *naamghar* (prayer hall) as follows:

> 'I am unable to observe taboos during menstruation as I have no one to do my chores. I do not get leave due to my periods so I take bath properly and go for work every day. One evening at the *naamghar,* I overheard some women talking about me that I do not observe menstrual taboos so I carry the pollution with me and women like us should not be allowed to visit a holy place like the *naamghar* anytime'

She further added that:

> 'My neighbours especially the elderly women are eager to know if I go to work during my menstrual periods. I had to give them a fake reply that I skip work or else I will be looked down and they will not accept even water offered by me' (Occupation: Domestic worker, Age: 32 years, Educational Level: Primary level)

Deviation in menstrual behaviour designated a woman as 'bad woman' in the society who is thought to be doom for the family concerned as well as to the community, at large. A woman food vendor who claimed to observe elaborate taboos herself held the following opinion:

> 'I will never have a glass of water from a menstruating woman' She said that she skips work and observe strict taboos for three days during menstruation and it is her husband who takes over the responsibilities. If menstrual taboos are not followed, bad omen will befall on her and she believes that is the reason why people these days suffer from fatal illness. She said 'there are other food vendors here, I know three of them personally they do not observe the taboos and serve food to the customers. It is not good for her and the family' (Occupation: Food vendor, Age: 43 years, Educational Level: Never went to school)

It would not be irrelevant to discuss here the case of a tribal (Tiwa) woman respondent hailing from a rural area in Morigaon district, neighbouring the city of Guwahati. She married (by elopement) an Assamese man and had two sons. After the sudden demise of her husband she started making a living by selling vegetables in the markets of Guwahati city. She travels daily for the purpose. She shared her experience being daughter-in-law in an Assamese Hindu family as follows:

> 'My mother-in-law never allowed me to enter the kitchen for seven days during menstruation. And

there were other restrictions strictly to be followed.....After the death of my husband; things went worst as my mother-in-law was never in favour of our marriage from the beginning. Unable to bear, my children and I started eating separately...Now I am not insisted by anyone in the house for observing taboos.....however I still follow the restrictions during menstruation. I do not cook or touch anything or even step out of the house for three days.

During those days, I usually ask a neighbour girl to help me with the cooking since my sons are too small to help...sometimes when there is no one to substitute in cooking, my children would buy *cira* (flattened rice) and milk from the nearby shop for lunch and dinner........

aibur atiya ki buli kom? (what will I say about these?) these are age old customs of the days of my mother-in-law...she used to tell me that these taboos, if followed properly are good for my life and my family..moi atiya nije buji pai ahisu (now I have realised on my own) what good it has brought to my life. I have been following these taboos ardently as showed by my mother-in-law...ki bhal eku bhal nohoi? (what good, nothing is good).......axhubidha (problem).....my health has deteriorated. I am unable to eat properly during menstruation in the wake of observing taboos. I have to ask favour from neighbours and whatever they give sometimes, if not sufficient, I feel ashamed to ask for more. So, many a times I sleep with half filled stomach. It becomes so difficult that I really feel it is useless to observe these taboos at all......My mother-in-law used to tell me that observing taboos during menstruation will bring good fortune to my children and my husband will live a long life. I don't know how far this is true. But where is the long life......despite observing all the taboos he is no more today. I have the results in front of me.......that is why it is said that dhormo (religion) if you want to follow, follow it and if you do not want to follow, leave it........

Despite my adverse experience, I still follow all the taboos that I have learnt here in this family because; there is a society that I live in. I go to the naamghar to listen to spiritual thoughts. I am uneducated, do not

> know anything. The spiritual discussions in the naamghar are informative that gives me relief from the stress I have been through. I feel rejoiced and refreshed submitting myself to eshwar (Almighty). With due respect for the naamghar, the manikut (the sacred shrine inside the naamghar) I keep observing the taboos around menstruation........

The above case study of the tribal woman depicts pressure from the Assamese Hindu society in observing pollution during menstruation. Already facing non-acceptance in the family, she fears further rejection from the society, and perhaps for that matter not only she but all women submit to the socially prescribed norms of menstrual behaviour. On the other hand, when the financial condition of the household demands her to go for work regularly, she had no choice but to continue her duty and deviate from the traditional norms of menstrual behaviour. For her, to live a life of a 'good woman' in the society, she either has to compromise on her daily basic needs such as food or abstain from participation in social life.

In an Assamese Hindu society elaborate taboos during menstruation were traditionally followed. Similar notion of pollution exists and due to the very attribution of pollution or impurity with the menstruation process assigned to females, Roy (1992), Ashraf and Das (2015), in connection with male dominated pottery making by Kumar potters in Assam, mentioned about the ethical code of restriction on female's direct participation in ritualistic sphere. Since, potteries are used for religious purposes primarily, to preserve its sanctity women (due to menstruation) are barred from making potteries in the Kumar community of Assam. Similarly, in *Satras* (Vaishnavite monasteries of Assam) of Barpeta- Assam, women are denied entry to - *'monikut'* (the main area of worship) due to the very 'pollution state' associated with women. In another study by Das (2001) noted the belief that "the state of pollution stays with a woman for her entire menstruating period for seven days every month". She mentions about the numerous taboos followed by Assamese Hindu girls as follows:

> "A girl or woman should preferably stick to her bed or her room. She is to stay here for three days. To indicate that she is menstruating, she has to keep her hair untied. If she is married, she is not supposed to wear vermilion on her forehead as this is also a pure entity. She is not allowed to do any manual work. She is not allowed to touch plants. Most important, she is not allowed to go to the prayer house. She is forbidden from performing any religious activities" (ibid. 2008: 34)

A wide range of menstrual taboos observed in some parts of Assam (especially in rural Assam) were penned by Chakrabarty (2014) as follows:

> "During periods, a woman is made to sit on a different seat or a lower one and allowed to move only with her seat, or is kept totally confined to one room. In some families, she has to move to a separate room to sleep. She is either allowed to use a bed or prepare a bed herself on the floor made of hay. On the third day, the same hay is burnt at some distance. She is served food separately and her meals are restricted to boiled food; she must avoid hot and cold meals. She cannot touch plants particularly, *'Tulsi'* (the Holy Basil). After her periods, woman takes a ritual bath and washes her hair. Thereafter, she can move around the house, but cannot enter the kitchen until the fifth day. It is only on the seventh day or the ninth day that she is allowed to enter religious places like a temple or *Naamghar* (prayer hall). The house is washed and cleaned properly. The various household utensils, curtains, bed sheets, and pillows are also washed. This is a kind of *suddhikaran*, purifying what is 'polluted' (ibid).

Such practices prevalent in the society ensure strict seclusion of keeping the menstrual pollution confined to woman herself. Owing to such seclusion, statements used during menstruation in India as: 'I've become an untouchable' and 'I am a *mahar*' (I'm sitting apart) is quite common (Woerkens 1990). In Assam, terms such as '*Suwa hua*' (polluted), '*nuara hua*' (unable to work), '*Auxhubidha*' (problem) are colloquially used that literally means observing menstrual seclusion due to pollution assigned to the phenomenon (Baishya, 2017). Observing of menstrual seclusion is re-established in the Assamese Hindu society by annually celebrating menstruation of Goddess *Kamakhya* during monsoon i.e. the Ahaar month of Assamese calendar. Going by the rich old tradition, it is believed that this is the period when the Goddess goes through her yearly menstrual cycle. And since, the most revered *Kamakhya* temple (atop the Nilachal hills of Guwahati city) is believed to be the birthplace of the Earth, during this time Mother Earth is also believed to be menstruating. The Goddess, and hence, Mother Earth, is believed to have become unclean for which the temple is kept closed for three days. Parallel to this, all Hindu temples across the region remain closed. Even at household levels, devotees cover their idol of worship with a veil and abstain from praying or reading religious text during this period. There is an entire cessation of all ploughing, sowing and other agricultural activities. It is believed that during monsoon rain the creative and nurturing power of the 'menses' of mother Earth becomes accessible to devotees at this site (Das, 2018). On the third day, the Goddess is bathed and several rituals are performed. This is to

ensure that the Goddess 'retrieves' her purity, after her menstruation course is over. Following this, the Temple is opened and *'prasad'* is distributed. On the fourth day, devotees are allowed to enter the Temple to offer their prayers. People believe that a period of 'rejuvenation' sets in once *Devi Kamakhya* retains her purity. To celebrate this renewal or rejuvenation, many people believe in cleaning up their homes and washing all their laundry after the third day, when the menstrual course of the Goddess is believed to be over. Interestingly, the basic idea is similar to the traditional belief attached to a woman's menstrual cycle. The very act of closing the Temple's doors in the belief that the Goddess is 'impure' or 'unclean' runs parallel with the traditional woman's 'menstrual seclusion' (Mowke, 2014). Das (2018) points out to the irony of the society that celebration of menstruation is only at the theoretical level, while the truth is menstruation is looked down upon as a taboo (ibid: 294). Thus, menstrual taboos are backed up by religious beliefs and practices in the Assamese Hindu society which reinstate the necessity of observing taboos and there exists, societal demand of strict adherence to prescribed menstrual behaviour from its members. Consequently, violations or deviations are not readily accepted. In fact, a crucial determinant of every woman's status in the society is her (im) proper observance of taboos. For instance, among the Kwaio of Melanesia, it is believed that woman damages relations with ancestors through violations, but a 'good woman' confesses her violation, so that those relations can be repaired through ritual labour and pigs sacrifices (Akin, 2003). A violation requires not only sacrifices of valuable pigs but also immediate and permanent abandonment of any house or garden where the mistake occurred (ibid: 388). In Kerala, a ritual "*Ashtamangala Devaprashnam*" (ascertaining the Lord's will) is conducted in 'Sabarimala' temple to establish the truth whether a female had defied the temple by gaining entry into the sanctum sanctorum. If the results of the rituals are not accepted by the chief priest it means someone has defied the rule.

Existence of such extreme practices in cultures across directs towards reluctance to accept deviation or changes. Women in the study have come out with strategies to deal with the moral sense of pollution at the individual level to continue supporting their family finances, but the society fail to support them owing to a physiological phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

Menstrual taboos are considered vital in an Assamese Hindu society where menstruation is believed to be 'a state of pollution' in women. Observance of complete taboos gives the status of a 'good woman' who is thought to put the better interest of the family and community in the first place. On the other hand, deviation designates a woman as 'bad woman' who is looked down upon and is subjected to negative treatment in the society. Ironically, these women who deviate due to compulsory economic responsibilities of the family, in

turn, had to abstain from any kinds of participation in social or community gatherings. While assuring basic needs for the family such as food, shelter, education of children and medical facilities takes priority, she deviates from social norms without a choice. Consequently, women in such situations lack a social environment-a basic right, due to a natural phenomenon like menstruation.

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BOOK REVIEW

To understand the nature of South Asia in terms of its unique character may not be an easy task because the whole region is full of diversities and presents a wide range of contrasting pictures. The point that comes first to our attention is that the region has all along been torn between 'mobility' and 'territorialism' in one form or the other. One of the Contributors to the Volume, Shail Mayaram, while " Conceptualising South Asia as a World Region", seems to agree with Ludden's (1994) position that mobility and territorialism, though oppositional in theory and practice, are in need of one another. They are inseparable in as much as they live together remaining engaged in transactions. With increased mobility, transactions have also picked up creating a sense of 'mutuality' and lasting 'interrelations' for economic development. This, however, is only one side of the picture. People's aspirations for better living vary between simple 'economic motivations' to' notions of progress'. Attempts have been made to explain the rapidly changing South Asian scenario from theoretical perspectives starting from colonial or capitalist 'modernisation' to postcolonial transformation of societies through industrialization, popular democracy, secularism and social justice (Partha Chatterjee 1986,1993; Corbridge and Harris 2000; Khilnani 1997). It may be mentioned here that Filippo Osella and Katy Gardner (2004) have found an intimate relation between aspirations to 'modernity' and 'migration' for the realization of people's craving for better living. In this respect, the picture is more or less the same throughout South Asia. But to the question what it means to be modern, people have different experiences. As Arjan de Haan (1994) points out with reference to Calcutta (Kolkata), " modernity is experienced in different ways by different people, but also that what constitutes modernity is not fixed." To think of South Asia as a world region with identities 'spilling across the nation-states' may not at all be a smooth affair. It may not be immediately possible to just gloss over incidents or happenings which suggest growing intolerance, chauvinism, provincialism and other expressions of localism or extreme ethnocentrism together with such phenomena as displacement and deprivation, ethnic strife, differentiation and marginalization, discrimination and social movement, land alienation and land reforms, redistribution and resettlement, to name only few. 'Being modern' may have multiple meanings and forms of representation. Global exposure may help one to feel modern, but it may not have a permanent cementing effect on others. If anything, it produces a type of dual representation by a person who performs dual roles as a global entrepreneur and a local investor. Their combined effects may have an impact on the local situation which has experienced prolonged global migration. In some cases, they even challenge the 'old landed elites' who have so far been in control of the situation. To come to terms with the changing scenario, some of these land owning elites try to toe the global line by seeking an entry into it at the cost of their own local resources. It only creates a type of pauperisation in terms of loss of values and weakening of local ties. Such destabilising effects of the global on the local only add to the growing imbalance of the region. The book is, however, set on a different plane. For the Editor, there was the provocation to see beyond 'an extremely narrow and short-lived utilitarian notion of the region' and explore 'the possibility of understanding the region as a landscape of epistemological reasoning'. Has the initial realization prompted him to go for an intellectual exercise of this dimension? From all indications, it appears to be a conscious move to 'uphold the utopian notion of the region' developed in course of intellectual exchange of ideas.

Within the 'diaspora community', those who could secure their own future in transnational space as members of an elite group or as economically resourceful persons are also instrumental in finding a space for others to join them. Although they apply their own preferences, they are promoters of global mobility. Some of the new migrants could prove themselves as successful entrepreneurs. But on the whole, their impact on global mobility as an instrument of transforming South Asia to a world region is, if anything, marginal. Transnational networks, within which the participants in the present exercise may automatically find a place, operate mostly amongst the elites. Political modernity mostly characterises the elitist group, but even such a group of people take recourse to the concept of national purity or purification once they are confronted with adverse situations or adversaries of various forms. Transnational flows of migration have to be seen in the context of more intensive local flows of migration, which sometimes follow a global pattern. On the other hand, there have been studies to show the relationship between global movements of people and construction of local identities. Just to mention one, Katy Gardner's (1995) study of a Bangladeshi village Talpukur with a long history of migration to the U.K. and West Asia unfolds the relationship between the local and the global, between *desh and bidesh,* in a manner suggestive of a new brand of power relationships within the village being controlled from abroad. Does it in any way suggest liberation of the people from local roots? The general impression is global mobility has not completely succeeded in weakening the cultural and emotional rootedness of the people. True, local social relationships have changed as a result of global migration, but to see the relationships taking a global line or direction as a natural process may be a little too much to expect at this stage. The opposite may be true in some specific cases. I was reminded of a Bangladeshi whom I met years back in New York metro. Actually, the person approached me and my colleague to get an opportunity to speak in Bengali. Years of continuous stay in the U.S. could not erase the memory of his childhood days in a village in the Feni district of Bangladesh. It was economic compulsion which had forced him to migrate to the U.S., as he confessed.

In the context of South Asia, it is almost imperative to follow a political perspective. The character of a region is to a great extent determined by the nature of political relations. In real terms, it is the 'relation of politics' which, more often than not, comes to the fore. As an academic exercise, 'bipolar perspective' developed by following a binary approach takes the form of a populist framework. Local- societal dynamics in reality operate beneath a multi-layered structure of 'relations of politics' and divergent economic as well as political interests. A number of examples can be cited to show how local-level politics determine migrant labourers' position in many parts of South Asia. The Editor and some of the Contributors to the Volume are probably in search of the 'unity of the global historical process' operative in South Asia. A discussion on the applicability of the Marxist position in adopting such a course is unavoidable because the Marxist theory of socio-economic formations after all expresses the unity of the global historic process.

'Nation' and 'nation-state' may not always hold the same meaning with reference to South Asia. There are some occasions when cultural boundaries correspond to political boundaries. This particularly applies to the tribal world. A nation-state suggests congruence between the state and culture, where cultural identity tends to take the form of an ethnic identity. If ethnic ideology is an impediment to global level participation, a nation should first of all get rid of such ideological centres. Gellner (1983) of course suggests functional replacement of older ideologies and principles of social organization, but it involves a strong faith in and commitment to national ideology on the path to modernity. This again creates confusion. If for a member of an ethnic group the first step to be modern means being a national by surpassing the ethnic boundary, there are tribals who are members of international organizations without having any direct national representation and they

are equally rooted to their places of origin. Their sense of nationalism grows from their community. Probably the tribal world needs to be treated separately, which, it may be argued, does not directly come within the scope of the present exercise. Politically, the implications of a 'national boundary' have been felt, particularly by those scholars who are involved in area studies across such a boundary. The societies they study in an area separated by boundaries share a common cultural, linguistic or literary tradition. To their dismay, they observe that the national boundary poses a barrier for the culture to move freely as a process. This is also the realization of Arjun Guneratne who has mooted the idea of an 'Indo-Tibetan Interface' following the guidelines provided by James Fisher (1978). Guneratne ends up on a sedate note: "The idea of an Indo-Tibetan interface with which I began is designed to make porous the boundaries of areas as they have been traditionally understood, but contributions to our understanding of the cultural processes that give shape to South Asia move uneasily and sometimes not at all across the borders that define South Asia's national territories." Where the scholars find it difficult to move and combine, the people in some cases move across and interact with their counterpart rather easily across the international boundary. One may refer to the border areas of North East India where socio-economic ties unite families on either side. Some areas of Indo-Bangladesh border continue to remain porous as before. Here cultural force of 'emotions' works with telling effect. Beneath all these, the main point of consideration is what constitutes a 'nation' or what it means to be 'national'. As Anoti Perera (cited by Sasanka Perera in his article) admits:

"Of course this does not necessarily mean that I don't feel I am Sri Lankan, and that I have little recognition for its boundaries and its status as a nation."

This may be the predicament of many who are exposed to the global situation. If nationalism appeals differently to the members of an ethnic group, there are reasons for it though we are not quite prepared to accept those because of our urgency to transcend the national boundary.

The book, however, deserves special attention for another reason. It claims to be a 'tangible' and 'transformative' effort on the ground of creating regional frameworks for Sociology and Social Anthropology, which may offer possibilities of 'transgressing national and disciplinary borders in the practice of these closely related twin disciplines.' The Editor further asserts," Such a regional framework of Sociology and Social Anthropology could ideally encourage research on novel thematic issues pertaining to the region as a whole."For quite some time it has become almost fashionable to tag Social Anthropology with Sociology. But earlier attempts by some Indian Universities and foreign-based ones to run combined Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology did not get along that well. As a matter of fact, they parted ways after a brief period of experimentation. In any case, Social Anthropology's sociological orientation cannot be denied. The same also applies to Sociology having a social anthropological concern. The methodological distance between the two has also been considerably narrowed down. Still, when it comes to the question of Social Anthropology's standing or basic affiliation, it has to be the holistic discipline of Anthropology, of which it is a constituent. Sociology's inclination to combine with Social Anthropology in conducting research is issue-based. In the context of the region, as pointed out by the Editor, the two may join hands or the approaches may be combined to carry out research on 'novel thematic issues'. Not all contributions in the present Volume are directly the outcome of inter-disciplinary research. But this does not undermine the need for it. So far as Sociology and Social Anthropology are concerned, there is a natural tendency for the two to come closer. After all, they are historically related.

One common area could be culture and the issues related with it in transforming societies. The processual and meaning-centered view of culture is more applicable in culturally pluralistic societies, which abound in South Asia. The issue of citizenship of immigrants and minority groups comes within its purview. Renato Rosaldo (1989) has elaborated the concept of 'cultural citizenship' as an alternative to citizenship as it is ordinarily understood. Citizenship may be reconceptualised, whereby cultural distinctiveness and ethnic consciousness of minority groups find proper recognition. Rosaldo's ethnographic research among the refugees from Vietnam, immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries to the U.S. may be a pointer. The most recent example of the Rohingas of Myanmar reiterates the need for an alternative approach like Rosaldo's 'cultural citizenship'. Even at the global level, the global migrants, once they settle down in the new country, are able to create a cultural space for themselves by re-enacting the cultural events of their place of origin. The performance of Durga Puja may be a worthwhile example. For those engaged in the field of art, literature and academic exercises with a global dimension, it may be possible to transcend the limits of the regional and national boundary to become a global member. To an extent, this may be applicable in the case of those engaged in international trade and commerce or other economic enterprises. Such persons are in a position to spread the message of global unity, but its impact is only limited. One sincerely hopes Dev Nath Pathak's wish that' the book may be of interest to anybody with a modicum of interest in the region' will be fulfilled. But how many of them will be interested in the book just to satisfy their aspiration 'to gather intellectual and discursive steam to transcend the moribund borders of nation-bound citizenship and identity' is an open question. Seen independently, each Contributor has a point to make though one is not quite sure that all of them have equally succeeded in strengthening the hands of globalists in a positive manner. The novel intention of the Editor to project 'another' South Asia 'transcendental of the modern sense of territoriality and official notion of regionalism' deserves appreciation. An impression has, however, been created in favour of the utopianism of such a proposition that it is people-centric. "It revolves around peoples of the region"- an assertion which appears to be a little hasty at this stage. The Editor terms it a 'better utopia' among all utopias. 'Another' here is the signifier for utopias involved. Even then, the apprehension remains that the usage of 'another' in the context of South Asia may amount to denial of stark realities. Can South Asia prove to be a region of ideal perfection in the face of a wide range of national, ethnic, socio-cultural, linguistic and religious differences? The differences can be downplayed, narrowed down, but can they be totally ignored? Better it is to share the cautiously-guarded optimism of a Contributor, Navnita Chadha Behera, who states, "The basic premises is that if different communities living in South Asia, cutting across the territorial divides and boundaries, can find ways to coexist with all their diversities and pluralities without having to fear 'the others', which may be an ethnic group, a nationality or a state, then this could possibly pave way for a very different kind of South Asia. It calls for coming to terms with their postcolonial historical inheritances without being its prisoner." To imbibe the spirit of world citizenship the people need truly to be liberated from the shackles of regional history. As an effort in that direction, the present exercise cannot just be overlooked.

Rajat Kanti Das
Editor, JIAS

A Letter to the Editor

To

The Editor
JIAS

Dear Sir,

I invite your attention to the serious problem faced by the Jarawas of Andaman in the form of loss of their innate tribal identity, which, though at the centre of tribal discourse these days, has gradually reduced them to a pitiable state. I am no expert on tribes and I am fully aware that such an issue demands rigorous academic exercise. As far as I know, such exercises rarely question the attitude of tourists towards tribals who are on the verge of being uprooted from their natural habitat. My realization is such people need to be educated more than the Jarawas are in need of education to be imparted by us. My recent visit to Andaman, which took me across the Jarawa territory, was more than an eye opener for me that I would like to share with your readers.

On a road trip to Baratang island, the gateway to the middle and north Andamans, I had a lasting experience through the meandering tracks of the reserve forest of the Jarawa tribe. I could realize that the Andaman tribe, who were earlier guardians of the much unexplored natural bounty, can no longer be held true to their disposition. However, this metamorphosis may have its roots deep down into the social change through modernisation. But what was really deplorable was the attitude and stereotypic vision contributed by utter lack of understanding on the part of tourists posing themselves as the true representatives of a much maligned concept as 'Civilization'. Undeniably, the initial reaction of all tourists who were on board along with me was a sense of fright and detest towards these "short black men" who were fearlessly stopping the vehicles on route and prying to gather our drinking water stock, some handy food or even essential items, like umbrellas or torches, to suit their need. While it seemed acceptable to most of us when the drivers gifted them with small packs of wild betel nuts for their momentary pacification, yet, the Jarwas are being coined "notorious and greedy" for their want or demand for "modern goods". The tourists kept discussing with regret among themselves that how on earth a marginalized tribal community turn fiery about tourist advent in their region and demand such lavish items that are the sole proprietorship of only the educated civilized ones. In their opinion, these tribal people should be satisfied with what they were born with, like the greenery around where they may hunt and forage and continue life like that. Little did they realize or pretend not to realize that such a group of people have been deprived of a life of their own choice because of our blatant and uncalled for intervention to suit our purpose. If the government gives these "uncivilized Negritos" many facilities, it takes from them manifold to meet the needs of the people it represents. Their argument was, to provide them education and promote their language would be a wrong step because the mainstream people can never benefit from their language or whatever it means to them. Let them remain satisfied with what they have, communicate among themselves and never venture to come near the civilized people. But what remained unuttered was that the so-called civilized people have the right to pry on them, and impose their surreptitious design on them. The fuss gradually faded away into a belief that these tribals are a "scary" bunch of people. Their frustrations may only enhance over time when they will start frequently attacking the tourists for their want of goods. The

dilemma continues over an unsolved question whether growth of economy through modernization will occur at the cost of "total loss of the innate tribal mentality." Is it an evil to be greedy for goods for a tribal who is lured into the world of greed and falsification? I had the opportunity to work among a section of Orang Aslis, the indigenous tribes of Malaysia, for a brief period. One aspect of Orang Asli existence, which may equally apply to the Jarawas, is that the land they occupied and the resources they used in their traditional economy have been targeted by the more powerful interest groups as well as Government on the plea of development. The same is the case with the Jarawas, where, as a first step, our Government has constructed the Great Andaman Trunk Road across their territory. Much has been written on this, which is probably the price the Jarawas need to pay for their future development. It is a common nation-building tactic. What particularly matters here is the attitude of the outside world as reflected in the tourist behaviour. The Orang Aslis at one time were also subjected to such negative images harboured by the dominant community. A Malay aristocrat, while addressing a Malay mistaken for an Orang Asli in a Malay epic, expresses, "At first glance they looked human, like us, but they are really like animals. Except even animals know how to clean themselves. Those didn't know how. Their hair was matted as black basket. It was not anything like human hair. It was all splotchy with dirt and true sap. It looked like tree bark. God only knows how many grubs and bugs were in it. And they did not wear shirts or sarongs, not a thread of cloth..." (Sturrock and Winstedt 1957 : 71-72).

The Orang Aslis have at least passed that stage when their credential as a civilized man was questioned, even if it cannot be said that they are no longer discriminated against. Their rights have been taken away in exchange of paltry benefits and occasional grants from the Government. Whether Jarawa development with an eye to their integration or amalgamation with the main power-holding groups may follow the same course, the future will tell. Meanwhile, they will continue to live in with such negativities.

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OBITUARY

**A Historian Who Espoused Hope: Prof Sabyasachi Bhattacharya
(1938-2019)**

[*Prof.Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, who has recently passed away, was associated with the Indian Anthropological Society in some of its activities. The Society is fortunate enough to have him in its programmes on a number of occasions. Whenever approached, there was hardly an occasion when he would disappoint us by not complying with our request. His association with Prof. Surajit Sinha was acknowledged by him time and again. Both of them were associated with the Centre for Social Science Research for a length of time. As a matter of fact, Prof. Bhattacharya delivered the Surajit Sinha Memorial Lecture organized by the Society in 2014 in the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta. When Dr.Gorky Chakraborty of IDSK was approached for writing an obituary on Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, he readily agreed. More than an obituary, it is a tribute to him in recognition to the place of importance he has given to anthropology in its search for national roots.*]

Perhaps, it would not be an exaggeration, if a layperson, like me states that Anthropology, as a discipline, for a long time has been overwhelmingly put under Humanities. Among other factors, perhaps the French humanists of the 18th century and German idealists in the 19th century played a major role in this conceptualisation. Later, during the 20th century, with the contributions of Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and host of others Anthropologists, the discipline started 'situating' itself in the bio-physical frames. Anthropology, nevertheless, as a discipline prospered by simultaneously walking on both legs – socio-cultural and bio-physical *albeit* in varying speeds.

If one focuses on the socio-cultural frame, again, it will not be an exaggeration, if I narrate that individuals behave under the influence of organised groups as the individual is always a subset in the overarching set of social being. So the individual is not focused in isolation but as a constituent of the social. The ceremonies and behaviour on the part of the individuals are influenced as well as largely guided by social norms.But are the norms beyond the influence of time, space and culture? Or, embedded in place and contexts? Seeking answers to such queries, in terms of dealing with the social, the importance of other disciplines in social sciences plays an important role. Despite being separate disciplines, they are entwined together e.g. Anthropology and History are more than often in a continuum in the study of the humans.

This relationship has been understood and highlighted by various anthropologists. One is reminded of Prof A.L. Kroeber (1876-1960) and his paper titled *An Anthropologist Looks at History* (1957) where he writes "the writing of History is perhaps the oldest scholarly pursuits....posited with minimum alteration for more than two hundred years, and across

change of language ever since Herodotus and Thucydides and even earlier days of the Chinese". Elaborating further, Kroeber suggests "history contains much that is art, the narration of significant events in literary prose....this is evident further in the fact that the great historians are also, in the main, great writers". Mentioning the qualities of historians, Kroeber mentions "they write the language of total and dignified communication of their day, without technical terms or jargon....untechnical common man's causality, intelligible on its face, and a similar common morality".

While we remember the passing away of Prof Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (1938-2019), these lines by Kroeber written six decades ago seem so prophetic. Prof Bhattacharya, whom the world knows as historian of international repute, possessed the interest and intent of an anthropologist at heart. His interest in issues that concerned the humans led him to the field of work that affected their lives and livelihoods, as well as issues of immediate past that shaped their present. As a prolific teacher he lectured, as a researcher he wrote and as a warm host deliberated with hope for a better tomorrow, where the lessons of past acted as the map for the impending, yet unborn future. Prof Bhattacharya's profile and publications (over a dozen books written in English and translated into several languages) are a reflection of wide experiences and extensive scholarship but his connect with a wider readership occurred through his popular writings, where the columns in *The Frontline* were extensively followed. His connect with the issues of 'everyday life' of the common man which the ever changing politics of the state influenced has been Prof Bhattacharya's lifelong passion. In reminiscence, some of the recent columns written in 2018 highlighting his connect with the 'surroundings' and his analysis that remained intelligible even for the common mortals.

The historian Prof Bhattacharya dealt at length with an issue often referred as "borrowing history". This was the title as well for one of his last pieces in Frontline (October 12, 2018) where he categorically analysed what does the term "borrowing other people's history" actually mean and its contemporary ramifications. Referring Tagore, he writes "while Europe possessed a history of nation-making, many Asian countries did not in the beginning of the 20th century" discussion on history has thereby often got back to the cliché of "borrowing history" in order to gain legitimacy. In the process of decolonisation, it was important for the decolonised minds to write their own history that critiqued colonial historiography which he referred as "*white supermacism*" of the Anglo-American world. But in the process we are creating a variety, which he termed as "*sanskari supermacism*". While the former was based on pseudo-scientific arguments of racial characteristics, the latter is founded on pseudo-historical premises.

Prof Bhattacharya elaborates that colonial education system did create conditions whereby Indians as subjugated subjects lost "faith in one's own self" and it thereby necessitated a complete new set of ideas and policies related to educational philosophy which helps to re-invent the self. Various thinkers and leaders e.g. Swami Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghose, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore to name a few had critiqued the then existing educational system and preached and practiced alternative systems which are 'rooted' to the Indian conditions. Except Tilak, everybody espoused for a secular education system. Even Tilak wanted that Hinduism should be taught to the Hindu, Islam to Musalmans....to "forgive and forget the differences of other religion".

It is interesting to note, Prof Bhattacharya reminds that none emphasised on Sanskrit learning as propagated under 'nationalist' ideals. Lala Lajpat Rai, who served as Secretary of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College in Lahore for more than 25 years states "personally I have a great attraction for the Sanskrit language and literature, but in my judgement any attempt to make it a medium of general education and uplift is bound to fail and

deserves to fail". He was on the other a votary of developing "vernacular languages where English being compulsory second language". Prof Bhattacharya quotes Aurobindo, "nationalist education no more requires a return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara....than the living spirit of Swadeshi... it was pointless to make a fetish of Sanskrit but it was necessary to coordinate its teachings with that of other Indian languages and English".

In other words, in order to provide an alternative to colonial educational pedagogy we need not forward, in the words of Prof Bhattacharya "a mentality and a pattern of behaviour in India which is founded upon belief in a notion of cultural superiority by virtue of inherited tradition" which "aims at constructing an ideology of domination over social groups excluded from such tradition".

Anthropology, as a discipline is rooted in institutions and their cultures and both are situated in historical frames, this provides both Anthropology and History, in many occasions to sail together. One is again reminded of the words of Prof Kroeber who draws the inter-relatedness between Anthropology and History (through Archaeology) narrates "Human bones give us not only some glimpses of the prevalent physique, but methods of burial, and sometimes clear indications of classes and economic differences. If carvings are cultish, they allow of inferences as to religious beliefs and practices; so do temples, shrines, preserved offerings. He further states "excavations and records, made and kept intensively enough, lead to conclusions as to size of community, number of communities in a period, graphic information on populations whose ethnic unknown, and whom the pre-historian may have to christen. We know in some cases the approximate proportion of males and adults and children in a population, and may be able to speculate with some show of evidence how far its particular distribution of age and sex was due to disease, war, malnutrition, or human sacrifice. All this is most eminently social or cultural history, even though of nameless peoples". In other words, Prof Kroeber highlights that the recorded history is enriched further through the unwritten findings and in this regard "if his luck with the spade is good, the archaeologist may come to control fuller data on daily life and custom than annalists conscious chiefly of kings' glories and battles have left to the historiographer as data for some nominally literate period or country".

Prof Bhattacharya, the peoples historian, the renowned teacher, disciplined researcher and a wonderful human being always used the proverbial 'spade' to dig through history and provide an enriching historiography of thoughts which was seldom clichéd but more nuanced in furthering our imaginations of several 'pride' and 'prejudice' that afflicts us in contemporary times. His 'insight', 'reach', 'rootedness' and 'sincerity' provided views that resolved controversies. He remained true to his historical genre and thereby never had to "borrow history" to prove his points. Such thoughts are close to anthropologist's mind who is equally concerned with the problems of decolonization. Prof Bhattacharya, who passed away on 7th January 2019, leaves behind an irreparable void, a colossal loss indeed.

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INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions are invited for Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society. Articles should be between 5000-7000 words. Scientific papers, review articles and brief communications written in clear, concise and correct English will be considered for publication. Submission of an article will be taken to imply that the article is not currently being considered for publication by any other journal. Acceptance of articles is based on content of original data or interpretation of the material. The editors reserve the right to edit manuscripts to ensure conciseness, clarity and stylistic consistency.

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Behura, N .K. and Nilakantha Panigrahi 2006.Tribals and the Indian Constitution. Jaipur, Rawat Publications.

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