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ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

University of North Bengal

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CONTENTS

Editor's Note: COVID19

Articles

- Development of a Dalit Self: Vasant Moon and the Aura of Dr.
B. R. Ambedkar 1
Saswati Biswas
- Journeys to Autumn 19
Jhuma Chakraborty
- Redefining the Contours: A Survey on the New Methods
Used in Social Sciences 29
Sudarshana Sen
- Criminal Tribes & The Raj: An Ideology of Control in Colonial
India 40
Anjan Saha
- Teaching Culture, Transforming Selves: An Insight into Life-
skill Lessons Offered at Government Schools 53
Arunima Bhowmick
- Formation and Care of Self: A Foucauldian Analysis 73
Gargi Goswami
- A Development of an Experiential Self 85
Maitreyee Datta
- Livelihood Challenges and Survival Strategies of the Hill-Kharia
and Mankadia Tribes in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha 90
Minaketan Behera and Kumuda Chandra Panigrahi
- Hawking on the lines: Tales of the Railway Hawkers and their
Everydays 114
Anindya Bhattacharyya

The Reformist Movement in India: An Analysis of the Role of Sant Kabir in Bhakti Tradition	128
<i>Ramesh Kumar</i>	
Ibn-Khaldun's Contribution to Sociology	143
<i>S. R. Mondal</i>	
My experience with 'Others'	151
<i>Arpita De</i>	
The Significance of "Empathy" in Social Sciences	168
<i>Sinjini Roy</i>	
Travails with Motherhood: An Auto-ethnographic Exploration of Being a Mother	181
<i>Ananya Chatterjee</i>	
Life of the Workers in an Abandoned Tea garden in North Bengal	192
<i>Ambika Rai</i>	
The Significance of <i>Brata</i> Rituals in the Life of the Married Women in Rural Bengal	210
<i>Anuja Gupta</i>	
Body and Ornaments: A Reflection on Ghurye's Perspective	225
<i>Sylvia Raha</i>	
Aesthetic Imageries: A Look at the Ideas of Sartre and Levi- Strauss	232
<i>Sanjay K. Roy</i>	
BOOK REVIEW	
Sinjini Roy: Life of the Middleclass Aged in Kolkata	243
<i>Ajit K. Danda</i>	

Editor's Note: COVID19

The world is passing through an unprecedented crisis named COVID19 since January this year. Country after country declared lock-down, half of the global population is living in quarantine, nearly 20 million infected, nearly a million unfortunate souls have perished untimely. In India, COVID+ cases have touched two million mark with nearly 40,000 dead. With more than 50,000 positive cases (reported everyday) India now tops the world in terms of daily infections. In this unusual time, the entire human race is living in a constant fear of catching infection, and death. A gigantic global crisis is looming as production stands shut, and distribution heavily disturbed, the global economy is in deep slump and the livelihoods of billions of workers are under serious threat, while many are already jobless. An uncertain future faces billions of young educated job aspirants. Depression, violence, crime and suicide rates are on the rise. Nobody knows for how long the menace will dawdle.

The global community spent the first half of 2020 grappling with the magnitude of the global pandemic, which has had its ramification in all walks of life. The social scientists and planners are busy calculating the scale of the damage and the medical science is busy finding a solution to the crisis. The treatment protocol, both for the disease and the social ruins, appear tentative and uncertain and a vaccine is a far cry. In late July while some of the countries have reversed the trend, India experiences uncontrolled community spread with no one assuring when the curve will flatten. Banking on good health infrastructure, political will, strong social commitment and care some of the Indian states, namely Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan have done reasonably well in addressing the crisis, while in other states, where these factors are absent, have left everything on the clemency of God.

The pandemic has thoroughly exposed some perils of India's neo-liberal order. We now realise, more than ever before, that over dependence on private capital and a weak social sector unavoidably make the vulnerable section absolutely defenceless in the face of a major social crisis. We can see, for example, thrust on private hospitals, while impoverished and ill maintained public health is not the right policy to protect our people from a pandemic. India spends only about 1 per cent of its GDP on health, compared

to an average of 10 per cent in the developed countries. The doctors, nurses and paramedical staff have put up a brave face, and some of them lost their lives while working with high risk. But there are also reports about doctors skipping their duties and nurses leaving hospitals after mass resignation. The inhuman face of the neo-liberal order stands thoroughly exposed and globally concerned scholars are arguing if humanity would be better off in socialist or social democratic orders.

The disease does not have a levelling effect. The privileged, who have amassed enough wealth, can afford a life with few months of no income. They shut down factories while putting the lives of the workers at risk. The privileged can take all the extra caution and have all the means to avoid contamination. The underprivileged, on the other hand, have to work and earn to survive; they live in villages and urban slums, and it is simply not possible for them to avoid contacts and therefore contamination. Just look at how COVID19 has spread in the slum areas of Delhi, Mumbai, Bangaluru and Kolkata. The market places, where the poor gather in large numbers, could also be the sources from where the disease can spread fast. Once diseased the poor can only hope to go to the government hospitals, which are already stressed and are short of facilities. The years of neglect of public health system and the greed of the private hospitals have together brought the country at the threshold of such devastation.

We have been witness to the greatest humanitarian disaster, after the partition disaster at the time of Independence, as a result of sudden declaration of nation-wide lockdown on 22 March 2020. About 8 lakh migrant labourers lost their jobs and the fear of starvation death loomed large. Driven by starvation worries they wanted to return home. The stranded labourers received no logistic support and in the absence of any form of vehicle, they marched for days and months back home. In this long march for life, many died of hunger, disease and road accidents. Both the central and the state government remained silent spectators to the disaster. Under mounting pressure from different corners, the governments started running some special trains to help the stranded workers travel back home.

All educational institutions have been shut since the middle of March and nobody knows when the teachers, students and scholars will swarm the educational institutions again. The teachers have been denied the warm company of students, scholars, fellow teachers and other members of the university community; visits to other universities and academic institutions have stopped as we are taken over by an overdose of death threat. In political circles there is a feeling that teachers are sitting idle yet drawing

handsome salary; some insensitive corners have even suggested suspension of payments to the teachers. The anti-teacher sentiments reel on a misconception that teachers are generally useless, yet well-fed. The teachers, students and scholars had to redefine their tasks in order to remain relevant. They (at least a large section) opted for an on-line teaching platform and few concentrated more on research, reading and writing.

As a life line of the pedagogic system, a new method called online teaching (and possibly examination) is being tried out in schools, colleges and universities. The UGC and governments at the Centre and States have supported the move in no uncertain terms. Some colleges and universities are already conducting classes, examinations, on line communication of assignments, holding of viva-voce at different levels with some encouraging results. The growing access to smart phones, internet and handy software applications, the practice of on-line teaching is going up big scale. However, with further sophistication and massification of communication technology we apprehend on-line education replacing the conventional class-room teaching in the near future. The State's reluctance to spend on education (in India the annual education budget stands appallingly low at 3 per cent of the GDP), increasing privatization of education and confusion of modernity with technology may turn the fear into reality. Left to private capital, the future mechanized education could be reduced to lesson modules produced in a centralized factory, and then sold all over the country for the students to memorise and reproduce mechanically against MCQs sitting in front of laptops. Let us take a brief look at what the mechanization and automation might turn the existing education system into.

The standard understanding of an academic institution is a communion of teachers, students, scholars, face to face interaction inside and outside class room, student to student interaction in the department, canteen, library, the impish hostel life, concerts and 'adda'. The ambiance of class rooms, the library, the hostel, the canteen, the lawns and the gardens and, overall, the life of a university campus cannot be created on-line. The colleges and universities not only facilitate dissemination of ideas and information, but they also give a platform for critical engagement through dialogues and birth to empowered agency, thus future leaders in different walks of life. Mechanization of education would mean death knell for the very idea of education.

At a time of big data and complete gaze (by national and global regimes) virtual education (online) will kill critical thinking and promote intellectual servitude. The teachers and students will be bid "good bye" from the

campuses, as education will be mechanical with no room for dialogue. Education budget can cut to size by the masters of neoliberalism. We are definitely in for major paradigm shift in education post-COVID.

The pandemic is being used as a pretext for the increasingly pervasive diffusion of digital technologies. The face-to-face contact, dialogues and dissent will disappear and lectures will be monologues. Physical presence, counselling of the weak and stressed, depressed students, the library visits, habit of reading books will depart for good. Group discussions and seminars will also disappear, which were an inseparable part of pedagogy. Campus life and the lived experiences amidst campus culture, where world cultures meet, will vanish. Students would be reduced to career-seeking selfish creatures.

Friendships and relations that are built during college and university days which sustain us in our later life cannot be built through on-line education.

Small towns, the university hubs, which used to come alive after the admission session every year, will lose their vibrance and mobility, and millions living in the small towns will lose their livelihood.

The system will try to coerce the students and experts into the new order as the course-curricula and the module production will be the monopoly of the ideologues in power.

Should we accept new servitude that the digital education promises to bring? A scholar to reckon with in the field of Indian pedagogy, Professor Abhijit Pathak in one of his recent lectures asked: Shall the teachers give their nod to this technological barbarism?

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5 August 2020

Development of a Dalit Self: Vasant Moon and the Aura of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Saswati Biswas

Abstract: *The development of self and a sociological approach to the study of self-identity are informed by mutual relationship between self and the society. The former impacts the society through individual actions reflected in the working of groups, organizations and institutions. Society on the other hand influences the individual through shared meanings and values which enables one to participate in social action and reflect upon oneself as the other. In the case of India where the Hindu society considers a group of people as avarnas also referred to as dalits or untouchables there is a great deal of complexity and layering in the interaction between self and society. The selves of the dalits evolve in constant interaction with the wider society through the complexities which till today are characterized by a great degree of exploitation and humiliation exercised by the upper castes. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the life of Vasant Moon which shows how a dalit person overcame the obstacles of life and evolved as a worthy member of his community under the influence of B.R Ambedkar who inspired and moulded the lives of innumerable dalits of a whole generation.*

Keywords: Dalits, Ambedkar, Buddhism, Self, literature, exploitation.

Introduction

The discipline of Sociology as it evolved in India is increasingly coming under the scanner for its near total disregard for the existence of a community of people within or periphery of the caste system that is the *dalits* who have always lived in the bottom or outside the caste hierarchy, were considered as untouchables and were at the receiving end of intense humiliation and extreme deprivation and exploitation. It is only recently that we find that scholars like T. K. Oomen, Vivek Kumar, Paramjit S. Judge,

Ghanshyam Shah and a few others trying to incorporate them and making knowledge creation about them a part of sociological endeavour.

We read of Indian tradition of community social life and a sense of regret that this community life is breaking down with the emergence of atomized self-seeking individuals even in the writings of the pioneers of Indian Sociology. The fact that there was another side of this community life which looked down upon a section of society as less than humans and which got religious sanction to denigrate, humiliate and exploit them has not been noticed by the scholars who in the name of value free sociology have contributed to the pattern maintenance where the higher castes have continued with their privileges keeping large sections of society at the mercy of the higher castes. However, for a long period of time starting from the medieval period individuals have come up who protested against the systemic violence and exploitation by the upper castes by overcoming many obstacles and put some hope in the lives of the others who considered them as leaders.

In this paper an attempt has been made to understand how under the leadership of B.R Ambedkar a *dalit* self-evolved in the first half of the last century when provided with the proper socio-political environment and a role model towards whom he could look up for guidance and leadership. This has been attempted by taking up the life story of Vasant Moon which he narrates in his book, *Growing Up Untouchable in India: A Dalit Autobiography*, originally Vasti in Marathi but translated into English by one of the very well-known sociologists, Gail Omvedt. The introduction to the book was written by Eleanore Zelliott, a well-known scholar on Dalits, who was a friend of Moon and was helped by him in her research on the *dalits* of India.

This narration of Mr. Moon is an example of autoethnography giving us an idea of his own life experiences which could be extended to the generalized other. What were the life experiences of the Dalits? How were they treated by the higher castes? how the conditions in which they were forced to live contributed to the inculcation of values in their lives all come out clearly in this autobiography. However what is most significant is not the deprivations and humiliations which the *dalits* have been forced to undergo since times immemorial, but how under the leadership of B.R Ambedkar the same people who were driven to the margins recognized their self-worth, fought for their rights and rose up against the tyranny of Brahminism. It also shows the character-building nature of movement-based politics as against the current politics of electoral gains.

The spread of literacy among the Mahars added to their determination to rise against the injustices and ultimately paved the way for their making a mark in the history of the period. There is a lot in the story of Moon's life, it is a story of his Vasti, his growing up under different types of privations but struggling intensely with himself and evolving as an intellectual and activist under the leadership of Ambedkar and the other leaders who evolved as Ambedkar's coworkers.

Development of the self in current sociological literature reflects upon the emphasis on power, reflexivity and social constructionism. The power relations and the place which one occupies in the realm of power whether as having power in whatever form political, social, cultural or economic which may also be termed as different types of capital plays a very important role in the development of a self. Thus, it has become common in reviews of the sociological self to argue that the self is both a social product as well as a social force. In the first instance the self is examined as a bounded structured object- Mead's 'me' whereas in the second instance the self is examined as a fluid agentic and creative response, Mead's 'I'.

The distinction captures the core principle of a socially constructed self namely that the self is a joint accomplishment, neither completely a production of society nor an individual agency. However, the I and Me are interrelated in such a way that the agency to be exercised is very often determined by one's position in society. When a person's self-estimation evolves in interaction with others it is difficult for a person to evolve a self which is capable of exercising agency when he/she gets a feedback of being addressed as an inferior and made a subject of humiliation. On the other hand, a person treated with respect and acceptance evolves with greater self-esteem, a greater feeling of security and a greater ability to exercise agency. Hence when we study the life of Vasant Moon who belonged to the former category we understand what intense struggles he went through suffering poverty and humiliation and what great a role was played by B.R Ambedkar in nurturing Moon's ability to exercise agency and stand up against injustices and fight for the rights of the *dalits*.

In this paper it is intended to focus upon the influence of Ambedkar on Moon's life and hence some other facets of importance in his life mentioned in the book has been kept out of purview. In this first autobiography of a so called 'untouchable', we learn about the inescapable hierarchy imposed by caste based on ancient principles of hereditary pollution. We see the unmatched importance of the heroic Dr. B. R. Ambedkar for india's awakened *dalits* who were increasingly realizing the injustices which were

mated out to them for ages and rising up to demand a place of equality in Indian society.

Moon grew up in a *vasti* and its social identity as a community space was much more important to him than its geographical location. He had an abusive father who was also a drunkard, his mother had left his father with Moon and his sister when Moon was only four years old. They stayed with his grandfather in the *vasti* but fell into very difficult times after his grandfather died.

First encounters with Ambedkar's ideas

The first influence of Ambedkar is found in relation to the worshipping of a goddess, there was a temple of Matamai and the goddess was worshipped when there was an outbreak of epidemics like cholera, diarrhea and small pox. After 1930 the wave of Ambedkar reached Maharpura as the area was then known as and the worshipping of Matamai stopped and people understood that the goddess could not really cure the diseases. Another thing that happened was seen in the realm of intercaste relations. Presence of subcastes and even disagreements among them on norms of purity and pollution existed but these came to an end with the struggle of Ambedkar who always made his followers conscious about not practising brahmanism with other *dalit* castes

The space which he refers to as *vasti* gives us a picture of Moon's childhood neighbourhood where in the midst of dire poverty members lived in close interdependence helping one another with whatever means they had. A neighbour would always come in with food if Moon's mother was unable to get any food for them or if the neighbours got to know that the children were going to sleep with a hungry stomach.

The book in all its pages shows the influence of Ambedkar in the self-development of Moon and the awe in which Ambedkar was held. Maharpura as the name suggests was predominantly inhabited by the Mahars and the word Hindu is not used for the members of the community, it is used only for the savarnas or caste Hindus. The Mahars are nowhere mentioned as Hindus, the word Hindu carried with it an element of aversion and was associated with the relations of oppression, discrimination and humiliation which the *dalits* had with them. Right from his childhood the treatment of an abusive father at home and the discrimination from the higher castes got a medium in the teachings of Ambedkar which moulded him with a

spirit of defiance and an urge to stand up for justice with an intense sense of self respect and dignity.

The above was reflected in an incident in primary school. The followers of Ambedkar did not like to be addressed as Harijans a term used by Gandhi as they found it condescending. Even during his life time one correspondent told Gandhi that it instilled into the minds of the people to whom it applied a feeling of inferiority however sacred the name may be (Guha 2015).

In his primary school a notice for Harijan students was put up and it was also read out in the class, the teacher then asked the Harijan boys to stand up. There were six Mahar boys in the class but none stood up. They were asked to give their names as a scholarship would be awarded to them. Moon rose up and said: 'Sir, we are not Harijans, and we don't want the cholarship of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. None of us are Harijans' (Moon 2001: 37). This happened when Moon's mother could hardly provide them with two square meals. His school uniforms came from benevolent friends and books from some kind neighbour. The pants he wore otherwise were made from tent cloth given to him by a neighbour.

The dreams which Ambedkar aroused in a child's mind can be seen from the way how poems taught in the class brought images of their own life world in their minds. They were enchanted by Sir Walter Scott's poem, "Breathes There the Man", taught to them which provided to them a shared meaning in the following lines.

Breathes there the man with soul so dead

Who never to himself hath said

This is my own, my native land.

Moon had questions and hope, he thought, the dream of Bhim Raj was before them and he wondered, 'where was our share in our native land'? (Moon 2001: 37)

Giving up Hindu rites and rituals

The young at Maharpura read the weekly named Janata which was founded by Ambedkar. In one of the issues there was a writing on Hindu gods, and it was said, "The Hindus' gods were not brought for us; don't do their pujas, their festival is not for us; do not observe them." (ibid: 42) this was a part of Ambedkar's movement to protest against the indignities suffered in the realm of religion, their not being allowed temple entry and being

considered as carrying the stigma of pollution which denied them any scope in the performance of activities related to religion.

An organization of the *dalit* youth had been formed and it was named SamataSainik Dal (Henceforth SSD), this organization carried on many welfare activities, and organized and participated in all the programmes organized by Ambedkar and his associates.

The SSD organized a door to door campaign urging people to give up, 'Hindu' rites and rituals, Moon was a child then, and though he could not have participated in the programmes, his memories which were refreshed by repeated reference to the occasion by others brings out a vivid description in his writing.

One of the leaders of the SSD Wamanrao Godbole carried the movement forward, asking people to celebrate, Ambedkar Jayanti, Chokamela Jayanti, Chokamela was a saint in Maharashtra in the fourteenth century and belonged to the Mahar community members were asked not to celebrate Janmashtami and Ram's birthday. Janmashtami was close by and it was very difficult for the elders of Maharpura to give up the worshipping of "Hindu" gods. But the socio-political environment was suitable for the purpose of doing away with them.

Ambedkar had led the Mahad satyagraha in 1927, the backlash from the caste Hindus clearly pointed out that they were not ready to give dignity to the *dalits* or allow them to rise above the stigma of untouchability, The effort of Ambedkar to lead his followers and draw water from a tank used by the caste Hindus was met with a lot of violence and economic persecution from the caste Hindus even though it was not illegal for *dalits* to draw water from the tank. Every house had a volunteer of the SSD and they were all called for a meeting by their leader Waman Rao Godbole, they were all asked to stop the 'Hindu' festivals in their own homes.

The young ones were successful in convincing their parents and most houses did not observe Janmashtami that year. Moon was in the sixth standard and the duty of children like him was to report if anyone was celebrating Janmashtami. There was already a mood of discarding Hinduism among the *dalits* and this attempt to give up participating in Hindu religious occasions was thought to be a preparation which would make it easier for them to accept a new religion.

Many festivals came after Janmashtami but they did not receive much importance. The Holi festival was stopped and this was related to a tragic incident revolving around a Brahmin giving his daughter in marriage to a

Mahar school teacher. The village caste Hindus boycotted the Brahmin, and the newly wed were burnt in the Holi fire, The SSD stopped people from buying colours and Moon never played *holi* for the rest of his life. He writes, “the culture that had been stamped on people’s minds for years and years began to be wiped out, and a new generation emerged” (Moon 2001:45)

The Poona Pact which was signed on 24th September 1932 left an indelible mark on the minds of the *dalits* as they had to forego their demand for a separate electorate. Their reasoning was that the Muslims were given separate electorate as they were judged to be a different community. The caste Hindus did not consider the *dalits* as equal and were not willing to give up the practice of untouchability, hence Ambedkar had demanded that the *dalits* should be considered as a separate community and be given separate electorates just like the Muslims. Gandhi was very much against the division of the Hindus and went on a fast. Ambedkar had to give in to the wishes of Gandhi and the Poona Pact was signed on 24th September 1932 at Yerawada Central jail in Poona between Ambedkar on behalf of the *dalits* and Madan Mohan Malaviya on behalf of the caste Hindus. Instead of being granted a separate electorate, seats were reserved for the ‘depressed classes’, out of general electorate.

This incident built up a feeling in the minds of the *dalits* of being let down by Gandhi. It was looked upon as a betrayal to the realization of justice for the *dalits* and they believed that Ambedkar was forced into submission. They were aggrieved by the fact that while Gandhi spoke against untouchability, he never spoke up strongly against the caste system nor did he express strong opinions on the domination of caste Hindus over *dalits*. As Arundhati Ray quotes Gandhi ‘Caste is another name for control. Caste puts a limit on enjoyment. Caste does not allow a person to transgress caste limits in pursuit of his enjoyment. That is the meaning of such caste restrictions as inter-dinning and intermarriage... these being my views I am opposed to all those who are out to destroy the caste system’ (Ray 2014: 41).

There was also an anti-Congress feeling among the untouchables as the former was looked upon as operating in the interest of the higher caste, as Ray writes (Ray 2014:41) ‘in 1931 when Ambedkar met Gandhi for the first time, Gandhi questioned him about his sharp criticism of the Congress which it was assumed was tantamount to criticizing the struggle for Homeland ‘Gandhiji, I have no Homeland’, was Ambedkar’s reply.’ He went on to say, ‘no untouchable worth the name will be proud of this land’.

It was in such a background that the refusal to worship Hindu gods came up, the *dalits* were caught in a quagmire, neither were the caste Hindus allowing them equality in the religious order nor were they being allowed to establish their identity as a community outside the Hindu society. It was in such a background that the next incident in Moon's life happened which was also related to the aversion which the *dalits* had for Gandhi.

Gandhi and the expression of resentment

By the 1940s there were people among the *dalits* who started participating in the activities of the Congress and the incident which will be taken up here is related to the situation emanating from such participation. Sometimes differences cropped up in the community and the Congress was interested in drawing to its fold some of the disgruntled members who were also interested to join because of their differences with Ambedkar.

There was a school located rear the railway lines close to Moon's Vasti and it was called Chokamela school after the name of the *dalit* poet saint. In 1941 the Chokamela hostel management with the collaboration of some Harijan students as the *dalit* student followers of Gandhi were called decided to call Mahatma Gandhi for an annual gathering of the hostel. The students most of whom were Ambedkarites opposed this. The SSD started thinking how the programme could be stopped, one of the members of the SSD, SadanandDangare lived in the hostel but thinking that he could not chalk out a programme staying there he took a room nearby in a hostel for the Mahars where he could lay out the plans. The youth from neighbouring places also joined him.

A huge pavilion had been erected in the centre of the yard and a strong line of police was placed. A few Mahar opponents of Ambedkar were members of the managing board. The president was ChaturbhajabhaiJasani who was a member of the Congress. He brought Mahatma Gandhi from Delhi but they got down two stations behind their destination, and the people of Nagpur were made to believe that Gandhi had not come.

Gandhi was brought in from behind the hostel, and members of the reception committee were waiting to welcome him, while they called out "long live Gandhi", at that moment thousands of demonstrators raised their voice saying, "Mahatma Gandhi go back", and as this slogan was heard by people in the neighbourhoods they started running towards the hostel, there were many followers of Ambedkar among the students and once Gandhi rose up to speak the students shouted out, "Gandhiji, we have many questions for

you,” Gandhi replied asking them to raise the questions, but the turmoil continued to increase, and the large gathering of people started throwing stones at the hostel and the stones fell inside the pavilion too. Once the stones hit the pavilion it started to collapse and no one was giving Gandhi a chance to speak and in the midst of the confusion the organizers brought Gandhi out from the pavilion, and he left through the back door just as he had come. Moon writes ‘with the shouting of, “Long Live Ambedkar Bhim Raj is coming soon,” Mahatma Gandhi’s car departed... The incident showed the ferocity of the anti- Gandhi sentiments of the people.’ (Moon 2001: 63). The major difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar rose from the difference they had around the question of untouchability, Gandhi thought untouchability was an aberration of the caste system which could be corrected without destroying the system. Ambedkar thought that untouchability was intrinsic to the caste system and unless the caste system is annihilated and blind faith on religious scriptures is done away with untouchability would continue to exist. It was Ambedkar’s ability to convince his followers about his ideas regarding the caste system around which much of their deprivations revolved that contributed to the antagonistic feelings which his followers had towards Gandhi.

Very often questions are raised around Ambedkar’s support to the freedom movement, Ambedkar always doubted about the consequence which independent India would have for the *dalits*, he spoke in favour of political, social and economic freedom. The attitude of the caste Hindus was clear to him from the way they responded to his attempts at acquiring justice for the *dalits* and the doubts he had have been justified when we observe how *dalits* are made the subject of humiliation and exploitation and see how difficult it is even for the educated *dalits* to be treated as equals today in many parts of our country.

Influence of Ambedkar in the field of creativity

There was another dimension in the life of Moon and other members of his community which was influenced by Ambedkar and that was in the sphere of art, literature and poetry which played an important role in the birth and unfolding of *dalit* literature. Moon had started participating in the activities of the SSD in his third standard. They had a flag which symbolized their pride and a lot of effort was taken to establish branches of the SSD in Nagpur. By that time the Scheduled Caste Federation was founded by Ambedkar in 1942 to campaign for the rights of the *dalits*. As such, there

was a great fervour in the community around which many activities were organized.

The first representation of creativity was reflected in the flag which was a united symbol of the Scheduled Caste Federation and the SSD. One of the leaders of the SSD Wamanrao Godbole made the flag with his own hands. He bought silk cloth for a blue flag, in the center of the flag was a sun which symbolized Ambedkar, in the middle of the sun SSF was etched out in a round form. On the left side of the flag eleven stars were sewn from white cloth and the letters SSD were sewn in the bottom corner. This was the united symbol of Scheduled Caste Federation and the SSD. The eleven provinces of India at that time were represented by the eleven stars.

Songs written by poets about the blue flag were famous. One of these read as follows:

We will give our life for the blue flag
Millions will bow before the blue flag
If you still plan to fight us, think about it.
We will sacrifice all for the blue flag.
Whatever Bhim wants we will do,
We will see our blood flow for the blue flag.

Such songs inspired the youth and made them ready to make sacrifices for their cause. Thus, the *dalits* were carrying out a parallel freedom struggle that to become free from age old persecution, exploitation and humiliation of the caste Hindus without which national independence would have little meaning for them.

All these activities with which Moon was associated from childhood was accompanied with hunger and poverty, He writes: 'we started going hungry for two days at a time. At first, we were troubled by pangs of starvation. However once the body gets in the habit of fasting, hunger is not felt. Hunger slowly begins to die. If food wasn't there clothes would be too much to expect' (Moon 2001:75). It was in 1946 when he was fourteen years old that his mother got a job as a cotton mill worker and some semblance of normalcy prevailed as far as meeting their basic needs was concerned.

A flag song was also written at that time, the first stanza of which goes as

Waiving always in the skies

Our beloved flag of freedom
The seventy millions of Dalit people today
Vow their lives to the flag!
The sight of you inspires us.
We'll uproot tradition in an instant.

The SSD evolved as a very well-organized frontal unit of the *dalits* with a sense of responsibility, loyalty and strict discipline among its members. They put their heart and mind in its activities and here too Ambedkar's teachings inspired them, and slowly activities extended from organizing meetings and gatherings to broader programmes of confronting social evils, injustices and atrocities. They were inspired by Ambedkar's sayings one of which was, 'sheep and goats are sacrificed not lions and tigers' (Moon 2001: 68).

The writing of songs is mentioned in another context also, where members of the *dalit* community would visit households or move around in the community fairs spreading their message of protest in the form of song accompanied sometimes with dance too. One of such songs starts as:

No one respects us in the market,
We live in mud huts.
When we live in Sitabardi
We get only blows and insults
Don't go without showing the wisdom of your guru,
Roar out your challenge (ibid: 80).

There were theatre performances also and as early as 1927, when Ambedkar was actively engaged in organizing protests a play named, 'Uplift of the Downtrodden', was performed. Ambedkar thus, was able to exercise an all-embracing impact on the lives of the *dalits*, their dream for a better life, a life without indignity and exploitation was aroused and this provided them a chance to express all their creative capabilities. It was the life and teachings of Ambedkar that brought out the intellectual and the writer in Vasant Moon too. Thus, the impact of Ambedkar's movement on the cultural life of the *dalits* was overwhelming.

The stories written around their urge for social reform were shown to the common people in a way that they could understand. Hymn singing groups came up which were known as Bhajan Mandalis and street drama groups moved around performing plays. All the poems and songs of the Das

Mandalis were very popular and one Hindi *qawali* was sung everywhere. The first stanza reads:

From the moment that the glance of Bhim fell upon the poor
 From that day our strength also grew
 To win freedom Gandhi and Jinnah met each other
 They did not ask Ambedkar, nor were they going to ask,
 Pandit Jawahar also tried a new trick
 When Bhim learned the secret his eyes also opened.
 The tyrannical Hindu people wanted to destroy us
 Hearing the voice of Bhim they lost their zest,
 Pandit Jawahar Nehru himself fell silent. (Moon 2001: 110).

This was happening in the forties when the freedom movement was in full swing, Moon was very young then but the wordings of the song as well as its popularity shows how intense was the feeling of anger towards the caste Hindus and the leaders who were thought to be protectors of their interest. The behaviour meted out to Ambedkar by the nationalist leaders was something which saddened and angered his followers. There was a consistent refusal on the part of the nationalist leaders to take up the issue of untouchability, exploitation and humiliation of the untouchables as important issues which required serious steps to be taken in the form of a socio-cultural movement no less important than the struggle for freedom.

Thousands of poets wrote verses on Ambedkar just like the saint poets of the medieval times, one of them described Ambedkar, the poet Manohar Nagarle wrote: (Moon 2001:113)

He is the beloved of our hearts, the crown on our heads
 He lives and will live tomorrow, our Ambedkar
 There will be words of gold and his name will remain
 Whenever our history is written.

The satyagraha against the Poona Pact in 1946 was dealt with harshly by the government, many were treated inhumanely in the prisons after being arrested and this also aroused poets to write verses. Moon writes: 'these singers were young men, who would experience an upsurge of rage about atrocities and the battle for our rights. They were not striving to publish

books of poetry. They went from neighborhood to neighbourhood, village to village to raise consciousness through their songs' (Moon 2001: 114).

Moon himself was very much inspired and the influence of Ambedkar which was building up in him as a young boy of twelve lasted throughout his life. He goes on to write: 'I was so mad over qawwali that I would listen to them in the morning...I would forgo sleep, sitting and listening to the singing throughout the night and take examinations during the day. There is no other medium more popular and effective than the qawwali for people's awakening' (Moon 2001: 117).

Acceptance of Buddhism

Moon entered college in 1949. By the time he left school he had become a rationalist humanitarian due to the Ambedkar's movement, this was carried forward through his college education which also taught him to question religious ideas. After graduation he got a job in the office of the Deputy Accountant General, Post and Telegraph. He left the job in 1955 to register for post-graduation.

Ambedkar's teaching and the rationalism with which he was trained in college had already shaped an anti-Hindu self in Moon. One of the leaders of the Scheduled Caste Federation brought the news that Ambedkar was going to convert to Buddhism even earlier. In the 1940s a person named Anant Ramchandra Kulkarni had started propagating Buddhism in the Vasti among the *dalit* community. Kulkarni was secretary of the Nagpur branch of the Mahabodhi Society based in Calcutta. Kulkarni propagated Buddhism, the news that Ambedkar would convert to Buddhism had reached Moon's Vasti before 1950, and sensing the mood of the community Kulkarni started meeting the representatives of the SSD, and Wamanrao one of the leaders asked him to come and teach the thoughts of Buddha.

The thoughts and religious tenets of Buddha as taught by Kulkarni had a lot of impact on the community, but the fact that Ambedkar was going to convert to Buddhism was a stronger driving force. This fervour around Buddhism released creativity among the members of the community and plays were enacted on the life and teachings of Buddha. The first play Moon wrote was inspired by the same.

In 1950 it was decided to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti and Moon decided that a drama would be performed, he was advised by Wamanrao Godbole to write a play on Buddha which would be acted out. There was a lot of

activity around the enactment of the play which was named, 'Welfare of the World', based on the life of the Buddha, he writes: 'It was an attempt to link the story of Jesus Christ's birth to that of the Buddha. But on stage this event was so impressive that people remained absorbed in the play for three hours. The Buddha's sight of an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a sanyasi, leading to the renunciation of his home, was shown in a tableau, which the audience liked very much' (Moon 2001: 126).

If we try to go back in Moon's life we find a person born in poverty, having an abusive father, brought up by his mother in the midst of great hardship, going hungry day after day now evolving as a person with great sense of dignity, self-respect and responsibility towards the community as well as rising up to fight the injustices towards the *dalits*, we understand how strong an impact the life and teachings of Ambedkar had made on him as well as the community as a whole. Moon went on to write other plays too after the first one.

By 1942 Moon's community had given up all the Hindu festivals, and by 1950 there was a general mood of leaving Hinduism and getting converted to Buddhism. Around 1954 Ambedkar proclaimed that the ceremony related to conversion would take place in Mumbai, however one of the leaders Wamanrao Godbole thought that Nagpur would be a more befitting place as there was a long tradition of Buddhism there and there is also a mention in a book that a tooth of the Buddha was preserved in Nagpur (Moon 2001: 149) Ambedkar agreed to hold the ceremony in Nagpur.

The death of Buddha is surmised to have occurred around the middle of October and it was decided that the conversion would take place around that time. There was also a lot of work to be done as it was expected that thousands of people would come for the conversion, Moon was given the task of recording the name, age, caste and religion of those who came, and also the task of overseeing the entire surroundings.

The programme in which Ambedkar and his followers converted to Buddhism was held on 14th October 1956, the whole process required a lot of preparation and volunteers came up in large numbers to perform the duties assigned to them. Ambedkar gave the *diksha* to all his followers and this bound them together as members of a Buddhist community. They all took Buddhist conversion oaths in front of Ambedkar, who had entered through a secret road, and Moon writes, 'after performing the conversion, Babasaheb left by the way he had come', this path was a secret so that no

one could see Babasaheb's car between the stage and the entrance road to the field where the programme was held.

Moon's freedom from a religion which inherently is not capable of treating all its members as equal and makes caste an essential quality of existence also came from Ambedkar who it is well known had been trying to acquire dignity and equality within the Hindu religion for a long period of time but finally came to realize that it would not come in the near future.

Vasant Moon matures as a writer

Moon from his school days had an ardent passion for reading, he would read all the papers in the temple trust committee's room. When he was in the eighth grade, the Chokamela hostel students published a hand written monthly magazine, and Moon had written an article on the childhood of Ambedkar. Moon writes: 'In those days, for that matter there were no facilities to give scope to untouchable boys in writing. As the Ambedkarite movement began to win renown, leaders such as Sankharan Meshram, N.H. Kumhare, Hardas Avale, N.K. Tirpude and Bhimrao Borkar were creative writers among the youth. However, they complained that their articles were not published in Tarun Bharat or in the Nagpur daily, Maharashtra. The movement of hand written magazines started among the students as a result.' (Moon 2001: 135).

The first elections in independent India was held between 26th October 1951 and 21st October 1952. Ambedkar toured the whole country and at Nagpur gave a stormy speech at a huge gathering of followers. The newspapers of the Congress party came out with disparaging articles on Ambedkar and criticized him vehemently. One member of the *dalit* community Raosaheb Thavare had shifted allegiance to the congress and wrote a booklet named, 'Dr. Ambedkar's Politics', and there he made a statement that, 'Ambedkar will have to live on crumbs thrown to him by the Congress' (Moon 2001:136)

Moon was very much angered by this comment and as he found that no one was responding he took up the task. He was studying at the intermediate level at that time, and at that young age he reviewed and responded to all the points mentioned in the booklet. The leaders of his community liked his writing and the result was a small booklet named, 'Beware Mercenary Propaganda,'. This book was published but Hindu shop owners would not sell such books and he began by selling copies in the streets. This was his

first mature writing and may have paved the path for Moon's unfurling as a renowned writer in Marathi and a pathfinder of what we now know as Dalit Literature specially in the realm of knowledge revolving around Ambedkar.

In 1953 there was a decision to bring out a hand written magazine in the community and Moon would also use pseudonyms to write for these magazines. He writes: 'The happiness that comes from collecting writings from students to include in magazines and writing much of it by hand, and then having the publication ceremony, is beyond the imagination of those who publish magazines today' (Moon 2001: 145) The foundation of *dalit* literature was laid by people like Moon, Ambedkar also appreciated the writings which came out and encouraged them to carry on with their endeavours.

Ambedkar's death on 6th December 1956 created a despondent situation in the *dalit* community. The death did not only mean the physical demise of a great leader, it also brought a great deal of uncertainty about the dreams which Ambedkar had woven in their minds about their future upliftment. Moon wrote an article titled, 'Baba and Death', he writes, "the tears and upsurge of feeling I saw were given expression in this small booklet".

It is said that there was hardly any researcher who could write on the *dalit* movement without taking help from Moon. The noted scholar on Dalits, Eleanor Zelliot consulted Moon's library for her PhD work and developed friendship with him. She has also written the introduction to Gail Omvedt's English translation of Moon's autobiography.

Moon rose to the position of county counsellor but he never forgot his community, Moon edited the complete work of Ambedkar, he ardently and painstakingly took up work on twenty collected volumes of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in English and his autobiography. He could not however complete the last three volumes of which he prepared the manuscript only. The final version of the three volumes were completed by Mr. Hari Narke, another important contribution of Moon was on, 'Life of Women in Buddha's period,' this book as the name suggests described life of women during the times of the Buddha. The other book on Buddhism he wrote was, 'Buddha Dhamma Pradeep,' it deals with different dimensions of Buddhist doctrine including the denial of the existence of soul in Buddhism, he also deals with the idea of nonviolence in Buddhism. He wrote another book on *dalit* movement entitled, 'Dalit Movement in the Central Provinces Before Ambedkar', which came out in 1987.

The erudition that Moon cultivated throughout his life is reflected in his writings and one can only understand the magnitude of his contributions if they are understood in the context of his life, the economic hardships he went through which affected his education and the humiliation he suffered along with the members of his community in being regarded as untouchable by the wealthier and powerful caste Hindus.

The pervading influence of Ambedkar in bringing out the evolved individual in Moon is also expressed in the restive self-disturbed at the ignominy suffered by his community, participating in Ambedkar's programmes and looking up at the path shown by Ambedkar as the only path to freedom for his community. The writer in him was brought out from his ardent desire to rise up in protest and his writings became a medium which gave expression to his desire to fight for justice and equal rights for his community.

Conclusion

Vasant Moon's 'Vasti', or 'Growing up Untouchable in India' is a powerful memoir of a youth growing up in the slums of central India. It is a narrative of a youth growing up in a social, economic and political environment which was not without its contradictions even though the freedom movement was at its peak. The strong leadership of the upper castes was not looked upon without suspicion by the *dalits*. They understood that their problems of existence which was characterized by humiliation, domination, exploitation and other elements of structural violence would not be resolved as long as power was exercised by the same people under whom they had suffered from those travails.

Moon's story traverses a world of poverty and deprivations through the unrelenting rise of the *dalit* movement under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar and then entering a world of intellectual endeavour and knowledge while at the same time remaining a social activist throughout. The other person who had an influence over him was his mother, who struggled indomitably to raise her children and inculcate the values of humanism in them.

Moon loved the *vasti* and remembered it fondly throughout his life, his life shows how an individual can fight all possible odds and grow up with qualities which enables him to make contributions towards society as also in the world of knowledge. Moon's life experiences were invigorated by the presence of Ambedkar as a significant other in his life as also the movements he led to acquire human rights for the *dalits*. At the end of his autobiography

he fondly refers to his *vasti*, he writes, “even so I remember it from time to time I should again become small and go live in some earthen house in that *vasti*, I should experience the love of neighbours, I should hear again the Buddhist and Ambedkarite songs sung by the new generation and be merged with the soil that nurtured the community” (Moon 2001: 176).

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Journeys to Autumn

Jhuma Chakraborty

Abstract: *In this paper I have revisited my own experiences from almost a third person's perspective. I have explored my journey from my childhood till the autumn of my life. This is the time when we look back and can give new meanings to our lived experiences. Being a student of philosophy, I failed to free myself from the philosophical views that I have inculcated consciously or unconsciously. I am deeply influenced by Tagore's essentialism and Simone's (Simone de Beauvoir) existentialism, where existence precedes our essence. Interestingly the above-mentioned views are opposed to each other for both the theories revolve round the concept of 'freedom' which is very different in these two conceptual frameworks. I have interpreted the dialogical and dialectical evolution of myself mostly through the lens of these two philosophers.*

Keywords: Freedom, lived experience, individualism, essence, relational self, essentialism, Cosmos.

We are essentially related to our environment natural and social, with our culture, norms and values, our relations with our family and work place and many more.... these relations are dialogical, dynamic and dialectical. Many times, our surroundings, the happenings in our life cannot be changed. They are beyond any alteration. The fact that I am a Hindu and a Bengali and I am born in a conservative environment are facts which we cannot change according to our wish and desire. But within this given fixed structure we evolve in unique ways, give meanings to the happenings around us, interpret it for our well-being.

We have our shared experiences, our collective projects in which we play different roles and there is a constant interaction between the outer given world and our inner being. This is true for all human beings; Each and Everyone's life is a grand narrative with so many sub stories within it. Once in an interaction with my teacher who has become a friend now, I

said, 'these days I do not have the luxury of reading novels and I feel very sad about it'. She said 'Jhuma you can easily mix with people and you have something in you that makes other people share their stories with ease'. This observation was an eye opener and suddenly I felt that, 'yes I intentionally or unintentionally play a very significant role'. Each individual in this sense is an interesting book with so many layers.

In this paper I was drawing the life of my student who has gone through many ups and downs and then I felt why not look at my own self and share my lived experiences. My life is also rich enough and I can look at myself from an aesthetic distance in the autumn of my life. I do not like my name and have decided to refer me as 'Tuli', which means 'brush' since I am painting some aspects of my life story.

Just because I am a student of philosophy, I could not resist the temptation of considering two important philosophical theories in this paper. One Indian and another western. I have chosen these theories simply because they focus on the evolvement of individual self in interaction with the happenings of the world.

These two theories have been proposed by two stalwart thinkers and are almost diametrically opposite to one another. Tagore (1861-1941) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). Both have emphasized on the freedom of human beings from two different perspectives. They consider freedom to be the essence of human species.

Tagore has clearly articulated his philosophy in his two famous books written for the western readers. One is *Sadhana* (1913) and the other is *The Religion of Man* (1931). In these two books he has expressed his philosophy in an explicit manner. It is more than obvious that all his writings, be it poems or stories, novels or dance – dramas (even his paintings) are expressions of his thought but in *The Religion of Man* and *Sadhana* he is more a philosopher than a poet, novelist or an artist.

Simone's entire theory revolves round the concept of freedom where she claims that a person builds up her essential self from his/ her birth by exercising freedom. She starts her life with bare existence and by asserting freedom, by taking up new projects she builds up her essence. Thus, a person herself is responsible for her becoming, by shaping herself gradually with changing lived experiences ignited by the social world that surrounds her. In other words, she is the one who assigns meanings to the different happenings of her life. Simone's theory thus emphasizes on pure individuality, where an individual is essentially unrelated to other individuals.

Simone maintains that there are aspects or events in our world which we cannot change according to our desires. For example, it was not me who decided to study in a hostel. The fact that I am born in an upper-middle class Bengali Family, that I am a Hindu Brahmin is a given structure which operates as a frame within which I could assert my freedom. I cannot simply deny the frame in which I am situated. I can decide to get admission into a music school or to marry after my Higher Secondary examination but cannot decide to be a student of class 1X all over again. I exercise my freedom within this given frame. According to Simone taking decisions according to my free will makes me responsible for my actions and for this reason I am in constant anxiety which has been technically referred as 'angst' in her existentialist model.

The individualism of Simone is in sharp contrast to Tagore's essentialism where men are essentially related, related to other individuals and Nature. Nature with a capital 'N' which is actually identical with the Cosmos. This theory is labeled as essentialism, for his Ontology, epistemology, where he talks about relation between the Cosmos and Man has some essential features.

For example, a human being is not an isolated individual, his very existence is relational. Man is essentially creative and free. This freedom enables man to realize his essence, his related self, his self that is not confined within this narrow present but goes beyond it. He is not only related to The Universal Man but related to each other and related to Nature or Cosmos. The concept of Universal man is not relevant in the present context and so I am not discussing it.

To understand his view, it will be most sensible to have a glimpse of what he actually stated in his famous book *The Religion of Man*.

This very mind of Man has its immediate consciousness of will within him, which is aware of its freedom and ever struggles for it. Every day in most of our behaviour we acknowledge its truth.

Man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds himself (RM, p.45) He irresistibly feels something beyond the evident fact of himself which only could give him worth (RM, P.44)

Tagore is referring to 'Boro Ami', where the altruistic self feels his or her worth by going beyond selfish desires and acts for the overall well-being of his surroundings. She /he is essentially a lover. His love for his family, neighborhood, his nation, his culture, and with the universal social and natural world that surrounds him is actually a manifestation of his actual soul.

I will consider Tagore and Simone's perspective for studying Tuli's life and will differ from Tagore's view of 'soul' or 'boroami', our essence which takes us beyond our narrow mundane self.¹

I will argue that in several occasions 'we do not consciously choose our projects. We are bound by the circumstances to opt for them. Simone was aware of this constraint of our life. She differs from Sartre who will never accept that in certain circumstances we cannot exercise our freedom. We are forced to choose a project and we have no other option left. Suppose if my parents decide to get me married, I will force myself to study for GRE, even if I am not interested in higher studies. Simone will agree with Sartre in insisting that one should be assigning meaning to every experience that makes one's being.

I will again argue that Simultaneously a person can be a Boro Ami or a selfless altruistic person and Choto Ami a selfish one. In fact, there relation is a very complex one and a neat compartmentalization between the two is not realistic. In fact, there can be an intrinsic relation between these two aspects of mind where either one overpowers the other or they can be different layers of the same self. I will do this by narrating my experiences of some journeys of my life. I will refer myself as 'Tuli', as has been mentioned.

Tuli is the first child of a family with a very affectionate mother and a disciplinarian father who was a Bank Manager in Bilaspur, then a very small town in Madhyapradesh. Her father in spite of being a good student could not continue his studies and had gone through a very rough patch because of the partition story. Tuli was extremely pampered in her maternal grand father's home in Ranchi where she had three Masis or aunts and a very big family and good number of Pets. Life was very smooth, happy and colourful.

But a dark cloud covered her cheerful life when she was sent to a very expensive boarding school in Kolkata at the age of seven. It was one of the best schools of Kolkata. By that time, she was an eldest of two other sisters who were twins. The family had to cut down their expenses for sending their child (Me) to an expensive institution. Her father had the dream of educating her child in a very good school.

Her separation with her mother with whom she was very attached made life painful and dark. Initially for a year or so *there* was not a single day that witnessed her, without tears.

The boarding school was very luxurious with an Anglicized Bramho culture charged with Tagore's songs and Christian prayers. She had to use spoon and fork in her lunch and dinners, had to go to bed by putting on night suit. Dinner used to be at 5.30 pm sharp and supper at 8.30 with a cup of milk. She gradually adapted herself with this alien culture and got back her cheerful self. The school routine had so many extracurricular activities and Tuli loved them. She was not good in her studies and she had a strong desire to prove that her parents took a wrong decision in sending her in a boarding school.

Tuli was a victim of his Father's project. She had no other option but to accept it. Simone is correct in the sense that within this hostel life Tuli struggled to be happy. She did not have any other option left but to make the most from her caged life. Sartre has not mentioned the age from which a person can take independent decisions. It feels absurd to think that a child would take up independent projects in his/her dawn of life.

Tuli was pampered by her matron and elder did is of the hostel though she did not have a very close friend. Deep within her happy cheerful self-there was a lonely child. She cooked up a story that she was a neglected child as she thought that her parents neglected her especially after the birth of her twin sisters. The story was a convincing one for she received very few letters from her parents in comparison with the frequency of letters for the other inmates living in the boarding. Her religious mother almost reiterated the same sentence in every post card that she sent to her daughter writing 'Bhogobantomarmongalkoruk'. This is almost similar to 'May God bless You'. Sunday evening was a visitors' day. Her uncles did come to meet her not regularly though and Tuli was not attached with any one of them. A child is sensitive enough to realize whether she is actually loved. In festive days like in Holy and Saraswati puja she stayed with her matron, who took her to the beautiful Cathedral Church (which was very near to her boarding) quite frequently. Again, we see that she had to choose what she chose. She did not have any option left. As has been already mentioned She probably decided (not consciously though) to be happy with whatever life offered her.

Tuli at this age feels that her perfectionist Christian Matron made her learn so many small and not so small things like doing bed, serving, knitting, cooking and many more. She had a very strong influence on her. She tried to make her realize that love, care, forgiveness are very important qualities that one should inculcate. In spite of the love that was showered on her by her matron and seniors Tuli was neither altruistic nor selfish.

Tuli felt very alienated in her home. For she was growing up in a different culture altogether. She was extremely problematic and destructive in her home where she went during Durga Pujas and long summer vacations. Everything was so different there starting from the food, their sense of dressing, the pattern of teaching, the mode of worshipping God. She felt alienated in that surrounding. She felt that it was a house and not a home with insensitive people around her who were unaware of her emotional turmoil and would never endeavor to understand her.

She got into the habit of beating her innocent sisters, breaking things whenever she had a slightest chance and wanted to go back to her boarding. Her parents were very upset and disgusted with her unbearable behaviour. Actually, it was her interpretation of her world. Her parents were not at all bad. They were interpreting the situation from their perspective. They cared for her in their own way. But they could not understand the complexity of Tuli's psyche and reasons for her non-senses. Things became more difficult with some incidents of repeated sexual abuse from a close relative when she was in class v and vi. She coped with this experience in her own way. She was in a state of complete denial.

If I look at Tuli from an aesthetic distance I would argue against Tagore claiming that though we are free and creative, we cannot be lovers in adverse situations. Our higher self can get manifested only after the most basic needs are satisfied. One of the most basic need of a child or an adolescent is to have a home where she is cared for and loved. She/he needs understanding care-givers, chiefly parents. So, the most fundamental precondition of blooming the 'Larger Self' or 'Boro Ami' is the satisfaction of some fundamental physical and emotional needs. Tagore would argue that he himself probably is a counter example, but I will reiterate that he is an exception and we should not be concerned with exceptional cases

I would rather walk with Simone, accepting that every person consciously or unconsciously assigns meanings to the happenings of his\her life.

We see that in this story that inspire of the negative happenings Tuli locked her pain, denied the negative experiences and got back to her vibrant cheerful state at the earliest. She was very good in sports and was appreciated for her knack in story writing. Her world of imagination saved her from getting depressed.

She left her hostel at the age of sixteen and to her utter surprise she scored very high marks in her school final examination. Her parents were happy. But she continued with her rude behavior towards everyone in her house

especially towards her mother. Her sisters hated their 'Didi' and hoped that she would join another hostel so that they can be 'happy four' parents and two sisters.

Tuli was extremely skeptical about friendship and close relationships in her school days. In spite of her varied negative and positive experiences she had a strong liking towards altruistic, helpful people. In class xii she got a very good friend Ratnabali and this was the first time when she got the flavor of good friendship. She started changing. She discovered a hardworking, intelligent persevering helpful self within her. Her philosophy teacher was excellent and Tuli was fascinated by this subject. Probably after a long waiting she could embrace the subject of her love. Her behavior towards the family was taking a constructive turn though she remained alienated with her family culture.

After finishing school, she joined Presidency college which was supposed to be the best educational institution in early eighties. Her cold behavior persisted at home and her happy loving altruistic self-bloomed in the outside world that waited for her with full of different colours. Her college life was very interesting with heated debates in the coffee house, long walks in the college street and art films directed by Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal and world-famous directors such as Fellini, Truffaut, Kurosawa, Bergman. Films played a very significant role in shaping her values, her voice against power relationships specially patriarchy and cynicism regarding the institution of marriage.

If we study this phase of her life, we will see that she was simultaneously both selfish and helpful. It was a spontaneous response to the happenings around her. This phase will go both against Simone's existentialism and Tagore's essentialism. She did not choose to be either selfish and helpful. If circumstantial factors determine our behavior then we are not free in complete sense. There can be instances where one chooses to be selfish in one situation, but there can be different more determining circumstances where one is almost compelled to be selfish. So, both the possibility remains open. We exactly don't know what is meant by 'choosing a project'? How do we define a project? Can a chosen mental state or a particular behaviour be labelled as a project? In fact, 'can we choose mental states' or we simply perceive us behaving or thinking in a particular way? We can see that Tuli was quite justified in being self-centered and helpful at the same time.

As far Tagore is concerned, we can see that being 'chotoami' is not inconsistent with being 'Boroami'. Thus, conceptually there is no inconsistency regarding the coexistence of both of them, or 'boroami' 'preceding,'chotoami' and vice-versa. In many occasions we take decisions which are apparently egoistic, a manifestation of 'chotoami' but in the deeper layer it is story of 'boroami'. For example, Abhisekh decides to divorce his wife, he wants to give more time to the blind school with which he is associated. He divorced his wife when his daughter was in class IV, it appeared to be a very selfish decision. But probably it has a deeper layer. The complexity of this action cannot be captured by a strict compartmentalization between the two kinds of self-depicted by Tagore.

Let us again go back to Tuli's story. Eventually She got married had a son, got into a job. Life again witnessed shadows and sunrays as things were always not so pleasant. A person who is against patriarchy or any kind of top down power structure should be prepared for rough patches in life. Tuli decided and chose her projects and exercised her freedom and enjoyed whatever life had to offer for her. Simone was her best friend in these phases of life. She loved being a mother experiencing the dynamic growth of a young adult (his son) with his strong individuality.

To cut a long story short she had three vital experiences in the rest of her journey.

1. She got a job in Srishiksayatan College after a long waiting because college Service Commission was closed for almost nine years. She worked there for eight and a half years. This phase can be described as the 'Gupta period' of her life. First time in her life she experienced group friendship and culturally active academic ambience. She was almost pushed to apply for JU (Jadavpur University), a department that made her depressed simply because she was being too idealist too romantic about relationships among colleagues. This was probably because of her exposure to a best possible academic ambience with supportive colleagues. She took time to understand the undercurrents and cross currents of this new academia and learn the language to be used in her present job.
2. She got into a long depression probably because of her menopausal stage and a feeling of deep alienation both at home and in the work place. She was missing her 'home' for the place where she was staying again became a house. Her husband is her colleague, a

very caring person. But both her son and husband love to get into debates regarding political issues and she resented continuous debates on political stories. She failed to cut out her space in home where she can be herself.

3. She experienced a feeling of falling in love with a doctor who was actually supporting her when she was into depression. It was actually a case of transference. She was very honest about her feelings towards the doctor, shared her mental state with her son who was twenty-two by then and her husband. There were very cool and relaxed about this change of her mental state. She felt like eulogizing her feeling of falling in love for she felt that this experience was precious in this phase of her life.

Her alienation in her work place and also at home made her sad. She was probably tired with the existential struggle at this stage of her life. She wished to have a space of her own where she can be absolutely free from all the different roles she was playing; that of a teacher, colleague, mother, wife, daughter and even a friend. She wanted to be herself. She thought the best way for being with herself would be to write scripts of short films, the dream that remained with her from her college days.

She took a leave for three months from her work place and just did nothing. She did not feel like scribbling anything. Probably for the first time she looked at life from an aesthetic distance. This worked as a magic. She realized that life has given her so much, starting from an understanding family, a good work place some very good friends and her consistently tolerant affectionate mother and a caring husband.

She could go back to all her usual roles. The entire journey of Tuli's life is not so unexpected unusual and unpredictable. Simone's existentialism has not addressed the issue of taking a project and then not working at it. Probably Simone would argue that not doing anything is also a project but this answer is not satisfactory.

Tuli is not interested in looking at life through the lens of either Simone or Tagore or anyone else. She just wants to be with her own lived experiences, in the autumn of her life.

Note

1. Tagore has made a distinction between soul ('boroami') I and self. The altruistic essential being within us is soul and self is 'chotoami' that the narrow, self-centered being in us which is actually not our real self.

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Redefining the Contours: A Survey on the New Methods Used in Social Sciences

Sudarshana Sen

Abstract: *The two intellectual and scholarly alignments, one with constructivism, logical induction and theory-building and the other related to positivism was reflected and manifest in two differing cerebral discourses. These intellectual alignments were rooted in different domains of philosophy of science reflected through different research paradigms. The result was a deepening divide between scholars who applied either quantitative or qualitative methods in their studies. In the late 1970s an initiative led to the publication of a Handbook of Mixed Methods in the Social and Behavioral Sciences further enriching the long struggle and intellectual reticence to mix differing and opposing philosophical flagships. This paper will take this struggle as a context and explore and analyze the emerging methods and the new philosophical breakthrough in social science researching particularly in the context of the study in everyday life.*

Keywords: Turning Points in epistemology, Methods in everyday life, Ethnography, Mixed Research.

Introduction

Research in Sociology has shown very little agreement in expectations from research and on how it can be conducted. There has been a division between what can be called ‘scientific’ and how science can be achieved alternatively not merely by practicing scientism. Such deliberate and sometimes careful dispositions within the field has led to choices among scholars to choose their methodological positions and also sometimes to create their own. The choices between two positions, quantitative and qualitative, within sociology have been encouraged so far leading to invent new ways of practicing the art in recent times. Such endeavours have led

to enormous and countless different topics and research with a massive emergence of epistemologically differentiated schools of thought and dominant research paradigms. Sociology has witnessed paradigmatic conflicts and contestations. Sometimes there has also been a trend to mix both and invent still further ways of doing it. What emerges is discovering new ways to establish what has been proposed at the beginning of the research on the one hand and also leading to discover new ways of explanations too. This article will revolve around the possible ways of doing a research that various researchers have discovered in order to carry out what they wanted to study. In doing so, this article will focus on micro-situations and the methods that have been employed in recent years barring the popular methods used.

The most popular way to know the everyday through research is to visit the field directly. This way of researching where the researcher completely immerses oneself in the culture of the indigenous people has its roots in anthropology. In sociology it started to be employed in studying one's own culture in its day-to-day setting. Ethnography as the method was called was developed in 1920s and 1930s in Chicago University under the tutelage of Robert Park. Well-known studies of this period included Thrasher's (1927) ethnography of a criminal gang and Thomas and Znaniecki's (1958 [1918–20]) study of Polish immigrants to Chicago. Later it developed as an approach to any study and interprets a way of life found in particular sub-cultures (Bryman, 2008). Thus, we see the potential to explore both the surface-level rituals and routines of a culture and the social order that hinges them, through a deep structure of grammar-like rules (Lévi-Strauss 1963). This interplay between agency and structure was also what inspired Giddens (1984) towards his theory of structuration (Scott, 2009). This may mean researching under cover, or covertly, which always involves the researcher living alongside the people they are studying and participating to a greater or lesser extent in their daily activities. This enables them to develop an insider's view of what is going on in that setting; in terms of the meanings people give to their actions and interactions. Consequently, the ethnographer may claim to be in a stronger position to write about the group than other types of researcher, by virtue of their privileged standpoint; ethnographic writing is often regarded as being high in face validity (Bryman 2008) because it is full of 'authentic' illustrations and descriptions.

The ethnography as a methodological standpoint often employed different methods such as participant observation, covert research, in-depth interviews, semi or unstructured interviews. The approach lends itself well

to phenomenology, by providing an insight into the subjective realities, or *lifeworlds* (Schütz 1972), of individuals. It is important to consider not only the manifest content of these – the concepts and categories people use – but also the motivations behind them. Another innovative source of information about everyday life is visual data that include photographs; drawings, diagrams and illustrations; computerized graphics; and so on. Researchers may also be interested in collecting artwork, commodities and other items of ‘material culture’ (Mukerji 2002; cf. Douglas and Isherwood 1996 [1979]). Using such alternative methods can help to elucidate features of a culture or group that might otherwise have gone unnoticed or reveal different perspectives on a problem. In Cultural Studies, visual data are often explored critically as texts through which dominant values and ideologies are said to be transmitted. For example, the advertisements pasted on buses can be read critically as embodying themes of consumer capitalism: they represent the colonization of urban spaces by market forces. Visual data can also be used to put a new spin on the traditional method of ethnography. Sarah Pink (2001) describes how social researchers can conduct a visual ethnography, using photographs, video recordings and online imagery rather than the more conventional techniques of interviews and observations written up after the event. She distinguishes between two ways of reading visual data: the ‘realist’ assumption that they authentically portray social reality, and the ‘reflexive’ approach, which recognizes the researcher’s role in placing an interpretive theoretical framework upon the data. This corresponds to Scott’s (1990) distinction between extant, naturalistic and demystifying photographs, and to the challenges posed by the narrative turn. Subsequently, the feminist, the postmodern turns have also influenced choices of methods in Qualitative studies and in the researches on everyday life.

Autoethnography is another method in recent use is a variant of evolution of ethnographic research. It is a convergence of autobiography and ethnography where the author situates her/him at the center of observing unit. It is an autobiographic narrative where the researcher and the observed speak about the acts of social transgression. In doing so the researcher tells a story which becomes a transgressive act revealing what has been kept hidden, or speaking of what has been silenced. It is a form of critique and resistance that can be found in diverse sources like fiction, memoir, texts etc. auto ethnographers argue that self-reflexive critique upon one’s position as researcher inspires readers to reflect critically upon their own life experience, their construction of self and their interaction of others within socio-historical contexts. The researcher becomes an active agent

with narrative authority over hegemonic dominant cultural myths that restrict social freedom and personal development (Ellis and Bochner 1996; Goodall, 1998; Spry 2001). The reader of an autoethnography should be critical. Goodall argues that a good autoethnography completely dissolves the idea of social distance, cannot be generalized upon, is self-reflexive and richly vulnerable.

New methods of data collection

In 1993 Carol Gilligan started a method of psychological analysis known as *The Listening Guide* where she emphasized on identity and moral development. In this method the researcher listens to a person's distinct and multilayered voice recorded during an interview. The researcher engages with unique subjectivity of each research participant. The basic question in this research is who is listening to whom, telling what stories about relationship in what social context. Each time a researcher is exposed to such voices, each step is called 'listening' because listening requires active participation of both the teller and the listener. The first stages of listening are prescribed but later on the listening is shaped by the particular question the researcher seeks to answer (know) from the interview. Each listening is marked and documented through notes and interpretative summaries. The reason for a series of listening is arrived at from the assumption that the psyche, like the voice is polyphonic so that simultaneous voices are co-occurring. For example, in the research Gilligan shows multiple listening exposed her to a "happy voice" of the mother at first but later "a little worried voice". Each listening amplifies another aspect of one's voice. In the first listening the researcher listens to the plot and the listener's response to the interview. The question asked is, what is happening? Or, what stories are being told? In the second listening the focus is on the voice of the "I". The purpose of this step is to listen to the first-person narrative and also listen to how the person speaks about him or her. In the next step the researcher listens to the polyphonic voices and brings the analysis back into the relationship with the research question. It offers a way of hearing and developing an understanding of several different layers of a person's expressed experience as it bears on the question posed. It means the researcher's questions shape this listening which may be based on the theoretical framework guiding the research or the questions raised by the previous listening or both. *The Listening Guide* method is a way of analyzing qualitative interviews that is best when one's question requires listening to particular aspects of a person's expressions of her or his own complex and

multilayered individual experiences and relational cultural contexts within which they offer (Gilligan 1993).

Friendship is also considered a source and a method of data collection now. In *Friendship Matters* in 1992 William K. Rawlins defined friendship and used the interpersonal bonds developed with his friend David Holland in ongoing communicative management of the dialectical tensions, characterized by binaries such as idealization and realization, affection and instrumentality and judgments and acceptance. Rawlins claimed that friendship occupies a marginal position within the matrix of interpersonal relations where no normative assumptions and prerogatives are recognized. The analysis of friendship ties and a source of data are based on principles of interpretivism, hermeneutics and verstehen. In addition to these the feminist tradition of political commitment to consciousness raising, empowerment and social change are also used to focus on intersecting power relations. In 1994, Michelle Fine has also used friendship as a method to understand relational truths where the dividing line between the researcher and the researched (Fine calls it hyphens) is blur. To record the data gathering process the researcher needs to engage with a community (Cherry 1996 had used this method to study an account of people living with AIDS), use the natural rhythm and context of friendship (Rawlins 1992).

NizaYanay and NitzaBerkovitch (2005) have used personal electronic correspondence as a reflexive strategy to explore ideas, theories and personal commitments. Their aim was to problematize experience, telling of their “stories” as a personal response to the construction of knowledge in place of theory. They used a form of dialogue to understand their own positioning of experiences as well as create, negotiate and understanding relations between ideas and emotions regarding sexuality, gender, desire and fantasy (Yanay and Berkovitch 2005). Their work combined three different genres: symposium, writing letters and formal analysis attempting an amalgamation of spontaneity, immediacy of speaking, intimacy of writing letters and rigour of scholarship.

Lauri L. Hyers, Janet K. Swim and Robyn K. Mallet used daily diary to understand experiences with everyday forms of discrimination (2001, 2005 and 2006) like sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, minority and majority group prejudice and sizeism. Diaries of respondents revealed the different sorts of prejudice they experienced in their everyday while interacting with friends, family and acquaintances. In their study women were asked to keep diaries for a week to keep record of their stress. The women who participated in research were called collaborators instead of participants

where their assigned role was not to perform but be observed only to the researcher-observer. Ordinary experiences thoughts and emotions, the essential components of daily life were recorded and it opened up the possibility of access to information about people's lives (Swim, Hyers, and Cohen 2001: 31-53; Mallet and 2005).

Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) have shown the importance of combining different methods and specific research designs for meeting research goals. For example, Campell and his colleagues (1959, 1966) have shown how the results of two or more studies can be combined, demonstrating that the results of each study cannot be trusted due to invalidity associated with a particular method. Triangulation as the method of combination, convergence or confirmation was called was based on the arguments of Webb et al. (1966). Currently, in more recent research there is an increasing decline in interest in such combination of results mainly because results fail to converge. In seeking alternative to convergence, one is combining quantitative and qualitative methods. This is an effort to integrate the contemporary strength of different methods through division of labour. The division of labour is achieved through a pair of decisions: priority decision and sequence decision. Both the strategies of assigning priority to one method and sequencing the two methods (priority and complementary method) are part of the research design. The strategy is to select one method as the principal means of data collection and a complementary method. The aim of the complementary method is to assist the principal method. This division of labour can either be qualitative or quantitative. The complementary method is then selected on the basis of what can assist the principal means of data collection. The second step is to select a contrasting complementary method that offers a set of strengths that add to the research design's overall ability to meet the research's aims. The sequence decision involves the order in which the qualitative and quantitative data can be used. Here too the researcher wants to maximize the value of the research. Here the researcher selects a second option to follow-up the principal method used. Recent studies with such combination designs combine and create teams that combine expertise. For a team-based work there can be clear expectations about what each piece of work consists and why is it done. A different approach to integrating is mixed-method research. Rather than transgressing borders mixed-method research requires new set of skills related to coordinating combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods.

In the second edition of the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* published in 1998 the editors A. Tashakkori and C. Teddie dwelt with how mixed research can be an alternative to the continuous struggle between quantitative and qualitative studies. If the first edition was focused on gathering a community of scholars to engage in discussions over the advantages of using a mixed method paradigm, the second edition was zeroed on creating connections between rich and incongruent conceptualizations. It also focussed on a perceptible shift from describing mixed methods and its legitimacy for systematic discussion of an integrated field with clear methodological ideas and advances for a guidance to the second-generation scholars. The editors believe that mixed methods research help in everyday problem solving. As such methodological position help in humanistic conceptualization of the research process thus rubbish issues that are incompatible and irrelevant from a humane perspective. Jennifer Greene (2002) has rightly shown that mixed method evaluates by using diverse ways of knowing and thus it provides a better understanding and evaluation of differences both constitutive and generative. Even so, mixed method engages with challenges of human diversity and respects human differences inviting democratization into the process of research. Greene (2005) contends that mixed method research can aim to know something better by bringing multiple ways of knowing one phenomenon at the same time respecting multiple diverse ways of knowing. Boyte (2000: 3) also makes the similar argument. To him, traditional monolithic ways of knowing emphasize detached, rational observer and in this way, it celebrates the scientifically educated expert as the initiator of all kind of information and marginalizing the amateur. He propels the idea that a far more civic craft is needed to witness democratic renewal of contemporary times. The reason for giving credit to mixed method research in the context of research on micro contexts is that first, the researcher positions him/her in the context of the research and tries to look at the scenario through his/her behaviour. Once done, the researcher has to articulate the questions that will drive the project. These research questions will focus and extend the specific research activities that will be undertaken. In developing these questions, the researcher becomes aware of the contextual environment within which the research will occur. Any social phenomenon is complex in the way that in order to understand it the researcher has to be interested not only on what has happened but also on how or why it has happened. The multidimensionality of a social phenomenon is the reason for a mixed method paradigm in research on every day. Second, once the problem has been identified, the researcher on every day scans

the environment for possible actions that might be relevant to those issues in the specific context. Here the researcher must go horizontal seeking the widest variety of intervention that might address the issue. Third the researcher should consider the most diverse arrangement of methodological tools available to answer those questions through a process called 'methodological eclecticism'. Fourth, the researcher now goes vertical by selecting those actions most likely to be effective in addressing identical issues. Sternberg et al (2000) conceptualizes this step as 'carefully fitting strategies to specific demands of a problem and modifying these strategies in response to the problem' (p. 54). When a researcher goes vertical by selecting best methods available, Teddie and Tashakkori refer to it as 'methodological connoisseur' (2010: 8). As a final step the mixed method researcher goes deeper into the understanding of issues s/he faces within the context of their work. That is, s/he should understand that their work is limited by time and space.

Conclusion

The first step in studying the micro every day context is to *defamiliarize* the familiar. It means the researcher has to ask questions on how, when and why the setting seems 'naturally given'. The second step is to look for underlying rules that govern the 'familiar', natural, taken for granted setting. This means delving deep under the surface of events. Here the researcher needs to learn that the actors involved have been instrumental in creating the 'naturalness' of the social phenomenon by repetition. Therefore, the researcher has to question how this was done and who helped in such creations. Third by asking who made the rules or how they were formed the researcher has to ask what happens if they were broken? The deviant helps us to study the conformist or sometimes a rule becomes visible only after it is broken. Such is the ordinariness (*taken for grantedness*) of social norms. The classical theorist Durkheim (1893) argued that deviance was actually functional for society, in that it unites 'us' against 'them' and reinforces 'our' adherence to a common set of values (1984 [1893]). By identifying the rule-breaker as a deviant individual, the behavior is safely contained and disassociated from the group, which becomes more cohesive. Finally, challenges refer to the instances of norm-breaking outlined above: the 'exceptions that prove the rule' and that elucidate the values of a group. These rule-breaking acts and the reactions they evoke will help us to understand who is seen as deviant or conformist, which values are important and how they are sustained. The three themes: social order, structures and

underlying rules; interactive rituals and routines; and challenges to the taken for granted helps us to identify the ways of studying the everyday context. Put together, these help us to see how we can make sense of our everyday lives, and why it is important to do so. Traditional forms of data gathering such as quantitative interview at one point of time may not provide a researcher with insights into the understanding of nuanced experiences of life. Instead a multidimensional methods approach that crosses traditional disciplinary borders by using methods other than conventional ones may help researchers to get the subjugated experience (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006).

What we have learned from the above is that there is no rule in picking methods of data collection. Methods are flexible and fluid. Platt (1996) have argued that the history of American sociological research has shown that there was a shift in use of research methods from 1920s marking a flow of a new direction in the history of research methods (p.1). Sometimes the researchers do not like to come out of their comfort zones of known methods. But crossing boundaries sometimes help in realizing how important it is to reflect on their position within the research process. This is precisely what it means to work between disciplines, sometimes bridging the quantitative and qualitative divide.

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Criminal Tribes & The Raj: An Ideology of Control in Colonial India

Anjan Saha

Abstract: *‘Criminal tribes’, born criminals or ‘Denotified Tribes’ represent a concept etched onto the minds of people at the time of British rule, varnished over with legislation and preserved for considerable period. The arbitrary categorisation was first made by the company raj in 1871 and this dubious status reigns even today, reducing them to one of the most neglected elements of Indian society. In India in the late 19th century there existed several wandering groups akin to gypsies of Europe. There were travelling magicians, traders, cultivators, pastoralists and forest dwellers. Their so called rootlessness caused severe headache for the authorities. Not only did their wandering existence reinforce an economy the East India Company was attempting to replace with settled agricultural production, but these wanderers might well have proved themselves indistinguishable from roving bands of thugs. Their desire to feel in control of this floating population encouraged the production of official stereotypes like criminal tribes. They have taken recourse to theories of criminology and social control prevalent in the western world, to justify the passing of the Criminal Tribes Act 1871, branding for the first time some tribes as a whole, as criminals. Therefore, in a nutshell, in this essay an effort has been made to find out the philosophical justification/rationalisation of this notorious act and its operation.*

Keywords: Criminal tribes, the Raj, East India Company, Nomads, Criminal Acts under colonial rule.

Introduction

Nomadic communities the world over have always been considered to be more criminal than not, and their ‘restlessness’ or constant movement is

considered a troublesome feature by members of sed-entary societies. The relationship between itinerant and sedentary communities has become more problematic in modern times. The more the itinerant communities get marginalised to the main sphere of society because of transformative processes, the more they become suspect from the point of view of the sedentary society they interact with. In real terms, their increasing marginality simply compounds the already existing prejudices against them. In Europe, gypsies became gradually marginalised to the established system with the processes of industrialisation. While mobility and ambulatory practices were treated as a criminal activity in Europe, but in India the phenomena reached its zenith when mobile and nomadic groups like street entertainers, mendicants, traders, prostitutes etc. were treated as 'hereditary criminals' or in the official parlance as 'Criminal Tribes'.

'Problematic' Nomads

The word 'nomad' is derived from Greek *nom des* meaning "those who let pasture herds". In fact in the Western world, the notion of 'wanderlust' and gypsy entertainers who indulged in playing music at village feasts and fairs as well as fortune telling, come closest to the imagery of a nomad. An unsettled, un-disciplined, aimless, vagrant and thrifty lifestyle as well as unpredictable movements characterized mobile communities, which persist till today. Further, the nomads' superior knowledge of the world acquired during extensive travels is seen to endow them with greater mental resources and a potential for greater manipulation of others. A mobile and unregulated lifestyle was also associated with guerrilla warfare and the 'hit and run' tactics of the nomads and vagabonds, along with other such mobile communities. Moreover, the mobile populace was resistant to proselytizing missions and the Christian missionaries couldn't achieve any success especially with the pastoral nomads (Philips 2001: xv). Besides, they could not be taxed and always escaped the scourge of war or any natural calamity like epidemics or drought and famine. Increasingly, street entertainment provided by acrobats, singers, dancers, tight-rope walkers and fortune-tellers were seen to be threat to public order (Radhakrishna 2001: 11) since they attracted large crowds during their performances. The Empire was also apprehensive of the 'regimes of circulation' (Markovits et al. 2003) formed by ambulation where besides material goods, other non-material aspects like ideas, skills and rumors circulated freely (Guha 1999). Already the colonial state was beset with a sense of great fear of a second Mutiny which would have brought the Empire on its knees.

Most importantly, the nomads' lack of property, and supposed, lack of due regard for others' property, is seen to be a threat to the established order (Mayall 1988). Their independence from rigid norms and constraints of sedentary societies is found equally objectionable. In fact, itineracy is seen as a possible escape route for the so-called outcasts and refuse of sedentary societies - if one is an itinerant, it is probably because he or she was not acceptable to the sedentary society. There have been other charges against gypsies, or migrants or nomadic people: they are escaping from the law, or simply fleeing from hard work of any kind. In agriculture-based societies, the men resent their escaping the hard work of ploughing and tilling, and the women that, or the harder labour of housekeeping and child rearing. In short, itineracy is not seen as a chosen way of life, but as an aberration of some sort. In fact, their very marginality to the established system is suspected to stem from a deliberate rejection of that system, and this offends the established members of sedentary societies. It is worth emphasising here that many of the above prejudices are not held so much by the local people, but by the local authorities. In the Indian case, these would mean the British administration, the police establishment, the high caste sections and the village landlords¹. More grievances were added to the standard list of charges against itinerants by the Indian authorities: their lack of predictability of movements implied a potential lack of control; their shifting abodes meant shifting loyalties to different patrons, and so they were seen to be perennially disloyal; the impossibility of taxing them, or raising any kind of revenue out of them, unlike their sedentary counterparts was probably a major irritant to the administration. In addition, for the keepers of social morality, their lack of visible social institutions implied complete disorder in their community life. Their absence of loudly articulated norms of morality implied absolute licentiousness.

At another level, there were more problems. Since they always collected a large interested crowd around themselves - and were quite a large crowd by themselves - their presence made the local authorities nervous. The British administration was increasingly inclined to favour forms of recreation which could be supervised by themselves, and would not precipitate what they called 'disorderly and riotous behaviour' on part of the spectators. It is worth mentioning here that in England, all laws relating to the gypsies were to protect the settled communities from itinerant ones and never the other way around (Mayall 1988: 180). Large-scale harassment of these communities by members of settled communities was a common feature in Europe. It is worth pointing out at this juncture, the ambivalences and contradictions in the attitude of sedentary communities to itinerant

ones. These are symptomatic of the latter's simultaneous usefulness and marginality to the established systems, they have to interact with. They were, infact, romanticised in imagination, especially in English fiction and poetry in the case of the gypsies (ibid: 87). This was for their independent spirit, their dark attractive looks (or bright clothes and jewellery as in the case of the Indian 'banjaras'), their supposed healthy outdoor life. In general, there was a lot of romance and adventure associated with their travels. However, when confronted in reality, there was fear and dread and they were shunned, if not despised. In fact, a number of English ladies in their leisure time in India drew banjara men and women in a romanticised light, while their law-making menfolk made them out to be ferocious criminals. (Banjaras were also declared criminal tribes by the British administration²). So the important point is that the very nature of the relationship between these two different systems, and the gaps in knowledge of each others' real ways of living will lead to myth-making on both sides. Unfortunately, we know little about the myths, that the itinerant people have about sedentary societies. At any rate, as far as sedentary societies are concerned, there is an overarching discomfort, a suspicion regarding itinerants which degenerates into seeing them as established criminals.

Conceptual framework of 'criminals by birth'

In the Indian context, the concept of a 'hereditary criminal-class' remained important and attractive for a long time. This was probably for the reason that, this view allowed deflection of enquiries into the causes of crime, and allowed for stringent, arbitrary measures of control. The important point to emphasise here is that, the investing of some sections with hereditary criminality was different in the case of India and England. In India it was based not on the notion of genetically transmitted crime, but on crime as a profession practised by a 'hereditary criminal caste'. Like a carpenter would pass on his trade to the next generation, hereditary criminal caste members would pass on this profession to their offspring (quoted in Nigam 1990). In England, a hereditary criminal implied one who had inherited criminality through the genes of a parent or an ancestor. In India, then, the concept of hereditary crime never really got linked to biological determinism. This happened not because of genuine advance in the field of genetics, but because the Indian caste system seemed to adequately explain to the British administrator the phenomenon of daunting criminality of at least a section of Indians. Clearly, there was a genuine need in these circles to find an explanation for criminality of such large numbers of people in society. By

calling the trait hereditary, the problem was rendered not amenable to resolution or intervention.

The British realized soon enough that in order to rule India, it was necessary to have knowledge of the native language to issue commands, collect taxes, and maintain law and order besides creating other forms of knowledge about the people they were ruling. In this connection Gauri Visvanathan remarks, 'the state had a vital interest in the production of knowledge about those whom it ruled' as well as 'a role in actively processing and then selectively delivering that knowledge... in the guise of "objective knowledge"' (Visvanathan 1989: 29). For David Arnold, it was the 'travelling gaze' which aided the British in developing an epistemological base of the land and its people. It is worth noting that the colonial concern to know India began with the desire to understand local forms of landholding and agrarian management in the 1770s.

It is worth pointing out here that there was the additional input into notions of criminality by the then developing discipline of Indian anthropology as well. This discipline addressed itself to the study of particular sections of the Indian population, mostly indigenous 'tribal' communities and itinerant groups, and contributed in a very substantial way to the conceptual outline of a criminal in the popular mind. By focusing on bizarre or exotic ritual aspects of the social lives of such communities, and at the same time also on their differential anthropometric measurements, the discipline managed to draw the fine line between a civilised and barbaric individual.

It was Cesare Lombroso, an Italian anthropologist, who sought to discover the causes of crime by examining the characteristics of Italian prisoners, and reached the conclusion that most crime is caused by discernible physical characteristics of an individual (Jenkins n.d.: 129-131).

Lombroso further advocated that since physical characteristics could be determinative of the likelihood to commit crime, preventive measures should be adopted in order to protect society from the crimes of these born criminals. He claimed that the method and amount of punishment should differ according to whether the concerned criminal is a born criminal, an occasional criminal or a criminal by passion. He further claimed that, the born criminals and the 'criminaloids who have become habitual criminals' should be 'set at liberty again only after extraordinary proof of reformation'. Some criminals ought never to be liberated. He was thus one of the first advocates of the controversial indeterminate sentence, which stressed that while no man should be imprisoned unless it is clear that his freedom is dangerous to others, once imprisoned, he should not be freed until the danger has ceased.

In furtherance of his stance, he stated, now, just as men came to recognize a century ago, contrary to the beliefs of the Middle Ages, that insanity did not depend upon free will, we must now recognize that neither does crime itself depend upon it. Crime and insanity are both misfortunes; let us treat them, but defend ourselves from their blows. At one stage, Lombroso even went on to claim that gypsies were born criminals, as they bore the necessary characteristics and their lust to wander and live life through carrying out 'con' jobs was just a reflection of this. This controversial theory was by no means unsupported. There are several fellow theories. For instance, Lamarck believed that traits learned by one generation could be passed on through heredity to the next and American criminologists such as Loring Brace and Henderson applied the theory to such behaviors as criminality, drunkenness and laziness. If parents were involved in these behaviours, then their children would most likely be as well. In fact, this precipitated many countries to attempt sterilisation of those persons believed to be carrying criminal traits. Some theorists even suggested that certain persons are drawn by a congenital impulsiveness to commit crimes. It was these popular theories that the British used to justify the creation of criminal tribes in India. These notions also resulted in the treatment of criminal tribes in much the same way that the insane were treated- through preventive measures like the indeterminate sentence. The supposed higher rates of criminality among these groups were attributed completely to their natural propensity to committing crimes and no alternative explanations were even considered.

It is important to mention that, the Salvation Army also considerably helped public perception of the criminality of groups, with which they worked. In fact over a period of time they were able to define with some authority, for administrations all over the world what constituted criminality, and in different social contexts, even pointed out who these criminals were - paupers in England, tribals or gypsies in India, aborigines in Australia, New Zealand or North America and so on. Salvation Army had been working with released prisoners in India a few years before the Criminal Tribes Act was instituted, and this organisation was taken very seriously by the government - its officials had evolved categories of criminals like incorrigible, habitual, hereditary, ordinary, worst character, would be good, won't be good, badmash, nekmash and so on in what they called 'crimdom', and differential treatment was suggested for varying degrees of Indian criminality in a potential 'curedom'. The treatment had to be punitive, deterrent, preventative or curative (Radhakrishna 2000). In any case, the general point to emphasise here is that the category of a criminal tribe was

not a sudden development - different stands of social and political opinions and considerations had been shaping the general category of an Indian 'criminal' for several decades.

India in the 19th century in India was marked by great political and administrative upheavals. Ranajit Guha has already mentioned that, there were not less than 110 known instances of these protests and sporadic rebellions in a spread of 117 years ranging from Rangpur *dhing* to the Birasaite *ulgulan*. These rebellions, protests, revolts, uprisings, insurrections were staged by tribal communities and rural masses, and were directed against the exploitative agricultural and forest policies of the Empire. Thus, late 19th century was a turbulent and trying period for the British policy makers in India. In the mother country too, increasing crime rate, vagrancy, poverty, unemployment, alcoholism and ailing health of the population was showing an unprecedented leap. The Empire was under threat from all sides. There was great moral pressure from the colonies to put a halt on this socio-economic menace from spreading further and castrate the possibility of any sign of discontent in the near future. It was in these circumstances that the late nineteenth century in India witnessed a unique kind of formation as never seen before. In order to control the mounting threat perception and contain the crisis from escalating further, the Crown embarked on a 'regime of surveillance'. The colonial state was creating and establishing the 'effect' of a 'despot' and subsequently turned the colonial state into a 'panopticon'³. The Revolt of 1857 was a turning point in the career of the British Empire as the baton of rule was handed down to the Queen by the East India Company. It was the beginning of 'direct rule'. C.A. Bayly speaks of a parallel system of information gathering system by the Empire which he calls '*information order*' (Bayly 2006), where the entire state acted as a panopticon and everyone kept a watch on everyone else and passed on the information to the concerned higher authorities. Gautam Chakravarty (2005) is of the opinion that, this interest in surveillance was necessitated by the fact that the "British empire grew by some 4,700,000 square miles between 1874 and 1902; an expansion that stretched national resources but created in the process new, extra systemic, methods of conflict management" (Chakravarty 2005: 157). The first half of the 19th century in India was a whirlpool of political and administrative upheavals including a jungle of legislations, rules and regulations, that had far reaching ramifications both for the Empire as well as for her most prized colony. Some of them like the *Indian Evidence Act*, *Female Infanticide Act*, *Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1862* and *Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of 1861*, *The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871* etc.

aimed at tinkering with the local customs and practices while also codifying criminal laws and identification techniques. Of all the laws and regulations that were injected into the body politic the Criminal Tribes Act (henceforth CTA) of 1871 bore great significance.

Legal Response of the Raj

The CTA redefined the notion of crime, criminals, criminology and tribes and led to a completely new identityformation for certain groups and communities in India. According to the Act, there was a strong belief by the colonial government that, certain groups were “addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences” and that these groups existed since ancient times. This Act was first applied to Northwest Provinces, Oudh and Punjab and later in 1911 a revised version was applied to the whole of India which included the Bombay and Madras Presidencies. The CTA can be seen as a watershed in the popular understanding of criminality, crime and henceforth the so called ‘criminal tribes’. Introducing the Bill of the 1871 Act, T.V. Stephens, a member of the Law and Order Commission said that, “They are destined by the usage of caste to commit crime and their descendents will be offenders against law until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for in the manners of the thugs ... people from time immemorial have been pursuing the caste system defined job positions: weaving, carpentry and such were hereditary jobs. So there must have been hereditary criminals also who pursued their forefathers profession” (D’Souza 1999: 22-26). It should be borne in mind that the CTA of 1871 along with few other ‘modalities of identification/information’ like the Census and Fingerprint technology was born to have an effective political surveillance, colonial subjugation and sedentarization. The ostensible purpose of the 1871 Act had been to suppress ‘hereditary criminal’ sections of the society (Radhakrishna 2001). It also helped the state to separate supposedly ‘delinquent’ from ‘honest’ subjects. In turn, it conferred a specific social identity upon such groups, thereby socially stigmatizing them (Bhukya 2007). Sanjay Nigam has contended that, the category of criminal tribes was a ‘colonial stereotype’ fashioned to justify the punitive ‘disciplining and policing’ of sections of the population, that were unwilling to accept the new moral order that the British sought to impose on rural society. David Arnold has observed that the Criminal Tribes Act was used against ‘wandering groups, nomadic petty traders and pastoralists, gypsy types, hill and forest dwelling tribals’, in short against a wide variety of marginals who did not conform to the colonial pattern of settled agriculture and wage labour. It was supposed

that particular types of crime were associated with particular skills which are specific to these tribal groups (Major 1999).

The CTA provided for:

- Designation of a group as a ‘criminal tribe’;
- Registration of all members of tribes who were deemed criminal tribes;
- Once registered, it was mandatory for all members to report themselves to the police or designated authorities at fixed intervals;
- It was necessary for them to notify the police of their place of residence, intended change of residence or any absence or intended absence from residence;
- The Government was authorised under the Act to restrict any member of a criminal tribe, or a tribe as a whole, to movements in a specified area, reside in that area and leave the area only with permission in the form of a pass even if it was only for a few hours or for a laudable/innocent purpose;
- If any of these rules were contravened, stringent punishments could be imposed. For a minor offence like inadvertently walking out of a settlement one could be whipped. The punishment increased proportionately with the gravity of the offence spanning from imprisonment for one year on a first conviction, to imprisonment for three years and a fine of upto Rs.500/- for more than two convictions (Jenkins n.d.:125-126).

The Act was amended in 1873 on the recommendation of the Police Committee and provided for enhanced punishments. The Government also felt that criminality among these groups was a function of association⁴ and hence provisions were made for the separation of children between the ages of 14 and 18 from their parents and placing them in reformatory settlements. This was in consonance with theories of ‘born criminals’ or ‘bad breeding’ which were popular at the turn of the twentieth century. These claimed that, a person’s inherited make-up could make him/her inherently flawed and this, coupled with parental influences, could lead to

poor outcomes. Therefore, this act of separation was widely supported and did not find much opposition, in spite of the fact that the children were not well schooled or given the chance to develop capabilities. Until 1908, the offenders were usually put in prison. However, this only increased their own poverty and placed their families in great depravation. The Salvation Army had been experimenting with criminal tribes in prisons and managed to convince the British Government that, criminal tribes could be reformed and made to deviate away from their lives of crime by placing them in settlements. Hence, the Criminal Tribes Settlement Act of 1908 was enacted. The crux of this Settlement Act was that, now even persons suspected of living by crime could be brought under its purview. They could be registered and their movements supervised. All those who had been convicted of crime could be placed in settlements, where they were taught to do work and their children were forcibly schooled.

The rationale behind placing them in reformatory settlements was for their 'moral' correction. However, very little of this was ever seen. Those settled were separated from their children and lived in glorified concentration camps, which were effectively centres that generated free labour for government projects and did nothing to contribute to their reformation. The work in the settlements included repairing roads, mending tank bunds, clearing drains, planting and cutting crops and other activities as necessary. The justification was that this process would contribute to economic correction. Moral correction was an objective that was simply dispensed with. Apart from being free manual labour, the basic living conditions in the settlements were appalling. They received miniscule wages for work, lived under draconian rules and regulations and had terrible sanitary conditions, a complete lack of freedom and abject poverty. This was a perfect example of a paternal, patronising government at its best, arrogating to itself the power to notify a community criminal, presuming that it could reform such a notified community and that it knew what to do with the children of that community, abducting them from their parents. The authorities in charge of the settlements also greatly abused their position. Permission to leave the settlement always came at a price. The officials habitually resorted to fraud and bribery and sometimes even instigated these people to commit crimes. If it was alleged that a person in a settlement committed a crime, they would be whipped or abject themselves to more arduous labour. Hence, their view of work was largely as a punishment and thus taking up honest work outside a settlement was still foreign to them. The Salvation Army, which ran a large number of the settlements, forced a number of conversions to Christianity. Following conversion several persons were left disappointed,

as they did not reach the desired goals that Christianity had promised them. But persons who converted to Christianity were given many privileges to serve as an incentive, and this created discrepancies and ill-will between those in the settlements.

Conclusion

It is generally through the process of law, that social stigma is sought to be removed. However, the CTA was an exception to this rule. It serves as an apt example of a piece of legislation that created an adverse label and attached it to persons who henceforth lived stigmatised, marginalised lives, effectively segregated from society as a whole. It is acknowledged that a criminal record attached to any person will serve as a means of marginalisation, but this Act ensured that even persons in a group who had never committed a crime could have their movement significantly restricted, accompanied by a societal sanction of their criminal potential. From the commencement of the CTA, they rose to the status of official guinea pigs—the first to be rounded up by the police for any crime committed in the vicinity. With the presumption of their criminal tendencies being taken virtually for granted, it became impossible for them to prove their innocence. Prior to the commencement of the CTA, these groups were primarily nomadic and their means of livelihood were non-sedentary. With the onset of industrialisation and other forms of development, many of them lost a large part of their traditional occupations. This was especially true for those who were travelling traders and salesmen who could not match the competition of goods being transported by road or rail. Many of them were reduced to abject poverty and turned to crime for survival. Those that followed other occupations such as fortune-telling and performance of magic were already distrusted. Hence, general notions of their criminality were already floating around society and were exacerbated only by the process of development and the CTA, which built notions of their inherent criminality. When India gained independence in 1947, there were close to 128 tribes numbering 3.5 million, amounting to 1% of the total population of India, who were branded as criminal tribes (Major 1999). In 1952, they were given the status of Denotified Tribes or *Vimukta Jatis* by the government of India, but although the legal status was changed but the social status of criminality remains intact and was fossilized with the passage of time.

Notes

1. The local people must find the nomads quite useful for the unusual wares they bring periodically. Their various skills of waving mats or making baskets or playing musical instruments, and more dramatically in the case of acrobats or dancers, make them a colourful and interesting presence, in all probability providing relief and diversion from the monotony of daily routine.
2. Banjaras were a community of grain merchants, who can be traced back, even under the Delhi Sultanat. They were a numerically larger community operating on a much larger scale traversing a larger geographic area. For the same reason, they escaped the criminal tribes act for a longer period being relatively less vulnerable.
3. Originally used by Jeremy Bentham to designate his idea of an ideal prison, the term 'panopticon' was later expanded by Michael Foucault to designate a kind of surveillance so intrusive and penetrating that, there is no differences between public and private.
4. They found justification in several psychological theories, such as those advocated by Locke. Locke considered that a child came into the world as a 'tabula rasa' a blank slate. The child's experiences in the world determined what was written on the slate and shaped the person he became. This view saw the child as essentially passive in the developmental process and the environment as the active agent.

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5

Teaching Culture, Transforming Selves: An Insight into Life-skill Lessons Offered at Government Schools

Arunima Bhowmick

Abstract: *There is naivety in considering that the awareness imparted on a desired lifestyle, health, hygiene and emphasis of its higher cultural value always goes down as planned, without any dissent. There are always contradictions between the idealized training and the socio-cultural context of the students expected to learn and practice the same in their everyday lives. Thus, values circumscribing suitable lifestyle seek validation by undermining an opposite set of values, guided by several socio-cultural and politico-economic considerations. This paper at large will make attempts to surface this majoritarian and universal control over value education that exists even today, standing at the crossroads of neo-liberal economies and liberal democratic political formations. It will also try to flag occasions ripe with possibilities for resistance to a given moral order from the subjective/subaltern experiences.*

Keywords: neo-liberal order, ideology, values, cultural capital, school curricula, extra-curricular activities, conscientization, school-community relation.

Introduction

Schools have always been both repository and preserver of culture. It is an institution that reserves sacred value for culture and thus reproduces it to accommodate other structural demands of the society. Culture builds like an edifice upon categories like class, gender, ethnicity and race, but often transforms into a practice that need not always reflect these categories in its complete distinctiveness. Education system in a multicultural and globalized world is quite illustrative of such overlaps and intersections, inviting negotiations and therefore training that ensures continuity while keeping the promise of change alive. Life-skill and personal grooming have always been on the cards for adding utility quotient to education, whether by

coercion to adopt given ideals of health, hygiene and cleanliness or making distinctions of esteemed lifestyles. At such crossroads, the pupils from the lower class of an urban space are seen lacking the required “cultural capital” to survive a life of dignity in the cities. With such ideological misgivings and political ploy often the state and its educator battalion run the mission of transforming them so that they drop their indigenous cultural moorings and slip into a “cultured” lifestyle that befits the larger imagination of the former’s growth. Thus, the paper attempts to interrogate such an educational regime by reading through all the extra-curricular programs of the Government schools in Kolkata, raising questions on purpose of learning, conscious raising and “conscientization” (Freire 1971) among the adolescent students.

Culture of Education and the Moral Responsibility

Education with the spread of modern school system, establishes close ties with the community. Since located in a socio-cultural milieu, catering to a particular geographical limit, the school functions as anything but an autonomous unit. The school as a formal institution too shares a continuous and reciprocal relation with the community, at times almost behaving like a serving body to a large clientele. Such a market orientation that education adopts in modernity to meet socio-economic interest, accommodating political overtones, surfaces in the form of moral injunctions. These admonitions are not always profoundly instructive, rather are very subtly placed to satisfy the larger promise of maintaining social order. However, the school-community relations that existed in the village life, where the immediate neighborhood and family stood as the guiding force for *patshalas*, have traveled a long distance to become a more organized body, operating with greater discreteness and bureaucratic formality. Public relations have made way into school administration at various levels to meet the needs of a culturally more heterogeneous community in cities. Thus, transcending the particularistic community interest of a clustered geographical identity, schools now seem to grapple with universalizing agendas and fast changing demands of every day. In the process a varied nexus of ties emerges, accommodating and negotiating on several cultural, social and political fronts. Value education and role of moral benefactor undergoes a silent metamorphosis. All key participants in the process of schooling appear to be apprehensive about the identity one carries into and comes out with from this rigorous institutionalizing system. As Jayaram observes: “Both teachers and students generally vary in their background characteristics,

and communities differ in terms of the material/monetary support that they can extend to the school and in their value systems. These diversities in the community's input into school impact it both directly and indirectly, determining the functioning of the school and the outcome of its educational efforts." (Jayaram 2019: 50).

The school-community relation in a city is enmeshed with a plethora of sub- counter-relations, which become evident in different categories of schools. Starting from Government public schools, government-aided schools, private schools, international schools, community schools, and missionary schools to municipality schools, all speak of the socio-economic diversity that education accommodates and replenishes in a plural social milieu of urban scape. The location of the school, management authority, primordial affiliations and gender composition become very vital in determining the influence of the community on schools and vice-versa. The association among the teacher-student-parent is quite segmented and formal, mostly indifferent beyond the fulfilment of immediate academic interests. However, in such situations, as Jayaram says, "the community's interests in school is mediated more by governmental channels rather than by community members per se" (Jayram 2019: 52). I would like to add an observation here, the community that makes inroads into schools holding hands of the government and its policies are no way a complete or organic representation of the former. The community therefore finds a majoritarian, hegemonic and often alienating presence in the school, serving disparate interests and encouraging instilling of values equally discordant at times. The private and public schools behave in contrast on the operational level, though synthetically they may appear in unison as far as imparting community values and bearing the moral responsibility of grooming the adolescent students is concerned. The public schools either seem to tout ideas of community participation and moral grooming under the larger banner of "uniquely Indian values"¹ to echo the need for traditional revivalism, or limit itself to fulfilling the demands and crises faced by the geographically immediate population it serves. Thus, the community here often represents a more preconceived, given and therefore dictating and often a controlling entity, far from being organic and culturally regenerative of the ones being educated. Contrastingly, the private schools accommodate and represent the community in a relatively more relevant fashion, keeping in mind the cultural and social backdrop of the students they pledge to train. Though, the motivation for the private schools remain profit maximization in most cases through display of sensitivity towards community and providing ways for cultural catharsis in the name of value restoration and moral protection.

But whatever may be the structure and administrative scope of the schools be, an overwhelming majoritarian influence persists. As Jayaram says: "... both in government schools and private grant-in-aid schools there is a discernible majoritarian orientation. While this is understandably a function of the demographic composition of the school population, it puts the secular ethos under strain and creates an uneasy feeling among the students and teachers belonging to the minority communities" (Jayaram 2019: 54).

From my research into the schools of the city, I have come to discern that the community-school interlacing invites a relook into the idea of community itself (along with the training it plans keeping pace with the cultural heterogeneity). Communities, as we all know, have moved beyond being a "spatio-temporal" entity to representing and obliging identities based on commonalities of religion, language, caste, race etc.; and often these identities come to exist through imagined commonalities (Anderson 1938) transpiring beyond physical continuity. Thus, the values/morals that emerge out of and sustain such communities are bound to have overlaps, contestations and discontinuities, all of which necessarily make way into the schools and twig their training manuals of all kinds. In fact India has been witness to an evolving culture of education that has strongly drawn upon its communities' social and political appeals as well as predicaments across history.² Such a rich culture of education that has been assimilating into the structures, needs and aspirations of a society from pre- to post-colonial times; necessarily rendered functions to fulfil moral and ideological obligations through varied channels. Thus, moral or value education found fresh orientation and content at several epoch in time keeping in tune with the fast-changing social fabric and corresponding shift in ideals. Several kinds of lessons, from spiritual awakening in ancient religious education, nationalist aspirations in times of nation building, sharpening of etiquettes for western colonizers to lifestyle coaching for industrial and then globalized society have found relevance under the rubric of moral and value education. It should not be missed, thereby, that there were always underlying purposes for such lessons. But these purposes never made overt display of supremacy of one utilitarian goal over the other, rather mechanisms were explored to convert few to satisfy the ideals of another dominant few.

As Pathak says, after Durkheim, "Schools instill a sense of morality into children. But what is morality? Durkheim made two points. First, the function of morality is 'to determine conduct, to fix it, to eliminate the individual arbitrariness' (Durkheim 1961: 27). This means regularity. 'Morality', wrote Durkheim, 'presupposes a certain capacity for behaving similarly under like circumstances, and consequently it implies a certain ability to develop

habits, a certain need for regularity' (Durkheim 1961: 27). Second, morality implies 'the idea of authority'. Moral authority is qualitatively different. One must obey moral command out of respect for it and for this reason only. In a way, according to Durkheim 'morality is a system of commandments' (Durkheim 1961: 31)." Thus, with reference to case studies from my field of research, I pledge to explore the several layers in training programs offered to the adolescent students in the city of Kolkata under the plethora of life skill lessons via extra-mural (beyond classroom) activities at schools. Here I would be highlighting the organized activities in which students of government schools participate, those of who mostly represent a specific socio-economic class. It will help explore the ideas and ideals that come to exist and circumscribe the larger universalizing notions of morality and, thereby, also locate the fissures within that notion, the breakaway points, the negotiations for subjective moral existences and the hegemony of a collective conscience.

Into the Everyday Terrains of Schooling

The state government schools of Kolkata were observing a week long program on the theme "Nirmal vidalayasapthaudyapan". The schools under ward 17 of Kolkata municipality had organized several activities beyond their curriculum to generate awareness about environmental protection and cleanliness. The themes included: renouncing the use of plastic, saving water, Dengue and water-borne disease awareness, open defecation, cleanliness in cooking, use of dustbins, planting of trees and doing of one's household and everyday chores. All these themes in a city-based public school, if you observe very closely, is indicative of the social and cultural practices that circumscribe the lives of the people mostly belonging to the lower socio-economic class. However, we can't really say that the environmental protection or cleanliness and saving of water are issues that only impinge upon the lives of the economically backward but the habits of open defecation, cleanliness of the surrounding and control of water-borne diseases necessarily affect the lives of the poor much more. As they dwell in houses and localities that lack proper sanitation and hygiene facilities and are also seen to be lacking adequate knowledge about the resultant health hazards in an urban space.

Event I - Road Rally

One of the events was a road rally where seven government schools participated. They had all assembled at Northern Park near Jagu Babu Bazar and were to walk down a distance of 3 kilometers up to Paddapukur Road canvassing with posters that they had made on the above-mentioned issues. All necessary arrangements for the march were made by the local councilor. The posters had slogans such as: “slow the flow, save H₂O”, “bajarkoritholihaatey, plastic barjanhobetate” (use bags for shopping, denounce plastic), “tubewell or pump tap, water must be clean for us”, “vidyalayamoderbari, takey mora porishkarkori” (school is our home, thus we keep it clean), “Beware of all types of pollution”. Besides these posters, students also decorated a scooter of a teacher like a tabloid into a forest, narrating the importance of rain forests and trees specifically to arrest environmental damages. Two very interesting poster slogans read: first, “barjonoitobarjoniyo, Jodi rakhisusthaney. Jothasthaneymoilafeli, prithokkorisabdhane” (waste is not wasteful, if kept in right place. If only we dispose of waste rightly, segregating them carefully). Second, “mid-meal erkhawardawarrakhtehobeporishkar” (mid-day meal food needs to be cooked in a clean and hygienic way). These both slogans if read deeply hint at finer understanding of waste and its scientific processing and goes beyond the mere logic of adopting habitual changes in personal grooming for health and cleanliness. The slogans also highlight the government provision for free meals at school and how it should nurture not only quality eating habits, i.e., the diet issues, but also its preparation by cooks who must not compromise on hygiene. Contrasting to the above preceding slogans emphasizing on the scientific and technical conditions for understanding health and hygiene, there were slogans like, “tottonoi, golponoi, chai roger pratikar. Dhangshohok sob jibanu, stabdohokhahakar” (no theories or stories of hope! We need cure of diseases through proper control of viruses and bacteria so that the suffering lot can be saved); “joljomberashirashi, thaktehobejolnikashi” (water logging needs to be addressed with proper drainage system) and “khabar eragey, souchor por, haathdutiporishkarkor” (before eating and after defecation wash your hands). Thus weaving all these slogans together a pattern can be seen in the narrative built: firstly, they are all in active voice, as if the adolescent girls and boys are taking a pledge while carrying these banners and posters, echoing their responsibilities for caring about their own health as much as of becoming responsible residents in an urban space. Secondly, there is also a kind of appeal in the slogans, demanding for privileges to ensure a more healthy and protected life for them. However, on talking to the students

who were carrying those posters, I discovered that most of the slogans were written by the teachers or copied from pamphlets and notices handed down by the *sikhabondhu* (the government appointed conduit between the office of secondary education and the government schools). One of the students, Bijay Dalui, residing in the Peyara Bagan slums of Kolkata, on being asked about his interest and motivation for participation in such rallies and programs, replied that he participates as the teacher asks them to and all his classmates and friends are part of it. He mentioned that it comes like a break from the regular monotonous classes, where mostly he fails to follow everything. The boy studies in class X and his father is an employee at the petrol pump, while mother works as a domestic help. He has two other siblings and resides in a single room house with the kitchen in the common space shared with other residents. They share a common toilet with four other families and every morning he needs to fetch the household water from the nearby public water supply tap to be stored for the day's use. When I mentioned that these programs and rallies asks all to avoid storage of water for long and management of diseases spreading because of unclean and unhygienic conditions in the households and neighborhood. He said, "My mother sweeps the house every day, but if we do not store water then we cannot cook and take bath. As the latrine is common no one bothers to clean it and for bathing we mostly use the common space closer to the public tap, whereas my mother and sister takes bath next to our kitchen using the stored water." Another student, Rohan Mallick, residing next to Landsdowne market area in south Kolkata, offered a similar response for participating in these events. He said that teachers generally tapped him to make the posters and copy the slogans written on the boards. He along with few of his friends carried out the task with much enthusiasm. He is elated to meet other students from different schools during these rallies and feels proud when people on the streets stop to watch them march holding these banners and posters high. On asking him what message he draws from these programs or how he finds them relevant. He says, "I know we should keep our surrounding clean and drink clean water. Therefore, we always carry our drinking water from the tube wells nearby. Since we stay near the vegetable market, at the days end all the rubbish is kept next to our houses and throughout the day people use the space for urinating, at times even the passerby. Last year I was detected with malaria and could not sit for my exams in the month of July. My father who works with the KMC as a sweeper is responsible for collecting waste in the adjacent areas, thus we have to stay in this location." There were other boys too who shared their feeling of enjoyment gained from participating in

such events and road shows. It's like a day out, almost going out for picnic, and are offered food packets too after the end of the event.

A girl from the United Missionary School spoke slightly differently. Chandrima Basak of class XII, resident of Kudghat in south Kolkata, said that her teachers guide them throughout for preparing these posters and writing these slogans. She also reiterated that she has learnt about these health issues from her physical science course at school. She says, "I know that water borne and air borne diseases can harm us. But at our house we have proper water supply and do not store water. We have proper toilets and keep them clean." On being asked what does she learn from these rallies and how she feels participating in them, she added, "I enjoy working together with my friends and walking down the streets while others flock to see us. It makes me feel as if I am doing something important and teaching others about essential ways of good living. I also feel that I should tell people who are unaware of these problems and impart them with these basic understanding of living a healthy life. Cleanliness is something that many people who live in shoddy houses never maintain. Few of my classmates are also very unclean and wear shabby as well as dirty clothes. They carry food that looks bad and we do not like to share our things or food with them." Another girl, Debosmita Das, residing at Sambhunath Pandit Street of Kolkata, says: "I have seen many such posters and slogans on the walls of the hospital next door. Those posters mention the harmful effects of smoking and how one can catch life threatening diseases if unaware. But the house where we live in is full of mosquitos. We use mosquito nets but keeping the surroundings clean always is not possible. My father is a taxi driver and often sleeps in the taxi itself, though we sleep under the net. I go home and tell people that we should adopt healthy practices to avoid falling sick. I stay in a small single room with my three sisters and mother, and use the public toilet whenever there isn't water in the servant's toilet in the outhouse. However, I wash my hands after defecation and before eating and tell others to do the same."

In fact, when I entered the schools after the rally ended, I found government issued hoardings on hazards of smoking and Dengue awareness. Interestingly, the region and the streets that they marched through were flanked by high-rise buildings and posh residential apartments, mostly housing people of the upper middle class and middle-class families. On asking one of the onlookers at the rally about his opinion on such a road show, he replied, "it's nice to see children taking such initiatives and participating in programs that will help them make the city a cleaner place. It will also help them learn how to live a healthy life and become more alert how to reduce

contamination.” One shopkeeper responded, “all this is just a game for these boys and girls, whatever dirt and mess that is there around will remain and diseases will increase because the ones who fall sick are those who are half fed, remaining in margins always. They will never change and continue to spread diseases.”

Event II - Inter-School Quiz Competition

A follow up inter-school quiz competition was organized after the rally at one of the schools to serve two purposes: firstly, advertise the ‘Sukanya’ project for girl child of the West Bengal Government. Secondly, raise consciousness about man’s relation with nature and therefore the importance of conducting oneself in relation to environment in a city scape. The quiz was held at the United Missionaries Girls High School. All teachers and students from other schools had gathered, with participants representing classes IX and X. The Principal of the school Leena George said that such programs are often conducted in her school as they have better infrastructure and space compared to other government schools. She said, “though the Diocese of Kolkata, the founding body of the school aren’t very keen on these programs, they feel obliged to extend support to the government for carrying out such awareness generating and training projects for other students from different schools.”

The quiz was to be held in the hall where all the other girls had gathered and placed themselves on the floor. Teachers had chosen the girls who would compete and were brushing up their biology and geography lessons. The quiz master arrived soon along with the local municipality workers and the councilor. The quiz master began the show with a vote of thanks to the school and all the local municipality workers one by one. Most of the questions were about the programs and policies that the present political party in power had formulated. The questions asked included: In West Bengal how many zillas are there? Which age group of girls are eligible for Kanyashree scholarship? What is RupashreePrakalpa? When was KanyashreePrakalpa launched? Which international prize did Kanyashree project receive? During marriage of girls, which program of West Bengal Government offers a gift of 25000 rupees? Who is the chief minister of West Bengal Government? Who is the Governor of West Bengal? What is the cultural capital of India? What is child marriage? All these questions pronouncedly tried to make the adolescent girls aware of the supportive measures that the government had brought into force to apparently improve their life chances. However, the fact that their position in the society and

limited opportunities for emancipation were being reinstated through several such questions, remained silent. Other questions asked were: when is World Health Day celebrated? Which mosquito causes Malaria? Dengue is caused by which Mosquito? Name two Vector borne diseases? When is International Environment Day celebrated? What is the full form of WHO? To these questions hardly any of the girls could reply. In fact, they asked the meaning of vector borne diseases and World Health Organization and United Nations. The girls had a profound sense of loss and anxiety on their faces when these questions were asked. To add to their sense of alienation came few more questions, like, who wrote Kaka Babu's *firisti*? Whose creation is Professor Shanku? Who wrote *Nonte Fonte*? All these dealt with popular Bengali fiction mostly written for the adolescent girls and boys. Finally, when the councilor saw that the girls participating from all the three schools had hardly scored any points, he intervened and said that he would ask three questions to each team and each question would carry 50 points. He sang verses from three patriotic songs and asked them to identify the chorus. He sang songs like, 'Godimeikheltihajiskihazaronnaddiyaan....' and 'agunerParashmonichowaopraney....' The quiz master was being guided and often interrupted by the councilor every now and then, doctoring the questions being asked and correcting his ways for conducting the entire event.

Event III - Sit and Draw Competition

In the week long program on social awareness, the secondary board of education had also organized a sit-and-draw competition on environmental problems and cleanliness issues. On a visit to one of the schools to observe the same I found that boys from class VII to class X were given a topic to express their ideas through visual representation. The topic was: "let's pledge to make our schools plastic free". The teacher who took me across the school, briefed me on how the students had no regular and formal training in art and whatever they were sketching were either shown to them by their respective teachers or it was mostly spontaneous. He also mentioned that there are no dedicated art class or any trained teacher to groom them. However, to comply with the government orders, the teachers briefed them and would send only a few of the drawings to the secondary school office, as this compliance is linked with funding. Upon my survey through all the art produced by the adolescent boys, I found somewhat a close replication in all. Most of the boys had drawn out their school premises with students cleaning the surrounding with brooms and planting trees.

There were a few drawings that showed the earth on fire and a few representing the weeping trees. All stood very close to the given theme and almost unquestionably adhered to the instructions handed down by the teacher.

When I asked these boys about how they feel about engaging in this representing act, most of them expressed their exuberance in a collective voice. Manoj Mandal, who lives in a home for poor children at MonohorPukur road, tells me that he and all his other friends collectively make these drawings. He added: "We look at each other's drawing and at times make fun and at times get ideas to draw. There is great fun as we do not have any restrictions and we are appreciated for whatever we make. All our drawings are put up on the walls and the best one is awarded." Asked what exactly he was trying to show through his drawing, Manoj Mandal said, that he had drawn all his friends cleaning the school premises, while he sat watching them. SamiranHaldar, another boy from the same orphan home, tells me that he has drawn the school building and himself, sweeping the school. An astounding revelation came from Sandeep Haldar's painting, student of class IX, when he explained to me that he had drawn his mother in the picture sweeping the floor. On further enquiry, I got to know that he stays in the same home for poor and his mother works in that home as a help. When I asked what his father did, other boys replied spontaneously that his father had fled away leaving him and his mother alone. However, the most remarkable drawing was by a boy who came from a family consisting of two younger sisters and his father. He had lost his mother when a child. His father is a sweeper in the community adjacent to the school. His drawing left me quite intrigued not only because it was very different than the other drawings that his contemporaries drew, but also because of the details he tried to capture. It might not be aesthetically or artistically a perfect picture, but it stands out as a signifier of the larger social and cultural fabric. He had drawn a plastic bottle of Bisleri with a young girl trapped in it. Firstly, the female body signified his fair understanding of a sexualized body, as it represented a full-grown woman body. Secondly, the female being trapped in the bottle hinted at his sense of human captivity (the meaning of captivity could be diverse here) and his sense of freedom. On being asked why he drew the picture, he replied: "I have drawn how the girl is trapped in this plastic bottle and would soon die." thus, if I became a little ambitious, possibly, and also saw a tinge of gender discrimination peeping from his eyes. Lastly, the plastic bottle as a trap came across as a great innovation from the young mind.



Source: from the art competition at South Calcutta National School for boys

Findings: Schooled into an ‘imagined’ right

Taking the debate on morality, patterning of human conduct under an authoritative guidance, and lifestyle coaching further, a very throbbing and palpable empirical experience from the field helps add nuanced explanation for its adoption. There is naivety in considering that the awareness imparted on a desired healthy life and emphasis of its higher cultural value shall always go down absolutely as planned, without any dissent. In all the above occasions, there were contradictions in what was being idealized and taught, and the socio-cultural context of the students expected to learn and practice them in their everyday lives. As Jayaram says: “A person can go through the whole process of schooling without really understanding a single idea in the sense of integrating it with his pre-existing experiences. This commonly happens to those whose native experiences and culture are not the same as those of the educated and the dominant classes who construct and impart their curriculum” (Jayaram 2019: 149). Thus, there is a persistence towards

handing down a manual of etiquettes for sanitizing a particular category of students who come from the fringes of the cities, where the hygiene and health standards are hugely compromised, thus feared as possible contaminators in an otherwise clean and artificially decorated city. In these cases, the dominant and popular ideas of being “cultured” are brought into the folds of grooming/lifestyle practices and the ones groomed are made to internalize the legitimacy of the desired lifestyle, even if materially and technically they are difficult to adopt. The universal and hegemonic value system is at times contested silently by the ethical underpinnings in particularistic experiences. But like any moral force, a consensus is built to justify an action in interest of some, compromising the others lower in the order of power (in terms of economy and polity). As Roy says: “Bourgeois democracies of the third world are structurally iniquitous and exploitative. Despite enjoying some degree of autonomy, the state primarily furthers bourgeois interests by encouraging production and consumption and controlling distribution. There is always a tendency to orient social institutions and organizations, ideas and ideologies in this direction. The process of subjugation is followed by a process of stigmatization. Years of dominance gives way to a set of stereotyped ideas about them, through a complex process of othering, distancing and stigmatizing. Once formed, such ideas become part of the ruling class ideology and are then reproduced time and again in their treatment of the subordinate classes, particularly the poor.” (Roy 1993: 2677). Hence the far-reaching ideologies and fragmented ideas about the “subjugated other” makes its way through different medium into the social space, and one of the medium surely happens to be the education system. It is the educational bodies that collaborates with the state and community at large to carry out the herculean task of nurturing and transforming selves to fit into “given” order of things.

The collaborators in performing humanitarianism

The task of percolating the “universal” values/morals across the mass, undermining the infrastructural handicaps, is executed by a very strong systemic structure and its several agencies. When violent, repressive ways of control appear as counterproductive, the systemic measures for indoctrination seem to be more acceptable in “gentling the masses” (Jayaram 2019: 150). In the content design to execution of slogan writing, poster making, quizzing to instructions for a sit-and-draw competition, we find a training being imparted that is necessarily top down. The problems and issues addressed are those that are perceived to be circumscribing the

lives of the adolescent students coming from a specific class location. Thus the “banking system”³ of education enables the pedagogue to see the students and the community they represent as “containers” necessary to be filled up and deposited with the “others” understanding of their situation and paradoxes. All these adolescent minds are coaxed to think of their location and responsibilities in a particular given way from an impressionable age. “The teachers think, and the students are thought about. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher...” (Freire 1971: 73). Thus, a narrative is built about the diseases that they are more susceptible to because of their improper health and hygiene practices with a pronounced prescription about how to address it. In doing so, a subtle consciousness is aroused regarding “the need of them to be ‘integrated’, ‘incorporated’ into the healthy society that they have forsaken” (Freire 1971: 74). They become gradually agents to transpire the consciousness raised in them to their fellow community members about their susceptibility to be defiling bodies. Hence the entire pursuit of these activities being geared towards a humanitarian goal misses out on the humanist functions that education promises to entrust. There seems to be strong absence of a dialogical exchange even in these activities beyond the curriculum, rather the effort remains to make these adolescent girls and boys more “human” as per the understanding of the powerful/oppressing class in an urban scape. Hence transforming them into objects that need to be guided and cared for while leaving them with a sense of permanence of their trying life conditions, lurching for an unachievable change ever after. Thus, interest lies in “changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them” (Freire 1971: 74). However, the education system remains fraught with over-ambitious humanitarian agenda, under the garb of which mechanisms to configure the good society for few goes on. In a similar strain, Roy says: “The dialectical relationship between the dominant and dependent classes in the ‘urban’ is not confined to material deprivation only. It is extended to engulf the ideas and ideologies of the classes which often influence class relations at the social level.” In light of such a relationship, the wards of the dependent (mostly perceived of socio-economic dependence that extends into a cultural-moral one) in the cities are wrapped with humanitarian services, which come across as nothing more than momentary thrills of ideological somersaults.

The Populist leader and welfare goals

We have observed that the community has always been a big stake holder in influencing policies and guiding possibly all discourses on education.

Multivariate motivations when get entrenched into such an organized effort, the outcomes are more than singular and univocal. However, a mediating state never fails to exploit the situation and foster fresh ways to further the community ambition, while espousing the larger political goals. In such attempts, the *National Policy on Education* (1986) recommended empowering of communities for management of schools, whereby the state and its local machineries along with the community would act as partners to provide necessary services. Thus, paving path for community participation of a very deep and complex kind. Anjali Noronha has mentioned about two kinds of community involvement: 1. Spontaneous engagement emerging from community partners and parents in education. 2. Political involvement. She further says, political involvement is extended in the following ways: “(a) playing a watchdog role, supervising and keeping an eye on teachers; (b) controlling the use of resources and their deployment; (c) raising issues for larger educational change; or (d) influencing the curriculum and the way it is implemented” (Noronha 2003: 100). I suggest a more pronounced interchange can be seen between political players and educational advocates, as they take up community needs and try addressing them through several other programs beyond the curriculum. It happens to be quite a flexible space that can be exploited to its hilt to accommodate local, cultural and social uniqueness. The involvement of the local councilor in the activities starting from funding the rally to conducting the quiz to promote the government policies and products for a particular community through “non-voting adolescent” category of citizen speaks volumes about how popular leaders operate. In fact, the rally and sloganeering around his constituency is carried out with an ambition to demonstrate the “welfarist” gestures and in turn construct/reproduce an identity for a class of people in the society. Through manipulation of the situation and inviting action on the part of the ones infested with varied social and environmental hazards, the councilor asserts the idea of struggle. Though he makes these students aware about their responsibilities and perceived actions for their emancipation, the reflection is completely beyond their access. They are turned into a “massified”⁴ lot working to turn around their fate with ideological conditions handed down to them from above. These adolescent minds are made to believe that their conditions are fatal and it is through their effort that situations can be improved and the welfare state is the only means to help them achieve something, but never ensure any total dislocation in their positions. Thus, impinging upon their ideas of liberation and building upon their demands for dependency to survive in stifled life chances. “The leader restricts himself to paternalism and welfare activities, although there may be occasional divergences between him and group of oligarchies whose

interests have been touched, deep differences are rare. This is because welfare programs as instruments of manipulation ultimately serve the end of conquest. They act as an anesthetic, distracting the oppressed from the true causes of their problems and from the concrete solution of these problems.” (Freire 1971: 152). The educational imperatives and the spirit of the adolescent are used to propagate the ideals of living in an urban space under the garb of investment in the young to change the future of their lot. Thus, the false sense of generosity and the culture of care permeated fulfils the demonstrative goals of the powerful, while maintaining the status quo. This is a very ubiquitous practice in government schools, imparting value education oriented towards domesticating younger generations of a particular class, impairing critical thinking, enforce conformity and thus produce “intellectual emasculation” (Jayaram 2019) for easy acceptance of the logic of the system.

Cultural discrimination and possibilities of assertion

From the responses received at the schools, a stark contrast in ideas about the rally and hygiene lessons were noticed between the relatively affluent girls and the boys from slums. It unraveled how the metropolitan city thrives on a popular perception of untidy settlements in poor neighborhood, and conceives of a public space divided into contaminating and non-contaminating zones. Both the girls explicitly mention about their role in conveying the ideas about health and hygiene practices to the others who come from the slums. In the schools, “within the structures of domination they come to function largely as agencies which prepare the invaders of the future” (Freire 1971: 154). These deep-seated ideas about cleanliness and environment protection find fresh vigor with the “middle-classes community” sprawling over cities in “gate-community” apartments. Middle-class promoted and practiced notions of safety, cleanliness, hygiene and environmental protection, and conversations around them have helped them assert their rights and privileges as citizens of a demarcated geographical unit. In doing so, the civil society and often activists who mostly hail from the middle classes, create a public discourse about community interest that lack representation of voices from the poor, dirty and therefore “contaminating” category. AmitaBaviskar in this parlance has discussed how “bourgeoise environmentalism” as an ideology shapes the popular understanding and a culture of reproducing a spatial order in the interest of few. I see a similar spirit of eschewed environmentalism and contingent lifeskills being honed at these schools, possibly to fulfil the larger interest of

a community that is itself segregated in all its drive towards urbanity. Baviskar has delved into it deep and made hints to a process of value reproduction playing along the finer demands of a power nexus. Thus she says, “As a hegemonic ideal, the discourse of ‘public interest’ reaches out to and may be embraced by those it excludes. Yet the project of urban cleansing remains incomplete and its success uncertain” (Baviskar 2011: 393).

Moving beyond the health and hygiene agenda, the questions asked at the quiz about age-old popular fictions and the adolescents’ unacquaintance with most names cast a shadow on their minds, creating a sense of alienation from the cultural life of the “other” and therefore a sense of lacking in their own. The instructions for drawing given at the sit-and-draw competition hints at the assumed passivity of the adolescent boys, impaired of much creative thinking. However, while the stereotyping continues, art seems to come as a game changer on several occasions in my field of observation. Though there isn’t any denying that art helps adolescents learn the culture given out to them and construct “selves” around it, art holds out and nurtures possibilities in aberration. Art offers endless opportunities for imaginative mind, creates new ways of resistance and carves out fresh dimensions in a renewed existence for future. Art is for young people an especially valuable means of promoting the reflexive project of creating self (Giddens 1991). The painting of the girl being trapped in the plastic bottle and the other boy representing his mother sweeping the floor are revelations of a ‘narrative identity’ in making that produces and reproduces the experiences of the world along with injunctions issued throughout the biographical sketch of one’s life history. Thus, opening up closed spaces and lending insights into lived experiences, paradoxes and accommodations, make scope for some true reflection vis-à-vis the unreflective actions meted out under the guidance of prescriptive social sanction. Adolescent’s visual language can mediate their opinions, feelings and ideas. In that light, artifacts, which are the results of encounters between them and their intentions, can be taken as symbols of communication used to deliver messages from one person to another and the society at large. Apart from another person being the viewer, the artist him- herself can also be the one responding to her own work while in performance and even upon completion. A dialogue with the intended self, the desired self and deviant self is promoted through art, which could bring to light the contradictions, coalition and contestations with the celebrated therefore dominant ideas of morality.

Conclusion

The ideology of value-oriented education often raises questions about the ethical positions taken for justifying the values to be imparted. Thus, values imparted seek validation by undermining an opposite set of values, guided by several socio-cultural and politico-economic considerations. So, the question as to whose values will qualify and embody the value-education courses in and beyond curriculum remains a pressing and critical one at any point in history. As Basil Bernstein says: “how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control” (Bernstein 1971: 47). This research into the extra-mural components of education in public schools has tried to delineate the conditions and factors promoting such majoritarian ideologies and thus raising of a concomitant consciousness. But the study has its own set of limitations, and hence opportunities for further exploration. Firstly, it has strictly accounted for the government schools and the orientation they have towards training/ indoctrinating the students. A contrast with the privately-owned schools of the city is not something that has been enumerated in equal length here, as on most accounts such state-sponsored programs were absent in the latter. However, the activities at the above-mentioned schools are encumbered by values of a different kind, which I shall elaborate in my thesis and in other writings. Secondly, the execution of all the training appears quite gender-neutral throughout, but I beg to differ in this regard. It shall later coax the buried scholasticism to bring forth the fissures that exist between genders as far as value training is concerned. The paper at large has made attempts to posit the majoritarian and universal control over value education even today, standing at the crossroads of neo-liberal economies and liberal democratic political formations. It has also flagged occasions that could hold out possibilities for resistance to a given moral order at the individual level, opening up paths for a journey between the “given” moralities and the “arisen”, thus authenticated, morality from the subjective/subaltern experiences.

Notes

1. Some of the unique values that remain etched in the public memory are ones of tolerance, purity, renunciation, seeking knowledge than

power, adherence to duty, loyalty and servitude that draws upon the ancient religious (myths, rituals, texts) tradition of India.

2. Indian education as a formal institution with all its modern qualities was the product of British colonialism. The English % or “modern” % system of education grew on the ruins of ancient indigenous education that had left its imprints in the new system as well. However, this colonial structure of modern Indian education not only survived the struggle for political independence from the same colonizers, but also expanded in leaps and bounds to permeate in newer forms in the post-colonial times. However, national revivalists like Gandhi on one hand with his “NaiTalim” and emancipist like Tagore with his project of “Tapavan” (a school amidst nature) at Sriniketan did try to made adaptive changes in the modern Indian education so that it prioritizes the then necessary values.
3. Paulo Freire introduces the banking concept of education and says that the teacher is the depositor who sees the students as containers to be filled with “motionless”, “static”, “compartmentalized” and “predictable” narratives on topics that are completely alien to the existential experience of the students. “In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing.” (Freire 1971: 72)
4. Massified are culturally or socially homogeneous categories of individuals; characteristic of a society engaged in mass production for mass consumption in a mass market.

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6

Formation and Care of Self: A Foucauldian Analysis

Gargi Goswami

Abstract: *Foucault's major work revolves around formation of self with regard to the relationship between three major forces: power, truth and subjectivity. Each of this has a unique relationship with the other, and the three forces in tandem have a major impact in the formation of the individual being. For Foucault, one must be aware of oneself and one's surroundings, and also must have the freedom to question it. This freedom manifests and perpetuates itself through the ancient practice called care of the self. Foucault often turns to the ancient Greeks in his work and analyses the individual in relation to this power dynamics. Care of the self-constitutes a lifelong work on one's body, mind and soul in order to better relate to people. This paper explores the aspect of care of self along with the constituents.*

Keywords: Self, care, ethos, askesis, *hupomnemata*, subjectivity, discourse, truth, power.

Introduction

Formation of Self encompasses our individual and social behaviour, which is determined not merely by our biological construction but by an interplay of society, politics, economics, religion etc. in framing up the so-called 'self'. Michel Foucault as a historian and philosopher, being associated with the structuralist and post-structuralist movements, brings out a critical engagement (in an historical manner) with the thoughts of traditional philosophers. Foucault through this historical analysis brings out a critical self- knowledge, a knowledge which can show the different ways our self may be constituted and constructed. Most of his ideas about this self-knowledge revolve around the concept of care of self and cultivation of self.

The last two volumes of *History of Sexuality* give us a thorough examination about how the ultimate function of Foucault's historical analysis

provides us with a critical self-knowledge. Rather than a substantive self-knowledge, his type of historical analysis can be seen as providing a critical self-knowledge, a knowledge that can show the different ways our ‘selves’ may be constituted and constructed. As Foucault has said: ‘Among the cultural inventions of mankind there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures, and so on, that cannot exactly be reactivated, but at least constituted, or help to constitute, a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analyzing what’s going on now-and to change it.’ (Michel Foucault: *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, p.236)

Thus, this idea of self-wariness leads not only to a critical self-knowledge but also to action, not by prescribing any particular course, but by pointing out possibilities. Here, too, Foucault’s understanding of history challenges the more traditions of that conception that sees its task as that of discerning the necessary condition of that which it investigated must already be defined and in some sense complete. However, as Foucault as well as the new historians have shown, there is nothing in history that can serve as such a non-contingent object of investigation (everything is open to re-interpretation and therefore is not complete); therefore, rather than seek necessary conditions, Foucault’s histories spell out conditions of possibility.

Foucault identified practices of self-information as what he called, ‘the ethical subject’. Foucault used the notion of the ethical subject to describe our continual processes for emerging in ethical action. According to Foucault, the ethical subject a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral worth. Foucault points out that the technologies of the self are operations available for self-formation which help in cultivation of the self and taking care of it too. Foucault’s major work revolves around formation of self with regard to the relationship between three major and inherently connected forces: power, truth and subjectivity. Each of these has a unique relationship with the other, and the three forces in tandem have immense impact on the formation of the individual being.

For Foucault, this freedom manifested and perpetuates itself through the ancient practice called *Care of the Self*. Foucault often turns to the ancient Greeks in his work, and this concept remains a central theme in his analysis of the individual as subject to various power dynamics. Care of the self, constitutes lifelong work on one’s body, mind, and soul, in order to be

related to other people and live an ethically – driven life. For him formation of self, talks about becoming a self, other than recovering a lost self. Contrary to Freud who assumed a hidden truth for all human behaviour, where we reveal our true self through introspection, Foucault believed that we continually reshape our past creations to conform to our present needs and our formulations of new meanings for present experiences.

Rather than searching for a lost ,foundation self, Foucault directed his energies towards retracing the historical development of present practices for continual self-formation .He identified two historical periods as dominated by the precept, ‘to know one self is to care for oneself’: the Greco-Roman culture of the first and second centuries AD and the ascent of Christian Asceticism of the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Foucault held fourth that through the inversion of this moral precept, the modern conception of the self ,and our interpretation of self -knowledge as moral action ,have resulted.

Both the philosophy of Greek antiquity and the doctrine of Christian Asceticism emphasized self-knowledge as a moral principal, although for the Greeks, the care of the self, preceded self-knowledge, while for the Christian, self –knowledge was of the foremost important. Foucault identified an inversion in the role of self- knowledge between these periods from the Greek concern for the self and living the good life –for which self- knowledge was necessary for their occurrence and reproduction - to the Christian commitment to know oneself for the purpose of renouncing oneself in the care of the soul, and equally importantly, in the reproduction of Christian dogma.

What is ‘care of the self’?

‘Those of antiquity who wished that all people throughout the empire would let their inborn luminous virtue shine forth governing their states well first; wishing to govern their states well, they first established harmony in their households; wishing to established harmony in their households, their first cultivated themselves...’ (‘Confucius, The Great Learning’, p. 11)

According to Michel Foucault, care of the self, first and foremost, constitutes creation and ornamentation of self. It requires a continuous practice of introspection that simultaneously allow for a realistic sense of one’s own surroundings. One could argue that this is the only constant element of the practice known as care of the self; while it is vital

to introduce oneself to new activities, ideas and challenges throughout life, that sense of both internal and external awareness must always remain intact. According to Foucault: 'In the Platonic current of the thought ... the problem for the subject or the individual soul is to turn its gaze upon itself, to recognize itself in what it is and, recognizing itself in what it is, to recall the truths that issue it and that it has been able to contemplate' ('The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom', p. 29).

For many, looking on the inside may be time-consuming, difficult or even painful. When there is so much to take in from the outside, it almost seems counterintuitive to keep us from the inside out. In our technology-based world, there are more than enough distractions to keep us from thinking about ourselves. A quiet moment of reflection fades fast when the phone begins to ring, or perhaps causes us to feel guilty that we aren't focused on something 'more productive'. For Foucault and the ancient Greeks, it was counterproductive not to be on the self, and a keen self-awareness was vital for participation in social and political life. Care of the self, then, became a focal point for individual freedom, positive relationship with others, and, potentially ethical participation in politics.

Ethos: The path to freedom

In order to know ourselves, we must first understand what constitutes caring for ourselves. It is both a mind-set and a practice, constant throughout one's life, in which the individual takes charge of his own identity and sense of self. This self-care occurs at the bodily, mental and spiritual level. When Foucault spoke of spirituality, he in no way referred to deities or religions. Instead, one's 'spirit' or 'soul' refers to an ethical, cosmic sense of self. Care of self, for soul, mind and body, is much more complex than eating healthy and avoiding stress, as Foucault explains: 'It is a matter of acts and pleasures, not of desire. It is a matter of the self through techniques of living, not of repression through prohibition and law' ('Subjectivity and Truth', p. 89).

Rather than identify oneself according to manmade limitations, Foucault suggests that we instead form our own unique individuality by way of our own experience and ethical code. If we look beyond social and judicial constraints and see ourselves in relation to the cosmos, the perspective tends to change. In terms of smallness in the universe and the limits of mortality, the often-observed reality remains that every human on this Earth is equal. We will all die eventually, as will our Earth, and no individual

is exempt from it. Recognizing this limitation and questioning one's socially –formed limitations are the first steps toward building what the Greeks called an *ethos*. One's *ethos*, and its continuous improvement, has essential permanence in one's practice of care for the self. Foucault elaborates on the importance of this mind-set:

For the Greeks, [*ethos*] was the concrete form of freedom; this was the way they problematized their freedom. A man possessed of a splendid *ethos*, who could be admired and put forth as an example, was someone who practiced in a certain way... Extensive work by the self on the self is required for this practice of freedom to take shape in an *ethos* that is good, beautiful, honorable, estimable, memorable and exemplary. ('The Ethics of the concern of the self as a practice of Freedom', p. 29)

In modern terms of, *ethos* translates quite obviously to ethics one's personal philosophy of morals and values. For the Greeks, one's *ethos* was the means by which individuals relate to themselves and others. Similarly, it was a means of opposing and preventing absolute and oppressive power, a major concern for many ancient Greek thinkers. According to Foucault, power exists everywhere, in every human relationship. Foucault's more pessimistic critics fear that power's ubiquity makes it inescapable, and that we are perpetually at odds with oppression physically, mentally and spiritually. In some ways, Foucault would argue that this is absolutely true. The individual, oppressed or not and, and conscious of it or not, always participates in what Foucault calls "power relations". For Foucault, power relations exist when all practicing care of the self allows one to adjust and control power over both oneself and others.

Askesis: The path to ethos

Askesis may be thought of in the manner of the physical manifestation or practice of one's *ethos*. In the ancient school of thought, *askesis* consisted of training for mind, body and soul. Many of their texts, according to Foucault's analysis, suggested a strong general awareness of the power relations that underlie each relationship, as well as fear of enslaving oneself to the unjust desires of oneself or others. In 'Technologies of Self', Foucault speculates: What are the principal features of *askesis*? They include exercises in the subject puts himself in a situation in which he is armed. It is a question of testing the preparation. Is this truth assimilated enough to become ethics so what we can behave as we must when an event present

itself? Truth can be a rather elusive problem. While forever bombarded with individuals and groups professing various discourses as truth, the responsibility remains within individuals to determine their own relationship with these truths. The 'preparation' Foucault mentions has to do with positioning oneself toward analyses of these truth in terms of one's relationship to oneself.

A lifelong cultivation of self, consisted of ethical practices allows one to alter one's relationship with these truths. Foucault proposes activities such as meditation and one self-writing, practices that bring oneself inside oneself, and momentarily outside of one's relationship with the world. He also mentions about practices of self-deprivation, such as fasting, that help individuals teach themselves about their own needs, and discipline themselves from that which is unnecessary or perhaps unjust. Most importantly, however, all of these practices help one to explore one's sense freedom by maintaining the ability to choose where to fit oneself within society.

A noted practice of *askesis* was in the form of the *hupomnemata*, a book commonly used by the Greek for self-writing and as memory aids in which remembering was a tool for examining daily practices, measuring them against expectations, and using one's observations for the betterment of one's actions in the future. The *hupomnemata* was neither a book for memorization nor 'substitution when recollection might fail' ('Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth', p.11) Instead, it was a tool for reading rereading in order to know oneself in the service of caring for oneself and developing proper relations with oneself and others. Quoting Foucault:

It is a matter of constituting ... an equipment of helpful discourses, capable ...of elevating the voice and silencing the passions like a master who with one word hushes the growling of dogs. And for that they must not simply be placed in a sort of memory cabinet but deeply lodged in the soul must make them not merely its own but itself ('Technologies of the Self', p.28).

Similarly, to the Greco-Roman practices for the Care of the Self, Christian Asceticism enforced the moral percept to know oneself through the repetition of accepted discourses and conceptions of truth. The significant difference was Christianity's use of 'true and rational' discourses for practices of self-renunciation and maintaining the authority of the church. Foucault recorded that 'the duty to accept a set of obligations, to hold certain books as permanent truth, to accept authoritarian decision in matters

of truth, not only to believe certain thing but to show that one believes, and to accept institutional authority are all characteristics of Christianity' ('Technologies of the Self', p.29) Uploading this duty required, first and foremost, an individual to know himself. Thus, according to Christian Asceticism, self-knowledge was an opportunity to rid oneself of the part of oneself that was sinful for the purpose of reaching a higher reality, while for the Greeks, self-knowledge was a tool for accessing the present reality.

Christianity is both a salvation religion and a confessional religion. The individual must know what part of himself interferes with access to the next level of reality. He must have the capacity to renounce that part of himself which interferes with his transgressions. In this way, self-knowledge became inseparable from the possibility of salvation. As Foucault observed, 'the acts by which he punishes himself are indistinguishable from the acts by which he reveals himself' ('Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth', p.17)

'Self-renunciation required establishing specific attitudes towards the self as the object of others' awareness. It involved practices produced through relations with others in which the individual was obligated to put others before himself, bear public or private witness against himself, and reject himself for the purpose of 'replacing himself with a self, closer to the ideal worthy of salvation. By putting others before himself, the emphasis was placed on seeking appropriate relations with others rather than with himself; by bearing public or private witness against himself, he placed himself in the position of being judge; and, by having the capacity to reject himself, he always had the capacity to begin anew. To continually maintain these self-relations required becoming self-aware as if one was the object of others judgement, thereby maintaining a constant vigilance over oneself, protecting oneself from sinful thoughts and behaviour while simultaneously oneself as the object to renounce.

The practice of formulating through the attitudes attributed to others is evidenced in the Christian practice of self-writing used as a 'safeguard against sinning', in which recording one's thoughts and actions was done for an imagined audience whose suggested presence could induce shame for any impure thoughts, thereby controlling any sinful impulses that might arise from them.

Foucault claimed the Christian moral precept to know thyself dominates our moral actions today, observing '...our morality, of asceticism, insists

that the self that the is that which one can reject.’ (‘The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom’, p. 19) He believed we inherited Christian moral principles along with a social morality that seeks the rules for acceptable behaviour with others.

We also see similarities with the Greek emphasis on the care of the self, especially since the eighteenth century and the human sciences, the social principles they inspire, and the pedagogical institutions that ensure the repetition of their knowledge in daily practices. The human sciences have also altered the legacy of Christian Asceticism such that we no longer commit ourselves to the practice of knowing ourselves for the purpose of self-renunciation; rather, as Foucault observed, the purpose today is ‘to use [scientific discursive practices] without renunciation of the self but no constitute positively, a new self’. (‘The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom’, p. 20) This takes the form of repetition of acts associated with the ethical subject while avoiding that parts of self which interfere with moral action.

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In modern terms, ethos translates quite obviously to ethics, one’s personal philosophy of morals and values. For the Greeks, one’s ethos was the means by which individuals relate to themselves and other. Similarly, it was a means of opposing and preventing absolute and oppressive power, a major concern for many ancient Greek thinkers. According to Foucault, power exists everywhere, in every human relationship. Foucault’s more pessimistic critics fear that power’s ubiquity makes it inescapable, and some ways, Foucault would argue that this is absolutely true. The individual, oppressed or not, and conscious of it or not, always participates in what Foucault calls ‘power relations’. For Foucault would argue that this is absolutely true. The individual, oppressed or not, and conscious of it or not, always participates in what Foucault calls ‘power relations. For Foucault, power relations exist when all parties involved have certain degrees of both individual freedom and power over the others. When an individual loses his freedom in this power relation, then Foucault calls this

a 'state of domination'. In this light, practicing care of the self allows one to adjust and control power over both oneself and others.

What is subjectivity?

Where, then, may freedom play into this constant flux of power relations? Foucault sees care of the self as being an essential component of individual freedom. Once again, self-awareness and consciousness of one's surroundings plays a key role. In order to maintain freedom from states of domination, whether internal or external, an individual must first explore how he fits into these power relations and how he may change that relationship. Foucault clarifies this concept in his essay 'The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom':

...The risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one's desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city ... if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death –that you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over other (p. 31)

When one gains enough power over another so as to invade his sense of self and identity, Foucault calls this condition of subjectivity. In this study of subjectivity, Foucault is not interested in how one individual exerts power over another, but how societal institutions when the power over individuals. An individual becomes subject to these institutions when the institution dominates some aspect of the individual's identity.

Discourses of truth

Throughout history, humanity has developed many schools of thought in an attempt to understand individuals and how they function within their societies. Each of the sciences as we know them today has bred its own languages (or discourses of truth that explore the problems of our discovering truth. We engage in discourses of truth that explore the problems of our relationships to the earth, other people, and ourselves. The study of

physics, for example, grounds us in acceptance of natural physical laws that dictate how objects relate to the space around them. Biology helps us to understand our own bodies, as well as the bodies of the other living beings with whom we share this earth, And so on. Each of these disciplines has its own method and terminology for discovering truth about the laws of the physical world. These ‘hard sciences’, however, leave many questions unanswered, and often trigger other, more problematic questions about our own existence. The discourses and empirical methods used by these scientists have not developed means for finding concrete laws of human nature or individuality. While the mysteries of the material world have well-defined methods for being solved, many of them ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of human life remain rather obscure. There exists no science discerning the laws of power, freedom, or differences in individuality – only theories. Philosophy and religion attempt to tackle those questions for differences in individuality – only theories. Philosophy and religion attempt to tackle those questions for which we have no means answer empirically. Yet, after thousands upon thousands of years of philosophical and religious research, thousands of books pamphlets, letters, and lectures, thousands of lives lost, we are no closer to definitive answers than we were thousands of years ago. In many ways, these theologians and theorists, in expressing their doctrines as truths, may have problematized these issues even more.

More recently, social sciences have taken the place of philosophy and religion in attempting to explore truths about human societies. Psychologists look to bridge the complicated gap between biology and behaviour, economists study fluctuations in an ever-globalizing market, and political scientist examine dynamics of government. all with the hopes of improving upon our knowledge of this complex, multifarious phenomenon known as humanity. In a postmodernist perspective on how we gain and use knowledge. While Foucault rejects ‘postmodernist’ and other labels, I find that there is a harmony of postmodernism with our present discourse: Postmodernism as epistemology argues that social science cannot serve as a ‘mirror of society’. Knowledge arises out of embodiment in society; it always has and always will. Social science and society bear a co-dependent and necessary symbiotic relationship to each other. This is not to say that the social sciences are entirely wrong about us, or that psychologists and economists should begin filling out unemployment forms. Rather, it is to say that social and self-understanding should always be fluid, evolving, and subject to change at any given moment. Consider again Foucault’s earlier discussion of critique and its necessity for discerning truth. As different elements of the world change, both in nature and society,

so do the questions and answers that social scientist study. Where one school of thought claims to have the universal answer to any given problem, it would make sense for another question the limits that solution and explore its possible alternatives.

This epistemological problem was of major interest to Foucault interest to Foucault. He used various discourses to analyze and critique the ontological problem of the present. For him, the answers do not lie within knowing the singularities of these disciplines, but rather to understand how these disciplines function in bridging the gap between the individual and the world. He opposed applying the discourse of social sciences to social. Political and economic issues, and instead initiated his own discourse on power, truth and individual in conversation with these issues. In doing so, he practiced critique as a means of maintaining freedom from domination by those institutions that claim to know the truth about individuals.

When certain concepts or rules take effect on the general population, it is often the institution using its own discourse of truth to set standards and boundaries for individuals. By doing so, these institutions tend to exclude those that do not fit into their sense of what is 'normal' or expected, a group of people Foucault would call 'the other'. The judicial system, for example, enacts laws that distinguish law-abiding citizens from criminals. Psychologists diagnose clients with various mental disorders, thereby distinguishing the sane from the insane. Each of these labels, while useful to institutions, have powerful and sometimes tragic effects on individual identity.

I believe his theories provide a timeless critical framework with which to analyze and critique how individuals relate to themselves and the society in which they live, specifically in the less frequently discussed contexts of power and truth. While I realize that these concepts may not fit consistently with all individuals and all societies. If we are to sum up our discussion, then, what Foucault provides in the last two volume of his *History of Sexuality* is response to the present and our self- understanding by offering a perspective from which to view them, thereby suggesting the possibility of moving beyond them.

The use of pleasure described a possibility of one's relation to oneself characterized by triad of freedom –self-mastery-truth that contracts with the present triad freedom-autonomy-truth; Thus while the present is familiar with the idea of the self freely related to its own truth, it is not through the mode of self-mastery but through the mode of an autonomous relation

to the universal. The point of contrasting the two is to reveal the possibility of creativity implicit in the mode of self-mastery; creativity, that is, vis-a-vis the code and rules regulating conduct, and thus of introducing this possibility of creativity in to the open. If one is to practice a freely creative relation to one's self as truth, then one should also take care to account for the fragility of that self and its truth.

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7

A Development of an Experiential Self

Maitreyee Datta

Abstract:*Is there a self over and above experiencing? When we try to express our experience through words, there appears a subject and its object. Can our experience be articulated without this subject-object structure? Anyhow, experiencing and talking about experience are not same. As students of philosophy, we do the latter, but as human beings we do the former. We live through our experience. Experiencing provides an opportunity to relate to others. This experiencing gradually helps to develop a notion of self which involves others.*

One way of talking about self is to talk about the subject of our experience. But there is another way to narrate self which is feeling the experienced self which emerges with our experience and a dynamic one. In different domains of human knowledge, thinkers talk about 'self', e.g. literature, philosophy, social science etc. But all these talks do not have the same orientation and goal. Here I would like to talk about a self, which develops with time and experience. This experience rooted self is not contaminated by any theorization. I would like to talk about the development of a pre-theoretical self which is not notional but experiential.

Keywords: experiencing, self, pre-theoretical, time, others, dynamic

In this paper, my aim is to probe into some of my experiences and make an effort to find out what role these experiences play in determining my-self. In philosophical literature there are different theories of self. Many of these theories claim that there is a substantive self over and above fleeting experiences as a unifying principle. According to such theories, self is taken to be a subject of experiences. But there are other views in which it is said that such a notion of self only takes into account the cognitive aspect which is admitted to be the function of self. But does self only function as a cognitive agent? In analytic tradition, mostly, self is taken to be a cognitive or moral agent, which helps to determine it as subject of cognition or action.

But there are other ways to understand *self*. Here I would propose to talk about some of those other ways which present an engaged self and not a detached one before us.

A self is identified by continuous *becoming*. After my birth I become a 'daughter'. This is a relation I acquire with my parents from the time of my birth. So, I say that I am a daughter. When I say 'I am a daughter', it does not merely refer to a relation, but also indicates who am I. So, this relation of 'being daughter' in a way constitutes my-self. Daughterhood consists of certain experiences which uniquely determine my-self. But it is not a fixed, time-bound set of experiences. It is open ended and developing.

As a child I used to have high fevers and often had it during my annual exams at school. During those days my mother used to read aloud from text books and I used to listen to those and prepare my study accordingly. That experience of learning from my mother in the above way constitutes my unique self of being a *daughter*. In other words, those particular experiences constitute me as a daughter who is different from all other daughters of the world. Again, from my childhood I used to share everything with my mother and she reciprocates. This has helped to develop a bond between us which is still continuing and developing my-self.

During my school days I often had conversations with my father regarding various topics, specially about our heritage, our freedom struggle, our epics and culture, our philosophy. All those conversations were those experiences which constitute me as a daughter having regards for my country's culture and heritage. I started loving my country and adoring it. These childhood experiences by constituting a unique *daughterhood* determine *my-self* as an ever developing one. My father always listened to my responses very intently and gave due importance to those. Those attentions make me a confident speaker which I think contribute to my being.

After my marriage I become a wife. From then on 'I am a wife.' My *wifehood* being constituted by my relationship with my husband evolves with time. From the beginning my husband takes special care to make me aware of my identity as a researcher. So, my being of wife is very closely connected to my being a researcher of philosophy. I put my effort to be a researcher of philosophy along with a wife. Our relationship as a couple has been shaped by many factors, but among those the most prominent one is our doing research together. This *wifehood* is a unique one which also is shaping and evolving with time.

Now by being a mother I am also developing day by day. I am writing this paper in order to share my thoughts with you. My nine years old daughter share her time with time of my professional work. Being a mother, I always appreciate such considerations from her part which gives me immense strength from within. Me as a mother is the most fulfilling experience for me and I am developing with it.

All these above determinations, such as 'being daughter', 'being wife' and 'being mother' constitute my-*self* and this *self* is a continuous process of development spreads out in time.

We find the corroboration of the above position in the following lines of Jesus Adrian Escudero in which he mentions Heidegger's understanding of self, in his article, 'Heidegger and Selfhood'¹ as thus: 'Being and Time demands that the reader undergo for him- or herself his or her own journey of self-discovery...'.

According to Escudero this is very clear in Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures that if someone would like to determine the *self*, one should start looking to our worldly experiences instead of searching inside our consciousness for some kind of abstract I.² For Heidegger our experiential life is world related. In other words, my self is an experiential self and it is not a private subject detached from my interaction with the world. On the other hand, it develops with the interaction with the world and so it is not merely a cognitive subject but very much situated in my interaction with the world. A person's life cannot be understood through the framework of subject object dichotomy. Thus, it is not a life of a isolated subject who is detached and dissociated from the world. But life of a self is immersed in the world with which the self- interacts continuously.

Heidegger holds and Escudero states '...experience myself immediately in what I do and in what I accomplish, in my concerns and in my relations with others...' ³

Self is neither constituted by cognitive relations directed towards the past, nor by actions fulfilled in the present. It is integrated in the network of practical and productive relationships projected towards the future. For Heidegger self is always open and developing towards the future.

In the above narration I also liked to state that My-self is developing with experiences which have a temporal direction towards future. Temporal passage lays the structure which contains our experiences in such manner which is taken to be the experiential self.

In Heideggerian view we come across such an open-ended self which continuously develops with experience. For Heidegger self (being) is in the world. Heidegger uses the term *Dasain* to refer to *being –in-the-world*. He says 'I experience myself immediately in what I do and in what I accomplish, in my concerns and in my relations with others...' he says further '...*Dasein* itself is also discovered in its immediate caring involvement with the things and people that surrounds it...' ⁴

The open-ended nature of *Dasain* is understood from the following lines of Heidegger. '...*Dasein* is always already beyond itself, not as a way of behaving toward beings which it is *not*, but as being toward the potentiality-for-being which it itself is.' ⁵ Here we come across *Dasain* as *being-in-the-world* which is open to future. Here we come across the *self* which develops with dimension of time. This *temporality* of *self* is an important aspect which I would like to stress in my experiential account also.

This open-ended nature of *self* is also found in the classical Indian tradition. The etymological meaning of *âtma* (the term standing for self) is *atyeti, vyâpnoti*- means to overflow and to spread.

Thus, in classical Indian tradition also *self* is not taken to be a static, private entity which can be known only in abstraction. It is related to the world and others and it goes beyond its boundary and engulfs other within itself. In some of the philosophical schools of classical India, philosophers have made a distinction between empirical self which is related to our experiences and a detached self which is beyond any experience. But for us the empirical self is only amenable as the other one is posited beyond any conceptual structure.

The experiential self which I have tried to depict through my personal experiences is an evolving one. In this paper, I have tried to show that continental philosopher Heidegger as well as in classical Indian tradition *self* has been determined as an evolving one which develops with our experience and open ended. This open-ended nature of self is different from the notion of self which is confined to the present also.

Those who seek to provide *present* a special status over and above *past* and *future* are eager to confine self within the boundary of *present*. This is a dogma of modernity which has been critiqued by Heidegger. He provides much importance on *future* and thereby seeks to locate the *self* in *future*. Thus, in Heideggerian view we not only come across a novel interpretation of *self* but also find a new understanding of *temporality*. All through his writing Heidegger shows the intimate connection between *Dasein*, i.e.

‘being-in-the-world’ and *temporality*. *Dasein* always exists in advance of itself. Its involvements with the world can only be understood in terms of its directedness towards the future. It is grounded in past and directed towards the future. So, for Heidegger, *Dasein* is stretched in temporality and not confined within a fixed locus of present.

Notes

1. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, Vol. 4 No. 2; February 2014, p. 6.
2. Jesús Adrián Escudero, Heidegger on Selfhood, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, Vol. 4 No. 2; February 2014, p.11.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Heidegger, S. pp. 191-192/BT, p. 185. Further, see Ernst Tugendhat, *Selbstbewusstsein und Selbstbestimmung*(Frankfurt, 1979), p. 177, and Georg W. Bertram, “Die Einheit des SelbstnachHeidegger,”*DeutscheZeitschriftfür, Philosophie* 61 (2013), pp. 203-204.

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8

**Livelihood Challenges and Survival Strategies of the
Hill-Kharia and Mankadia Tribes in Mayurbhanj
District of Odisha**

Minaketan Behera and Kumuda Chandra Panigrahi

Abstract: *This paper is based on a study on the survival and livelihood challenges of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes (PVTGs) and the impact of welfare schemes in their life in Jashipur and Karanjia blocks of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The paper reveals that education beyond primary level among these PVTGs is almost absent and their health status is poor, which together, make them vulnerable. These two tribal groups lack basic infrastructural facilities such as schools, hospitals, roads, banks, electricity, proper drinking water, communication and transportation. Majority of them are in primitive stage of life, without having a proper house and largely depend upon on forest produce and manual labour for their survival. They spend very less on education and health. Besides, alcohol addiction is the main reason for their poor health and economic condition. The tribal welfare programmers could not achieve the desired results in the life of the Hill-Kharia and Mankadia and many of them are at the bottom of the human development index.*

Keywords: PVTGs, socio-economic conditions, literacy, health, nutrition, micro credit.

Introduction

Tribals are the aboriginal inhabitants of India. Tribals are identified as different names. Scholar like Hutton (1933) had used the term 'aboriginal' to denote the term tribe. John Henry Hutton, Emile Durkheim and Taylor had referred the term 'primitive tribe' while Thakkar Bapa, a tribal leader who had called them 'Adi Praja'. Verrier Elwin and Virginius Xaxa denotes them as indigenous people. G. S. Ghurye, an eminent sociologist uses the

term 'backward Hindus' for tribal population in India. Various international forum such UN, depicts tribe as indigenous (Bruman 1980). The constitution of India refers tribe as 'scheduled tribe' but no definition of 'scheduled tribe' has been mentioned in the constitution. Further, tribal people are also denoted to other names, such as Vana Jati (forest caste), Adivasi, Vanavasi, Janajati or AnusuchitaJati. The tribal population of the country is 10.43 crore, constituting 8.6 per cent of the total population and traditionally concentrated in about 15 per cent of the country's geographical area (Census 2011). Odisha is one of the tribal heartlands in India. As per the census report 2001, Scheduled Tribe constitutes 22.1 percent of the total population of the state and 9.7 per cent of the total tribal population of India. Odisha ranked 3rd and 11th among the state and union territories in terms of tribal population of state, respectively (Census 2011). Highest numbers of scheduled tribe live in the state, that is 62. Tribals are one of the most marginalized social groups lives in the state acute deprivation, backwardness. In present time too, many tribes are in primitive stage of their development. Most of them lives nomadic life in the midst of forest and mountain and collect their livelihood from the forest. Tribal communities suffer major challenges in their survival and earn their livelihood (Vidyuta and Upadhyaya 2017). A sizeable numbers tribes purse hunting and gathering as their occupation, few of them are in agriculture which is in rudimentary stage. Indian state has many legal measures and welfare programmes for socio-economic development of tribal communities. In spite of so much legal intervention, and welfare measures for tribal welfare, it has not equally benefitted to all tribal communities in the country. There are certain tribal communities who could not availed the welfare benefits and left behind to the condition of vulnerability. Indian state has attempted to provide special focus for the welfare of tribal communities who are who could not have availed the development benefits as other tribal communities did and still live primitive live and victims of deprivation, backwardness and vulnerable to many problems (S. B. and Thakur 2018). On the basis of degree of vulnerability, certain tribes are identified and characterized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) who were earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups. Out of 705 tribes, 75 are identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) who live in 18 states and 1 union territory of India (Census 2011). Out of 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, Odisha has highest numbers of PVTGs, that is 15. The PVTGs population in Odisha constituted in 541 villages and distributed in 69 village panchayat under 20-part block in 20 districts of Odisha (Pattnaik 2017) According to the 2001 census, the PVTGs population is approximately

27,68,322 which is 2.6 per cent of total Scheduled Tribe population in India (Report of High Level Committee, 2014). With aiming a special focus for the development PVTGs, government of India have come up with numerous tribal welfare programmes, policy measures and developmental schemes and spending crores of rupees. In various Five-Year Plans, number of Micro projects have been launched by the Government to ameliorate the living conditions of PVTGs and bring them in the main stream of development. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). In the State of Odisha alone, 17 micro projects have been set up exclusively for 13 PVTGs, both in the demarcated Tribal Sub Plan and Non-Tribal Sub Plan areas with 100 per cent assistance from Government of India. Even after Six decades of planning, they are considered as the most vulnerable section of our society from the ecological, economic, social, political and educational point of view and are facing the problems of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, poor literacy, poor health facility and deprivation from natural resources. They have remained excluded from the fruits of Development. Despite the government's continued efforts for the development of PVTGs from the 5th Five Year Plan, no state government had proposed the deletion of any group from the list. Many studies have undertaken to understand the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in India. These studies argue that Human Development Index of PVTGs reveals that overall status of PVTGs are worse than the Scheduled Tribes and other communities (S.B and Thakur 2018). The vulnerability of PVTGs are due to sudden change of economic system, restriction of forest entry had made them to loss their livelihood, establishment of industrial projects has cause them to lose their land and association with outsiders has increased their exploitation. PVTGs in Odisha suffers negative population growth, low literary, high dropouts, loss of traditional rights over forest and loss of livelihoods, degrading health status, bondage labor and exploitation from outsiders etc. (Pattnaik 2017). However, studies on PVTGs are very few. Odisha constitutes highest numbers of PVTGs, however less has been explored to understand their socio-economic conditions and challenges they face towards development. In this backdrop, the present study has empirically attempted comprehend the development of PVTGs with respect to socioeconomic indicators and livelihood issues of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Odisha with a specific focus to the Hill-Kharia and Mankadia Tribe of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. Along with major problems and challenges which affect their livelihood, the paper evaluated and examined the impacts of various welfare schemes towards the obliteration of vulnerability among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes.

Materials and methods

The present study has been conducted on Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe in Jashipur and Karanjia blocks of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Both primary and secondary sources data have been used for this study. The primary data has been generated through field work conducted by using survey method with structured and semi-structured interview schedule. Simultaneously, group discussion and informal interview methods have been used. Observation has been conducted through semi-participant methods. The study conducted in villages which comes under the Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HKMDA). Out of 12 Revenue villages under the Micro Project, 7 revenue villages were covered under the study, namely Durdura, Kendumundi, Khejuri, Podagarh, Palguda, Matiagarh and Astakuanr. A total of 240 populations has been surveyed from 77 households. Out of 240, 121 (50.42%) are male and 119 (49.58%) are female. The secondary sources of data used in the study from Census of India, Annual Reports of Ministry of Tribal Welfare; Government of India, Economic survey of Odisha; Government of Odisha, Selected Educational Statistics, reports of Planning commission, reports of Ministry of social justice and empowerment; Government of India. In addition to the documents, various books and journals are referred and used. The variables used in this paper are literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates, gender wise literacy etc. Different data presented in tabular form, which shows in percentage. An index has been calculated to show the gender parity among the tribal.

Hill-Kharia and Mankadia Tribe: Location and origin

Hill-Kharia and Mankadia are the primitive tribes largely constituted in Similipal hill and plain and fringe regions in Jashipur and Karanjia blocks of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. Few of them also lives in Morada block of Mayurbhanj district and Sundargarh and Sambalpur district, respectively. Hill-Kharia speaks 'Kharia-Tar' language which belong to Indo-Aryan language family while Mankadias speaks 'Munda' language. They do conversation in Odia language with outsider. Hill-Kharia tribe is known by some other names that are Pahari Kharia, sabar, Kheria, Erenga, Pahar etc. Hill-Kharia tribe identify themselves as sabar but outsider calls them Hill-Kharia/ Pahari Kharia. They consider themselves as the descendant of VishwabasuSabar who was the first worshiper of Lord Jagannath and proudly identify themselves as Sabar. The Mankadias are characterized by typical physical features including short stature, dark complexion with long head, thick lips, wavy hair, broad flat nose etc. They are called Mandakia

because they trap and relish monkey meat. Chotanagapur plateau is the place of origin of Mankadias. It is believed that ancestors of Hill-Kharia tribes were living in Patna but they were attacked by an Ahir Chief, as a result moved to Chotanagpur and other places. Now Hill-Kharia and Mankadias lives in different parts in India. Hill-Kaharia and Mankadias are semi-nomadic tribe, live in the midst of the forest and considered as hunting and food gathering tribal communities but some of them are in the rudimentary stage of agriculture and primitive cultivation (Tudu 2017:60). In the present time, they live with other communities, agricultural tribe and castes Hindus in the same village. Hill-Kharia tribes have been identified as one of particularly vulnerable tribe due to their marginality, deprivation and backwardness.

Settlement pattern

Hill-Kharia and Mankadias live in the midst forest. Their houses are situated contagious to water resources which are made of mud, wood with thatched roof made of mud clay having no window in the house and walls are plastered with mud. Their houses are constructed in rectangular shape comprises only one room which they use as kitchen, bad room, storeroom etc. The villages of Hill-Kharia and Mankadias comprises 10 to 30 families but there are villages which has less than even 10 families (Tudu 2017:10). The Hill-Kharia and Mankadia villages located in the midst of forest are generally homogeneous only Hill-Kharias and Mankadias lives in those villages. However, Hill-Kharia and Mankadias villages which situated in plain region, is heterogeneous in nature because other communities also live in those villages but their houses are situated separately from other communities. The Mankadia are nomadia tribe who move from place to place in different seasons but in rainy season they could not move and built a hut for temporary settlement called Tanda. In a tanda, besides a Kumbha (meant for individual families), there are two other huts called Dhugala and Kudi Ada. Dughala is meant for unmarried boys and Kudi Ada for unmarried girls. Kumbha is a hut made of twigs and leaves of Sal trees, where the Mankirdias live. It is dome shaped. The height of the Kumbhas is found to be 5 feet. It covers a circular area. They enter in to the hut by creeping. A portion inside it is used as kitchen and store.

Food and clothing

Rice is the staple food of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe. They prefer to eat boiled water rice with cooked vegetables. Other supplementary foods

they consume are mandia, maize, green leaves of various plant, flowers, mushrooms, arrowroots, various types of fruits, nuts, flowers etc. Beside this, they consume meat and fish. Eating dry fish (Sukua) with boiled rice is common practices among them. The types of food they consume varies seasonally due to its availability. During rainy days, they suffer rice scarcity. Therefore, they consume maize, edible roots and tubers in rainy days. Drinking alcohol is a common practice among tribal (Ho and Mishra 2017) and the case is similar among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia. Alcohol is one essential item among them and they prepare it by themselves only. Consumption of alcohol is mostly preferred in ceremony and festivals but they drink it in other days according to their choice. Hill-Kharias and Mankadias tribes were water from river, stream and pond for drinking, cooking and bathing. However, these days they use tube well and well water for drinking and cooking and river, stream and pond water for other purpose. In every house they have a garden where they grow vegetables for their own consumption. Among Hill-Kharias and Mankadias, male wear short size short dhoti/lungi and women wear short cotton sari without blouse and their sari fall up to their knee. Wearing of blouse and undergarment was not common for women in the past, now women prefer to wear these garments. Their women wear ornaments are namely, brass necklace, armlet, earring, finger ring, and iron hair pin, ear ring, glass and metal bangles and ribbon for adorning their hair. With influence of outside communities, youths of their communities are wearing vest, shirt, pent, jeans, t-shirt and shoes. Male also wear ornaments such as neck-laces made of beads. Making tattoo is one the common practices among them and it is seen that mostly women are found to have tattoo on their forehead, eye corner, both hand and legs.

Social setup and practices

Family occupies central position amongst Hill-Kharia and Makadias and nuclear form of family is dominant among them. Family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal in nature where father is the head and takes final decisions in all matter. However, female also enjoy equal right with male in many aspects. The next major social unit is clan. The Hill-Kharias and Mankadias are classified into different clans. Marriage is another significant institution among them and monogamous forms of marriage is largely prevailed in their society. However, it is observed that polygamy also prevalent among them. They practice endogamy, marriage outside their tribe is strictly prohibited and punishable offence.

Bride pride is commonly prevalent among both tribes. They also prefer cross-cousin marriage. Marriage of Girl and boys takes place between the age 14 to 16 and 18 to 20 or 25, respectively. It is important to note that, child marriage is not preferred among Hill-Kharias and Mankadias. There is space for surrogate and widow remarriage among them but it is not common rather allowed in specific circumstance. Divorce is permitted on ground of infertility, adultery and incompatibility. The matter of divorce is adjudicated by their community council on the ground of validity claim for divorce. Divorce on the ground of adultery, wife's family is required to return the cash and kind received as bride price at the time of marriage. Among Hill-Khariais and Mankadias, if the deceased person is married then they are cremated whereas deceased person is buried if they are unmarried. In the case of cremation, the bones and ashes deceased person is thrown into the river by putting it in a new earthen vessel with parched rice. They observe death population rituals for ten days and performs mortuary rites at the end (Tudu, 2017:66). On last days, they host a feast by inviting their friends and relatives. A tall slab memorial stone is set up near the house of deceased person.

Economic life

The principal occupation of Hill-Kharias and Mankadias are hunting and gathering. They are expert in hunting and they use four major techniques for hunting that are cutting, digging, picking and climbing. The tool they use for hunting are bow, arrows, sticks, spears etc. Apart from hunting and gathering, rope and handbag making is one of the primary occupations of Mankadia tribe whereas making leaf plate, cup and basket, broom etc. in bamboo other occupations practiced by Hill-Kharia. Mankadias are expert in catching monkey, they eat the flesh and sell the skin to skin traders. Fishing is another important practice between Hill-Kharia and Mankadia, they do fish for their own consumption. Some of them also practices agriculture but it is in rudimentary stage. They also rear domestic animal and poultry to supplement their food and income. In the present time, wage labour is one of the major sources of their livelihood among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia and they work as labour in the agricultural field and construction sector in their locality. Similipal was declared as National Park in 1958 and Wild Life Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve since 1973. As a result, these areas have been declared as protected region and restrictions were imposed to enter the region, and cutting tree, hunting and collecting forest produce activities are banned. It has brought adverse effects in the economic life

of Hill-Kharias and Mankadias. Their self-sustained economy got misbalanced and they are now converted as informal labor force. However, food collecting and gathering is one of the main sources of livelihood among Hill-Kharias and Mankadias. Traditionally, they were hunting and collecting food for their own survival but now they exchange it for rice, other goods, and some time for money.

Political organization

Hill-Kharias and Mankadias have simple political organizations. Political organization of Kharias and Mankadias are constituted at village and inter-village level. Every village has a panchayat headed by a Pradhan or Mukhia. Among Mankadia tribe, 'tanda' is known as the autonomous socio-political unit for all purposes. The head of the tanda is called Mukhia whose post is hereditary. The Mukhia or headman of Hill-Kharia and Mankadias, acts as judge and suggests, advice and settles with the help of other functionaries of the village. The Mukhias of Hill-Kharia is assisted by Dehuri (Priest), Chhatia (Messenger), Gunia (Magician). The matters related to Tanda and its members are discussed in meeting of Tanda council. The male household heads of Tanda are the members of the council headed by Mukhiya. The headman of Mankadia acts as priest and worships the deities and officiate in all ritual performances. The headman does not demand any remuneration for his service but commands respect and allegiance of his fellowmen.

Religious and cultural life

Hill-Kharia and Mankadias are polytheists and nature worshipers. 'Thakurani', the earth goddess is the supreme deity of Hill-Kharia while 'Logobi' and 'Budhi Mai' are the supreme deity of Mankadias. Hill-Kharias also worships DharniDevta and sun god. They believe that sun god is the creator of earth and all living being. The other deities they worship are namely BadamBudhi, Ramaraja, Pabanbira, Mahabira, BhandarDebata, Thakurani, Bauli, Basuli, Basuki, Gramadebati etc. Among Hill-Kharias and Mankadias, every clan has their own deity and they have strong faith on their God and Goddess and strictly practice their religious rituals. None of them enters to the forest for hunting, food gathering or wax without propitiating the forest deities and it is followed after the observance of rituals and propitiation. The Hill-Kharia and Mankadias also worship their ancestors. The Mankadias construct a tiny Kumbha for their ancestral

deity called as 'Alabonga'. They also believe in super natural being and soul of the deceased persons. The headman of Mankadia is known as 'Mukhia' also works as priest and perform all the religious rituals of their community.

Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HKMDA)

The headquarter at Jasipur, the HKMDA micro project has been working since 1987 with the aim to bring all round development by implementing development programmes to raise their standard of living and to ensure quality life to Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia tribes. The administrative zone of the Juang community lays on the Northern territories and they are distributed in 129.78 Sq.Km. geographical area in around 18 villages and 12 GPs which come under TSP area. The average size of land holding per household among the Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia is about 1.36 Acre. They speak Mundari language. The Hill-Kharia and Mankadia are conceived as the PVTGs during 1986-87 (Annual Plan Period, 1985-90). The average size of land holding per household among the Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia is about 1.36 Acre & (Micro Project Profile, SCSTRT).

Demography profile of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia

The total population of Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia community is 2111, among them 1060 are male 1051 are female. Growth rate of Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia population during 2007-2010 is about 1.29 per cent. Child population up to 5 years is about 308 and up to 6 to 14 years is 426. Population density of Hill-Kharias and Mankadias is 16. Sex ratio of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes are relatively satisfactory but it is comparatively less than scheduled tribe sex ratio of Odisha which 1026 (Census 2011). However, compare to other social group/community, sex ratio of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes is in good condition. This shows the importance of female population in their community.

Housing conditions and drinking water facilities

Owning a house provides significant socio-economic security to an individual or family. The study found that all Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes have their own house which are usually scattered and on sloppy edges or on foot hills adjacent to watercourses. The findings suggest that 40 (51.95%)

tribal houses are having fire proof (Mud with Straw Tiles Roof) whereas only 27(35.07%) and 10(12.98 %) of the total households have Pacca house and Kucha house (Mud with Straw Thatching), respectively. It is found that in most of the households, house construction was supported by HKMDA under Infrastructure Development Scheme (IDS) and Indira AwasYojna (IAY). However, majority of the houses in such condition which demand repairing. There is no separate kitchen, toilets, animal shed in these houses. All households use firewood for cooking obtaining from 3 to 4 km radius that takes about 4 hours to collect. About 30 per cent of the families use, solar lights for lighting and the rest are dependent on kerosene lamps.

Kharia and Mankadias always select their habitat near to the water sources in the hill slopes. Pure drinking water is one of vital needs of all living being. The Kharias and Mankadias have three major source of drinking water, those are tube wells, wells and stream water. Traditionally, stream water was the main source of drinking water for them. However, at present majority that is 52 (67.53 %) use tube well/well for drinking water. Still, significant numbers of Hill-Kharia and Mankadias that is 25(32.47%) consume drinking water from spring/river/stream. During the focus group discussion organized with the villagers in the study villages; the tube well water was not acceptable due to contaminants. Under this Micro Project, it is proposed to cover the maximum villages by the end of 12th Plan Period keeping in view the availability of stream water sources. The findings of the study suggest that 54.55 per cent of households have do not face scarcity of drinking water. However, a significant percent of them that is 35(45.45) households are facing drinking water scarcity for more than 3 months i.e. 3 months in summer. Due to the unavailability of pure drinking water facilities, Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe suffers many water-borne diseases and it degrade their health condition.

Literacy

One of the path breaking Act, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RCFCE) Act of Aug, 2009 recognized education as Fundamental Right for every child in the age group between 6 to 14 years. It is the obligation of the Central and State Governments to ensure availability of a neighborhood school and also to ensure that children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups are not discriminated against providing school infrastructures, learning equipments, quality of elementary education, training for teachers and monitor the functioning of the schools to achieve

target of 80 per cent literacy by the end of 11th Plan Period. However, we are well aware that percentage of literacy among PVTGs is dismal.

The table 1 shows that bulk of the surveyed populations in the study villages are illiterate i.e. 56.77 per cent. The overall literacy rate of the sample population is 43.23 per cent. Findings suggests that literacy rate of male is 46.86 percent male and female is 35.41 percent. Female literacy among Hill-Kharias and Mankadias are very poor state compare to male. Similarly, overall literacy rate of Hill-Kharias and Mankadias are not satisfactory. Finding suggest that almost all Kharia children study at Special Residential Schools – ‘Angarpoda’ for girls and ‘Hatibari’ for boys which provide education up to matriculation. It is important note here that, among Hill-Kharias and Mankadias, more girls are admitted to schools and continuing their education than boys. There multiple reasons which hinder the female education are language efficacy, poor economic status of family and traditional mindset. Due to traditional mind set, girls are not allowed to continue their education after puberty and discontinue their education. Further, compare to boys, girls are engaged in looking after their siblings and manage other household works. As a result, girls leave school and discontinue their education.

Table 1: Literacy Rate the sample households

Literacy	Percentage
Male	46.86
Female	35.41
Total	43.23

Source: Field survey, 2015-16

The table 2 depicts that, among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe who are educated, majority of them have studied up to primary level (72.63 percent). There are 19.33 percent and 6.26 per cent of them have studied middle school and high schools. Finding suggests that educational attainment of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe beyond primary level is in very worse state. Very few of them have gone to middle schools but majority of them failed to reach high school and further. One of the major reasons of drop out after primary and middle school is that majority of children are considered as source of income and most of them are compel to participate in household work and productive activities to financially support their family.

Table 2: Education pattern of sample Households

Education	Percentage
Primary	72.63
Middle school	19.33
High School	6.26
Intermediate	1.22
Graduation	0.56
Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015-16

Occupational pattern

Hunting and gathering was the main source of livelihood among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe. However, at present wage labour and collection of forest produce is their main occupation and principal source of survival. Besides these, they pursue small business and animal husbandry. The table 3 shows that even today, majority that is 63.64 per cent of the households in the sample villages pursue collection of forest product as their principal occupation for livelihood whereas 33.76% households work as wage labour as means of livelihood. Besides these, there are certain households who depend on small business, and animal husbandry, as part of occupation. However, only 2.60 per cent of the households in the study villages pursue other works as their principal occupation. The other occupations are such as preparation of Siali Rope products, Sal leaf plate making, and MGNREGA work etc. It is found that in some village, certain families have been provided land by the government under forest right act but most of the lands are not yet brought under cultivation. From the past few years, Hill Kharias have also begun cultivation in around their homes or on leased paddy lands. It is found that no one among the Hill-Kharias and Mankadias are in government services in the study villages.

Table 3: Major Occupations of the sample households

Occupation/Source	Households	% of Households
Wage labour	26	33.76
Collection of Forest products	49	63.64
Others	2	2.60
Total	77	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015-16

Major NTFPs collection and seasonal calendar for common NTFPs collection

Honey, bees wax, *kusum* seeds, *karanj* seeds, char seeds, *tasar* cocoons, *sal* resin, mahua fruits and flowers, arrowroot, *sal* leaves, *siali* leaves, and firewood are the main NTFPs collected by Hill-Kharia and Mankadias for the purpose of sale. The uses of Non-timber forest products are meant for only consumption goods, goods for marketing or both consumption and marketing. Findings suggest that there are 42 types of NTFPs is being collected by the Hill-Kharia and Mankadia in the study villages. These types include variety in terms of the plant parts and animal parts used for several purposes. These include almost all parts of the plant, including fruits, leaves, flower, bark, stem, seeds, root and tuber, gum, and others. They collect the forest products for two purpose, one if for self-use and another is for sale. The NTFPs collected for sale and own consumption are Amra, Dahu, Jamun, Mango, Dumar, Jackfruit, Wild Fibres, Broom grass, Mushroom, Ber, Fodder, Harra, Bahera, Drumstick, Fuller's Earth, Chew Sticks, Medicinal plants, Bamboo, Tamarind, Guava, Bel, Amla, Papaya, Fishes and Yams (*Dioscorea pentaphylla*, *Dioscorea pubera*, *Dioscorea alata*, *Dioscorea hispida*, *Dioscorea oppositifolia*, *Dioscorea excelsa*).

All the Non-timber forest products are not available in all seasons throughout the year but there are certain non-timber forest products are available throughout the year. Most of the products collected in the forest are available in particular months or seasons. The NTFPs products are harvested mostly in two seasons, winter (Nov-February) and early summer (March-April) when it is off-agricultural season. Few Non-timber forest products are available during the lean season that is July to October. In the rainy season, forest dwellers suffer food scarcity in the period of July to October because entering to forest become not feasible. The vegetables which are found

throughout the years are Sal leaves, Sal twigs and wild vegetables. Even fuelwood is also found throughout the year. However, most of the tree-based fruits such as Mahua flowers, Mahua seeds, *sal* seeds, Saialifibre, Tamarind, Sabai Grass, Jalfruit etc. are available in the months between January to June and non-tree-based products such as Mushrooms and Kanda are available between July and September and it is known as the food scarcity period. The three based seeds such as Sal seeds and Mahua seeds are available in the months of June and July whereas Kusum seed and Karanjaseeds are available in July and August and March and April, respectively.

Distribution pattern of household income

Household income is one of the most important indicators of economic status and livelihood standard. Among the Hill-Kharia and Mankadia, most of the households have multiple sources of income because no single source of income is sufficient to provide their means of survival. The finding suggests that, Hill-Kharia and Mankadia have three major sources of income and livelihood, those are wage labour, collection of forest products and incomes from other sources such as small business, rope making and livestock, etc.

Income from forest produce

Honey is one of the major forest products which provide livelihood necessities for Hill-Kharia and Mankadia. It is mostly available in flowering season and collected primarily in the months of May and June from both Bara/Bhagua Mahu (*Apis dorsata*) and Sana Mahu (*Apis mellifera*). During the season a group of 3 to 4 persons collect 20 kg of Honey per week and sell for Rs 70 to Rs 120 per kg. This goes on for about a month. Sal resins are primarily collected from September to November although it is available round the year in smaller quantities. Usually the old trees shed resins when the bark cracks from strong winds and rain; observing this the Kharias climb such trees and cut out the exuded resin by making notches using axe and collecting in bamboo baskets. The cleaned resin with larger proportion of pellucid portions and particle sizes fetch higher price. Each tree can yield from 250 g to 2 kg of resin. Between Sep to Nov each family is about to collect about 3 kg of resin per week that sells for Rs 70/kg.

Morika root (probably *Rauwolfia serpentina*) is one of the ingredients of vegetative ferment tablets (called Ranu, Morika or Bakhar locally) used in

preparation of local drinks like Handia, Mahua etc is available 10 months in a year. Each family is able to collect 5-10 bundles every week that sells for Rs 20/bundle. Arrowroot (*Maranta Arundinacea*) rhizomes locally called *Padu* are collected from December to March though primarily in villages inside Simlipal Biosphere Reserve as compared to the villages in the fringe areas. Each household is able to dig out 2 to 5 kg of rhizomes every month for 2 months. A kg of finished arrowroot costs Rs 200 per kg. Sal leaves are collected from forests primarily by the women of all families. This activity is going on for quite some time at least 10 months in a year, and women are able to stitch 2 leaves plates making 200 to 300 leaves in an hour and working for 5 to 6 hours at home make about 1000 plates per day. These are sold at Rs 25 per 1000 plates in local haats. Apart from these primary produce families also collect Kusum, Karanj seeds, Tasar Cocoons (inside Simlipal Biosphere Reserve) and Mahua flowers, and Siali leaves

Wage and other source of income

Another source of income for Hill-Kharia and Mankadia is wage labour. As a wage labourer, they work in road construction, pond excavation etc. for around 15 to 20 days in the months of February and March in a year. The per household with wage rate varies from Rs 120 to Rs 140 per day. MGNREGA payments are usually delayed and they have to receive their wage from Jashipur which takes 2 days in a cycle from Simlipal Biosphere core area villages. It is interesting to note that majority that is 88% of the surveyed families had job cards. The Hill-Kharia and Mankadia also works as Farm labor in the agricultural land of neighboring agricultural communities and in return of their labor they receive for Paddy. Preparation of Siali rope products is also important source of income for the Households. They bring stripped Siali bark from the forests and make ropes and articles of different types like- Sika, ChheliPhaga, Phaga, Barjao. They sell these products in the local *haats*. It is found that each family approximately sale 5 to 6 pairs every week thus making Rs 300. Kharia and Mankirdia families rear small animals like Goats and Poultry. There are no vet services available currently though 1 such Centre is being constructed for villages in the core areas. Every 5 families also own fruit or timber trees.

Annual Income and expenditure

The table 4 shows that average annual income per household is Rs.22985. The majority of households' income comes from forest products. Out of Rs. 22985 annual incomes, forest products contribute Rs. 12825 (55.80%) in yearly household income. Besides this, wage earning also contribute significant share in the annual family income that is Rs 8624 (37.52 %). In addition to this livestock provides Rs. 978 (4.2 %) and Others such as Patty business provides 558 (4.25 %) in the total yearly household income.

Table 4: Average annual income of Sample HHs from Different Sources

Source of Income	Value	Percentage
Forest Produces (NTFPs)	12825	55.80
Wages (including rope making)	8624	37.52
Livestock	978	4.25
Others (Patty business etc.)	558	2.43
Total	22985	

Source: *Field Survey, 2015-16*

The household expenditure consists of both on food and non-food items. The household expenditure on food items of the sample households covers their expenses on cereals, pulses, vegetables, oil, sugar and non-vegetarian food items. The data shows that the average annual expenditure of the households is Rs.19990. Out of Rs.19990 annual expenditures, Hill-Kharia and Mankadia spend more on non-food items than food items.

Table 5: Annual household expenditure (Rs.)

Expenditure	
Average annual expenditure /HH	19990
Average annual expenditure on food items/HH	9397 (46.76%)
Average annual expenditure on non-food items/HH	10643(53.24%)

Source: *Field Survey, 2015-16*

The expenditure on the non-food items includes dress and ornaments, repair and construction of houses, education on children, health, fuel/ lighting, transport, alcohol, social ceremonies etc. (Table-6) and in Non-food items,

they spend more on social ceremonies (12.53 per cent) followed by expenditure on alcohol (10.77 per cent), dress and ornaments (10.44 per cent). Surprisingly, health (6.45 per cent) and education (2.23 per cent) are two non-food items where they spend less which is around 9 per cent of total non-food item expenditure. The main source of health care among tribal is Traditional herbal and spiritual healer. Since long traditional herbal healer had taken care of many health problems including physiological problems. However, traditional herbal health treatment and medicine practices has been radically disappeared because of the active presence of modern form of allopathic medicine and Medicare. Although the rugged topographical features retard the adequate growth of infrastructural facilities in the study area, the forest dwellers still prefer to go to the health centers of modern medicine. Thus, expenditure on medicine has risen considerably in the study area.

Table 6: Annual Expenditures pattern

SI No	Heads of Expenditures	Total Expenditure in Percentage
1	Food items	46.76
2	Non Food	53.24
3	Dress and Ornaments	10.44
14	Repair and construction of house	4.33
5	Education of children	2.23
6	Health	6.45
7	Fuel/lighting	3.63
8	Transport	2.16
9	Alcohol/country liquor	10.77
10	Social ceremonies (Marriage/Death/Festivals/Others)	12.53
11	Others	0.7
	Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015-16

Construction of house is not a regular phenomenon. At an average, the local people build their house every 10 years. Materials for construction are collected from local forests. Apart from these, the required labor is gathered from the community; so that the cost of constructing houses is nominal as compared to the other components of total expenditure. Their spending on repair and construction of houses is about 4.33 per cent. Only

about .7 per cent of other expenditure also constitutes their non-food item expenditure.

Indebtedness

Credit is one of the most crucial inputs in the process of development. Loan and indebtedness is inherent to PVTGs as they have very limited access and control over resources. But through the government welfare measures PVTGs access to credit and volume of credit are also changing gradually.

Table 7: Volume of loan

Loan Volume	Details
No of HHs availed loan	12
Total loan amount	49500
Range	1000-20000
Outstanding	28068
Average loan amount/Indebt HH	4125

Source: Field survey, 2015-16

In the last 7 to 8 years, Self Help Groups have been initiated in most villages where Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe lives and findings suggests that they reported savings in Self Help Groups (SHGs). Traditionally, the major source of debt was money lenders. The other sources are friends, relatives and neighbors. However, SHGs is the new sources where they take debt. Table 6.14 depicts that the total number households taken loan are 12 and total loan amount is 49500 as revealed from field investigation. Average loan per indebted household is Rs 4125.

The following table depicts that major source of debt among Hill-Kharia and Mankdia is from SHGs. Half of the households have taken debt from SHGs. Relatives and community members are another major source of debt and finding suggest that 33.34 have taken debt from them. Taking loan from money lender has radically declined to 8.33 percent. However, Hill-Kharia and Mankdia very rarely prefers bank for debt. Only 1 (8.33) household have reported that they have received debt from bank. Loan incurred by Hill-Kharia and Mankadia is for the consumption and production purpose. Health care, purchase of livestock and social ceremonies/marriage are the major reason of debt/loan.

Table 8: Sources of loan

Source of Loan	Number of Households	Percentage
Bank	1	8.33
SHGs	6	50
Relatives/Community members	4	33.34
Money Lender	1	8.33
Total	12	100

Sources: Field survey, 2015-16

The SHGs exclusively comprises female members and it has played significant role in access to rural credit in general and female participation in particular which is highly appreciable. The micro credit has made a crucial contribution towards women empowerment and to bring dignity among women in Hill Kharia and Mankirdia community. Studies have revealed that women's position is perpetuated and reinforced by their limited access to and control over resources in relation to those on productive asset. In such circumstances, SHGs seem to be one productive tool for women empowerment.

Health

Health is one of the precious assets of human being and determinant of a person's quality of life. The finding reveals that poor health of PVTGs is one of the critical bottlenecks. Cold & Cough and Fever (including Malaria) and Chicken pox are the major diseases affected by Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe. There are some changes in health care practices among the Hil-Kharia and Mankadia. Now, most of them prefer to avail health care services from Government medical facilities which offers free services. However, the significance of traditional herbal/spiritual healer is still remaining and majority of them consults for cold & cough, jaundice and diarrhea. Treatment costs range from Rs 200 to Rs 300 for cold & cough and up to Rs 500 to Malaria. To find out the severity of different diseases a four-point (frequently, seasonally, seldom and never) indicator has been used by assigning score 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Household responding against first 3 point are kept under the "Household Suffered from the Disease" (HSD). Mean of the diseases has been taken as the index of severity of the respective diseases.

Table 9: Intensity of diseases

Major Diseases	Mean Score
Malaria	3.97
Diarrhea	1.23
TB	0.22
Malnutrition	1.26
Skin Diseases	2.06
Sickle cell	0.21
Yaw	0.09
Mean of the Mean	1.29

Source: Field Survey 2015-16

Table 9 indicates that Malaria has been the most critical health problem among the Hill-Kharia and Mankadia in the study area. Mean score of Malaria (3.97), Skin diseases (2.06), Malnutrition (1.26) and Diarrhea (1.23) are found high, whereas Yaw (0.90), Tuberculosis (0.22) and sickle cell anemia (0.21) are found low. Facilities like Janani Express have been functioning well. ASHA is active in fringe villages helping pregnant women but not so much in core areas (since they reside outside the villages). Some families have received Rs 5000 under Mamta scheme for the first 2 children. Usually traditional birth attendants (Dais) and ICDS workers help during delivery. The ICDS is present in all villages and offers Flour packets irregularly to expected mothers. 57% of the eligible couples have adopted permanent methods of family planning (primarily tubectomy). 48% of the boys and 59% of the girls (in age 0 to 2 years) have been immunized. Out of the 16 villages, there are 13 differently abled and 5 chronically ill individuals. The mean BMI of sampled Kharia adults was 18.7 with 67% having BMI < 18.5.

Basic amenities in the villages

The social and economic infrastructure in the villages such as drinking water facilities, electricity, medical facilities, educational institutions, motorable roads, banking, communication networks etc are in very poor and vulnerable condition. Almost all villages are connected with Kutcha

roads i.e. link road from residential area in the village to the main road. Communication network is poor in the selected villages. The field data reveals that the average distance to Sub Center, PHC, Dispensary, Medicine store, and ANM is 5 Kms, 12 ms, 7Km, 10 Km, 6 Kms and 5 Kms respectively. They do not have access over any kind of banking and co-operative credit facilities inside the villages. The problem of drinking water has been a perennial problem in villages. The available well/tube well is insufficient for providing water for drinking, cooking and other uses. Even today, majority of them depend on stream water for drinking and they have to fetch water from long distance. The data reveal that the average distance to primary school from the selected villages is 1 K.m. which is the state norm of SSA to provide primary education within 1 Kilometer of every habitation. The average distance to ME school, High school and Special Girls Residential School of HKMDA is 2.5Kms, 4Km and 5 Km respectively. The schools not functioning properly, the teachers even do not come to schools regularly. They come to school late and leave before closing time. The quality of teaching in these schools is not up to the mark. They do not reside in the village. They leave the school almost one hour before its scheduled closing time every day. If at any time there is any damage in school building due to heavy wind, rainfall or cyclone schools remains unrepaired for years.

Conclusion

The study concluded that Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes faces numerous livelihood challenges. Sex ratio of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia is satisfactory but literacy rate is very worse. More than half of the population are illiterate and female literary is in vulnerable state among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes. Compare to boys, enrollment rate of girls has increased in the past few years, due to traditional mindset, poor economic condition, lack sanitation facilities in schools, girls discontinue their education after puberty. Educational status beyond primary education is very worse among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia and responsibilities support financially to family from the childhood has created impediment to continue their study beyond primary school. Around half of the households studied pursue food gathering as their principal occupation and source of survival. Surprisingly, none of the Hill-Kharia and Mankadia are in government. This depicts that Hill-Kharia and Mankadia are still in the primitive state of their life. The second principal

occupation is labour. Food gathering and labour work could not provide regular employment throughout the year. Even today, forest is the main source of survival among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribes. They collect the forest produce for their own consumption and also sell in the market to earn some money. So, forest produce and labour is their main source of income and livelihood. The average annual income of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia is 19990. This depicts the worse economic condition of Hill-Kharia and Mankadia. They spend more on non-food items compare the food items. In non-food items, they spend more on social ceremonies, alcohol and ornaments. Drinking alcohol is a major problem among Hill-Kharia and Mankadia and it weaken their economic condition and condition of their health. Surprisingly, education and health are given less important among them, therefore, they spend less on these purposes.

Hill-Kharia and Mankadia now prefers to take loan from the modern source such as SHG, however, taking loan from money leader has been radically declined. But they prefer less taking loan from bank. Loan incurred by Hill-Kharia and Mankadia is for the consumption and production purpose. Health care, purchase of livestock and social ceremonies/marriage are the major reason of debt/loan. The micro credit system has empowered tribal women and given them opportunities to deal in the financial matter of family and economic independence. Cold & Cough and Fever (including Malaria) and Chicken pox, Diarrhea and Skin diseases are the major diseases affected by Hill-Kharia and Mankadia tribe. It is important to note that preference of receiving treatment from government hospitals has increased but still many of them prefers their traditional way of healing. The basic amenities such school, hospitals, road, electricity, drinking water facilities, banking, communication networks are in very worse condition. Still today, pond, stream and river are main source of water for them. Most of roads are kuccha and not connected to adjacent village. As a result, they suffer communication and transportation facilities. Schools and hospitals are located in very far distance and it create hindrances to easily avail these facilities. We conclude that socio-economic conditions Hill-Kharia and Mankadia are in very worse state. Their villages lacking essential human needs for their survival. The effort made by the state has not successfully empower them and improved their condition. Therefore, special policy measures must be taken urgently to save them from vulnerability, improve their living condition and bring them as per with other communities. The results of the study suggest that there is an urgent need to assess the livelihood pattern, education, occupation and infrastructure such as health, education, banking, transportation and communication facilities in the tribal

region. Besides this, awareness programs for health and education and availing banking facilities for tribal must be undertaken. Special care must be taken to generate employment opportunities in the tribal area and policy measures need to be taken to elimination exploitation of tribes in the region. More numbers of SHGs would be created and tribal must be motivated to be part of micro credit system which will reduce their traditional form of indebtedness and protect them from the exploitation from money lenders.

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9

Hawking on the lines: Tales of the Railway Hawkers and their *Everydays*

Anindya Bhattacharyya

Abstract: *Hawking is a profession of the informal sector. It takes place in different forms. From pavement to a moving local train, hawking is a way of livelihood to many. Their everydays are patterned, routinized and bound by time and space. But their work is different in the sense that it is lived by both them and the passengers. The essence of their 'social' world is diffused in the sense that they are sellers of products of low price with very less capital. This article will focus on the life-world of hawkers in train running between Howrah and Bandel. This is a part of the main line of Eastern Division of Indian Railways. The researcher has undertaken an ethnographic research on hawkers of this section. The article will focus on how the hawkers create a life-world distinct and diffused, ordered yet haphazard. The peculiarity of this life-world is that the researcher is also part of it.*

Keywords: Hawkers in Indian railway, Hawking, Life-world, Everyday interaction, Ethnography, Men and Women Hawkers.

Introduction

I never thought that I will write on them. Their presence had many a times disappointed me (it still does some time)! I am sitting at a platform of a railway station between Howrah junction and Burdwan. It is a chilly morning and is rather dark. I was struggling to keep myself warm in the wintry morning. I am waiting for a train to take me home. The lights in the station are still glowing; time at the clock in the station says it is 3. 57 a. m. It is still eight minutes to wait for the train to arrive. The fraction in time is very important for trains. All can be disrupted in a fraction! The parallel lines of the train lay in front of me. The deep red fluorescent lamps at the two ends of the platform seem to delay the time of the trains by their sheer existence. Both the up and the down platforms were empty and bare. I looked at the

lines again. These are the lines that help people to take them to so distant places. These are the two lines that remain, they may be divided at some point, at others may join others but nevertheless remain parallel to each other. Though the lines run analogous they also connect to maintain the link or are the link of a continuum. At this hour a train might arrive with some passengers, where I will be an addition, some of the passengers might also board the train or get down but all of this will occur at a moment in the long time-frame of the train reaching between two stations in a single time-frame. Any activities or actions that take place here are subsumed under the time-frame at a particular space. The train or its carriages will be the immediate space where interactions, relations will start and continue. The interaction may seem trivial or insignificant but those will surely be patterned and routinized. This will occur every day. This journey on a new space for interaction started on 16th April 1853 under the Viceroyship of Lord Dalhousie. The first train to run in India was between Bori Bandar and Thane of Bombay residency. It was the first passenger train with fourteen carriages. It travelled thirty-four kilometres with four hundred passengers (Indian Railways, Annual Report 2020). The first train from Howrah started in 1854, 15 August, marking the first in Eastern India. The space for a new interaction to develop started one hundred and sixty-six years ago (ibid).

The train arrives. It brings in a wintry chill with it. I caught hold of the steel rod and boarded the train. Another man boarded the train with me. He had a monkey cap on his head to avoid the chill, a bag in hand, a cloth wrapped on his full-sleeve shirt, trousers and a pair of slippers to stay away from being barefoot. The doors of the local trains are always kept open. So, the winter chill did not spare us. I took a seat opposite to the way of the wind. I thought to myself that it was the best place to avoid the cold. The man also sat beside me and smiled in a way to show that it was his place and I had taken it away from him. I apologetically asked if he wanted to sit in my place. "Oh no!" he replied, "...actually I sit in this place *every day*, it is okay that you sit for today". I asked him where he is going. He replied, "Howrah and from there I will take a different route". I asked whether it is the time he boards a train every day, to which he replied, "Yes, I do not have holidays Dada.¹ It is a holiday for me only if I take one" he smiled back. "I am a hawker", he said, "I sell biscuits in trains in the South Eastern division. I have a flask full of hot tea in my bag. I have fixed customers between Kharagpur² and Howrah.³ The flasks will be empty after I reach Howrah. I will return home once they are empty".

The Line that was laid in 1854 has grown far and wide, there has been modernization too. The trains take us from one station to another. It is the only means for many to reach their destinations. It is also the space where many people have found their bread and butter. To the hawkers the train is not only a means to reach destinations but it is also a means to survive hardships collectively. The branch of Indian Railways on which I am writing this essay is part of Eastern Railway, the Main line running between Howrah and Bandel.⁴ The number of hawkers who work in this division is more than ten thousand. They work from morning till the last local train finishes its journey. They sip their brew and talk about their markets with each other at the time they start their business of selling petty goods. "...we have to move out of our homes in every kind of weather, be it rainy, summer or winter" said Manas Das, arranging his mango *papads*.⁵ "...investments have all gone with the blood tests I had to do for my wife", he continued, "...if I do not sale an extra amount of two hundred rupees each day it will be difficult for me!" ...there are people here who work like us lends us money with an interest of four percent. I have to repay my loans as early as possible. The doctor has asked to give her fruits too. Where will I get the money/ so I take fruits from other hawkers. We do not charge much from each other and that a principle we follow. If we cannot understand each other's problem then it will be hard on our survival. Our relationship with passengers has changed. Before we could pass on the bag of any passenger who was unable to enter a carriage or any passenger would take things of their choice from our bag and pay later. The new generation of passengers of young age do not see us in the same light. We have intimate relationships with many of their uncles. Our relation with them extends beyond simple seller and buyer. They have always extended their hand to us in helping us with doctors' appointments, medicines at low cost etc. But there are few new salesmen working here who have damaged our reputation with their bad behaviour and misdeeds. The other day a passenger fell off from a carriage because of a fall-out between two hawkers. We sometimes have to carry the fruits of their transgressions. Actually, the Railway Police Force (R. P. F.) comes after us. I could not come for work for two consecutive days. We had to negotiate with them and then it was feasible for us to work again". He stopped there as train had entered the station. It is a risk they enter every day. They run or fall off a moving train whenever such chase by the police takes place. I bid him farewell and started to walk down the platform. A train stops at a platform for thirty to forty seconds. It is within this time that passenger board and get down, hawkers move from one compartment to the next. They start off their daily interaction as soon as they enter a compartment.

Many everydays: Different, dynamic and patterned

Twenty years ago, I called him ‘Kaka’ (Uncle). Today after many years, I saw him again. He came down from a local train to the platform where I was seated, waiting for a train to reach my destination. He held a bundle of packaged nuts, coughing. His chest panting for breath was looking frail in his uncut grey beard, unbuttoned shirt torn in places with holes from cigarette or *bidi*⁶ flames. His *Hawai chappal*⁷ bearing the proof of wear and tear with visible stitches, he soon recognized me and came forward. But as I was not a daily passenger now, found a loss of words on how to call him by the same old name, ‘Kaka’. His smile and recognition assured me of a tête-à-tête. ‘You have grown in size!’ he smiled at me, to which I replied and told him about my thoughts on his recognition after a long gap. He said, ‘you were skeptical because of my looks, aren’t you? I have two daughters and two sons, daughters are married, sons have separated and live by themselves, it is only us now— wife (*Mrs.*) and me’. His utterance of an English synonym for his wife kept me wondering. Before I could ask him, he answered, ‘I talk in English now! Especially when I work, the young ones often call me “Uncle, give us a packet of nuts, what is the price? Rupees five isn’t it?”’, his smile broadened. He has been working on the local train, selling different products at different times for forty-five years. He continued, ‘I have sold so many items these years, incense sticks, handkerchiefs, hair-clips, socks, what not! Life is full of tension to us... have been working dawn to dusk to meet all ends... from paying tuition fees for children to buying medicines for wife. ‘Why did you come to this way of earning livelihood then, I asked?’ He went on ‘...Look I have been working (hawking) all these years but never have been involved in any controversies with passengers. Those who have started work now often get intimidated by the passengers (buyers). When everyone is racing for a livelihood it is obvious that there will be situations of conflict. But we have to be conscious of it. We work in shifts. I work usually in the afternoons the morning goes away in helping with household chores... to keep up with the *time-kaller jol*⁸... your *Kakima*⁹ is sick for the last five years... visits to a doctor is not helping her in any way... sons do not live with us so I am the only one to help her. Then I sit to arrange the goods, packet the nuts after bringing them from the *mahajan*¹⁰ and go out for regular job every day. A plethora of questions come up to my mind. ‘How do you select the carriage?’ I asked. ‘at first, I would guess, my experience later taught me that my earnings would be better if I left three from the first... worked for two stations in between and would get down after a fair sale. Usually have

some tea and boarded another train to sale my stuff to another set of passengers’.

There is a link between sociological theories and methodological orientation. If we hold that sociology is what we do in every-day life and that is its main focus, then we are inclined to take over from the methodological orientations popularized by the anthropologist. This is so because our daily life is visible and therefore observable. We might think what is ‘common’ in such trivial, relatively and mutually discrete phenomenon that has challenged the dominant macro-sociological theorizing? Such trivial yet significant perspective has in fact bottled up sociological analysis of the ‘social’—socio-economic structural analysis, social structure, analyses of social development to the analysis of the ‘social’ in the miniscule boundary of the every-day. It has matured into the analysis of our daily life, routine life, every-day emotions, experience, conflicts, cooperation, struggles, love and hate. We cannot analyze this mundane routine, timed behavior by standing at a distance. It has to be lived, experienced, shared and believed. We need to analyze it from the different aspects of social interaction keeping in mind the everyday context in which it takes place. The sociological understanding and study of an abstract social structure is always not possible without the understanding of the in-depth dynamism of the daily life. At the same time the awareness of the micro-structural elements of our daily life remain active. We are situated at the juncture of the continuous flow of every-day life and the awareness of the abstract social structure we believe to be omnipresent by normative statements. Our social existence is neither limited by the structure and its abstract analysis nor is it bounded within our daily wants and responses. It means that our social existence is never stagnant. It is continuous and, in a flux, because we cannot call it ‘life’ if our social existence comes to a standstill. Our social existence is always a dynamic process. It should not be assumed that our existence is dynamic and processual only because we do routine jobs every day! It is dynamic also because it is the trajectory of long-term change. Our everyday is constructed through the most trivial, relatively unimportant ideas and activities. Kaka was still sitting beside me, murmuring under his breath. He might be thinking of his job that day! There are quite a number of people like him who commute every-day to sell their products to passengers on the local train. These hawkers are different people but a category to a sociologist. As a category of people united by the nature of their profession they struggle, calculate their loss and gain after each trip constitute a discourse on hawking in trains. All of them have an existence that is so different from each other yet so common. The dynamism of their wants and desires, happiness and

loss, emotions and rationality all form an innate motivation for social action. The opportunities that the customers of Kaka and many others give form the motivation for them to overcome any crisis (of a day) and motivation for them to go to work the next morning. So when I ask him 'how was your marketing today?' he reiterates by saying, 'it was my first train, let me see what future holds for me!' what I mean to state is that the process by which hawkers like him sell their products and the process by which their customers have bought them both have made him (or others like him) a hawker. The dynamism of the relationship between an individual and the social context is the context of the daily life in which a hawker exists. It comprises of calculations, love, hate, conflict and cooperation of a hawker and his customers.

This daily life is framed within time. A particular train at a particular time, a particular carriage for a particular hawker is time-bound. Space and time both are circumscribed by the clock. My conversations with him revealed more about this. The context (social existence of this hawker) is such that he does not board the next train if he cannot board his train of choice on time. Dalim had been working for more than thirty years. I asked him what made him choose this profession when opportunities were better compared to the present. 'Did not have decent education, my father being poor could not pay for my tuition fees and asked me to work. I started to work at the age of twelve and give a portion of my earning to the family. I was very happy to leave school but now I understand it would have been better if I completed at least secondary education. But I love my profession...it is the work that helps my family to survive.' I asked if this was the type of products, he sold from the first. '...no...I started with selling nuts but realized that there was fair amount of competition in selling such a product and quickly switched over to the selling of fruits. That too was a consumable product and was in tension of a loss...you know it is hard for a hawker to survive a loss...I have less strength now and switched to sale of ornaments.' My silent ear to Dalim perhaps invokes a support and he continues...'there is competition in this profession. The passengers particularly those who commute daily readily recognizes our voice and understands what kind of products we sale. The voice in which I am talking to you is my real voice but I change my voice, modulate, to make it more attractive to the passenger. This is harmful for my throat and my voice so I gargle with warm water as I return home. I grew enthusiastic to a hawker's voice and realized what Dalim meant. The voice of a hawker can be heard in a train carriage from far. The pitch of the voice is high and all have different styles peculiar to an individual. Everyone has a different technique of presenting their product.

Body is very important in daily life. The *everydays* of each person revolve around their bodies. The level of strength and endurance, weakness, might and limitation give each of us our own share of expression of our bodily capacities. We act with all this in a particular situation at a particular time and at a particular context. The context has its own features. There are some intrinsic characteristics of our daily lives which are common and it is beyond our capacity to identify those. The common is that which is natural. There is also some theatrical element in our daily lives, a style that has to be adopted and internalized. So Dalim and Kaka both and others like them situate their everyday in the context of a train. Here they not only sale their product but use the space to introduce the product to the prospective customers, sometime initiate a dialogue with them and draw them towards the purchase of the product. Each sell of a product is episodic but the duration varies from the nature of the product and the style the seller adopts.

‘Train is our space where we sell our products. We do not like to be static or bound by a space. Our space renders mobility as the key to our sale’ said Rabi. ‘It is also challenging to sell products to different customers at the same space at the same time. But it has its risks too. But we like to avoid crowd. It is always difficult to sale products in a crowded space. Many passengers have become known to us. They are not mere acquaintances now. Many inquire about our children too. I was invited once to a wedding of a passenger. It was an invitation for my family but I took only my son with me as I did not want my wife to be identified as a “hawker’s wife”. But I respect my profession. It is through this that I am able to sustain my family.’ The interactions and the relationships that develop with the passengers are often the seeds of a collective. This collective is bound by a journey from one destination to another where both parties have different interests. Each one looks out for a space within their reach, gather at a particular time and disperse. The compartment of a train is the spatial context where such interactions take place, mutual exchange occurs. It is also a space which is the possible output of a long bureaucratic system, a historical evolution of railway connections, colonial hangovers, state security, and surveillance of a policing system. ‘...sometimes the Railway Police Force (RPF) initiates activities against many of us...we run...lose some of our belongings in the fallout’. Their everyday are days of struggles not only to meet both ends but also to survive a system of unfair and corrupt policing. The struggle concerning power is another important aspect of the study on ‘everyday’. When I started off with this study and also in my earlier days as daily commuter on local trains, I have seen a deep friendship of the hawkers with the passengers. They could easily be identified as an

interacting group. They have their self-motivated interests but also work together, take risks and maintain friendly interactions. They answer to the queries of the passengers, give them information, share, and trust each other. There are stories of mistrust and abuse too. The hawkers in a train not only perform but there is a human face embedded in their daily routine job of salesmanship. I have seen a hawker helping a passenger with glucose-drinking water and a fan in the summer, warn a passenger on the possible dangers of talking into a cell phone by the window. Dalim said, 'we need to be alert at the time child commuters go to their schools and return.

Malati, a woman hawker in the evening echoed a similar concern. To her this profession helps her to meet all ends but there are more disadvantages than the opposite. To her a female body in such a space is the most important disadvantage. '...the passengers who keep on standing at the gate of a compartment are mostly very abusive, they take advantage of a female body. But we need to get inside the train to work...sometimes we need to shout at them. Moreover, the male passengers often do not like to buy things from us as they fear being victims of taunt and ridicule of their men friends. Moreover, women hawkers face being labeled as "bad woman" very easily. Therefore, we need to be alert and conscious to this too. It is never an issue with the men hawkers. Sometimes passengers do not trust women hawkers to be able to compete equally with men in their capacity to sell same kind of products in a crowded train, so most women hawkers come later in the afternoon to work when trains are comparatively less crowded. Another disadvantage that women hawkers face is their problem in changing from one compartment to another in a moving train.... women hawkers need to dress-up too. I have seen men hawkers to be able to sale goods even in torn shirts but if we come in such dresses passengers do not like to listen'. Her wants and desires and the working conditions do not match. She wants to equal her men counter-parts but she cannot. At the same time, I could understand the experiences of a man and a woman are different. This difference in their perception and experience is also routinized, continuous and important in understanding the unorganized scattered daily life of the hawkers.

It is spontaneity which is one of the other features of our every day. This naturalness is often expressed through language. The choice of words, use of language is significant ways in which a hawker accomplishes his or her salesmanship with proficiency. The knack with which a hawker does this is a creative aspect of their salesmanship. They fulfill their targets, sale their products, make profit but with a smile. To fulfill such targets, they

often take risks. Milan talked about such risks. He had to realize a target in order to buy gifts for a wedding. He missed the station where he had to get down. The R. P. F. caught hold of him for travelling extra 40 miles than for what he had a license. The passengers took my side and convinced the police personnel. The fine charged was reduced. In such circumstances Milan quoted that many run down the track to avoid payment of fine and probable harassment.

I sit on a bench in an unknown platform...there is a *kadam* tree beside the bench. After a few minutes some hawkers come under the tree to rest on the cemented pulpit. All are there with their products for sale (*maal*), discussing something. I assumed they were waiting for someone. I found someone sleeping using the trunk of the tree as a prop. They called her by the name Jhulan. She picked a small Tiffin box from her bag. It was full of *muri*¹¹ and desiccated coconut. They shared the food on a piece of newspaper spread over the pulpit. Completed they stated off their own journeys throwing the paper in the dustbin. One among them said it is the practice for them for the last ten to fifteen years. There is a definite station where they find time to sit for lunch too. The little time they have in between trains is utilized by friends in this way.

Santosh said, 'as I work in the evenings I cannot talk much. People buy things in their way home. The compartment of the train becomes a market place in the evening. This is not a big market...a small one which caters to the accidentally forgotten items. We supply those items that are important for daily living but are very insignificant in the context of large bills. We maintain our daily bread by selling these items to the customers. We are not in a position to buy things that are expensive. There is a lot of bargaining in the train. There is also a culture of lending money among hawkers. Palash had bought a smart phone with the money he took on loan. He keeps it at home for his wife and children to use. He keeps a simple mobile phone instead of the expensive set. He said, 'smart phone is not a necessity but it is an item of interest to his wife and children. They do not understand everything of the mobile set but still want or desire it. Sometimes they desire and want something which is out of my reach but I try my best to get them the things they want. It is then that I need to take loan. There is one boy who sell newspaper. He buys tickets for lottery and spend at least ten to twelve thousand on it per month. He earns two thousand and fifty every month but all of the money he earns is spend on repayment. There are different people who desire different things. I wonder what else describe their life. Is it important because it is different? The answers loom large.

Why the search for the difference and the pattern?

Sociology started to take shape and focus on social structure, social system, social institution, industrialization, urbanization, social relationship, in short on the macro aspect of understanding society and the social environment in which we live. In the pursuit of the macro-social analysis and causal inferences the study of the *everydays* and how these days brought about the necessary pattern and diversity seemed a trivial issue though sociology never lost the significance of daily practices. Emile Durkheim's division of labour (1997 [1893]), religious life (1965 [1912]), and anomie (1951 [1897]) had discussions on how family and community impacted everyday life. Karl Marx (1975 [1844]) and 1969 [1848]) highlighted how the capitalist system killed the human spirit and helped in the decay of community and family every day. Talcott Parsons (1949) the progenitor of grand theory showed how individuals take decisions performing their social roles and create the social structure. Later on, it was through the works of Max Weber, George Mead, Levi-Strauss and others that the study of the micro level reality started to take shape. Simmel was a forerunner of this kind of sociology. With it ushered a turn in methodological perspective to how to look into such realities so close yet not under any scrutiny.

In sociology the study of the everyday was not a focused area for exploration unless Garfinkel tried to bring out how our every day is managed, organized and become the 'taken for granted' context in which we live our lives. Each one of us lives every day. Our *everydays* are marred with the mundane, routinized, solemn, grim, repetitiveness. Still it is the *everydays* that are reflection of the structure or the system; the system or the structure is maintained through our everyday struggles, works, joys of living and dreams. Yet we do not consider these *everydays* of any worth in our daily habit, duties and struggles. Our existence is counted in our years not in moments that in summation are our *everydays* adding of each day in our lives. Unless it has been lived or discovered under the scrutinized observation of a researcher that these become a base for the understanding of a series of life-experiences. Hawking is one such.

A hawker is a vendor of merchandise that can be easily transported; the term is roughly synonymous with peddler. In most places where the term is used, a hawker sells inexpensive items, handicrafts or food items. Whether stationary or mobile, hawkers often advertise by loud street cries or chants, and conduct banter with customers, so to attract attention and enhance sales. When accompanied by a demonstration and/or detailed explanation of the product, the hawker is sometimes referred to as a demonstrator or

pitchman (Mazumdar and Ghosh 2017). The railways often termed as the 'lifeline of the nation' directly provides a means of living to many people and also offers jobs to many people of the country irrespective of their cast, creed and religion. It is widely believed that the unorganized sector in India suffers from a low productivity syndrome, compared to the formal and organized sector. The prominent features of the sector are lower real wages and poor working / living conditions.

A lot of the goods sold by train hawkers, such as moulded plastic goods and household goods, beauty products and cosmetics, homemade sweets, snacks, jewellery, stationery are manufactured in small scale or home-based industries. These manufacturers cannot afford to retail their products through expensive distribution channels of the formal sector. In this way they provide a valuable service by helping sustain employment in these industries. Thus, they are a vital link between producers and consumers making a valuable contribution to the economy. The business of hawking evolved from the past and holds existence from primitive times itself. We have encountered this form of unorganized business in different timelines and in different forms. It can date from the large markets of rural India to street-side salesmen who sell their products the same way a railway hawker might do.¹² But what makes the railway hawkers significant is their degree of freedom in mobility; he can travel various places to reach his customers which the other traders may not be able to with their collection of commodities. Street hawkers are particularly vulnerable to efforts to regulate and transform urban space because they tend to work in strategic locations with a high volume of pedestrian traffic. In many instances, these are the very places where the authorities seek to impose and showcase a 'world-class' urban vision, which involves the exclusion of 'undesirable' users such as street dwellers and hawkers (Fadaee and Schindler 2017).

The study of the everyday of hawkers is fundamentally vibrant. It is dynamic not only because it is unrelenting and uninterrupted but also because it gives us a vision of productive social transformations. The actors here are at the one hand are negotiators with limited resources and bargaining power and on the other are social agents to exploit and forego opportunities. These are the people who are acting with limitations; carry the practices of their predecessors and also carefully creating a path of their own for the future generations. Their struggles and hardships and also their resilience to fight make them really real persons.

Notes

1. Dada is a term called to denote elder brother
2. Kharagpur Railway station is an operative station in the South Eastern division of Indian Railways. It was opened in 1898-99 (See Wikipedia.org for details).
3. Howrah Railway station is the oldest and largest railway complex in India, built in 185 (See Wikipedia.org for details).
4. Bandel is a junction station of Kolkata Suburban tracks in India. It is situated on the Howrah-Bandel-Bardhaman line in Hooghly district. It is also connected to Sealdah division by Bandel-Naihati line ((See Wikipedia.org for details).
5. Mango papads are Indian fruit leather made of mango pulp. It is sweet and is available in different varieties.
6. Bidi is a local version of cigarette made out of leaf and tobacco, lower in price and commonly consumed by people/smokers
7. Chappal is the Bangla term for sandals. Hawai is a form of sandals made of rubber, lower in price to leather sandals. Hawai is a brand name.
8. This is a usual dialect which indicates water supply commissioned by urban administration. It has a scheduled time-frame so the term includes Time-Kol (tap)-jol (water).
9. Kakima is a term used for the wife of Kaka (Pateranl Uncle).
10. It is a term used for broker and money-lender.
11. Puffed rice
12. In the colonial archive of Calcutta, the term ‘hawker’ appears along with other similar terms such as pavement seller, footpath seller, and *pheriwala* (peddler, or costermonger; whether stationary or mobile) at least since the late nineteenth century. But even in the 1970s, ‘hawker’, or even *pheriwala* (*pheriwali* for female vendor), was not a common term for a trader, whether on the footpath or itinerant; rather, they were popularly known for their trade. Thus, a fruit seller was called a *phalwala* (*phal* means fruit); one who sold utensils was called a *basanwala* (*basan* means

utensils). In Calcutta's everyday language of conversation, 'hawker' emerged only after partition (1947), when the government of West Bengal initiated economic rehabilitation projects for refugees by building a number of 'refugee hawker corners' in the city. These retail corners, which fuelled much of the expansion in the retail trade in refugee-dominated areas, were regulated through the Markets Regulation Act, and shop owners were given a trade license, but retained their specific history in their names (for example, Kalighat Refugee Hawkers Corner). See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawkers_in_Kolkata retrieved 30 March 2020, 2 April 2020.

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The Reformist Movement in India: An Analysis of the Role of Sant Kabir in Bhakti Tradition

Ramesh Kumar

‘The Creature is in Brahmin, and Brahmin is in the Creature,
They are ever distinct, yet ever united’ - Kabir

Abstract: *Many reformist movements had emerged in India and have revolted against the corrupt practices of Hindu religion. ‘Bhakti’ being one of them also played a very important role in this. Many poets and saints are associated with the bhakti movement, and one of the most popular among them is Sant Kabir Das, who led a movement against the malpractices of the Hinduism and Islam, and criticized both. Building upon such criticisms he tried to evoke a new synthesis, taking good elements of both Hinduism and Islam. He criticized mainly the caste system and rejected the dominant practices of the Hindus and the Muslims. He criticised the guardian of both religions, the Mullahs and the Brahmins. He taught mainly the ideas of the universal humanism going beyond the narrow and dogmatic practices of religions. This paper focuses on the main teachings of Kabir, and the ways in which he preached his ideas to the people. The focus would be on his use of the poetry and the skill of language to communicate the essence of his teachings, which was later consolidated and institutionalized by his followers, paving the way for the creation of Kabir Panth. This paper thus tries to locate the Sant Kabir in the cultural domain of Indian social structure which made him focus on themes that were untouched by the dominant religions of the day. A thorough analysis of his poetry/doha, is done in order to understand how his works have impacted the social cultural domain of India, and thereby generated a new way of conceptualizing the relation between man and the god.*

Keywords: Religion, Bhakti, Sufism, Doha, Poet, Personalised God.

Introduction

The word '*religion*' comes from the Latin word '*religio*.' In society it means believing in high power. This higher power is usually a God; people are taught how this comes to be. When one believes in God there are set ways of worship and moral codes that is lived by not every religion has God and sometime there are many Gods, or in some instances there is no God. In any case this general definition does not do justice to all religion because of the different beliefs that each religion has. There are many aspects to religion like animism, Magic, divinization, taboo, totems, sacrifice myths, rituals, rites of passage and ancestor worship. Every religion has all of these, but a different combination of them. Animism is the belief that everything around has spirit. In religion it is the belief that by performing certain formula dance and incantation correctly, one can change the course of nature. According to Durkheim – 'A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them' (Durkheim 1915/1976: 47). Religion not only configures the day to day routine activities of the people but also orders the ways in which we think and conceive of the facts of the reality in a very precise way. Therefore, it organizes the ways of life of the people who adhere to the belief and practices of the people. India has been a place where we can find almost all the major world religions; it in fact is the home for major religions of the world like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc. To note the significance of the reformist and the revivalist movement in India it is essential to note the historical origins and functions of all the religions in India. Therefore, in this context when we are analysing the works of Sant Kabir Das, we have taken note of the religions and religious practices of both Hindus and the Muslims. The analysis of the type of social structure is therefore important to note the significance of the great leader like Sant Kabir Das. So, it is intelligible to start with the analysis of the main belief systems of the Hindu religion. As Kabir wrote and worked against the corrupt practice of caste system it becomes further more important to locate the Hinduism in the era in which Kabir lived and worked.

Hinduism in India

Before we outline the trajectory of the Bhakti movement in India it is essential to understand the main teachings of the Hinduism, which was the most dominating religion of that time along with Islam. As it is popularly believed Hinduism is the oldest organized religion; it consists of a thousand

of different groups that have evolved since 1500 B.C.E. Because of wider variety of Hindu tradition freedom belief and practice is notable feature of Hinduism. Most from of Hinduism heterogeneous religion they recognize a single deity and view other God and Goddess as manifestation or aspect of that supreme God. 'Hinduism does not refer to one particular religion but, rather is a catchphrase for a group of religions, which have its origin in India.' (Rose 2006: 3). While trying to understand the main features of Hinduism many scholars have underlined many diverse beliefs and practices, however, Rose has had summarised them very neatly as- (1) Belief in divining of the Vedas, the epics and the Puranas, which are the holy books of the Hindu religion. (2) Belief in one, all pervasive supreme reality manifesting as both an impersonal force, which is called Brahman. (3) Beliefs in the cyclical nature of time, and the age which repeat themselves like seasons. (4) Belief in *Karma* the law of action and reaction, by which each person creates his or her own destiny. (5) Belief in reincarnation that the soul evolves through many births until all past deeds have been resolved, leading to ultimate liberation from the material world. (6) Belief in alternate realisation with higher beings. (7) Belief in the enlightened master or 'gurus' exemplary saints who are fully devoted to God, and who mediates between the man and the god. (8) Belief in non-aggression and non-injury (ahimsa) as a way of showing love to all creatures. (9) Beliefs that all revealed religion are essentially correct as aspects of one ultimate reality and the religious tolerance is the hall mark of all wisdom. (10) Belief in living, and living is first and foremost a spiritual entity a soul within the body and that the spiritual pursuit is consequently the essence and real purpose of life. (11) Belief that an organic social system traditionally called '*Varnashrama*'¹ is essentially the proper effective functioning of human mind and thus this system should be based on intrinsic quality and natural aptitude as opposed to birth right (Stephen 2006).

For analytical reasons it is very important for us to note the main beliefs of the Hindus as it is in contradiction to many of these features that Kabir writes his poems. It is against the hypocrisy of both the Hindus and the Muslims that Kabir writes and sings his *doha*, instead of a mythical and abstract God he preaches the idea of the loving and the all-encompassing God. This God is personalized to the extent that He does not become distinct from the self. It is thus very evident that most of the movements in Hindu religion can be seen as a result of unequal social order which tried to eliminate the inequality prevailing in the religious sphere. The sociological understanding of reformist movement thus has to be understood in relation to the wider context of the society in which it came out and also generated

a significant change in the overall lives of the people. In India it was caste structures that governed the lives of men and the networks of relations that they could enter into. The structure of social divisions that arose thus was, as mentioned, a rigid, inflexible and unequal one that created extremes of inequality, privileges and deprivileges between men and social groups. Although this was an extremely unfair system, little could be done or said against it as it was supported by Hindu religious ideology, particularly the notions of high and pure birth and occupation as against the low and impure. In other words, Hinduism was as much a social system as it was a religion, and provided an ideological framework on the basis of which Hindu society arose. In other words, Hinduism was both religion and social framework and governed the lives of Hindus. To be a Hindu meant that one's life was governed by factors such as being born in a caste, being subject to one's actions or karma, to be a part of Brahman and aim at achieving '*moksha*' or Liberation of one's soul or salvation. Further, it must be remembered that Hinduism was not a revealed religion that had just a single text. With every phase in the development of Hinduism came new scriptures and texts. Thus, we have the Veda, the *Upnishad*, the *Purana* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Even though we have stressed that the caste system was a system that formed the basis of life in Hindu India and was rigid and unchangeable, there nevertheless occurred many anti-caste movements in the course of the development of the religion. Buddhism and Jainism in the 6th century B.C. that spoke against caste divisions and social inequality. This struggle was carried forward and saw its culmination in the rise of the medieval movement of bhakti or '*selfless*' devotion to a single God, with which this unit is primarily concerned. The Sanskrit term bhakti is most often translated as "devotion" and *bhaktimarg* as "path of devotion". Bhakti is the divine-human relationship as experienced from the human side. There are at least three major forms of bhakti that is *Vaisnavas*, *Saivas*, and worshippers of the great power (*Sakti*). Each sect is divided into many subjects. Bhakti is between popular religion and asceticism. Bhakti shares the concern for *moksha* (salvation), that is release from the bondages of life on earth. The ritual of puja is very important. There are other rituals too communal singing of hymns and chants; recitations of epics; recounting of sacred lore. It is this last path of devotion that forms the basis of a religious tradition that survives and proliferates today even across international boundaries.

Bhakti tradition in Indian context

Bhakti needs no introduction, celebrated as an Indian version of Protestant Christianity by nineteenth-century missionaries and scholars. Grierson defined the term *bhakti* as having the primary meaning of “adoration,” while the related term *Bhagavata* (which the author always capitalizes) means “the Adorable One” (in the sense of “One who is adored”)² Bhakti tradition plays on the relationship between the real and the imagined, the local and the universal, the specific and the abstract. The two main pillars of the bhakti tradition are ‘love’ and ‘meditation’. The ‘love’ is for God, and it is ecstatic in nature as well as symbolising a feeling of bliss or happiness that is unparalleled; and an intimacy or closeness with God like that with one’s beloved. The idea that is being conveyed here is to be lost in the love of God as though He were a beloved. At the same time the relationship that arises here may be one of dependence upon the God. The basic teaching of this tradition was the idea of ‘loving devotion’ by concentrating upon the image of a single God and without any thought for oneself, as being the way of liberation of one’s soul. Any God could be the focus of one’s devotion. This God was then seen as one’s personal God or *Ishta deva*³. The most often chosen God for one’s devotion we find has been Krishna and most of the bhakti tradition has evolved around him. The idea of self-abandonment or the forgetting of everything in the presence of one’s God, is also seen as an important part of the bhakta or devotee’s devotion to God. This particular form of relationship between the God and devotee has been called ‘viraha bhakti’. Viraha bhakti is the name given to exclusive personal devotion to Sri Krishna where feeling of separation or longing is felt for the deity by the devotee. The devotion to Krishna and the bhakti cult that arose around him became prominent in South India around the 8th century.

When we look into the trajectory of the Bhakti movement in India, we have to find the course and genesis of the movement, Bhakti comes from the Sanskrit word, it is also similar to Tamil word ‘Anmu’. Bhakti is an affection fixed on God and Ishwara. Bhakti emphasises devotion and practice to above rituals, it also represents human beings’ relationships. Most often beloved friend, parents, child, master servant, it also refers to devotion to spiritual guru, teacher as a Guru is an impersonal form of God. Scholar like C. N. Venogopal considers Bhaktism as liberal dogma. It provided a kind of spiritual forum for people who were drawn from different castes. The main principles of Bhaktism were (a) cultivation of personal devotion to a god, (b) de-emphasis on rituals, (c) monotheism, and (d)

participation in a collectivity built on brotherhood or equality (Venugopal 1990: 80).

The concept of the Bhakti was a pan Indian phenomenon, yet there were regional variations, organizations such as *Kabirpanthis* (north India), *Chaitanyites* (Bengal), and *Dadupanthis* (western India), were active in their exclusive areas. Therefore, there are slight variations in their form of representation of the dominant culture of their area. 'The bhakti poets of regional languages differ from one other in the degree of criticism represented in their poetry. In all cases, bhakti poets respond to the world around them; at issue is how much their vision of bhakti overlaps with the norms of the surrounding culture.' (Prentiss 1999: 28). In its purest and highest form Bhakti is *prapatti*, 'abandon', the total self-surrender of the devotee to his Lord. The religion of Bhakti is one of a deeply felt love for a visible god, a love which suffices for everything and is its own recompense; Bhakti is constantly represented as the 'easy path', a kind of court which makes all asceticism unnecessary. However, notwithstanding the mere similarity of the Bhakti movement, there are sharp divisions that stem from the two-fold division between the *Nirguna* and *Saguna Tradition*- 'The Saguna bhaktas had strengthened the existent sects, and had supported the established socio-religious norms. As against this, the Nirguna bhaktas had taken a radical position, and their teachings had led to the formation of new and unorthodox sects. The Bhakti movement, therefore, embodied the conservative and the liberal, as well as the revivalist and reformist trends. It contained both conformism and dissent.' (Prentiss 1999: 27). Owing to this it has been argued that the cult of Bhakti is catholic, universal and to all. Thus, while the Bhagawat religion of devotion is perfectly democratic, yet it did not become universal religion due to the overwhelming domination of the Brahmins. The Bhakti movement on the contrary, was actually a reaction against that Brahminic tradition. So though there were regional variations in the Bhakti movement yet there was unsaid unity in the poets and the Sants who were active during this time, and this unity was the criticism of the dominant order of the day and time. 'The poets not only constructed their theology of bhakti in regional languages but also they offered reflections on the surrounding world. Their poetry tends toward the observational, with images of everyday life and their responses to it, including folklore, as well as the more institutionalized religious images such as God, temple, and ritual.'⁴ As it is very important to note that Bhakti emphasizes a personal devotion for one god. It may be pointed out that the *Alvar bhakti* saints of South India composed their devotional Poetry between 5th and 9th century AD. They were worshippers

of Krishna. They approached him with a love based on parental, filial, friendly and devotional attitudes the *Acharyas* who followed the Alvars had an intellectual approach treated dependence on god as logical rather than emotional. 'Vallabha formed a sect based on Sri Krishna-Radha in the 16th century AD. Krishna -Bhakti was also given much attention by Sri Chaitanya (AD 1485-1533) who was a contemporary of Vallabha. However, Sri Chaitanya's worship was of the ecstatic kind and popularization of the chanting of Hari (Sri Krishna), as a way to spiritual liberation. Namdeva (end of 14th century AD) and Ramananda were further important Bhakti Saints. The North Indian school was popularized by the disciples of Ramananda such as Kabir who used local language for preaching. Mirabai herself was initiated by Ravidas as disciple of Ramananda.

Locating Sant Kabir in the Bhakti tradition

The rise of Bhaktism almost coincided with the influx of Islamic groups into India. Bhaktism was a liberal creed. It provided a kind of spiritual forum for people who were drawn from different castes. The main principles of Bhaktism are (a) cultivation of personal devotion to a god, (b) deemphasis on rituals, (c) monotheism, and (d) participation in a collectivity built on brotherhood or equality. Insofar as Bhakti sects were heterodox, they faced uncertainty and often incurred the hostility of both Hindu and Muslim rulers in the initial stages. During their early formulations they were 'liminal groups'. As noted earlier, Indian reformist sects, such as Kabirpanthis (north India), Chaitanyites (Bengal), and Dadupanthis (western India), were inclusive rather than exclusive. Indeed, they included some cult-like characteristics. In the Bhakti sects, membership was not very selective. Discipline was not strictly enforced among the members, and flexibility enabled marginal individuals and groups to enter the sect. In addition, the cults often accommodated marginal, fugitive, and deviant individuals. It is very difficult to understand the contribution of Sant Kabir, without taking into account the Sufi tradition in India which had a very strong tradition in the time of Kabir. 'Sufism began around the 8th century with Saints such as Hadrat Habib Ajami (AD 738). Some scholars feel that Sufism is not against the Islamic law. In fact, the process of Sufism is closely interwoven in the Islami law. Sufism can be explained from the viewpoint of three basic religious attitudes found in the Quran. These are the attitudes of Islam, Iman and Ihsan. The attitude of Islam is that of submission to the will of Allah and the teachings Quran. Iman designates a further penetration

into the religion and strong faith in its teachings. Ihsan is the highest stage of spiritual ascent.’ (Prentiss 1999:14).

It may thus be noted that the ideas of Kabir was the interwoven text of the ideas that was developing in the Sufi and the Hindu tradition in India. In this period, we can see how the forms of ‘Sufism which were widespread in North India at the time of Kabir had already been influenced by Vedanta monism and had also assimilated some yogic methods, so much so that the Sufis appeared to the people as a variety of Yogis’ (Vaudeville and Partin 1964). This kind of very acute synthesis is found in the works of Kabir as his intellectual roots are ingrained in the culmination of the two distinct yet similar line of thinking. The fusion of Islam and Hinduism was complete in the poetry of Kabir, who in fact refused to identify himself exclusively with either religion. In the mystical experience, subject and object are felt to be transcended, and Kabir shared with Samkara the conviction that when ignorance is abolished the soul knows itself to be one with the Supreme Atman, in which, as Kabir said, following the *Mandkya Upanisad*, ‘God is one; there is no second’.⁵

Contribution of Sant Kabir Das

Although Kabir (1440-1518) was born in Benares, his father was a Moslem, and he was profoundly influenced by the Moslems who dominated India from the eleventh century until the advent of the British. ‘Rejecting the external authority of the Vedas and the Koran, Kabir, who was brought up in a Muslim family, preached the goal of inner realization based on the love of a transcendent and formless divinity.’ (Stahl 1954: 141). He was influenced by Vaishnava bhakti primarily but also by yogic and Sufi ideas and practices, such as the ideals of self-perfection and the oneness of God respectively, and the meditative recitation of God’s name as an expression of one’s love for him, common to both Hindu devotees and Muslim Sufis. His followers were drawn mostly from lower, often untouchable, Hindu castes, and included Muslims. Kabir expressed himself in the thought-forms of his own time and his own culture, but he was neither an apologist nor a critic of any school of philosophy. His motive is practical-to express the results of his luminous experiences so that men bound by ignorance and superstition might know liberation and peace. Throughout Kabir’s work the accent is on interiorization: man ought to turn his attention away from the exterior world, from all sensible forms, in order to withdraw into the innermost

depths of his conscience (undoubtedly analogous to the *Sirr* of the Sufis) where God dwells:

They say that Hari dwells in the east and that Allah resides in
the west:

Search in your heart, search in your heart-there is his dwelling
and his residence!

I believed that Hari was far off, though he is present in
plentitude in all beings,

I believed Him outside of me-and, near, He became to me far!⁶

During the life of Kabir, Hindu and Muslim, both religious leaders feared; because Hindu religion wanted to save the Hindu ways and practices, and the Islam also feared that the converted Muslim might not convert back to Hinduism. Therefore, the Brahmin and Mullah, fearing the negative aspect of each other consolidated and formed their religion on more orthodox lines. This was the situation in which Sant Kabir was born. 'Kabir's devotionism was cantered not on a personalized god in human form, however, but on an abstract and formless conception of the divine. He considered the religious experience more important than its ground in some conception of a divinity. Alongside bhakti Kabir echoed the metaphysics of the Upanishads and reflected in some measure the influence of Sufi ideas on his upbringing as a Muslim.' (Madan 1989: 120)

Kabir was influenced on the one hand by the tradition of the Bhakti and also of the Sufism on one hand and on the other by the Yoga tradition of Hinduism, but Kabir fosters a tradition which is- 'Contrary to Yoga, which is essentially technique, Bhakti is essentially faith, the adoration of a personal God, who is generally "manifested" in an anthropomorphic form, that of an *avatdra* or "descent." It is this visible form of a "qualified" (*saguna*) God which is the object of Vishnuite devotion. This God asks of his devotee ("bhakta") or of his servant (*ddsa*) nothing but faith, love, and trust.' (Vaudeville and Partin 1964).

As the bhakti movement liberalized Hinduism, so the Sufis liberalized Islam, and the synthesis of these two streams of thought met in Kabir. Kabir gave devotion to the Guru, who gives individual knowledge and who guides him throughout. For this very reason Kabir regards Guru to be of supreme importance. He regards Guru to be the person who paves the way for his disciple's salvation. Thus, he writes in one of his *doha*-

Can one without feet take a leap?

Can one without a mouth burst into laughter?
Without sleep can one rest?
Can one churn the milk without a vessel?
Can a cow without teats give milk?
Can one accomplish a long journey without road?
So the path cannot be found without a Guru.⁷

Kabir criticised Hindus and the Muslims both, Brahmin and Mullah alike, so both hated him, once upon a time Mullah went to Delhi and told Sikander Lodhi, that Kabir used word Ram-Ram! Publicly, but he is not a Hindu, similarly Brahmin also joined them and accused Kabir that he used the Tilak, which is the symbol of the Hindu though being himself a Muslim. Lodi was not convinced by their arguments and accusation and let Kabir go free. Again, once there was an accusation against Kabir before Lodi, and he was summoned in the court, on that occasion Kabir reached late. When asked for the reason for him to get late, he replied that he was engaged in watching the strange sight of elephants and camels are passing through the eye of needle. Lodi thought that he was lying, then Kabir answered by saying-

*O Kabir speak not on truth,
No one knows why may happen a quarter of second
O Kabir, all can comprehend
A drop entering the sea,
but the sea has entered into the drop
Few can understand this
The outward eyes have perished
O Kabir who has lost all four
What can one find in him?⁸*

*My name is great one,
All the world knows this My name is throughout the three worlds
I made manifest the seed of Brahma
I fought against the bounds of Yama*

*And I made my body clean
 Gods, Sage and men do not achieve the heights
 Saints alone can find it by Vedas and Quaranas
 None will reach the shore so deep is the mysterious knowledge.
 Hear of Sikander I sage of both religions.⁹*

Kabir was one of the staunchest opponents of the orthodoxy of both Hindu and Muslims faith. He lavished his criticism against both of them, and especially against its most devoid practitioners. That this is essentially the position of Kabir is brought out in the following poem in which creature and Brahman are said to be 'ever distinct, yet ever united.'

*The creature is in Brahma, and Brahma is in the creature:
 they are ever distinct, yet ever united. He Himself is the
 tree, the seed, and the germ. He Himself is the flower, the
 fruit, and the shade. He Himself is the sun, the light, and
 the lighted. He Himself is Brahma, creature, and Maya.
 He Himself is the manifold form, the infinite space; He is
 the breath, the word, and the meaning. He Himself the
 limit and the limitless: and beyond both the limited and the
 limitless is He, the Pure Being. He is the Immanent Mind in
 Brahma and in the creature.¹⁰*

The work of Kabir contains a resounding satire on Brahmanical orthodoxy and the superstitions of popular Hinduism. Not only does he condemn with finality worship of idols, these 'lifeless stones,' but he also rejects with contempt all the proceedings and ceremonies by which popular Hindu devotion manifests itself: purificatory bathing, ritual fasts, pilgrimages, and all sorts of practices:

*What is the good of scrubbing the body on the outside?
 If the inside is full of filth?
 Without the name of Ram, one will not escape hell,
 Even with a hundred washings!¹¹*

His criticism of the Mullah Islamic religion is also astounding like his criticism of the Brahminical Hinduism. His criticisms are one and the same time directed against the two collectively.

*The one reads the Veda; the other does the qutba,
 This one is a Maulana, that one is a Panda:
 They bear different names, but they are pots from the same clay!
 Says Kabir, both have gone astray
 And neither has found God.... The one kills a goat, the other slays a
 cow:
 In quibbles they have wasted their life!¹²*

For the people in the North India Kabir is one of the great names of the literature and religious history of North India. He belongs to that first generation of poets of Hindi language who composed couplets and songs for the people in a language which they understood: a mixed Hindi dialect, a kind of dialectal Bhojpuri which is not amenable to the classifications of the linguists. His use of the local language to foster his ideas was very well accepted by the people and it in turn helped in enriching the language of the local people. The lucidity and the innocence of the language that Kabir followed had a tremendous impact on the thoughts of the people, who in turn showered lavish attention and appreciation to his works. His notion of the God and the non-dualism of the person and the lord had a very great appeal to the masses in general, his Doha like the one in which his ideas of non-dualism are encoded are still very popular among the masses. Kabir most often takes the masses to the ideal state in which the body and the soul meet and the soul has the great realisation of the almighty, this mysterious experience he calls 'paricaya', from a word which signifies 'acquaintance by sight or by contact.' Thus he writes-

*When I was, Hari was not-now Hari is, and I am no more,
 every shadow is dispersed when the Lamp has been found
 within the soul.... The One for whom I went out to search, I
 found Him in my house, And this One has become myself,
 whom I called other.¹³*

Therefore, his idea of the God was more reachable to the masses, the lord for him is not the idealised anthropomorphised idol in the temple and sacred shrines but one with whom the human being is in constant interaction and, with whom one can share the deep feelings of life and agony. One is totally devoted to the lord and thus one is totally at the mercy and grace of the lord, thus he writes-

*His confidence is complete; he belongs body and soul to his
 Master: I am your slave, you may sell me, O Lord, My body*

and my soul and all I have, all is Ram's. If you sell me, O Ram, who will keep me? If you keep me, O Ram, who will sell me? Ram is not only the companion and friend; He is more than a father-He is a mother: Whatever fault a son commits, His mother will not have a grudge against him: O Ram, I am your little child, Will you not blot out all my faults
 14?

Kabir's ideas are thus encoded still in the daily life practices of people, and in form of institutional organizations like the Kabir Panth for whom Kabir is understood as a trans-temporal figure, so his words have a resonance larger than life and his signature a force that goes beyond any single historical context. 'Particularly in the Dharmadasi branch of the Kabir Panth, the term "Kabir" signifies more than the name of a man' (Hawley 1988: 271).

Conclusion

Throughout Kabir's work the accent is on interiorization: man ought to turn his attention away from the exterior world, from all sensible forms, in order to withdraw into the innermost depths of his conscience. Therefore, for Kabir, the religion of the man is to realize the non-dual aspect of the reality. His conception has come a long way in getting espoused in our ways of thinking. This continuity in our thought shows the relative importance of his teachings, also in the contemporary world. Kabir's ideas in the society are usually scattered in the forms of the popular idiom and proverbs, which serves us to find a ray of hope in the domain of darkness and austerity. It teaches the gospels of love and brotherhood which we can easily relate in our daily life. So, like in the quotation given in the beginning, we find solace in knowing the presence of the god in every realm of our life. It therefore from the idiom of the daily life of the householder and also of our daily conversation, where we argue for the presence of God in all the realm of life.

Notes

1. Hindu social system was divided in the four-fold division of labour, therefore people were organized in the hierarchical strata, whereby

the relative position of one group was justified by the origin myth of that particular group, respectively from the parts of the Brahma.

2. Grierson as quoted in Prentiss Karen, Pechilis. (1999): *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, Oxford University Press. New York, p. 7.
3. Ishta devais a deity that the worshipper chooses as a personal deity and accords it personal devotion.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Quoted from Partin, Harry B and Charlotte Vaudeville. 'Kabîr and Interior Religion', *History of Religions*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter, 1964), p. 196.
6. Quoted from Partin, Harry B and Charlotte Vaudeville. 'Kabîr and Interior Religion', *History of Religions*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter, 1964), p. 196.
7. Kabir quoted from, Ezekeil, Issac. 'Kabir the Great Mystic.' (p.16).
8. *ibid* (p. 36).
9. *ibid* (p. 38)
10. Roland Stahl, 'The Philosophy of Kabîr', *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Jul., 1954), p. 149.
11. *Ibid*
12. Quoted from Partin, Harry B and Charlotte Vaudeville. *Kabîr and Interior Religion* (1964). pp. 193.
13. *ibid* (pp. 197)
14. *ibid*

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11

Ibn-Khaldun's Contribution to Sociology

Sekh Rahim Mondal

Abstract: *Euro centrism and western domination deeply shaped the domain of knowledge in contemporary world academic disciplines. The same is true about sociology. As a result, the supremacy of western thoughts, ideas and methods are firmly established in the study of society. Against such a backdrop, the contributions of non-western scholars in the field of social sciences are either ignored or neglected for various reasons. However, such a trend is gradually changing in recent times under the influence of post modernity and reflexivity. Consequently, the social thoughts and methods of social inquiry discovered by many nonwestern scholars are getting prominence both in western and nonwestern worlds.*

The present paper is a humble attempt to highlight the life and thoughts of Ibn-Khaldun, which bear significance in understanding the dynamic nature of individual, society, state and civilization even today. The paper is based on a review of some noted publications on Ibn-Khaldun, both by nonwestern and western scholars.

Keywords: Kitab-al-Ibar, Al - Muqaddhimah, Asabiyah, Human nature, Nomadic life, Sedentary life, Social laws, Social epidemiology, Society, Culture, Civilization.

Ibn-Khaldun: Background and creative works

Wali-al-Din Abdal - Rahman Ibn Khaldun – al – Hamari (popularly known as Ibn-Khaldun) was born in Tunis, in May 1332 and died in 17th March 1406. He was the son of a very reputed Arab family, ethnically belonged to a tribe of South Arabia. His family immigrated to Spain but later moved to Morocco. He belonged to a family whose members occupied many important administrative and political positions, both in Spain and some African States.

Ibn-Khaldun was very meritorious and received education under the well-known scholars of his time. His family height enabled him to study under best teachers of Magrib. He acquired vast knowledge on classical Islamic texts, philosophy, logic and mathematics. Following his family tradition, at a very young age he held important official and administrative positions and served several government offices. He was also involved in politics and faced troubles for his political activism. But the most important fact is that in spite of his administrative and political associations he devoted himself to creative works in many fields of science and social sciences. He had an avid reader of books in wide range of subjects. Due to his professional and political affiliations he had access to important official records and literature. His contracts with the higher officials as well as with the common people enabled him gathering experiences and knowledge on societies in Arabia and Africa of that time.

The earliest systematic formulation of history and society is clearly found in the works of the Ibn-Khaldun. He was a philosopher, historian and social thinker. His contributions are much known for his monumental work on history of mankind, known as *Kitab-al-Ibar*. The sociological issues of his interest found mention in the "*Al-Muqaddimah*", i.e. prolegomena or introduction of *Kiatal-al-Ibar*. In *Al-Maqaddimah* he noted a wide range of subjects like influence of environmental conditions on society, people and society, human nature and character, various forms of political organizations and governments, differences between remote and urban desert peoples, kinship and social solidarity, health issues and above all the economic conditions and social organizations.

Ibn-Khaldun wrote *Al-Muquddimah* at a very young age (early 40's) on the basis of his tours, travels, reading of books, official documents and records. His official positions and political association helped him in gathering facts for *Al-Muqaddimah*. His official duties had brought him in close contact with many important persons, such as scholars, administrations, tribal chiefs, and even the commoners from whom he obtained firsthand information regarding social and political events. This book not only dealt with the rise and fall of empires but also addressed issues in geography, history, economy, culture and society. *Al-Muqaddimah* was translated in English by Franz Rosental in 1958 and it was translated in French by De-Slane in 1963.

Kitab-al-Ibar, the history of nomads (Barbers), which is now considered one of the earliest books in universal history. It is the collection of seven books and *Al-Muqaddhama* is the first one. Two to five cover history of

Arab dynasties while six to seven discuss the history of nomadic peoples and societies of Magrib. (Ba-Yunus; 1988, 2017 ; Mahdi: 1957; Schmidt; n.d.)

Khaldun's ideas

Ibn-Khaldun's core interests were in philosophy, theology, and mysticism. He divided science into different categories, namely, religious or moral sciences, non-religious or intellectual sciences and auxiliary sciences. To him the Quran exemplifies religious and moral science. He clubbed subjects like logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, etc. in intellectual sciences. The auxiliary sciences consisted of economy, polity, society, language and literature. He discussed social laws or the norms with great interest. Social laws, for him, are created neither by a single individual or single leader nor even by a small group of individuals but by a large majority of the members of a society. This is an idea that constituted the core of Durkheimian sociology much later. Khaldun's fundamental thoughts are noted below.

(i) On Human Nature: Ibn-Khalun has discussed dynamics of human nature at length in his monumental work *Al-Muqaddhimah*. For him, man is by nature social by nature and both good and evil elements are ingrained in him. Going by human nature he drew a distinction between man and animal on the following grounds:

- a) Human being has innate capacity of reasoning; man's capacity of reasoning is the root of perception, volition, and ability to think and act. This innate human nature distinguishes man from other animals.
- b) Cooperation, cohesion and competition are the features of human being. Cooperation enables them to satisfy the needs in an efficient manner and protects them from external threat while competition leads to conflict, which, in turn, brings about changes.
- c) Man makes tool and engages in other works to reduce risks and secure a better living in various ways.
- d) Man's ability to think and reflect sets him apart from other animals. The most important ability is his ability to draw knowledge and perceive the feelings like joy, grief, anxiety, patience and gratefulness.
- e) Social cohesion arises spontaneously in all small and large groups and is intensified through ideologies -religious, political, social and cultural.

ii) On Society, State and Civilization: For Ibn-Khaldun, State is an essential institution as laws are necessary to regulate the peoples' deviant behaviors and remove injustices from society. He was prompt in observing that the State itself could be the cause of injustice when the system of governance turns exploitative and oppressive. Civilization, for him, is a social phenomenon which is created by men for their glory and it will last as long as human beings exist. He argued that culture is created for meeting the basic needs and the rules and patterns, thus created, crystallized in a form of civilization. In the beginning, people looked for different means for increasing production to meet their basic needs and this was followed up with expansion of economic and social activities. Ibn-Khaldun was one of the proponents of social transformation and change. In his view, society begins with formation of social groups, or social differentiation, in order to achieve a stable social order. Stability makes social life sedentary and people become lazy; they stop working hard for greater productivity, and stop creating crafts and arts. The ruler fails to initiate appropriate steps to bring in the much-needed dynamism and thus allows the society to roll in a path of decay. When the society faces decadence a new group of rulers comes forward with right kind of initiatives and promise and the society is restored to the path of development and change. Ibn-Khaldun thus formulated his idea of cyclical change. He predicted a life span of a dynasty, which is about 120 years, which cover three generations of rulers, each lasting for a period of 40 years. He observed changes and a pattern within these 120 years of a rule; first generation is generally very strong, maintaining a high degree of group solidarity, the second generation becomes sedentary as the rulers live in luxury and lose control over the collectivity, and in the third generation the decadence is complete and the ground is now ready for the end of the ruling dynasty and the rise of a new one. One can see similarity in Khaldun's and Pareto's interpretation of history as the latter aptly defined history as the "graveyard of aristocracies".

(iii) On Solidarity and Collectivity: Ibn-Khaldun introduced the word *asabiyah*, which means group feeling, or collective consciousness to explain the character of tribalism in desert. (The word *asabiyah* is now taken to mean solidarity by the modern sociologists). The natural and spontaneous formation of social groups is found among tribes and other small communities around the world. Ibn-Khaldun observed that too much of bureaucracy, imposition of high taxes and too much of control of social life through legislation would make people angry and they would, in course of history, revolt against the power hierarchy. Anarchy and instability thus created would ultimately constrain the growth and development of a society. He

asserted that it is absolutely imperative for the bureaucracy to understand the dynamic nature of commerce, market forces and peoples' aspirations in order to work for social stability and progress. Mastery over technology, skills and crafts can also help in establishing social solidarity and progress. Through his concept of *asabyiah* Ibn-Khalun examined and analyzed the growth and development of great Ottoman power.

(iv) On the Role of Language in Society: Ibn-Khaldun's made a significant contribution to the understanding of the relation between language and society. The level and richness of a language finds reflection in the literary and philosophical works, which, in turn, indicates to the level of development of a society. He argued that alongside territoriality and culture a common language helps social interaction and social solidarity. It also marks distinctiveness of a culture and a population.

Ibn-Khaldun observed that the life ways of remote desert lands are marked by much hardship, where bare survival is a great challenge. The urban sedentary life ways in desert lands, on the other hand, are relatively comfortable and facilitate development of art, crafts and other creative fields. His notion of collectivity and solidarity articulated in *asabiyah* and distinction between life ways of non-urban and urban social settings in desert lands are very unique.

(v) On Health and Disease: Ibn-Khaldun made a significant contribution to the field of social epidemiology by classifying diseases based on their distribution among the urban and remote desert dwellers. He examined the linkages between urban life style, especially the food habit, rich diet and diseases. He observed that the city dwellers were lazy and were reluctant to do physical exercise. Hard-work was not a part of their everyday life and this, according to him, was the primary reason behind higher frequency of diseases among the city dwellers, compared to desert dwellers. He also observed greater use of medicines by the city dwellers. The desert dwellers often had scarcity of food grains and had to work very hard for a hand-to-mouth existence. Fighting with adverse nature and for food defined the essence of desert life and culture. Social customs were framed accordingly.

Ibn-Khaldun viewed that preparation of food using spices and fruits were the luxury of the rich and, in the process, they faced a lot of health hazards. The nomadic life, in contrast, required more physical movements and hard work (exercise) when they ride horses or camels for a living. For these reasons, the health of desert dwellers is in general is good; they develop strong digestion system and need very less medicine. This also explains why there were near absence of trained medicine practitioners in the desert

areas. (Ba-Yunus: 1981; Mohammad: 2017; Momin: 2017a; 2017 b, Rosenthal; 1958)

Conclusion

Ibn-Khaldun (1332-1406) is considered a great scholar of 14th century and is widely known for his works in the fields of philosophy, history and sociology. He moved from orthodoxy to an open-minded, logical philosophical inquiry, while preserving the true spirit of Islam. This great man was not only a social thinker but also a political advisor to the political power of his time.

Ibn-Khaldun was one of the early Islamic scholars who explained historical processes explicitly on the basis of social laws. He recognized the role of human agency in historical processes. As a rationalist and empiricist, Ibn-Khaldun attempted to discover social and historical laws of socio-political change. His ideas and concepts of social and political change are a precursor of modern social theories. He stated that social laws need to be discovered through observation, experience and fact findings. This scientific method to social knowledge marks a clear departure from metaphysical thinking and established him as an important founder of science of history and society. Ibn-Khaldun's writings and visions are distinctly sociological. His ideas and views on society are entirely based on his personal observations, experiences, collection of facts and reading of documents and records. He did intensive works and observations among ethnic groups and small indigenous groups of Arabia, and Northern parts of Africa.

Ibn-Khaldun's major project was to study and understand the conditions prevailing in the Muslim societies of his time, particularly the disintegration and decline of Muslim power, state and society in Spain and North Africa. Ibn-Khaldun was interested to know the process of social change in Muslim societies of Arabia and Africa through macro historical level. To him history was not only a narration of stories of rulers (kings) and dynasties but also an exploration of the internal dynamics of important social, cultural and political events.

Ibn-Khaldun formulated the concept of *asabiyah*, meaning the collective consciousness, has much significance in sociological understanding. He believed that the motor behind the rise and fall of society and civilization is *asabiyah*. *Asabiyah*, for him, is a key analytical tool for understanding the

dynamics of human society and social transformation, the rise and disintegration of human civilization.

Ibn-Khaldun classified the population of desert lands into two groups, nomads and settlers in a chronological order, the former evolving into the latter.

Ibn-Khaldun not only contributed to understanding human history but also to the understanding of society, and many of his ideas, like social solidarity, collective consciousness, social change found reflection in the modern sociology, particularly the ideas of Emile Durkheim and Robert E. Park. His views on individual, society, human nature, social character of man, kinship and social system, social solidarity, urban and non-urban differences, economic condition, political organizations, health, disease and above all the social-political change bear relevance even today.

Contemporary European scholars acknowledged many of the Ibn-Khaldun's works, thoughts and ideas. The modern thinkers consider his *Al - Muqaddhimah* as the first work of its kind that dealt with social science subjects while propounding a view of universal history. Earnest Glenner a well-known British sociologist made a positive evaluation of Ibn-Khaldun's contributions while regarding him as a sociologist and a proponent of the notion of "ideal type". Famous historian F. Toynbee recognized Ibn-Khaldun's view on social process and change as a great contribution in history. Patrim Sorokin described *Al-Muqaddhimah* as the earliest systematic treasure of sociology. H.E. Barnes considered Ibn-Khaldun as the greatest founder of sociology. C. C. Zimmerman considered him as an important person who firmly established sociological thinking (Momin 2017a).

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My experience with ‘Others’

Arpita De

Abstract: *This is an autobiographical paper which intends to explore my ‘Self’ and my relationship with ‘Other’ in the continually changing world. It is presented in two parts. The first part is comprised of some discriminatory norms which I have identified in my lived experience from the very childhood. These norms are usually unwritten, but embedded in rituals, cultural traditions and discourse. I have tried to define my perception of ‘Other’ with respect to the agents of these norms in my life journey. I have always been in suspicion with such agents as they usually create pressure, put someone on the margin, and try to deprive one of exercising one’s agency. Interestingly, I observe that my relationship with ‘Other’ is not also static. My emotional reaction associated in the journey of perceiving ‘Others’ has also been changing with time. The second part of the paper tried to explore these interactions in my professional life with a client of mine in my counseling chamber who came to seek professional help and whom I perceived as an agent of the discriminating dominant discourse. I have tried to explore how I suffered from a role conflict; a split between ‘me’ and ‘the counselor in me’ and how I could slowly resolve the split and enrich my insight both as a human being and as a professional.*

Keywords: Relational-Self, Dominant Discourse, Stories, Subjectivity, Otherness, Alienation, ‘Us vs Them’, Patriarchy, Stereotypes, preferred identity.

The unwritten norms

On an occasion of writing something on ‘self and lifeworld’, I started focusing on myself. When I observe myself, I observe the path I have followed; watch the map of the landscape I have explored; the time space I revolved around with family, friends and significant others; co-travellers I met in my journey. The journey starts when I am born. The path is not always smooth. At times it is rough, I stumble; sometimes it is rugged, I fall down; sometimes it is beautiful, I enjoy. When I look back, I find many

things other than humans. There are other creatures, objects and articles, different norms, beliefs, values, dominant habits of the family and society, different discourses and many more. There are many stories. Those are my stories. Those stories of my life encompass varieties of entities. In the journey, with every appearance of new visual a new story begins. These observations are exclusively subjective. My observations are limited to the extent of my own relatedness; my own emotions and all that matter to me. And it really matters how I am related with the observed. How do we develop such a relationship? Is the self-relational? Is it always a happy experience or it involves pain/distress too? In this context I started thinking of 'Others'.

What does the term 'Other' signify to me? Is it what I find dissimilar with respect to my 'self'? I may have certain mental picture to depict me, certain notion of myself. I love to see myself in a particular way; my preferred way. I have my own likings, disliking, fascination for something, may be aversion to something, some beliefs, some values— all these define my comfort zone. If I am forced to behave opposite to the way I define myself, I immediately react by saying like *Chitrangada*,

"সেআমি যে আমি নই আমি নই"(Sheyami je aminoi, aminoi)!' (taken from the dance drama *Chitrangada* of Rabindranath Tagore which means 'It's not me, not my right depiction'. In order to impress Arjuna *Chitrangada* prayed to God Cupid who transformed her to a physically good-looking woman. Here she perceived that portrayal of herself as something which is alien to her own identity. It seems that as if I am observing a piece of 'Other' in myself.

Is there a set of rules in the society which try to control my 'self'? These rules may be unwritten but embedded in the structure; enmeshed in the rituals and discourses; hidden in the daily practices?

It is neither a configuration, nor a form, but a group of
rules that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its
specificity (Foucault 1972: 46)

I have been watching these rules since long time while travelling along the path of my life journey. I have come to the conclusion that I cannot second Sukumar Ray when he says that

("এই দুনিয়ায় সকল ভাল", "কিন্তু সবার চাইতে ভাল পাঁউরুটি আর ঝোলাগুড়")

'everything is nice in this world'. Sukumar Ray who is one of the greatest humour writers in the world, concluded that everything is nice; be it real or imitation; cheap or expensive; you or me... But the best of all the things is

a loaf of bread served with runny jaggery. It has been a very favourite childhood poem of mine and none the less the meal, which I cherish at this age too.

But here I am talking about the discriminatory attitudes or rules or dominant discourses which put someone in the margin of the society on the basis of some defined attributes. The definition comes from the society itself. It may be on the basis of gender, race, religion, economic status, disability, mental illness! In the process of marginalisation the person who does not fit into the rule sometimes becomes 'Others'; sometimes 'Alienated'; 'Helpless'; distressed and 'Oppressed' may be.

I spent days in the foothills of Himalaya surrounded by forest and river in the first seven years of my life. Nights were lit with kerosene lanterns in that part of my life. Down memory lane I find so many things which immerse me in deep comfort and happiness. It was the 'sound of silence' of the jungle; the excitement of waiting in the wooden veranda every day to witness the small blue toy train going to Darjeeling; my playmate little sweet pet dog Jerry; memory of watching 'The Sound of Music' in a Darjeeling show house, playfully learning in the kingdom of nature with my mother. The story of breaking of innocence probably started when we left that place as my father got transferred to southern part of West Bengal.

While growing up, I gradually understood that most of the people in our society put a special weight on boys. This special emphasis gets reflected in everyday life; in linguistic connotations; in rituals; in cultural practices. It was the beginning of seventies. I came to realise that when a baby is born people generally become happier if it's a boy. Boys are compared with gold or diamond, which are precious and expensive metals. There is a Bengali saying which says “,সোনার আঁঙটি আবার বাঁকা না সোজা” (sonar angti abar soja na banka)! It means that a golden ring is always perfect and precious even if it is broken or has a bad shape. This saying actually indicates that boys are always precious and faultless as the material they are made of is gold.

To me, Essentialism encourages reductionism, a crude form of stereotyping and over-generalisation. I used to wonder, is it a world of males actually? They are the first-class citizen of the world and other things come in relation to them?

She is not regarded as autonomous being (Simone de Beauvoir 1948: 26)

I was a student of a school which was meant for girls only. There were frequent regrets from my friends. ‘Ohh! Why am I born as a girl? Boys are so privileged! Starting from a big piece of fish to juicy portion of a mango — all travel towards their dishes! This is the rule.’ It was a shock for me. Being their only child, I never faced such discrimination from my parents. I used to feel guilty for being so fortunate! At the same time, I could remember a joke of my uncle! He used to say ‘I really don’t know how much amount we have to spend as a ‘ferry-charge’ for you to get you across the river of marriage! You are so dark! But there is a hope too. You are glamorous’. When I was very small (in preschool) I could only understand that there was something insulting in the sentence. I used to complain my mother about it saying ‘he is calling me glamour!’ My mother assured me that it was a joke and advised me to ignore it! As I grew up, I tried to answer back and my enquiry was always on the line of questioning the norms.

‘What is wrong in being black?’

‘Is the colour black considered to be shameful? Why?’

‘Why marriage of a girl is the responsibility of elders?’

‘Is it mandatory to get married?’

‘Why we always say the act of marriage as ‘being’ in case of girls and as an act of ‘doing’ in case of boys?’

The person who is supposed to answer all these questions (generally an elder) used to declare ‘end of session’ by taking privilege of his/her age after giving me a scolding.

Friends used to narrate their stories. It has been a common practice that girls take care of household works. The roles are defined! Her elder brother is never assigned with such responsibilities! She doesn’t get time to study where her brother can. In many families I observed that objective of educating a girl child is to make her more presentable in the market of marriage! I used to get very angry and annoyed against such practices.

‘Have you just realised how free they are?’

‘Rules and restrictions are only for us, not for them!’

‘Don’t do that! Hey! Don’t sit like that! That is not the gentle way for girls to sit! Don’t dress yourself in such way! Don’t laugh like that!’

There are so many unwritten norms for girls! A mentality of 'Us vs Them' was automatically being created without our conscious effort.

On the other hand, if a boy behaves in a different way which is contrary to the defined dominant role of a male, there was immediate sarcasm towards the boy.

'Why are you behaving like a girl? Boys do not cry! You are a boy! You have to be brave!'

In this context, I remember a short story of Tagore. It is 'Ginni', which means mistress of the house. It is a story of a boy Ashu who was a shy and introvert student of a primary school. Sibnath Babu, the teacher-in-charge of that school was famous for naming his students with innovative sarcasm. It was scarier than physical assault for the victims. An example of such name was "ভেটকি" (Vetki) which was the name of a fish with wrinkled blunt face. Ashu had a younger sister who was very dear to Ashu. They used to spend time together playing happily. The climax of the story was naming Ashu 'Ginni' in front of his class after witnessing Ashu to play with her sister. It was an auspicious occasion of marriage of her doll and Ashu was actively involved in the play. Sibnath Babu was an accidental witness of the play. The new identity of Ashu as 'Ginni' along with the overt expression of bullying by his friends shattered Ashu. Tagore expressed in the last line of the short story that Ashu perceived playing with her younger sister as the most shameful mistake of his life which was irreparable.

I could remember one of my relative's cautions about crying! She always warned me when I cried!

'Don't cry my dear! You are born as a girl! You have to endure so many things in life!' Now I realise that the warnings meant that the act of crying has come to a girl by default and at the same time power of endurance should be there in a girl by default too!

Roles are defined; societal norms try to make you destined to behave in a particular fashion! I found a tendency growing within me to question any stereotypical norm or practice. In the time I am talking about it was not a common practice for the girls to work outside. Most of our mothers were house makers. I was a naturally talkative girl and used to argue frequently with elders on such issues. Questions always flooded into my mind before accepting a norm which had a discriminating connotation involving gender, race, colour or religion. My journey from school to college and college to university were full of such questions and arguments. Gradually I came to understand what patriarchy is and how people are engraved with patriarchal

values. I was a bit too privileged. I enjoyed freedom more than many of my friends. It was overwhelming to go to a different city on account of taking education! It was thrilling to travel and discover the outer world alone! My parents never stopped me to do anything I liked! But there were many agents of patriarchy who raised their eyebrows! The argumentative self of mine declared a war silently against the warrior of patriarchy who disapproved freedom of girls to conquer their own fate!

নারীকে আপন ভাগ্য জয় করিবার
 কেন নাহি দিবে অধিকার হে বিধাতা?
 নত করি মাথা পথ প্রান্তে কেন রব জাগি
 ক্লান্ত ধৈর্য প্রত্যাশার পূরণের লাগি দৈবাগত দিনে।

NAREEKE AAPAN BHAGHYA JOY KARIBAR
 KENO NAHI DIBE ADHIKARI
 HE BIDHATA?
 NATO KARI MAITHA
 PATHAPRANTE PNEO RABO GAJI
 KGLANTA DHYRAJA PRATYASHAR WPURANER LAGI
 DAIBAGATO DINE

[‘Ohh God! Why haven’t you provided women the right to exercise her agency to conquer her own fortune? Why do I have to awake with my exhausted and tired soul for something which only can happen by miraculous intervention of God?’ “SABALA” by Rabindranath Tagore (free translation)]

But I was enjoying my freedom! I can remember we friends were experiencing happy trips in mountains and forests! There were resistances from many others! “Are you travelling alone?” This ‘alone’ means without male escorts!

‘Oh! What a joke! How four persons become alone?’ – We were in bubbling laughter!

আরে তুমি কি মালিক না রাজা?
কে দেয় সাজা মুক্ত স্বাধীন সত্য কেরে?
হা হা হা পায় যে হাসি !

[‘Are you my master or a king?’
‘Who can punish a liberated and free sole?’
‘Ha haha! It is ridiculous’
-Najrul Islam (free translation)]

I found a change in myself from an angry annoyed argumentative one to a confident freedom loving entity. I identified freedom as my utmost priority. I felt that I love celebration of life. It comes from the feeling of being connected with others; with friends; co travelers; with people and creatures of the world; with nature & the bigger universe. It’s like the happiness of a bird learning to fly for the first time! I could remember the books like ‘Jonathan Livingston Seagull’ and ‘why I am an atheist’ by Bhagat Sing.

But ‘She is defined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the subject; he is the absolute — she is the other’ (Simon De Beauvoir: 1948: 26).

There were representatives and agents of those unacceptable discriminating norms. I also find them hidden in words, languages, proverbs even games children play in our day to day life. Those connotations are apparently benign but I find them help to strengthen the structure of this system. These tools are not only used by people who try to control others but these are often found in the vocabulary of people who are being controlled. They use them knowingly and unknowingly both and become agents of the discrediting system. They held the system and help it to exist.

An example of such a common popular game can illustrate it more clearly. Many of us have participated in the game specially girls.

It is a poem we used to play it in a group. we gather in a group and used to say in melody...

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এলাটিং বেলাটিং সইল
 কিসের খবর আইলো
 রাজামশাই একটি বালিকা চাইল
 কোন বালিকা চাইল
 এই বালিকা চাইল
 Elating belastingsai lo
 Kisherkhaborailo
 Raja mahashayeeektibalikachailo
 Kon balikachailo
 Eibalikachailo.

[It talks about the arrival of an announcement. It goes like this-

‘Hello lady maids’
 ‘Listen!’
 ‘What is it about?’
 ‘The king has asked for a girl.’
 ‘Who is the girl in demand?’
 ‘She is the girl in demand.’

[News arrives. King wants a girl. The girl in demand gets the garland. The girl is a passive agent. She doesn’t have any power to select; to exercise her agency; she will only be obliged to get the garland.]

‘লজ্জা যে নারীর ভূষণ।’

Another saying goes that ‘shyness is the glory of a woman.’

In every society introduction of discourse is at once controlled changed organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (Foucault 1972: 216).

Tagore's *Chitrangada* may be a strong depiction of a woman's self-respect. In the last song of the dance drama she is saying that she is neither a goddess nor an ordinary woman. She cannot accept her to be ignored and at the same time to be worshipped. She proposes Arjun that if he keeps her by his side at the time of both prosperity and critical situation as well, he will be able to know her.

But what I felt from my experience that the position of the second-class citizen has been prefixed on the basis of gender.

Gradually I was observing the conventional market of marriage; how it values a girl. Yes! I found it as a market. It was in the early eighty's when we were in college. The bride's party comes to choose a bride; asks questions. Questions were like — what are her abilities and disabilities; what extra qualifications she has; how good she is in music etc. There is sometimes open discussion about dowry; sometimes it is put in such a manner as if they are usual; a part of rules. I could remember that one of my elder warned me that if you do not bring enough wealth from your father it is shameful for you.

In this context I remember a story. It was about the marriage of a girl of my hostel. She was from a well-established family. The list of articles in the dowry couldn't make any problem in the negotiation. The only problem she had was her would be in-laws wouldn't allow her to be dressed in night gown. Dressing in a night gown was the only symbol of freedom to her. It was making me angry. I asked her 'how do you accept the very practice; the way of negotiation; the dowry?'

I realised that she could not understand my question. Parents are the guardians; they do what they think is best for us! I was getting annoyed!

'But you see they are demanding so many things for the marriage! The list involves certain amount of gold, fashionable couch, chest of drawers, dressing table, fridge, washing machines and many more! '

'Let elders handle it. My parents will gift me all those things unconditionally.'

An answer came back.

I was confused. Who is speaking? Is it the pride of wealth?

I am going to quote Sartre.

The one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes

everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am
hiding the truth. (J e a n
Paul Sartre 1966: 49)

Is she in 'bad faith'? Is she finding it too anxiety provoking to exercise her agency by making a protest? At the same time, I cannot place 'bad faith' and 'good faith' in polar opposites.

Can it be a case of ignorance? May be, she never thought about the complex dynamics embedded in those norms! I perceive it as a joint leadership of discrimination and power!

Mystification is one of the forms of oppression; ignorance is a situation in which man may be enclosed as narrowly as in a prison. (Simon De Beauvoir 1948: 98)

She has been brought up as per the definition of a 'gentle' girl. It has been a pre-defined category made by patriarchy. She is obedient and adjusted herself to fit in that definition. She did not learn to argue with the elders. She did not learn to say 'No'! She did not even learn to express herself or maybe she never thought of what she liked! Girls are born to please others; sacrifice for others. She has learnt to recognise the voice of patriarchy as her own voice.

'when women feel excluded from direct participation in society, they see themselves as subject in a consensus or judgement made and enforced by the men on whose protection and support, they depend and by whose names they are known.' (Gilligan 1982: 67).

‘পরের খুশি দিয়ে সে যে
তৈরি হল ঘাষে মেজে,
আপনাকে তাই খুঁজে বেড়ায় নিত্য আপন-হারা।’

‘Parerkhushidiye she je
Tairihologhashemeje
Aapnare tai khunjeberayenityaaapan-hara’
—*Beshur* by Tabindranath Tagore

[She has only learnt to please others

She has made herself ready to align with the practice
And so she continuously misses her own sole'
(Free translation)]

The psychologists can conclude that she has internalised the norms; has conformed to the societal expectation. Conformity can come to express the mentality to go align with the dominant group; it can also indicate a desire to be socially acceptable; to 'fit in' the norms to avoid confrontation; it can simply know it to be correct in the social context.

In my lived experience I have found such many examples. There are examples of people who have accepted this role happily. I have observed that sometimes people do it unknowingly. People are also found in dilemma of happiness and unhappiness; may be in a split!

People are also victimised! We know how Kadambini of Rabindranath Tagore in 'Jibito O mrito' had to give her life to prove that she was not dead! Sharadashankar was a jaminder. Kadambini was a neglected widow in Sharadashankar's family. She was very much fond of Sharadashankar's youngest son whom she brought up and nurtured with her maternal love as the biological mother of the child was sick after giving birth of the child. She was a marginalised person in the family and people were mostly indifferent when her sudden and supposed death took place in an evening. To avoid any trouble from the police four Brahmin employees of the zamindar quickly carried off the body to the burning ghat. She was not dead anyway. Her heartbeat stopped due to some unknown reason. It was a rainy day. The four Brahmins were playing cards. They suddenly realised that there was no dead body. When she regained consciousness, she left the place but imagined herself to be dead. The irony lied there; when she realised and convinced that she was alive the Sharadashankar's family thought her to be a ghost. She committed suicide and the last line of the story goes like this...' Kadambini had to die to prove that she was alive.' The story may be a satire directed at the blind superstitions and notions of ritual purity nurtured by the orthodox Hindus. But I remember the story in today's context when I find the society's dominant view of rape and how it points the finger towards the victim and make her the 'Other'. I could remember the movie 'Adalat O ektimeye' by Tapan Sinha. We have seen 'Me too' movement very recently. There are many examples of 'Jibito O mrito' girls whom the society prefers to be dead and continuously throw subtle and overt feelings of discrimination towards them!

When I was in college, I was not accustomed in theoretical interpretations of such concepts. I had no idea of the concept 'Other'. Now I observe myself as a person who was an 'OTHER' to patriarchy. Even today if I find an agent of patriarchy my antenna immediately steepens. Interestingly my relationship with the 'OTHER' (as if, considering them to be 'OTHER' of mine) has also been changing. In my childhood I had a tendency to identify the person as 'the agent' and getting annoyed with that very person strongly. Gradually in my life journey I have realised that the feeling towards such people has also been changing. I have learnt to resolve my anger with humour; singing a song often became my solace; placing my frustration in falling leaves of autumn; the mountain, the river, the vermillion red of flowers helped me to hold my pain! I have learnt about how people protest collectively; I have seen people are getting involved in various movements discovering the beauty of individuality! I got drenched in the feeling of solidarity. My journey involved a process of continuous construction and deconstruction of myself and others. I love to work in the field of mental health. Here I also felt there is no final or ultimate definition or core self! It is relational; keeps changing.

An agent of patriarchy in my counseling chamber?

I am going to include story of a person who came to my chamber asking counseling help. I also like to include how I perceived him as an 'agent' of Patriarchy and how I resolved the issue of dilemma within me as a counselor.

He was a middle-aged person who holds a high post in a corporate office. One day I got a phone call from Mr. P (let me call him Mr. P). He told me over phone that he had to see me because of a very ordinary cause; it was his anger. He said 'I do not have any serious problem except that I am getting angry! It seems that I have to go! So, I decide to go.'

After missing two dates he came to my chamber.

He said 'When I get angry, I absolutely become out of myself; I become a demon!'

In our conversation we were exploring the questions like 'how the demon looks like', 'how it behaves', 'the situations when the demon comes', 'how it influences the situations' 'what are the effects of its influence', 'how does it affect him and his relationship with closed ones' and many more.

As he narrated, we could observe that the demon visits his home as well as his office! He was talking about some incidences. Let me first narrate an

incidence which occurred in his home. There are four members in his family. He has his wife, one son and one daughter. His wife is a government employee. His father stays in a nearby flat. The flat being in the same locality Mr. P finds it easier to take care of his old father. In one Sunday, his father came to his house in a day out. It is a common practice of the house that Mr. P gives instruction about each and everything of the household activities; about the menu; how those are to be cooked; every tidbit. He also informed that other members of his family are afraid of him and his temper. The incident of that day was a little bit different! One of the menus was cooked in a little different way as he directed; he referred it as 'which hardly mattered' but he became furious about it. The demon came; overturned the dining table and crushed everything. After his violent reaction no one could take any food; he did not talk with anyone; he went to the office in the next day without taking any food.

In the office environment he cannot accept any mistake of his juniors. He informed that they did not know how to make a proper power point presentation. He told me that he knew himself as a perfectionist although he was also well versed of the fact that nothing is perfect in this world.

We were trying to explore the effects of the workmanship of the demon in his life; across his life line.

I find it very important to inform that I haven't taken any permission of the person to share his stories here. I was in a dilemma whether to ask him or not. Ultimately, I decided not to inform him as I thought it could hamper the therapeutic relationship. I haven't mentioned his name; changed other allied facts; the stories of his life I mentioned were not at all uncommon in a society like ours.

We were exploring the things that were coming up –

He was a proud man and which was continuously being published in his language.

He was also proud of the fact that he was a self-made man and his body language was speaking about his love for power.

He was talking about himself; how he was helpful to his juniors – a sense of disregard and slight was coming out about the persons whom he helped!

He considered himself as a generous person! He helped poor people with money but never want the money back!

In this context, he was talking about a poor old lady who ran a small shop in his locality. She had taken some money from him as a debt and informed Mr. P that she would like to give the money back! He made a taunting comment with a mocking smile 'I know you are not going to return the money back! Why do you say?'

He was talking about his wife. He labelled her as an average woman. He said 'although she is a working woman, she is mediocre'

He also added that he gave them time; he said 'no one will be able to say that I do not give them time! They purchase whatever they needed.'

He considered himself to be a very cultured person and he was the only intellectual person in the family.

His expressions were full of arrogance and stories were full of proud haughty power revelation and manifestation of patriarchal values.

Suddenly I realized that I was labeling him as an 'agent of patriarchy'! It was the fly on the wall who informed me.

'Am I losing my friendly curiosity?' – I thought.

'Am I a split between 'the counselor in me' and 'the person who raises her eyebrows to visit anyone who makes people marginalized and tries to control 'OTHERS'?'

'Am I observing an 'OTHER' in me too?'

All of a sudden, a peculiar feeling came in my mind! Being a controlling, power loving masculine and abusive Patriarch might be no less vulnerable & threatened than the person who is marginalized in the system! A person who has learnt to control 'OTHERS'; tries to put a person in the margin who doesn't align to the dominant norms or norms set by him; he is also helpless in the system. It is easier for a marginalized person to understand the oppression; her/his helplessness; the distress he/she receives from the system!

But a patriarch who is successful, proud of fame, money & power never understands that his distress too may come from the dominant definition of success! The dominant discourse which the person may have taken it as the final one can be self-devouring too! I remember a sentence 'Capitalism is self-destructing'! Patriarchy is a very welcoming tool of capitalism then!

I got back my friendly curiosity towards the client.

We started exploring again! Interestingly we reached to some points.

He cannot take any criticism from anyone.

He is the master of his kingdom.

He loves to control everyone in his kingdom as he is the decision maker. It has been very natural to him.

He is successful; earned enough money and he thinks he has fulfilled the need of his family but never asked them what they want!

Although he knows that nothing is perfect, he expects others to perform in 100 percent perfection!

He suffers from a continuous performance anxiety whether he will be able to maintain his position!

The demon makes him to do things in such a way that he becomes a completely different person altogether! As he expressed 'as if I am not me'! The person gets bisected and doesn't understand why he was being split! The demon makes himself 'Other' to himself. He also observes a piece of 'Other' in him. It makes a devastating effect in his immediate environment; in the family as well as in his office. The persons with whom he misbehaves and becomes rude never accept him with spontaneity. It makes him disturbed as he fails to repair the relationship!

He feels alone in his kingdom. He has no friend. It was not his preferred identity too!

I found a sad lonely person came out of that proud, arrogant and controlling Mr. P.

He started talking about his love for power to control others. He compared this urge as addictive (he said 'it is like a 'ନେନା' (intoxicating drug)). He uttered ' I don't know how I should express! It's like a drug! It's very difficult to come out of its effect'.

if the oppressor were aware of the demands of his own freedom, he himself should have to denounce oppression. He is dishonest; in the name of the serious or of his passions,

of his will for power all of his appetites, he refuses to give up his privileges. (Simon De Beauvoir 1948: 96).

I understood that he was responding! There were many words which came up from our conversation. Among those the most important was 'King'. It was a very symbolic connotation. We started exploring what the king might have in his hand except a whip! A very popular song came up which was composed by Satyajit Ray in his film 'GupiGayenBaghaBayen' it was 'এক যে ছিল রাজা তার ভারি দুখ' Ek je chilo raja Tar bharidukh. It was a fantastic story of two villagers who were gifted by the king of ghosts to become singers. It was their dream and, in this film, they went to a country Shundi where their adventure began! The adventure included freeing a king; stopping a war; banishing aggression and reuniting two brothers.

The song goes like this: There was a king who had a lot of sadness. He cries; he is helpless! It is not only the absence of wealth which makes one sad! A person having lots of gold in his store house can be unhappy too! Actually, he is anxious of dacoits! By punishing others how will he get comfort? He is nothing but a prisoner in the palace! If he can abandon himself from the palace and can take fresh air in a meadow, probably he can get peace!

To will oneself free is also to will others free. This 'will' is not an abstract formula. It points out each person concrete action to be achieved. (Simon De Beauvoir 1948: 73)

I was thinking that many problems can be solved if a king can throw out his urge to power and control! If we cannot respect the freedom of others how can we really experience freedom?

Mr. P. told me that he was very fond of Tagore! The reference of Tagore was coming up again and again. He started talking about many small things which were close to his heart! He talked about a local train journey, watching sky full of stars. He talked about his mother, his childhood, persons of his liking, what he learnt from them, his hopes, his commitments, his dreams and he was moving towards his preferred identity!

Some questions are coming in my mind. Is the demon as an agent of aggression, anger, oppression and power hidden in the discriminatory patriarchal system represented and manifested itself by dominant discourse? Is it the very thing which gets spread in our family relationship; in our workplace; between you and me? Is it the reason of the violence we are experiencing currently? Is it the intoxicating effect of urge for power and to control others which is responsible for all these? Is it the same demon

that is interfering in the borders of two countries; between races; among genders; in skin colors; in religious practices? Is the contemporary politics is pampering the concept of 'OTHERS' to prevail the demon in our mind?

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The Significance of “Empathy” in Social Sciences

Sinjini Roy

Abstract: *Connecting to others, knowing others, and collaborating with others for making society better driven by an endless empathy for others constitute the core of social life and the essence of social science knowledge. This paper explores the significance of empathy in conceptualizing everyday life in three ways: (1) as a method to fieldwork, (2) as a method to sociological knowledge, and (3) as a method to organize and live everyday life. The central argument of the paper is that a detached approach, bereft of empathy, to sociology and life is not only impracticable but also undesirable.*

Keywords: Empathy, interaction, fieldwork, cognition, knowledge formation, social praxis, intersubjectivity.

Introduction

The word “empathy” is not to be confused with the word “sympathy”, as is often done in its everyday usage. Empathy can be looked into as way of life involving the modes of cognition, self-formation, interaction and transformation, that we usually do in the lifeworld. These processes work in feedback in a circular way. The empathetic mode of life calls for going beyond one’s own version of reality in order to understand other peoples’ reality, their sensations, joy and pain, and thus form a reconciled and negotiated cognition of the lifeworld. It involves an open-end unprejudiced communication, interaction, in order to get to the emotional state of others, and, at the same time, share one’s own emotional world, the world of feelings, with honesty. The two-way mutual understanding with empathy helps build a shared cognitive world, which, in turn, impacts the mode of social interaction. Curiosity about others is the first step towards understanding of and care for the fellow human beings.

Everyday life is all about how we conceive, organize and act in a constructed lifeworld, both individually and collectively. The significance of "empathy" in understanding and organizing everyday life stands underexplored in current sociological research, particularly in India, although some of the early social thinkers had thought about it with great interest. We have not explored enough the cues left behind by Rousseau, Husserl, Schutz or C. Wright Mills to look at social relations and everyday life through empathy, notwithstanding the fact that in the West a branch of sociology named *sociology of empathy* is already doing rounds. Rousseau in shaping the idea of "pity" had said that there is empathy at the root of all social relations. Husserl and Schutz have identified empathy as a force through which experience-based subjective knowledge could be transformed into intersubjective or shared knowledge. For C. Wright Mills, empathy is the virtue with which a sociologist can connect to history, contemporary social issues and even with the future of mankind.

My paper would therefore explore the significance of empathy in conceptualizing everyday life in three ways: (1) as a method to fieldwork, (2) as a method to sociological knowledge, and (3) as a method to organize and live everyday life. The central argument of the paper is that a detached approach to sociology and life is not only impracticable but also undesirable.

Empathy as a method to fieldwork

Right from our undergraduate days we have been taught that sociology is an objective social science, an idea that has been endorsed by Andre Beteille and many other sociologists and anthropologists in India (Beteille 2002) and that we have to detach ourselves (in emotive and value terms) from the subjects of our study (Weber 1949). But, when we approach our field of research and start interacting with the subjects of our study we tend to take it as a form of social interaction, in which both parties (the researcher and the subjects) approach with all the humane qualities like emotions, passions, pains and sufferings, will to care for the fellow human beings. Both the researcher and the information givers remain normal human beings throughout the interaction sessions, where they display all the general rules of any other form social interaction. Besides the above-mentioned considerations, they also bring in self-interest and even trickery in the course of playing a mind-game. Inquisitiveness and probing coated in empathy constitute a part of ethnomethodology. Here is an illustration. Suppose I am riding a rickshaw and I immediately feel connected with the poverty stricken *rickshawwalaseeing* his toil, sufferings and I start asking about

his name, his family, the conditions of the trade with the rickshaw owner, place of origin, the living conditions and so on. In this interaction the *rickshawwala* is unequally placed (in class terms, culture and power) and therefore he is expected to check his inquisitiveness. Rarely, such passing interactions will turn into a one-to-one permanent relation; but, the rider and the rickshaw-puller will go back with a social understanding, which works in defining the long-term relationship between the members of the two distinct social categories. Similar terms define the relationship between the middleclass urbanites and their maids: the only difference here is that the maid spends a longer time in the house of the employer and interacts in greater depth. If the maid is inquisitive and bears some observation power, in most cases she has both the qualities, she can draw a fair (and objective) understanding of the employer and the work situation. Both situations are unjust and exploitative yet an empathic approach adds humane dimensions to the relationship. Interestingly, a humane approach gives stability to the relationship which works to the advantage of the employer, because, she can deploy it as a strategy of personnel management in order to sustain the exploitative relationship. For the maid or the rickshaw-puller, who, despite being conscious about the mechanism of exploitation, takes empathy as a bonus to her/his livelihood.

Interaction between the researcher and the information giver is different from the above two forms. The researcher plans and works out strategies in selecting the information givers and convincing them to open up and give authentic information. The strategies would vary depending upon the fields, and the population that constitutes the field. The fieldworker has a time frame as she wants to collect “adequate” information for the project within a targeted time. The information giver is the “giver” and the researcher the “taker” and this interaction is expected to bind the researcher with gratitude and obligation. If it is an urban middleclass elderly population the researcher cannot resort to trickery as the informants are educated, informed and experienced and they do not expect anything from the researcher; they only wish her well in life. The informants could either be indifferent or by kind and empathetic to the young researcher. But convincing them to sit in the discussion table is a big challenge.

I have studied the elderly citizens in Kolkata in 2013-14 for my PhD work on the *Life of the Middleclass Aged in Kolkata* (Roy 2019). I selected a total of about 120 families/respondents, taking 60 from a neighbourhood (block) of Salt Lake area of Kolkata, and 60 from two old-age home/homes, from the southern part of the metropolitan Kolkata. I knew well that until and unless I build up a strong rapport with my respondents, they

would not feel comfortable in sharing their life experiences with me. In order to make a breakthrough I first made an appointment with a willing respondent and went to his/her place at a time they had given. My first task was to explain the respondent in details everything about my study to remove all the possible apprehensions from their mind. I deliberately spoke a bit about me and my family, I shared my own experience with my grandparents, my love for them and how badly I miss them now when they have crossed over. The idea was to give a fair understanding of my social location and my intensions and interests. This helped generate in the respondent a bit of empathy for me. I never took fieldwork as a “heartless exercise; because of similarities in class and cultural I could identify myself with the elderly informants and had an instant emotive attachment as well; I could see my own grandma and grandpa in them. I knew that moving into interview in a formal way (like question answer way) would not help and therefore I took the questions in my memory without any fixed sequence and took care in keeping the conversation as natural as possible, without giving them a hint that I was already into the interview. The interview was thus transformed into a normal interaction or “adda”, based on high degree of mutual trust and a bit of mutual empathy.

Besides sharing some personal information and likings as a strategy of rapport building another factor that came to my help was my training in music, Rabindrasangeet, an unequivocal identification mark of urban middleclass culture of the Bengalis all over I didn’t miss an opportunity to use this cultural capital of mine in order to impress upon my informants. I could notice a sea change in their approach towards me after I had sung a couple of songs. It helped establish a “spiritual connection”; they probably took me as a girl next door, who can be trusted. May be, unconsciously, they saw their daughters or grand-daughters in me. Many of the respondents had some training and interest in music and they also sang the songs of their liking, finding an appreciative and knowledgeable audience in me. Having a middleclass upbringing we could connect with each other as we shared similar cultural symbols (for details see Roy 2014).

I have learnt, in course of interaction with the respondents, that being aged they live with a general feeling of neglect or loneliness and they long for warmth and are willing to share the experiences of their life with someone whom they can trust and who can generate a bit of empathy. They generally have enough of leisure time and less amount of work. Moreover, as their children are all well settled, and scattered to different places, they remain busy with their own work and thus the aged people feel bored and they seek people with whom he/she can chat for a while. Thus, in most cases,

my respondents felt very happy to see me, once they got over with the initial phase of hesitation and were interested to talk about their life; their achievements, struggles and regrets, their thoughts about the contemporary society, about the younger generation and so on. In talking about their childhood days, and about their parents, the respondents often got very nostalgic and they shared very interesting incidents of their life with me. They shared the minute details of their life. They just went on with a flow and shared many things which were not even required for my study. But they were in such a good mood that I didn't feel like stopping them; stopping them would have been rude and unethical on my part. I did notice the glow in their face and engagement when they were unfolding the layers of untold "truths" of their life.

One thing that I really cherish about my field work is that during this process of interview I managed to build up a very strong bond with some of my respondents, the relations are like that between close relations based on mutual care, love and respect. I met some retired scientists, university professors and retired administrators and some of them actually guided me in my fieldwork and advised me how should I approach the informants and what kind of questions I should be asking. After the interview got over many of my respondents invited for lunch or dinner. Some of them asked me to visit them whenever I had time and sing some songs for them. In one of the old-age homes the elderly ladies invited me to join their evening prayers and sing prayer songs with them. The most wonderful thing is that even after returning to my native place (Siliguri) I was in regular touch over telephone with some respondents with whom I had developed intimacy. They called me asking about my health, my music and insist that I should visit them again. I visited them as a researcher, a stranger, yet brief spells of interactions have helped establish long-term bonds. I was the taker and the respondents were the givers and the exchanges were never reciprocal yet they showered unconditional love and "pity" on me.

In early September 2015 I joined a college in Kolkata as an Assistant Professor. I visited the old-age homes and some of the close informants in Salt Lake, carrying sweets. They were so pleased to see me after a gap and were immensely happy at my getting the job. I spent some time with them and they blessed me for my happy future. Now, I live in Salt Lake and try to keep in touch with the informants with whom I have developed some affinity.

From my year-long fieldwork experiences I have learnt that when the two sides trust each other they relate to each other well and often transcend the rules of a formal meeting to travel into each other's private spheres.

They share their problems, pains and joys, achievements and regrets of life to each other with an unconscious will to relate to each other with a hope for moral support.

In this interaction, the researcher is the one who is the taker and therefore the primary beneficiary of the interaction. But she cannot approach the interaction in the line of "calculative rationalism" (in Weberian sense); rather she travels into the private space searching for "grandparents" in the elderly, and tend to play a "daughter" or a "grand-daughter" to the elderly, who have their children or grand-children living in distant places. The subjects in the field too try (mostly unconsciously) to connect to the researcher (in varying degrees, depending on the degree of mutual liking), and share their emotions, sufferings, and joys. I understand that without this emotive and empathetic connect the fieldwork remains dry and formal and the data, thus collected, remain superficial. The fundamental question here is, can two sensitive persons remain unconcerned about each other's problems or likings. Probably not. The other relevant question could be whether the outcome of such research would be "objective". I think, yes. Because, without the emotive and empathetic connect with the subjects, the fieldworker is most likely to return with the superficial numerical information and the outcome of such research would be without heart and soul.

Empathy as a method to knowledge

In knowledge production, for which the human mind is naturally and culturally programmed, we always look for "totality" of knowledge, which, according to Kant, is a combination of unity and plurality. For Kant, totality is one of the "ancestral concepts of pure understanding" (Kant 1998: 215) that we bring to the world, making it the object of a "possible experience" and thereby "humanising" it. The experiences of everyday life, in reality, are transformed into stable elements of collective (or intersubjective) knowledge through social participation, exchange of information and cognition, dialogues and negotiations in the social field. In experimental terms, the senses and ways in which we apprehend the world as a totality are fluid since they are the objects of endless negotiations and reconstruction. In our subjective understanding, the world and objects appear as fragments and in incoherence, but we make efforts to make them coherent and total. We make efforts to make our cognitive world coherent and total and our work, to this end, is never complete. We travel from "concrete" fragments to aesthetic total and in this "never to be complete" task we collaborate and negotiate with the cognitive worlds of the accumulated given and the

contemporary worlds of creation with a preparedness for sacrifice of subjective self and empathy with alternative selves and differential modes of cognition. This is a condition upon which we are able to see ourselves as an integral part of the natural and social world. The totality that we collectively create is perpetually under reconstruction.

Emile Durkheim (in *Rules of Sociological Methods* [1885] (1982) conceived only of objective and socially constructed knowledge. Max Weber, while arguing that sociological knowledge must be objective, worked out strategies for construction of objective knowledge out of subjectively constructed ideal-type *verstehen* (Weber 1949). Empathy is also there in the core of Marxism; Marx had set out to explore true knowledge for the emancipation of the exploited and the oppressed. For Marx, collective experience is the true source of knowledge and knowledge thus gained in applied to the transformation of the history (Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', 1969).

C. Wright Mills was deeply concerned with the responsibilities of social scientists. He advocated for engagement of intellectuals in public life in contrast to merely conducting distant observations. He called upon the intellectuals and social scientists to be the "conscience keepers" of society and to be engaged in "politics of truth" for their "job is the maintenance of an adequate definition of reality". Mills stated:

the main tenet of this politics is to find out as much of the truth as he can, and to tell it to the right people, at the right time, and in the right way. Or, stated negatively: to deny publicly what he knows to be false, whenever it appears in the assertions of no matter whom; and whether it be a direct lie or a lie by omission, whether it be by virtue of official secret or an honest error. The intellectual ought to be the moral conscience of his society at least with reference to the value of truth, for in the defining instance, that is his politics. And he ought also to be a man absorbed in the attempt to know what is real and unreal (Mills 1967: 611).

In phenomenology, both Husserl and Schutz have dealt with the problem of transcendence of experience-based subjective knowledge into collectively shared intersubjective knowledge. The individuals draw knowledge out of their own experiences in the socio-spatial world (or "lifeworld", to use Husserl's terminology), yet as they interact with fellow human beings, they enter into dialogue with them and share experiences and knowledge in order to gain universal knowledge. Knowledge is thus a social construct of

the intersubjective experiences; it occurs in the course of our conscious attribution of intentional acts to other subjects, in the course of which we put ourselves into the others' shoes. In this, we tend to bracket our "subjective" beliefs and knowledge and look in the beliefs and knowledge of others and test and justify our understanding of the spatio-temporal world. We thus transcend our initial beliefs and move towards further beliefs (shared by others). It is these further beliefs that make up the rational structure underlying our intersubjective experiences. Since it takes phenomenological investigation to lay bare these beliefs, they must be first and foremost unconscious when we experience the world in the "natural attitude" (Husserl 1913).

For Husserl, the ego-centric perspective of one individual about the spatio-temporal order is just one of the many perspectives, which becomes meaningful when many such perspectives about an object coalesce at the intersubjective level. Empathy or willingness to share understanding with others is the key to "objective" understanding. Empathy also forms the basis of both our practical, aesthetical and moral evaluations and of what might be called intercultural understanding, i.e., the constitution of a "foreign world" against the background of one's own "homeworld", i.e., one's own familiar (but, again, generally unreflected) cultural heritage (cf. *Husserliana*, Vol. XV). The spatio-temporal world of each individual is unique and dynamic and the perceptions about it also changes. One has to recognize that the spatio-temporal objects forming his own world exist independently of his subjective perspective and experiences. The perceptual objects are "transcendent" and therefore there is a need to reflect back again and again to get to the proper representation in language, which is shared at the intersubjective level.

Endorsing the value of empathy in social science inquiry Claude Levi-Strauss has, in all his works, assimilated himself with the supposedly neutral and objectives of study (Johnson 2003: 186-7). He has unequivocally upheld the value of empathy in drawing ethnographic knowledge. The most convincing illustration of the claim could be his *Save Mind* (1962), where he has defended the primitive mode of knowledge formation as scientific and aesthetic, hence not inferior to the so called modern and scientific modes. Levi-Strauss borrowed the idea from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom he regarded as the father of modern anthropology. Pity or empathy, for Rousseau, entails a "desire for identification with others" and a "total refusal of identification with [oneself]". The ethnographer can use himself "as his own instrument of observation". He can "learn to know himself objectively and at a distance as if he were another person." To do so, he

must identify with “his” essential humanity – what Rousseau called the humble third-person “he” within himself. Only this “other” person within him can empathise with (or pity) the concomitant others within those the anthropologist observes. In this self-mediated and intersubjective context, ethnographic identification, subsequent communication, and eventual objectification are possible. Levi-Strauss argues that “the principle of ‘confessions’, written or unacknowledged, is ... basic to the work of every anthropologist”. In this sense, Rousseau’s celebrated formula “the me is another” heralds both the emergence of “unconditional objectivity” and the resolution of the epistemological schism between self and other, outside observer and native participant (1962: 11-12).

Social interaction (field-work is one of the many forms) is always a complex process of dialogue and knowledge formation, an endless exchange of information between the ego and the alter, a dynamic feed-back between practical consciousness (existing body of knowledge) and the social situation or individuals with reference to whom actions are done. Knowledge formation, social action, and communication of information are entangled in reflexivity and continuous negotiations between actors from all sides. Since knowledge and understanding about life and social reality are drawn under the influence of tradition, the dominant discourses, and inflicted with interest the search for objective knowledge and “pure reason” ends in vain.

I have interacted with the respondents in person informally for long hours and sometimes on more than one occasion. The idea was to get into a lively “dialogue”, into sessions of intense interactions between two thinking selves who not only exchange passive accounts of their lives and viewpoints but interact with strategies of “impression management”, compassion and interest, which is not possible except in direct interaction.

I have recorded the life histories of my respondents following the logic of phenomenology (combining elements of both descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology), which precisely means I had to get to the subjects’ accounts of their life and experiences and take care in presenting their versions undistorted in preparing the “text”, and, at the same time, being aware that the informants’ versions of the information could very well be “strategic”, “interest driven” or “unconsciously mediated”, constructed under the influence and in the language of tradition. In the process of sharing our life world with each other there is an element of empathy. We listened to each other with pity and believed each other’s stories. This empathetic interaction helps building up a trust and a great bonding with one another.

The kind of knowledge I have gathered about the life of the elderly is the result of negotiations and empathetic exchange of views at different level – the media-based views, the knowledge in existing literature, the knowledge I gathered out of my own interactions with the elderly in my family and close circuit and the narratives of the information givers in the field. Interaction with the informants in the field works and impacts both ways. My respondents' narrations about their life world and the relationship with their children have left a deep impact on the way I perceive my own life and the life of the elderly at large.

Empathy in everyday life

Rousseau further emphasized that one of the secrets of human life is empathy or "pity", a unique quality by which we relate to others facilitating man's transition from nature to culture. Pity is defined as man's capacity to identify with his fellow human beings and with all living creatures (Levi-Strauss 1962: 77). Drawing from Rousseau, Levi-Strauss argues that humility of self and identification with others have ethical and moral implications. If psychologically "I am not 'me', but the weakest and humblest of 'others'," then sociologically my own culture is always partial; that is, "it is in no way a privileged form of society but only one of countless 'others' ..." (1962: 13). Since such an unequivocal affirmation of cultural relativism is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for an anthropological theory of social values, Levi-Strauss further echoes Rousseau's demand for the ethnological discovery of an "unshakable basis of human society" (1955: 389). Cultural anthropology is specifically charged with the scientific delineation of a "new humanist revolution" (1953: 350) with the spread of this humanism to all mankind (1960: 52) and with its concrete implementation (1961: 13). The main objective of the humanist revolution is to establish a new order where man looks at nature and fellow human beings with empathy and care and not to exploit them in the name of advancement of civilization. Levi-Strauss argues that we have to learn a lot from the so-called primitive people in re-establishing the lost connect.

We can operationalise the fundamental principles of empathy in organizing everyday life in three ways. First, we begin with a sense of humility, or a perception that we all are limited in terms of ability, morality and knowledge and therefore are always ready to listen to others before taking a relatively stable position in terms of discourses. Second, the care for nature, the animal world, and fellow human beings would prevent us from taking a "selfish" path to life. Third, in order to re-establish the otherwise lost connect

between man and nature and between fellow human beings we need to take a collective approach to life.

In section one of this paper I have discussed how “pity” or “empathy” connected me to the elderly residents in both Salt Lake residential area and in two old-age homes. I have also spelt out how some the relations have turned into permanent relations. The knowledge I have gathered out of my research, the discourses I have drawn about the elderly have been internalized and become a part of my lifeworld, my “self”. These discourses will now impact my life and my approach to the elderly, until I revise them through further praxis. Empathy thus, constitutes an integral part of our “self-care” (Foucault 1984) and our discourses. The discourses, thus formed, impact our everyday life social interaction (See, Hall 2004: 345-349). In our everyday life, we select the significant others based on our likings and interest and thus make out social world. The selection of individuals and groups of our interest is essentially dynamic since our tastes, interests or priorities change over time. Once selected, reciprocal “empathy” keeps the members of the social world connected. The dynamism of the lifeworld works through a process of placing the members in terms of proximity and distancing.

In our everyday life we make efforts to construct a lifeworld of our liking by eliminating the rough edges in it. This is a matter of collective endeavours that operate in the social field through interaction and social participation. Empathy connects an individual to her inner and outer worlds, to the family members, the relatives, friends and fellow social beings in the neighbourhoods, work place and in other collective organizations. Without empathy or pity or emotive attachment with fellow individuals and their problems social life and collective moves for social transformation is simply not possible. We cannot produce social science knowledge without an empathetic involvement with the topic of our research and with the people and their causes.

Conclusion

There is a strong intellectual tradition in social sciences, set by scholars like Rousseau, Marx, Levi-Strauss, Mills, to name only a few, that stresses upon the significance of empathy or pity as one of the fundamental principles of human life. Under the pressure of building “formal” and “objective” knowledge social sciences in recent times has undermined this tradition. In this paper, I have only argued for the “rediscovery” of empathy in social

sciences by way of understanding its immense significance in fieldwork, in knowledge production and in social praxis. Following the Marxist and humanist traditions in social sciences I have argued that the connect between modes of data collection, knowledge formation and social praxis is indisputable and universal. In this tradition, the modes of cognition, text formation and actions are conceived to inseparable as has been construed in Foucault's interpretation of "discourse". It is therefore the time that we free ourselves from the myth and demands of unembedded "objective knowledge" in order to realise the full potential of empathy as a method to knowledge and to organizing everyday life.

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Travails with Motherhood: An Auto-ethnographic Exploration of Being a Mother

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Abstract: *Motherhood is as much as a sociological as a biological and physiological construct. Each and every human society has its values, ideas, duties and responsibilities attached to mothering and motherhood. Even though the concept of family is changing with the emergence of alternative forms to traditional patriarchal family, the raising of children is still perceived to be the sole responsibility of the mother. The expectation that women will become mothers, forms part of the normative discourses governing motherhood which construct women's sexuality and identity through their reproductive function. Cultural representations of the idealised and sometimes "yummy" mummy (middle class, attractive, healthy, sexy and heterosexual) contrast with depictions of 'bad' mothers proliferate in the popular press. The ideal mother is constructed as selfless, nurturing, subsuming their own needs to attend to their children's demands. The motherhood experience of the working mothers often deviates from the dominant model of motherhood. In their experience of alternative motherhood, they are often marginalised in their family and close kin circle which holds on to the patriarchal definition of motherhood. In this autoethnographic essay I have explored how my experience of motherhood has redefined my identity of mother while passing through a course of negotiations and conflicts with the idealized standards.*

Keywords: Autoethnography, motherhood, mothering, fatherhood, identity, reproduction.

Introduction

The past two and half years of my life have been filled with many changes, experiences and challenges as I became a mother to our wonderful child, Arani. My research uses auto-ethnographic methods to explore the dominant

cultural discourses and ideologies of motherhood. This research draws from my own experiences of becoming a mother and it examines the struggles and challenges I faced while trying to mediate between my expectations of motherhood, which were greatly shaped by dominant mothering ideologies and my actual lived experiences. My study creates meaning and elucidates greater understanding of one mother's journey and transition to motherhood while calling attention to dominant discourses that frame and shape mothering. The findings in this article illustrate the hegemonic power of discourses in my own life. This article shows that despite my attempts to challenge patriarchal ideologies of motherhood, the explanations of my decisions tend to reinstate the dominant discourse. This reflexive auto-ethnographic research is important because it seeks to disrupt the cultural hegemony by revealing the often-hidden experiences of motherhood. This article examines current dominant mothering ideologies and uses auto-ethnographic data including stories to explore the extent to which my own thoughts and experiences reflect, challenge, question and/or subscribe to the dominant cultural discourses of motherhood.

Auto-ethnography: What and why?

Auto ethnography is often described as a hybrid term as it combines the two words 'auto' and 'ethnography'. Different scholars have defined auto-ethnography in various ways that reflect different meanings associated with the term. Spry (2001) argued that "auto-ethnography can be defined as a narrative that can be defined as a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (p.710). Reed-Danahay (1997) suggests that the "notion of auto-ethnography foregrounds the multiple nature of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing about social life (p.3). Auto-ethnography as both a text and a method grew out of two disciplines- ethnography and life history (Reed-Danahay 1997). Ellis (2004) argued that "auto-ethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" and as a method auto-ethnography is "both a process and a product (p.273). Hughes et al. (2012) claim that the term "auto-ethnography is intended to name a form a critical self-study in which the researcher takes an active, scientific and systematic view of personal experience in relation" to culture (p.209). Some auto-ethnographers view the writings based on these types of research as more authentic since the author's voice is synonymous with the subject. Denzin (1989) has labelled this type of writing the "biographical method"

which includes “autobiography, ethnography, auto-ethnography, biography, oral history, case history, case study, life history, life story, self-story and personal experience story” (p.27). Ellis (2004) argues that “auto-ethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to culture” (p.37). She maintains that it displays multiple layers of consciousness and is an autobiographical form of writing.

There are various approaches to auto-ethnography, each with its own goals and methods, but all most all approaches call for analytical analysis of personal narratives and comparing them and contrasting them with existing research findings. One form that auto-ethnography assumes is that of reflexive or narrative auto-ethnography which according to Ellis et.al. (2011) focus on a culture or subculture and authors use their life story in that culture to look more deeply at self-other interactions. Researchers are reflexive in their writing examining how their own positionality impacts the culture under study. I have used reflexive auto-ethnographic approach for a nuanced understanding of motherhood in Indian context in light of my lived experiences.

The transition to motherhood is experienced in diverse ways by women. New mothers coming from all backgrounds and walks of life have reported “shock” and ambivalence associated with having a baby in contemporary society (Buchanan, 2003). Dominant cultural discourses about motherhood include Hays’ (1996) concept of the ideology of intensive mothering, discourses about natural child birth/motherhood, medical discourses and media discourses of the good mother, supermoms, the mommy wars and alpha moms (Miller 2007; O’Brien Hallstein 2010). These cultural discourses portray and institutionalize motherhood in ways that are oppressive to women. Kawash (2011) suggests that despite several decades of feminist critique it appears that new mothers continue to be surprised at the gap between idealized depictions of blissful maternity and more complicated and exhausting reality, akin to running a marathon every day.

New mothers are speaking out in the form of blogs and motherhood memoirs, sometimes called ‘mommy memoirs’ or ‘mommy lit’ and these contemporary mothers are very angry at the high standards, competitive parenting and impossible expectations of mothering that make them feel guilty or like failures when they fall short, which is always. There is always a gap between our expectations and our actual lived experiences but more is at stake when motherhood is socially constructed in certain ways that affect the actual experiences becoming a mother in negative and harmful ways. By examining the contradictions between socially constructed

expectations and depictions of motherhood in relation to lived experiences, the ideologies themselves can be challenged. In this way I am interested in how my personal expectations of motherhood were reconciled with my lived experiences of becoming mother and the ways in which I responded to the contradictions.

Prior to becoming a mother, I considered myself to be heavily influenced by feminism, if not a feminist. I had pushed back gendered expectations of household labour in my own home(s). But after having my baby I realized that my beliefs and expectations about motherhood remained largely unquestioned and unanalysed. Only after having my son I was forced to confront those patriarchal assumptions about motherhood that I had internalized. My personal experiences may not make connections to other new mothers' realities. But as personal realities and lived experiences are shaped by cultural discourse, I hope this article will speak about the larger cultural beliefs about motherhood.

Portrayal of motherhood in Indian Society

Before narrating my own experiences of motherhood, I would like to discuss in short, the portrayal of motherhood in Indian society. To begin with I would like to reiterate the fact that motherhood and mothering are two distinct phenomena. Mothering is normally related to certain activities or practices concerned with looking after helpless and dependent infant, nurturing them, taking care of their physical and emotional needs and socializing them for better future. Such activities are normally performed by women who may not necessarily be real mothers. Though a father, a gay or lesbian guardian may equally perform those tasks in patriarchal Indian society these are considered to be aberrations rather than the norm (Ghosh 2016). The issue of fathering has failed to gain much importance in Indian context. The father is portrayed to be masculine and authoritative; a bread winner for the family and an epitome of rationality (Sriram, 2019). In contrast, certain feminine values are attached to the practices of mothering. As compared to mothering, motherhood is a larger social institution and is characterized by specific meanings and ideologies (Ghosh 2016). By paraphrasing Simone de Beauvoir, it can be said that, 'women do not become mothers simply by bearing a child. Women are made into mothers' (Woertman 1993). It is associated primarily with women since the state of motherhood has a direct impact on women's lives, regardless of whether or not they become mothers. Every society and culture have some stereotypes associated with motherhood. Donald Winnicott (1953: 49) has

developed the notion of the 'good-enough mother' whose "whole life is bound up with the needs of her child". In contrast, women who are 'masculine' or 'preoccupied with themselves' (p. 49) are singled out for criticism. Though women's role as 'child producer' is widely celebrated but women in general are relegated to a secondary position in a patriarchal society and the task of child rearing is assigned to women folk as these are not 'masculine' enough.

Auto-ethnographic stories & reflections: My journey towards becoming a mother

Now, I would like to share a few reflective auto-ethnographic stories about my experiences of becoming a mother. These stories are primarily descriptive in nature yet they point to several major key discoveries that were made in the process of becoming a mother.

Prelude to becoming a mother

Having a child seems for most people in India to be a 'natural' choice. In Indian society and culture marriage is depicted as a sexual union between male and female whose primary duty is to beget children, preferably male children. Unlike Western societies, majority of women in India 'do not have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they want to become mothers (Woertman 1993). Motherhood is thus for most of the women in India a fate rather than a choice. For me, the choice translates into a simple question of desire: do I want to have a child? My answer to this question has changed over the course of time. Initially, I did not want to have any child but later on I deliberated on it and changed my mind and decided to have a child after I have settled down a bit (i.e., after getting a full-time job, completing my PhD etc.). For me, that child need not be a biological child. Me and my partner were open to the idea of adoption, as both of us were on the 'wrong' side of 30s when we decided to have a baby.

Finding out I was Pregnant with Arani: A Surreal Moment

After not really trying and not getting pregnant, it became a stressful thing so we stopped trying all together and just decided that it would happen and if not, we can always apply for adoption. I went for a trip to Ranchi-Netarhat with my colleagues at the end of January, 2017 and went back to Haldia after the trip as I teach in a college there. I started to feel very

exhausted quite easily and I thought that my blood sugar level has gone up. I am type 2 diabetic and at that time was taking oral medicines to lower my blood sugar levels. After a few days, I had a second thought and decided to do pregnancy test. So, I went to the drug store and bought two pregnancy test kits to be 100% sure with the test results. It appeared to be positive both the times. I was both excited and anxious. I felt overwhelmed. It was surreal. I called my husband and he was ecstatic. But I warned him not to disclose it to the parents before our visit to the gynaecologist as I was still worried that these tests may not be accurate. Next day I took a leave from college, went to my gynaecologist who prescribed an ultrasound which confirmed that I was pregnant for real. Our joy knew no bounds and we gave this news to our parents. They were also very happy for us. Both my mother and mother-in-law asked me not to disclose it to anyone else before at least three months had elapsed. But I told them this is not feasible. I have to disclose this to my colleagues and superiors in my college as I live alone in Haldia and only they can come to my rescue if there is any emergency situation. I really hoped that I am pregnant with a girl but as pre-birth sex determination is a punishable offence in India, I could not ask the doctors/technicians conducting the USGs about the sex of my child. The entire period of pregnancy was spent at Haldia where I looked after myself which raised a lot of eyebrows. Many female colleagues discouraged me to work so long and hard and asked me to take leave but my gynaecologist asked me to continue with normal life. My pregnancy was without any major complications barring the fact that I had a very high blood sugar level and had to take high doses of insulin to keep that within check. And ultimately, I gave birth to a healthy baby boy on 5th October, 2017.

Breastfeeding: A love-hate activity

It was something that I loved and hated. I was sick and tired of breastfeeding by the time my son was 4 months old. Breastfeeding restricted my freedom of movements. I was ready to wean him after 4 months but people were judgmental about this. Not only doctors but even friends and relatives would suggest and advise me to breastfeed my son until at least he is 6-8 months old. Even the parenting blogs would publish article after articles highlighting the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and thereby painting a particular picture of an ideal mother. The underlying assumption was that one is not an ideal mother if she is not exclusively breastfeeding her child even at the cost of her own wellbeing. These would fill me with guilt and anxiety as I had to rely on top feed to feed my baby since he was two months old. The

paediatrician whom I was consulting was very supportive of my decision to wean him and being a doctor he knew that as a blood sugar patient and as someone who has undergone blood transfusion at the time of delivery it was really difficult to depend on exclusive breastfeeding both for me and my son. And since I was going to join my full-time job at Haldia in two months' time he even advised me to wean him gradually.

Writing a dissertation, joining a full-time job, raising a baby and being a new-mom

I was supposed to complete my Ph. D. by April, 2017. But because of my pregnancy and other issues I could not do so and had to re-register. But I was determined to submit my thesis before my maternity leave was over. Thus, I started writing and finalizing my thesis when my baby was only three months old. I appointed a professional care giver to look after him. The first day when she joined and took over many responsibilities of looking after my son, I felt a bit estranged and alienated. I also felt that I am neglecting my son as my primary duty during maternity leave should be looking after my child and not writing a dissertation.

In May 2018 my maternity leave was over and I had to join my workplace at Haldia. Earlier I used to spend whole week at Haldia and get back to Kolkata only on weekends. I used to stay at a rented flat that was a bit far from my college. Both these arrangements needed reconsideration. I shifted to teachers' hostel within college campus and instead of staying over at Haldia throughout the week I decided to take my preparatory day in the middle of the week so that I do not have to leave my son in Kolkata for whole of the week. Taking my son along with me to Haldia was not feasible due to logistical and other considerations. Thus, I became an 'absentee mother' — a concept and reality which was hard to be accepted by my family, wider society and even me. My colleagues and relatives constantly asked me who would look after my son during the nights that I was spending at Haldia. That the father of the baby is with him and the father can do everything that I as a mother can do, maybe even better, was not very acceptable to them. My father, who is more than 75 years old, became very concerned and out of his anxiety he keeps asking whether it is possible for me to get a transfer in a nearby college so that I could juggle between my roles as a mother and as a teacher more efficiently or without having to be separated from my child. I realized that the separation anxiety not only affects my son but I also suffer the same and my father's concern stresses me more as I have no immediate solution to this unpalatable situation.

One of my ex-colleagues even went to the extent of calling me a ‘bad’ mother who has failed to do her motherly duties properly. In a message sent over WhatsApp she asked me (I am quoting her verbatim): “And what will you do? You go away for the entire week leaving your son behind and even when you are in Kolkata, he is being taken care of by grandparents and aunts. Isn’t that a shame? He will teach you a lesson when he grows up. Then only you will understand.” She failed to understand that leaving my son behind is not a choice but a compulsion for me.

A ‘Motherly’ Father

I would also like to mention the role of my husband Sourav in ‘mothering’ our son. He has been very supportive thorough out from the very beginning of our journey to parenthood. He knows that it is a joint responsibility to nurture and care for our child. It was because of his support I could complete my Ph.D. thesis immediately after giving birth to our son. I could commute to Haldia leaving behind my son because he has taken over many of the chores associated with ‘mothering’ such as changing the nappies, putting the baby to sleep, feed him during night in addition to fatherly duties of taking him out to the park and so on. He is a ‘motherly’ father with lots of love and affection. But in a patriarchal society his efforts are not appreciated readily. He is sometimes ridiculed; sometimes his manliness is under scrutiny because the larger society thinks that it is the duty of the mother to look after the baby and to allow the mother to be away leaving the baby behind to be looked after by the father is not acceptable. Some of his colleagues, friends and relatives take it upon themselves to remind him that his only duty is to spend some time with the child after he gets back from work and that’s it. He need not do anymore because fathers are not supposed to look after the babies. This is how patriarchy and its notion of fathering and mothering discriminates the male members of the society who dares to question those ideas and defies the rules set by the society.

Realizations

1. My expectations of motherhood were shaped by two factors: my own experiences of learning from my mother and elder sister and portrayals of mothers in popular culture.
2. Completing a Ph.D. thesis, getting back to a full-time job and becoming a mother is really hard to do.

3. Men who deviate from patriarchal model of manhood also have to face social exclusion, isolation and ridicule.
4. Throughout the process of narrating auto-ethnographic stories I remained silent about the intersectionality of gender, middle class privileges and power in my own experience.

In lieu of a conclusion

Writing this paper has been an emotional endeavour for me. I have learnt many things about myself and others through reflexively analysing my own experiences. Through writing this article I realized that I did not either subscribe to or challenge the dominant discourses of motherhood. In some cases, I deviated from the ideals projected by the society consciously. In other instances, this was involuntary and, in such cases, the internal conflict was more intense. It was really hard for me to write about the painful things that I have experienced. I struggled to make myself vulnerable. It was difficult for me to discuss conflicts with my family members knowing that they might read my work and misinterpret me. But my experiences highlight how powerful and discriminatory hidden hegemonic ideologies of motherhood can be. In my personal experience all the dominant discourses and the so-called modern interpretations of mothering and motherhood propagated through blogs, vlogs and other forms of social media are oppressive not only to the mother but to the father also.

The careful reading of these narratives reveals that the cultural values of a particular society affects the women even when they are conscious of its discriminatory nature. My experience shows that in Indian society a married woman's value lies in motherhood. A married woman who does not want children represents a threat to the patriarch (Leira&Krips 1993). It is almost a taboo for couple to not to have a baby. Being childless is still not considered to be a conscious choice of the couple. For a married woman to gain self-respect she has to bear children otherwise she is often shamed and ridiculed. Nurturing and caring for the child is primarily thought to be a feminine activity which has to be primarily performed by the mother and in her absence other female members of the family. When the father actively takes on the duty of 'mothering' and performs a non-conformist role he is often ridiculed and shamed and thought to be not 'man' enough.

The most challenging aspect of using auto ethnography as a research method is that it becomes difficult to be reflexive at times because we become so

wrapped up in our socialization that it is hard to see how our own positionality and subjectivity affects, shapes and derives the research process. Also, I did not talk much about joys of mothering. Though I experience an enormous amount of joy while mothering my son yet I really talked about it in my auto ethnographic stories. I did not do so because I really find it hard for me to put into words the love I feel for my child and easier to write about the challenges and responsibilities that comes with raising a child. To some extent this omission was deliberate as I wanted to highlight the hegemonic and oppressive construction of motherhood in our society.

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Life of the Workers in an Abandoned Tea garden in North Bengal

Ambika Rai

Abstract: *A tea plantation, apart from being an economic unit, is a social institution, which, to a great extent, controls the lives of their resident work force. The tea industry of North Bengal provides employment to more than three lakh workers. These workers are dependent upon the plantation management for food, water, shelter, education, health, sanitation and more. However, it is taken to be caught in crisis since the early 2000s. The closure and abandonment of several tea plantations of North Bengal has thrown the labourers into a situation of dire uncertainty. They lose their jobs, and there comes a shift in the nature of their work, from permanent labourer in the tea estate to casual labourer elsewhere. Besides losing economic security, they are losing whatever minimum social security they had prior to the closure or abandonment of the estate. The paper aims to understand the reason(s) behind the closure of one particular tea estate from the Terai, namely, Panighatta Tea Estate. The estate has been abandoned since 2015. The paper further tries to analyse the impact of the abandonment and closure upon its concerned labourers.*

Keywords: Tea plantation/estate, labour, crisis, closed, abandoned migration, socio-economic, terai.

Introduction

The Indian organized tea sector employs over 1.1 million workers throughout the tea growing states all over India. The industry is characterized by an enclave estate economy with a resident labour force comprising mainly of the socially and marginalized communities who remain to be relegated even today in independent India.¹

The report (2007: 4) also points that the crisis in the Indian Tea Industry has affected estates in three states namely, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal. However, neither Kerala nor Assam has suffered as much as the tea

workers of North Bengal. In India, this crisis has been manifested through the closure and abandonment of tea estates mainly in the states of Kerala and West Bengal since 2000. There has been a huge uproar on crisis of Indian tea industry that had been alleged to face from 2000 to early 2008 (Majumdar 2016: 18). The Tea industry in West Bengal is in deep crisis since the last couple of decades with the number of sick, abandoned and closed tea gardens on the rise. Those still open are under tremendous financial crisis, due to equal contribution of globalization and the inability to compete in export markets. The reasons for the present crisis are many—mostly related to the nature of ownership of the gardens. There have been numerous changes in garden ownership with new owners focusing on maximizing profit. The profit earned gets invested on diversification rather than towards the welfare of the tea industry and the labourers. Every day brings in news of a new closure.

The Status Report (2007: 97) further highlights the apathy of government, political parties as well as trade unions as a responsible factor for the present condition of tea industry of the region. The owners want to earn maximum profit from the plantations till the industry is a viable enterprise or otherwise they leave the gardens declaring locked out or abandoned. Presently, more than 50% of the population in North Bengal depends upon tea gardens for their livelihood. Closure of the garden throws these workers into a state of abject poverty and helplessness. Tea, since its very inception, has been an internationally traded commodity. It is indeed a paradoxical situation where with every passing year the graph of demand in the international market is increasing, yet gardens in North Bengal are getting closed down one after the other.

Initially, the plantation companies were European owned and they used to meet their financial requirements by raising capital from London money market. But with the rapid expansion of tea plantation industry towards the end of the 19th century, the demand for capital loans also increased substantially. The gap was filled by indigenous money lenders who were mostly the cash-rich Marwari traders and *baniyas*. The tea companies started taking a large part of their loans from them. After Independence, the expatriate owners of the plantations started withdrawing from India. This indigenous money lender class now entered the tea industry acquiring the companies from retreating expatriates (Majumdar 2016: 6). The Tea gardens became a ground for extracting profit for the new tea estate owners.

It is very clear that with the closure of the plantations, workers lose all the benefits or rather the minimum benefits that they were receiving prior to its

abandonment and closure. Also, since the Plantation Acts makes it mandatory for the employers to provide these facilities; the workers cannot get any support from the Panchayat (Bhowmik 2009: 21-22). They have to depend upon the relief services provided by the NGOs and other sources. Therefore, because of the sudden closure and abandonment, the workers and their families concerned are thrown into the worst possible situations. Also lack of basic infrastructure like medical, educational and other facilities have resulted in deaths due to starvation, suicides and have compelled the students section to drop-out from schools. Added to this, there has been a tremendous increase in the pattern of out- migration.²

One interesting nature of such abandonment is that the owners do not declare the tea garden to be closed but conveniently abandon them without any prior notice to the workers. They simply run away from their responsibilities of paying Provident Funds and Gratuity, wages, bonus, rations and other facilities to the workers (Rai 2017). The labourers receive Rs. 176 per day as wage after working for 8 hours in a day and this in spite of the profit the industry is making. The workers have been fighting for their right to Minimum wage which is yet to be achieved. According to the Minimum Wage Act (1948) providing wages to the workers below minimum wage is regarded as bonded labour.

Tea Plantation of North Bengal and the crisis

North Bengal has around 276 organized tea estates in the entire state which is spread over Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. More than 32 out of 276 tea estates have been closed down in the different regions of Darjeeling hills, Dooars and Terai. To name a few closed tea gardens; we have Jogmaya, Peshok, Doothria- Kalej Valley in the hills, Panighatta, Maruti, Koti in the Terai region; Lankapara, Hantapara, Garganda, Tulsipara, Madhu, Bandapani, Dheklapara, Dharanipur, Surendranagar, Bagrakote, Red Bank, Joybirpara, and others in Dooars. Adding to the list, Singtom Tea Garden in the hills was closed on 24th February 2020.

According to Majumdar, there has been a huge uproar on the 'crisis' of Indian tea industry that had been alleged to start from 2000 to early 2008. It has been attributed to a set of factors like declining tea prices, stagnant demand in the domestic market, and shrinkage of export market for tea, escalation in the input of cost including labour cost and the supply of large quantities of tea by the unorganized sector comprising of small tea growers and bought leaf factories (Majumdar 2016: 18). Most of the planters cite

the over-supply situation as the main reason for the fall in tea prices. The over-supply situation arose because of (a) Falling exports (b) growing imports (c) falling tea consumption in India and (d) rising labour costs. The falling tea prices due to the oversupply of tea and the declining demand in the global market, combined with stiff competition from many tea producing countries are other cited reasons that have caused a slump in the profit, leading to the crisis in the India's Tea Industry (Roy 2013: 347).

According to a report of 2003³, earlier the employers were traditional planters but of late traders, who have very little knowledge of tea plantations, run the tea plantations. The traders are making profit whilst the workers in various tea plantations are dying of starvation. The other narrative says that the number of workers in the garden are becoming less every year. Migration was one of the tangible impacts of the crisis in the tea plantation sector. The disinterest to work as plantation labour coupled with poor economic conditions and rising cost of living push men and women to migrate for work (Rasaily 2014).

The Convener of the co-ordination committee of Plantation workers, the largest conglomeration of Leftist trade unions for tea garden workers in West Bengal has stated that the tea garden crisis is artificially articulated problems of the tea garden owners (Sharma 2010: 34). There is hardly anyone who takes the responsibilities of the crisis in the tea industry. The owner easily runs away shutting down the garden, the trade unions are least bothered about going after the management to reopen closed estates. At the end the one who suffers are the poor workers. These workers are the poorest and most backward section in the organized sector. These workers and their families remain secluded and dependent on the plantations for their survival (Bhowmik 2009: 21-22). Amidst all these reasons, the workers are the ones who are clearly at loss.

Starvation death, suicide or institutional murder?

The crisis in the tea gardens is a major issue in North Bengal. The news of workers dying in the closed and abandoned tea gardens because of malnutrition reaches us through some medium or the other. The social scientists have termed this as 'starvation death'. It is because of lack of proper food intake and medical assistance people are losing their lives. A Joint Fact-Finding Exercise undertaken by the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) and United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) in 2003 suggests that most of the workers in the tea gardens die due to blood

dysentery and cardio respiratory failure. The third largest number of deaths was due to acute anemia followed by gastric ulcers and hepatitis. As the supply of rations and drinking water to the estates had stopped, the workers resorted to eating fruits and vegetables from the jungle, unhealthy food and drinking water from unsafe sources. However, the workers and their family members are not losing their lives just because of the lack of proper food or hunger. There have been cases in the past where the worker(s) of several tea estates were forced to commit suicide because of the worsening condition of the garden and also because of the ill treatment of the garden authorities towards them.

On 25th of February 2006, Shri Baburam Dewan committed suicide in protest of the frequent lockouts of Chongtong Tea Garden in Darjeeling. He was one of the sub-staffs of the garden. He died with a suicide note hung on his chest. The garden was purchased by an enterprising industrialist of Darjeeling district in the year 1983. From that year till 2006 the garden was locked out for more than 20 times. Similar kind of incident happened in Orange Valley Tea Estate of Darjeeling on 14th April 2007. Shri Sukbir Rai of Orange Valley Tea Estate committed suicide because of the harsh behaviour of the management of the garden.⁴

Tracing the exact number of deaths in the closed gardens is very difficult. These deaths are not registered and finding a source to know the count is quite a task. Even in spite of witnessing such incidents in the past the Government and the owners have remained silent. The Trade Unions too fail to meet the needs of the workers and cater them in the time of such crisis. These are just few cases that have come out of the gardens. Sometimes people do not want to discuss about such incidents because of the fear of being targeted by the concerned authority.

Since, the paper deals with one of the closed Tea Estates of Terai, therefore I present a brief history of tea plantation of the region.

History of Terai Tea Plantation

Tista River demarcates the North Bengal plains into two parts. The western part of Tista River is known as Terai while the eastern part as Dooars. Tea production in Terai is mostly concentrated in Siliguri Subdivision of Darjeeling district (Roy 2013: 337).

The planters began to turn their attention to the Tarai, where experimental plantation had already been started. Here in 1862, the first garden was opened out at Champta, near Khaprail, by Mr. James White, who had

previously planted out the Singel Estate near Kurseong, which is still one of the largest gardens in the district. Others followed suit, and by 1866 more gardens had been opened out at Terai (O'Malley 1907: 93). Right after then more tea gardens were opened in various pockets of Terai region.

The labour force of Terai consists of the Adivasis who were brought here from the Chottanagpur plateau, Bihar, Jharkhand and the adjoining regions. While others belong to Nepali population and they have migrated from Nepal.

Going back to the written history, the development of tea industry in Terai had to contend against serious drawbacks. It is an extremely unhealthy tract; it has suffered severely from blights and it has been further handicapped by having its labour drawn away to the Duars (O'Malley 1907: 95). There is a difference in the quantity of tea produced in Darjeeling hills and Terai region. Mohini R. Das Secretary of Terai Indian Planters' Associations said that most of the tea gardens (75%) in the region do not produce the best quality tea, as this was not a traditional tea producing area. Agricultural land has been converted into tea plantations because of the high price fetched by tea.⁵

Panighatta Tea Estate: Background

Panighatta Tea Estate is located in Mirik Tehsil of Darjeeling district in West Bengal, India. Darjeeling is the districts headquarters of Panighatta village. The total area of the village is 925.12 hectares. Panighatta has a total population of 5,235 people. There are about 1,058 houses in Panighatta. These houses are situated in different labour lines of the Tea estate. There are 12 labour lines in the estate. These are *Bich* Line, *NF* Colony, *Girmit* Line, *Gairi* Line, *Dus* (10th) number, *Balay Busty*, two *Naya* lines, two *Dara* lines, *Adivasi* line and *Premnagar*.

Established in 1880s by the British, Panighatta tea estate covers around 1200 hectares of land. There are around 900 permanent labourers in the estate and 1200 casual labourers. Among these 900, 275 are *Adivasi* workers and the rest are Nepali workers.⁶

When the British left the garden, the ownership was taken over by Dalmia. The owner of the estate Dalmia was known to the labourers by the name Pawan *Bau*⁷. Pawan *Bau* had a brother. Both of them were given two different tea gardens by their parents. Pawan received Panighatta Tea Estate and his brother got Belgachi Tea Estate from their parents. Pawan *Bau* was successful in running the garden for more than 35 years. Because

of his age and ailing health, he could not come to the garden regularly and handling the work of the garden became strenuous for him. Later, the garden was taken over by a person named Kansal, commonly known to the labourers as *KansalBau*. After his retirement the garden was handed over to some other family members of Kansal in the year 2011. Again, the ownership was transferred to Sarafs, a wealthy business class of Kolkata. This was the first time that the Sarafs got the ownership of any garden and were new into the business. Time and again, the ownership of Panighatta Tea Estate kept on changing.

The crisis in Panighatta Tea Estate started from early 2006 i.e. even before the Sarafs had taken over the ownership. The garden had recurrently closed down and reopened. The mismanagement is one of the main reasons behind the closure of several tea gardens in North Bengal and the same happened to Panighatta Tea Estate. One interesting fact about this Tea Estate is that the incident of closure or suspension of work was not something new for the workers. The garden had gone through several closures in the past. The garden experienced closure on 6th April 2006 for 15 days. The garden management on 6th April deserted the estate after putting up a notice of suspension of work. The tea estate reopened on 21st April after a successful tri-partite meeting. The workers were rendered jobless at that time. The incident was repeated again in 2009 and it lasted for 10 days. The story of closure or abandonment of the garden does not end here. Panighatta Tea Estate was once again shut down on 27th December 2011 and it got reopened on 8th February 2012. One common feature of the closure is that the garden usually gets closed during the lean period and gets reopened during the plucking season. Adding to the list further, the tea estate was abandoned on 10th October 2015 when the management ran away from the garden at the darkest hour of night.

What led to the closure of the garden?

According to the workers and the staffs, Panighatta Tea Estate started falling into crisis since 2006. The Sharafs had very little knowledge about the functioning of the tea garden. The lease of the garden was given to each Sharaf brothers for a period of 5 years. Each one of them came with a motive of earning profit from the garden and was least bothered about re-investing the profit back into the garden.

The tea bush needs re-plantation after it reaches 50 years, then after the tea bush loses its productivity. However, re-plantation was done only in 8th

number and 63rd number.⁸ Once uprooting was done in 4th number but re-plantation was not done. Even at the time of the field work, some areas in the garden were still vacant without any re-plantation. Poor management and negligence on the part of owner can be regarded as one of the important reasons which led to the closure of the garden.

S. Gour (F, 28) a permanent worker of the garden says “If only the old bushes were replaced with the new ones then the condition of the garden would be much better now. Re-plantation was done only in 8th number and 63rd number. Uprooting was done in 4th number but re-plantation was not done.” I could not get the information about the volume of production of the past or scale of profits etc. This is because the Garden office was closed and no officials were to be located. The labourers also pointed out at misuse of power by some Political parties and the Trade Union leaders for the closure of Panighatta Tea Estate.

M. Tamang (M, 52), a permanent worker expressed the same disgust regarding the Trade Union leaders - “The Company is profit-motive oriented. They try to take every profit from the garden. They have eaten up the garden from inside. The manager ran from the garden a day before we could get the *Puja* Bonus. The Trade Union leaders are all the same. We are not sure but they might be in good terms with the company (owner).”

R. Gour (F, 35), a casual worker says “There were some labourers who used to remain absent from the work but they used to get full wage, because of this reason the condition of the garden started deteriorating. Though it was unfair we could not protest because of the leaders. Had we protested we would have been targeted and could lose our job.”

The workers further pointed out how the garden’s interest was overlooked several times. To give an example, G. Tamang (M, 60), Security Guard of the Garden’s factory says “The new owners had little knowledge about the tea industry which did not work out well for the garden. Re-plantation was not done. If the bush died the workers would uproot it but the place would remain vacant. Slowly, in the last 10-20 years there were many vacant places in the garden without any bush. They did not give proper care to the garden and were only concerned about the profit. The trees were chopped but new trees were not planted which is very important as it gives shade to the tea bushes.”

S K. Chettri (M, 60) expressed the same sentiment. “The new owners could not run the garden properly. Slowly, the garden lost its charm. The

use of different kinds of fertilizers and pesticides is also one of the causes of low productivity of the tea leaves.”

This supports the fact that mismanagement of the garden by the owners is one of the main factors that led to the closure of the garden. The new owners were not capable of operating the garden properly. Their only motive was to extract profit and invest the surplus somewhere else rather than investing back in the garden. The Trade Union did bare minimum. Rather than helping the workers they misused their power in the Tea Estate. The workers clearly were not able to seek any assistance from them.

Dues to be paid

The owner of the Panighatta Tea Estate is liable of paying a huge sum of money to the workers. Part of the Provident Fund was not submitted in the PF's Office since 2003. Rs.15 Crore is due only to Provident Funds. The workers were yet to receive rations for more than 42 weeks. Wages of 2 weeks were due along with the bonus for the year 2015. Even when the garden was open, the labourers were not receiving fringe benefits such as umbrellas, blankets, slippers, firewood, etc. Repairing of the house used to be done by the management but that also got stopped. The workers, who were liable of receiving retirement benefits, are still in hope of receiving all the liabilities like Provident Fund, Gratuity, and Arrears etc. Those who retired before the closure of the garden were yet to receive their dues.

During the interviews several respondents expressed their feelings that they do not want the old management but rather someone who understands the proper functioning of the garden. According to these workers the garden needs new owner who will not cheat the workers but work for the benefit of the labourers and the garden as a whole.

L. Tanti (M, 50), permanent worker of the garden said “For better functioning of the garden, the new owner and management will have to be very strict otherwise the garden will not function properly. Payments must be given to the workers regularly. The daily wage must also increase.”

K. Chettri (F, 40), permanent worker says that “Rs.132 per day is not enough to run the entire family. She feels that the minimum wage should be at least Rs.350 per day.”

According to K. Rai (F, 50) the garden should reopen and never close down again. She feels that the workers need good owner who can pay the wages on time and provide all the facilities to them. A ‘good company’

should take over the garden for the worker's benefit. The dues must be cleared. She does not want to beg for the things that are her rightful dues.

All the workers felt the need of wage revision. At the time of undertaking the field work, the garden had remained closed for 2 years, so getting the exact sum of dues was not possible. Even though some of the staffs were interviewed, they were not able to produce the written documents as both the office and the factory was locked by the High Court. They said that there are many dues and they themselves have forgotten about the exact amount of the dues.

Government's Initiative for the workers

In this situation of crisis, the tea garden workers are turning towards the Government with a hope of getting some relief. Though the NGOs provide some relief now and then, but this relief does not seem to be the solution in the long run.

Now, the Government is providing the workers with Rs.1500 every month under FAWLOI (Financial Assistance for Workers in Locked out Industries). Only the permanent workers are eligible of getting this relief amount provided they did not exceed the age of 58 years. The permanent workers of Panighatta started receiving FAWLOI from the month of June 2016. Among the 900 permanent workers, 156 workers were yet to receive the amount. These 156 permanent workers do not pose the necessary documents to procure benefit from this initiative. However, the question still lingers as to till when these workers would be depended upon such relief materials? Is the amount enough for the workers and their families to survive? Or is it enough to cover the damages that the closure has brought into their lives?

Impact of closure upon the labourers of Panighatta Tea Estate

Around 2,450 workers were rendered jobless because of the certain closure of the tea garden without any prior notice by the management on 10.10.2015. The workers were left with no choice but to move around nearby places in search of a livelihood. After the abandonment of the garden, many labourers started going to the nearby River Balason to collect boulders; women started chipping stones on the river side to sell it to the local contractors. Some of them migrated to the urban spaces like Delhi, Bangalore, Kerala and Mumbai in search of a job. Apart from this, the people started going to nearby tea gardens like Garidhura, Longview, Nischintapur, New Chamta, Simulbarie,

Quiney, Sukuna, Kadapani, Baigunbarie to pluck tea leaves during the plucking season. Working in the nearby tea gardens is one option for them and there are contractors who arrange such jobs. However, they work purely on casual basis. Hence, the permanent workers of the garden have become casual workers elsewhere.

The labourers are mostly recruited in the nearby Garidhura Tea Estate, Sukuna Tea estate, New Chamta Tea Estate, Gulma, Nischintapur Tea Estate etc. Every morning 10-15 vehicles gather in front of the Panighatta Police Station. The workers need to assemble between 6:30- 7 am. All these vehicles get loaded with workers and leave by 7:30 am towards different gardens. These vehicles are usually tightly packed. After the work gets over, the same vehicle takes the workers back to Panighatta. There is no fixed daily wage for the labourers. Some gardens pay Rs.132 and some up to Rs.150 per day.

The lives of these workers were miserable when the garden was open. The sudden closure added to their miseries. The meager amount of Rs.132.50⁹ was not enough to run the entire family. Even after working for 6 days in a week, the amount of money they used to get was not sufficient to meet the ends. The tea garden was the main source of income for these workers. Generation after generation they have been working in the garden and its sudden closure swept away the ground from their feet. Since, they do not possess the land rights, at least one person from one household has to work in the garden otherwise they will have to leave the garden.

Apart from working as a casual labourer in other tea gardens, the labourers and the family members between the age group of 18 and 45 work in the nearby Balasun River. For some, work in the river bed is an additional source of income. During the winter season when there is no work in other tea gardens they come to the river as this is best time to work with less flow of water in the river. By the end of November, the tea garden labourers start their work on the river bed.

The workers come to the river early in the morning at 5- 6 am and work till 4-5 pm in the evening. They bring their lunch along with them. The men usually collect boulders from the river and load them in a truck or tractors. Since the work demands lot of strength and man power they usually form a group of 7-10 people to complete the task. For 1 tractor load of boulders they get Rs.350 and for one big truckload they can even get Rs.700 which is equally distributed among the group members. They usually do 5-6 trips in a day. It is very tough to work in the river as compared to the tea gardens.

There is high risk of getting injured while working in the river. There are possibilities of getting injured while loading the boulders.

Women too are involved in the work in the river bed. They are usually involved in chipping stones which is very time consuming and needs a lot of strength. First, they separate stones from sand. Then they chip the stones. Later, the sand can also be sold to the contractors. The chipped stones are sold for Rs.400-500 per vehicle. These women have to wake up early in the morning, prepare breakfast and lunch and leave home for work. After coming back from the work, it is the women who do the entire household chores like cooking, cleaning and washing.

The story of migration(s)

Out-migration from the tea estates is not a new phenomenon. Migration is happening not only from the closed and abandoned tea garden but from the running garden as well. The case of Panighatta Tea Estate is no different. Since the abandonment of the garden, one person from every family has migrated to other states in search of work. The percentage of migration within the state is quite low as compared to migration to other states. Both men and women have migrated and are still migrating in search of work to support the family. They mostly migrate to Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kerala and other big urban cities. Men gets employed as security-guards, daily wage earners in factories, waiters in restaurants and hotels etc. while the women folk work as domestic helper for the rich families or work as babysitters. They usually go with someone who is already working outside the tea estate. Sometimes they leave with their family members or sometimes with their friends.

D. Darjee (F, 50) was a permanent worker of the garden and started working from the year 1997. Her husband also worked as a permanent labour in the garden when it was functioning. On the other hand, her daughter Manisha (23) worked as a *bigha-wala* (casual) in the garden. She went to work in other gardens as well but never received the full payment. Because of the uncertainty of work in the garden she had to migrate out of the state in search of a living. She worked as a domestic help in Mumbai for some months. She had to work from 7 am in the morning till 11-12 at night. Initially she was promised a salary of Rs.9000 but later she found out that the payment was not made at once, but was in installment. She is in a hope that the garden will reopen soon but if there is no chance of opening her

daughter Manisha will leave for Bangalore. She said she will be working in a beauty parlor but she does not have any formal training.

Suraj (M, 47) was a permanent worker and his wife a casual worker. It has been almost 30 years of his work in the garden. He works as a carpenter and sometimes works in other tea gardens as well. After the garden was abandoned, he has worked in Garidhuri, Saureni, Toklan Tea Estates etc. He stayed in Dowhill School for 3 months and in Victoria School in Kurseong for 2 months. He went there to work as carpenter and received Rs.300 per day. He says 'One cannot choose jobs if one has none'. Suraj's son died mysteriously in Delhi some 5-6 years ago. He had gone there to work. The family is still unaware of the reason of his son's death. They were lucky enough get his dead body. He was 23 years old.

S. Biswakarma (M, 32) was working as a temporary labourer in Panighatta Tea Estate before its closure. After the factory was shut down, he did almost every kind of job that came his way from working in the river side, as a casual labourer in other tea gardens to migrating as a construction labourer to Nepal. It has been almost 9 months of his work in Nepal. He was taken to work there by a contractor. There are at least 20-22 men from the garden that work in Nepal. His father (58) had a permanent job (*nij*) in the garden and his mother (55) worked as a casual labourer (*bighawala*). Both his parents work in Garidhura Tea Estate now. Apart from that, his father has worked in Nischintapur, Longview and Singhijhora Tea Estates.

S. Rai (M, 37) was a permanent worker of Panighatta Tea Estate. He got recruited in place of his mother after she died in 2006. He opted for different kinds of jobs after the closure of the tea garden. He worked in Darjeeling Hills, Mizoram and Nepal. He was taken to these places by different Contractors. He says that it is quite difficult to remember the exact month or year of the work as he is always on the move. He worked for almost a year in Nepal and in Mizoram for 2 months. He was supposed to work for 3 months but the whole area was infected by malaria so he had to return after 2 months. He used to get Rs.250 per day including free food and stay. He worked in a place called *Langtalai*. They had to work from 5 am to 7pm. It was tough for them as they were not familiar with the language of that place. There were altogether 45 labourers from Panighatta.

These case studies clearly portray the precarious life of the labourers. It is not at all easy for them to get work outside the garden. There is no certainty

of work in the garden as well as outside the garden. They have been running errands to earn a living.

Trafficking

The migrants leave their home with a dream and hope of earning money so that they can provide a comfortable life to their family. But there are times when they unfortunately fall into the trap of traffickers. This happened with 12 people of Panighatta Tea Estate.

Rangu Souriya, the chairperson of KhanchanjunghaUddhar Kendra, an NGO that fights against human trafficking crime against woman and children and child labour, is also one of the residents of Panighatta Tea Estate. She related some instances of trafficking from the tea belts of North Bengal, not only from the closed gardens but from the running gardens as well. On September 2016, her NGO rescued 12 bonded labourers (all men) of Panighatta from Mumbai. All these men were local residents of Panighatta Tea Estate. They were sent to Mumbai by an agent who also happens to be a local resident. These men were promised to be given Rs.15, 000 a month with free food and lodging facilities. They were told that they had to work as labourer in the sea port for loading and unloading of goods. But they were taken to some other place which was far from the sea. They were kept in a warehouse and were asked to carry big gunny bags for Rs.2 per sack. The family members of these trafficked men somehow got to know about the situation and came to Rangu Souriya seeking her help. Then after few days the NGO rescued those men. The family members of these trafficked men did not file any complaint in the Police Station as the agent was from the garden. They did not want to drag the issue further.

This is just one instance of one Tea Estate of North Bengal. There are several such cases of human trafficking which go unreported. It is often said that tea gardens of North Bengal are a hotbed of human trafficking.¹⁰

Conclusion

The situation in the Tea industry of North Bengal is no less than a calamity. The sudden closure and abandonment of the plantation has hit the normal functioning of the garden leaving the tea workers in a situation of uncertainty. The pattern of closure is almost same in many tea gardens. They close down during the winter season i.e. the lean period when plucking of the leaves is at halt and reopens during the first flush. Problem of trafficking is

rampant, many of which goes unreported. Out migration has become common.

The management of Panighatta Tea Estate did not submit Provident Fund for more than 14 years. The poor management of the owner is one of the main factors that led to the closure of the garden. The new owners had little knowledge about the proper functioning of the garden and took over the garden with a motive of earning profit. They were reluctant to invest money back into the garden. The old tea bushes were not replaced and those uprooted places remained vacant without further re-plantation. The garden was not closed for the first time but the workers were left in the similar kind of situation several times before as well. With no hope of the owner returning back, the workers of Panighatta Tea Estate had to search for an alternate means of livelihood to support the family. At least one member of the family has migrated to other states in search of alternate means of livelihood.

The garden might get auctioned but the workers seemed quite unsure if any company would take over the Tea Estate. The new owner(s) will have to make a huge investment on the garden to revive the factory and garden. Though the workers hope for the garden to reopen, they do not want their children to become Tea Garden labourers. The younger generations are also likely to opt for work outside the garden because there is no certainty of the smooth functioning of the Tea Estate and also the wages are too low to support the entire family.

The women headed households face more problem as there are no male members of the family to migrate to earn a living. There were few cases of dropouts. It was not only because of the closure of the garden but the children of these workers cannot attain higher education because of the low income of the family. Even when the Garden was open the children of the tea garden workers could barely study up to standard 12. After which they are bound to search for a job to support the family. There were few families that could send their wards to college as only because the family members have jobs outside the garden as well. Majority of the workers do not want their children to work in the Tea Gardens like them. They hope that their children will get a stable Government job that will provide them security.

Since, the wage of the tea garden labourer in North Bengal is very low, it is impossible for them to break the shackles of poverty and the cycle of precarity seems to never end. Therefore an increment in the daily wage of

these labourers is the need of the hour. The workers should be treated as an asset rather than as a liability.

Notes

1. Behind Closed and Abandoned Tea Gardens- Status Report of India. September 2007. p. 4.
2. Tea Plantation of West Bengal in Crisis (May 2003). 97-98.
3. *Tea Plantations of West Bengal in Crisis- A Joint Fact-Finding Exercise*. May 2003. New Delhi: Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) and United Trade Union Congress. p. 28.
4. Out- migration is not only happening from the closed gardens but from the open gardens as well. As the daily wage of the tea garden labourer is not sufficient to run the family, out- migration has become an option for majority of them.
5. Tea Plantation of West Bengal in Crisis A Joint Fact-Finding Exercise (May 2003: 29)
6. This information was provided by the workers and office staffs.
7. 'Bau' in Nepali means 'father'. Most of the workers are not aware of the real names of the owners. So, they address them by adding the term 'Bau' after their names. This also shows that the owners are considered as a father figure for the entire work force of the tea estate.
8. Since the tea plantation is spread over a vast area, it needs to be segregated to make it easy for the labourers to get distributed for their work every day. So, the garden is divided into "Numbers" or lines.
9. The daily wage of the tea garden labourers was Rs.132.50 before the closure of the Panighatta Tea Estate. The wage was revised and at present the daily wage of the tea garden workers is Rs.176.
10. <https://feminisminindia.com/2018/08/01/tea-gardens-bengal-hotbed-human-trafficking/> (accessed on 1.04.2020)

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The Significance of *Brata* Rituals in the Life of the Married Women in Rural Bengal

Anuja Gupta

Abstract: *Brata is an age-old religious ritual practiced by women of West Bengal. It has its roots in the totemic cults of the aboriginals of this land. Brata finds reverberation in the identity that it ascribes to women as being the Su-Grihini and care-giver of her family. In the present day, community jubulations buttressed by the perception of Dharma provides legitimacy to Brata that makes it an omnipresent ritual. In this paper, I attempt to underscore an anthropological and cultural perspective of Brata and understand its significance in the religious life of married women in rural Bengal.*

Keywords: Brata, faith, women, tradition, celebration.

Introduction

The existence of religion is undeniable. It is either perceived as a coercive force, binding humanity together by bringing them together under one faith or as a disruptive institution that weakens scientific reasoning and makes one susceptible to irrationality. There are staunch believers, atheists and even critics who deny the existence and relevance of God, nonetheless they find themselves preoccupied with the notion of God. Some consider religion as an 'inner faith that could move the world, while some name it as a supernatural force whose existence is perceptible in the miraculous events of life and a few regard religion as an institution that makes humans feeble and static. Nonetheless in spite of its varying manifestations one cannot disregard the social meaning that is attributed to religion.

India is a land of multifarious religious activities and organization. The presence of religion in the life of an ordinary individual is undeniable. Daily life of an ordinary individual breaks with the chiming sound of the local temple bells, the morning walks are accompanied with the chanting of the '*hari naam*', exam preparations are bolstered with divine mantras, mothers pray and keep fasts for the general well-being of their children, school

examinations are taken very seriously and so are its accompanying prayers. Mothers offers prayers and make donations at temples so that their children are benefitted by lady luck. This is not unknown to the people; they have grown up under the shadow of faith and experience religion as an integral part of their lives.

India's historical past is a tale of spiritual Hinduism that is codified in texts or *granthas* and is observed in the mainstream dominant religion, and the local folk religion that is cherished, remembered and lived through memories and carnivals. Among the various forms of folk religion, *Brata*, premised on the edifice of faith, continues to perform a significant role in the spiritual, social and emotional life of an Indian woman's life. In the whirlpool of empirical diversity, *Brata* appeals as a women centric religious ritual which has its diversification in different regions of the country but its uniqueness and commonality is asserted by the principles of 'auspiciousness and purity, care for others, helping with problems and expressing personal faith' (Daniel 2003: 30).

There have been many scholars (Pearson 1996: 45-77) who have traced the origin of the word *Brata*. Pearson refers to the work of Kane (1974:1-21) where he describes the word '*br*' to mean a choice or to select. This meaning was given by Yaska in his *Nirukta* written in the 5th-6thB.C. According to him, "*as a choosing involves willing*", '*br*' can also be used to mean "*to will*", and '*br*' with a suffix can be used to mean "*what is willed*". But he also gives various other meanings that can be derived from the word '*br*', which are: to command, to obey, to perform one's duty along with the correct observance of religious and moral practices and upholding the sacred or solemn vow. Hence *Brata* is a vow or promise, usually to a deity, associated with a ritual practice to gain some goal- a husband, a happy family with many sons, wealth, a job, or recovery from disease or disaster (Daniel 2003: 29).

Brata is a set of rituals that involve fasting, worshipping and praying together a common God or Goddess, or any elements of natural objects that are believed to have supernatural powers. It is the festival of the common people, distinguished by the age-old customs, beliefs, rituals, proverbs, riddles, songs, myths, legends, tales, ceremonies, art, symbolism, and various other cultural manifestations.

Anthropological understanding of Brata

Randhawa (Ray 1961: 'Foreword') writes that '*Bratas* are magico – religious rites performed by women folk in Bengal for invoking the blessings of various deities to secure domestic happiness and welfare of the dear ones. Tagore (1919) was the first author to initiate a detailed discussion on *Brata* rituals. He writes about the arts, crafts, and stories connected with *Brata*. On a deeper study it is observed that the origin of this tradition is hidden in the aboriginal totemic tradition of the various autochthonous ethnic groups who lived in this country in ancient days. The ancient Indian aboriginals in their attempt to fathom the working of the Universe, believed that divine powers resided in the elements of nature like the rivers, oceans, trees, animals and birds. They conferred sacred powers on the elements of Nature and invented rituals (systematic repletion of acts) based on the principle of sympathetic magic to appease them (Tagore 1919; Roy 1950; Das 1952; Roy 1961).

There dawned a realization among the natives that natural powers could protect and prevent hazards of all forms if they could be appeased through innovative rituals. Rituals were thus initiated in groups that would facilitate communication of one's desires or *kamana* and in turn would safeguard the community against the onslaughts of nature. Primitive society was characterized by collective consciousness. Prayer was not an individual isolated activity rather it was offered in groups to seek welfare for the entire community. As a natural consequence, the normative performance of *Brata* acquired group legitimacy. Some of the common wishes of the natives which they sought to be mitigated through rituals were prevention of drought, famine and flooding. The natives performed *PurnipukurBrata* and prayed so that water might not get dried from the ponds during the spells of extreme dry heat of *Baishakh* season. Similarly, prayers through *BasundharaBrata* were offered so that they were blessed with adequate rainfall (Tagore 1919: 22-28).

The Aryans named the natives of this country as *Anya Brata*, and their religious rituals were called *Brata* (29). The supernatural powers attributed to the elements of nature were not exclusive to this land, rather Tagore notes several aboriginals in different parts of the world who worshipped the common natural forces like the Sun, rain and mother Earth. The corn Goddess of Mexico (Tagore: 1919: 36-37), for instance, bears remarkable similarity with the Goddess Lakshmi who holds a bunch of paddy shaft in one hand and *Lakshirghara* or the earthen pot containing coins in the

other. Similarly, the Huichol community used symbolic representation through sketches similar to the use of *alponain* Bengali *Brata*.

Nihar Ranjan Roy (1950: 615-617) divides *Brata* into two categories. First, there were *Bratas* that were performed by the pre- Vedic Adivasis and *Bratas* of the aboriginals where they used the power of cave magic. In the early Vedic period, rituals were Non-Puranic and Non-Brahmanic in nature. The natives formed an agricultural community who portrayed their wishes using *guhajadu* (cave magic). The customs and rituals of the natives were associated with their daily agrarian work. Hence agrarian activities like preparation of the soil by ploughing, sowing of the seeds, harvesting of the crops were accompanied by rituals. Cave magic and its associated performance was not given consent by the Vedic sages and they refused to accept or legitimize it. Performance of cave magic as a recourse to gain favours and strength was an unacceptable ceremony hence it was not mentioned in the ancient texts written/composed during the Early Vedic Ages (Roy 1950: 616).

Due to socio-economic reasons like marriage, war and proximity in settlement areas, the Aryans and the non- Aryans interacted with each other resulting in the process of acculturation. Ancient ingredients like fruits, vegetables, beetle nuts, turmeric, banana, *paan*, *dhan* (paddy), coconut, vermilion, *sindur*, *ghat* or a pot, and the symbol of doll (that is drawn on the pot), used by the pre-Aryan natives, became a part of the ritual observances of the Aryans Brahmanical society. This is one of the major reasons for the gradual acceptance of the Non-Brahmanical *Bratas* into the Aryan society. The Non-Puranic and Non-Aryan *Bratas* in Bengal gained popularity in the early middle ages (fifth, sixth and seventh century) and continued to be widely accepted for days to come.

With the passage of time, the aboriginal *Bratas* required the presence of a Brahman priest to solemnize them. Women retained their initial status, as the main *Brata* practitioners and preachers, in these instances. Once a certain *Brata* was legitimised by the Brahman priest, it was included in the Puranas, facilitating the process of 'upward mobility' (Daniel 2003: 3). These *Bratas* have transformed its nature from being a non-Aryan, native, unrecognised religion, to being a recognized ritual, performed by the Brahman priests in the Hindu society. Some of these *Bratas* that underwent the process of upward mobility were *Shivratri Brata*, *Akhanda Dwadashi Brata*, *Purnima Brata*, *Rambhatritiya Brata*, *Budhashtami Brata*, *Mahanavami Brata*, *Anang Eyodashi Brata*, *Adityashayan Brata*, *Raskalyani Brata* and *Sharkara Brata* (Roy 1950: 616).

S. K. Roy (1960) gives an anthropological perspective on *Brata*. The Bengali community descended from the Palaeolithic race. They lived as hunters and gatherers but gradually with the passage of time as the delta expanded the Paleolithic race migrated to the alluvial plains. They became agriculturally and commercially advanced people. 'It is for this reason that their culture, art and crafts are fundamentally and functionally related to those of the aboriginal tribes living today in the hills around the new alluvial tracts' (Roy 1960: 6). Bengal, he writes, was subjected to tidal overflow. In the rainy season the whole alluvial plain was converted into a sea and rivers overflowed most of the area. Thus, frequent heavy rainfall, floods, storms and earthquakes, brought disappointments to the primitive inhabitants. The common *Brata* practised by women was the *Zampukurer Brata* which was performed to protect the inhabitants of the swampy areas from ferocious wild animals.

Sudhashu Kumar Roy writes: 'Brata is a domestic form of religion and apparently not associated with temple service. It is the fundamental religion to which all Bengalis are born into and brought up' (Roy 1960: 10). He further writes that originally *Brata* was not a secluded domestic religion of women alone, but existed as an interior wing of a single and complete magico- religious observance that also had a powerful exterior wing for men: 'somehow or other, the link between the two sexes has now been lost or cut off. The introduction of Brahmanic religion, philosophy and mode of worship tended to disintegrate the full-scale functions of the Brata religion' (pp.12-13). In other words, with the introduction of the Brahmanic religion into the domestic life of the Bengali household, men have gained more power and importance in the external aspect of religion, while women have retained their participation in the domestic observance of religion in the form of *Brata*. This clearly reflects on how *Brata* has become a ritual that is participated by women.

For S. R Das (1953), *Brata* is significant, because it has shaped the Hindu religious rituals. 'Brata persists side by side with the so called Hindu rites and practices....It is in the folklore that we find an expression of genuine desires, aspirations, emotions and thoughts of a people...Certain Bratas have retained their indigenous features because they have not been legitimized by the Brahmins and absorbed into the Vedic culture. Their originality is marked by the absence of a male Brahmin priest, (who is appointed to offer prayers and services on behalf of the devotees) and absence of unnecessary ceremonial elaborations that make them an all-inclusive women-centric ritual. Besides, absence of strict cast/e rules makes

the Brata an open system for all to participate irrespective of the caste norms and makes Brata a truly folk religion.’ (Das 1953: 2-3).

Barun Kumar Chakraborty defines *Brata* as a ceremony, participated and organized exclusively by women. A renowned folklorist that he is, Chakraborty analyses the concept of *Brata* from the perspective of cultural studies, explaining how *Brata* is an expression of women’s feminine nature and qualities in a patriarchal society. *Brata* performance as a domestic religious ritual becomes a medium of achieving respect not only from the members of the family but also from one’s self. A woman undergoes penance, and sacrifices her desires for the sake of the others in the family. She finds extreme solace in offering prayers for the wellbeing of her family members (Chakraborty 2015: 242).

Chakraborty explains that originally men were engaged in the outside activities, while women were engaged in the domestic activities. An important part of the domestic interior world was celebration and participation in religious rituals. Women were taught, ever since childhood, to look after the welfare of their husband and children. The emotional inclination to care for their beloved ones was buttressed by the agencies of socialization. One of the main agencies that imparted lessons on being a good woman and a good wife was through *Brata* *kathas*.

There are chiefly three types of *Brata* identified by Tagore (1919: 17). The *Shashtriya Brata* (*Brata* that has originated in the Aryan culture and are mentioned in the Rig Veda), *Kumari Brata* (that is performed by unmarried girls between the age of 9 and 14) and *Meyeli Brata* that is mainly observed by the married Bengali women and whose rituals are the result of cultural acculturation between the Aryans and the natives. The *Brata* that I am chiefly concerned with in my study and that is commonly followed by women in West Bengal is *Meyeli Brata*.

Nature of Meyeli Brata

The popularity of *Meyeli Brata* is mainly observed in the rural areas where there is a close association between the nature of social organization, economic pattern and religious observances. The powers worshipped through *Meyeli Brata* are elements of nature like plants, shrubs, stems, a lump of earth, stone, and sometimes even the grinding stone (*sheelnora*). They are either personified as human Gods/ Goddesses or worshipped in their natural form. These ‘supreme forces’ are believed to be easily appeased

by obeisance of the simple rules which are set in accordance with the Bengali lunar and harvesting calendar (Basak 2006:20-33). Consecutively in the rural areas, harvesting is not simple an economic activity for self-sustenance rather it is a manifestation of their religious temperament. Each of the agricultural step is preceded by and concluded with *Brata* observance. The ingredients for each *Brata* is determined by the seasonal variations and its correspondent fruits and vegetables available (Maity 1989: 1,6-9).

The essential characteristics of a *MeyeliBrata* in its purest form are: 1. Making arrangements for collecting the fundamental ingredients required for *Brata*. 2. Reflection of one's wish through *Alpona*, which is a form of art drawn on the floor with rice paste. Each *Brata* has its separate *Alpona* designs. 3. Narration of the *Bratakatha* among a group of women. *Bratakatha* is the recitation of a story organized in such a manner that it has explicable moral understanding. *Bratakatha* requires to be heard as a moral obligation to a deity. A *Bratakatha* is divided into four parts, viz. a. Displeasure of a god or goddess for nonfulfillment of a promise, b. days of trouble caused, c. fulfilment of promise and d. *mangala* or incident or reward to the devotee for their loyalty. The next and the most important feature of *Brata* tradition is the 4. Non- involvement of a male priest or any Sanskrit slokas or *mantra* in the conduction of the *Brata* rites. Prayers to the Almighty that is reflected through *charaor* rhythmic couplets after which the objects of worship are offered with flowers and the desire is expressed silently. A woman shall continue to perform *Brata* till her wish were granted. If she desired, she could still continue her *Brata* as a mark of gratitude. As these rituals have been performed by women through generations, they have acquired the status of a priestess, who has the power to assuage the weaknesses and sorrows of the family.

Fruits and flowers are offered as symbols of appeasement. Worshippers experience both faith and fear when they offer prayers to the Almighty for these are not merely blocks of stones but they are personified Gods and Goddesses whose appeasement shall ensure a better, safer and prosperous future. A typical feature of the ancient native rituals is the prohibition or certain acts or taboos during the ritualistic performance. Those acts were considered taboos that were found to be contradictory in nature. For instance, kiln could not be placed near the ritual performed for rainfall, as kiln shall heat and evaporate water. (Tagore 1919:17) Thus, *Brata* ritual is a reflection of the principle of causality as perceived by the aboriginals. Their understanding of the world is based on homeopathic magic (Frazer 1890),

where the belief prevails that the nature of conducting the ritual shall bring forth the similar result in the real world.

West Bengal is mostly a plain land, drained by different river systems, its land is best suited for agriculture. Being influenced by such geographical conditions, agriculture has become the chief occupation of the people. Rice, a staple diet, is not only cultivated for sustenance but it is important constituent of trade exchange. Other occupations like weaving and sea ferrying have also emerged on the fringes. Agriculture is a laborious occupation, involving several steps like sowing, reaping, harvesting and thrashing. Each step has to be successfully completed with swiftness and skillfulness to move on to the next step. For ripe rice grains, adequate water has to be given to the rice plants. This has intrigued the preliterate people to construe images and conceptions about the supernatural forces who would either facilitate their lives or create havoc unless appeased through prayers. Susan Wadley was the first author to mention about the auspiciousness that women attached with the ritual performance. For the practitioners, *Brata* observance marked their auspiciousness, which was explained by their commitment to the womanly duties (Wadley 1976: 150).

Given the cultural background of *Brata*, do we codify *Brata* as magic or as mysticism, ritual or an everyday practice, faith or habit, religion or superstition? As multiple thoughts cross my mind, I seek to explore the reason for continuance and persistence of *Brata* in the present state of West Bengal.

Methodology

My research is a qualitative explorative study. A convenient, purposeful, snowball sampling study was conducted in the rural areas of Howrah namely, Jagatballavpur, Amta, and Nabagram. The areas too were chosen through convenient sampling. A 'reliable resource person for each area was the point of contact. Fifty married women between the age of 19 and 86 were interviewed through face to face interview conducted by an interview schedule. Case study method was also adopted to avail primary data about the respondents.

Observations

The demographic profile of Shyampur- (Nabogram) shows that the maximum respondents belonged to the early middle age group (30-44 years),

majority of whom were married but, there were also a few respondents who were widows, unmarried and separated. On a whole, the maximum respondents belonged the general caste while a considerable number of respondents represented the Scheduled caste category as well. The educational distribution of the respondents reveal that the majority of the respondents were educated till Higher Secondary but some were illiterate. Many of them had obtained Bachelor's and Master's degree as well, explaining that the educational qualification of the respondents varied largely.

Maximum respondents belonged to the middle-income group whose income ranged between 21,000- 40,000. The majority of the respondents were housewives, but the sample population, also consisted of respondents who were students. Some of the respondents were engaged in farming and fishing activities. The majority of the husbands of the respondents were engaged as farmers or as fishermen. A few of them earned their living as tuition teachers.

According to the respondents, *Brata* is a religious activity of worshipping the Almighty. But there were respondents who replied that *Brata* is an activity that helped in continuing the family tradition and rituals.

Amta was characterized by elderly population, who were fifty years and above. They belonged to Scheduled caste and OBC. The women were married while some respondents were widows. The educational status of the area was poor as most of the women were illiterate. All the respondents from Amta area were housewives and their husbands were farmers by occupation. The area was stricken with poverty as most of the families belonged to lower income group. For the people of Amta, *Brata* is a tradition that has been continuing since age old times. Hence, they did not want to stop performing *Brata* as that might result in infuriating the Gods. They performed *Brata* with intense faith. They referred to *Brata* as Baar that was characterized by its auspiciousness.

Interestingly, the respondents believed that because they were married, they were all 'sansarimanush', who had to perform *Brata* for the wellbeing of their family. *Brata* was to be performed on every auspicious day, like the Purnima, Ekadasi and on a Saturday. Those who responded that *Brata* should be performed for children's welfare replied, that as mothers, it was their moral duty to keep *Brata* for the welfare of their children so that no harm shall fall upon them.

On further probing, the respondents replied that although there is no guarantee that they shall get something in return or a definite result, they would still like to perform the age old *Bratas* to maintain the religious

tradition of the family. The general wish, among the respondents in Amta, was to have a stable situation at home. They expressed their gratefulness to the Almighty through *Brata*. The majority of the respondents replied that they performed *Brata*, because they believed in the effectiveness of *Brata*, while a considerable section of the sample performed *Brata* because they feared that non-performance might bring ill luck and harm to the family. A considerable number of respondents believed that they bore the responsibility of passing down the essence of *Brata* tradition to their next generation.

Jagatballavpur - The respondents in this category belonged to late middle age. They had children who were adults, some of them had even gained the status of being grandmothers. Most of the respondents interviewed were either married housewives or widows. A fairly large number of respondents gained their livelihood through agricultural activities. Some of them had large tracts of land. There were a few households who earned their living from the agricultural produce as well as by engaging themselves in academic activities. Majority of the respondents belonged to general caste and they lived in joint families.

The respondents in Jagatballavpur believed that *Brata* must be performed by married women for the wellbeing of their family and children. Those who responded that *Brata* is a popular folk festival, reasoned that in some cases *Brata* has been imposed by the Brahmin priests upon the common people due to which *Brata* is still relevant in contemporary times.

Unlike Amta where respondents replied that God will look after them if they performed *Brata*, no one in Jagatballavpur replied back with the similar thought. Rather for the respondents of Jagatballavpur, *Brata* practice is a reflection of the Bengali culture. *Brata* was a form of worship, a puja that had to be performed. Their faith in *Brata* was strengthened by the long history of its performance.

Case Study

Case No. 1. Minati (name changed) an elderly woman X of 80 years old, educated till class 12 and lives in Jagatballavpur village subdivision of Howrah district. By caste she belongs to *sadgopjati* (Shudra Varna), a general caste. The family earns its livelihood from selling the agricultural produce.

She has been observing *Bratas* like the *Kulkuliti Brata* and *Shiv Ratir Brata* since her childhood. After marriage, she added some other *Brata* to her list on her mother-in-law's instruction and has been following them since

then. She is a dedicated homemaker and believes that regular *Brata* practices shall keep her family united. Some of the *Bratas* performed for the welfare of her children and family are *Ashok ShashthiBrata*, *Neil ShashthiBrata*, *ChabraShashthiBrata*, *ItuBrata*, and *Lakshmi Brata*. *Brata* for her is *puja* (worship) that is accompanied with fasting. If any specific wish gets fulfilled by performing *Brata*, it is repeated again to show gratitude to the Goddess / God. She says: 'Bratakori mane einoye je amionnokichunakorleo, amarechepuronhobe. Bratakori, monerbishshashtheke .Brataamakeanekashubidathekeuddharkoreche.'

(Just because I perform *Brata*, it does not mean that I will not have to do anything to attain my wish. I perform *Brata* because I believe in it. I have been able to overcome many problems in the past through *Brata*). She further adds that *Brata* has strengthened her mental powers and has helped increase her concentration and focus in life. Hence, she feels she has been benefited by *Brata*. *Brata* is neither a burden, nor a practice of sacrifice. She has wilfully agreed to undertake *Brata* practise for the sake of her family.

As we speak, she gets comfortable and continues to talk about the changes that has occurred in *Brata* practices. She remarks that *Brata* performance has become much easier with time. There are temples erected now and priests appointed to conduct the *Brata* rituals. The temples have attached courtyard where women can sit and talk about their common issues. The priest is appointed to conduct the daily prayers and worship the *Brata* Goddesses like *Manasa* and *Shitala* in whose name temples are constructed.

I was inquisitive to know whether she believed that her wish would be fulfilled through *Brata*. To which she replied that she will worship and pray with sincerity and let God take care of the rest. If her wish were not fulfilled it did not mean that God was cruel, rather it was due to lacking sincerity in her prayers.

The above case study explores the intensive faith that women have on *Brata* rituals. *Brata* started off as an obligatory ritual but with time it has become a regular practice essentially connected with their existence.

Case No. 2 Case Study 2 is Mandira (name changed) a widow of about 55 years old in Amta. She belongs to OBC –B category and has never been to school. She has five children. She works as a domestic helper in other's house, but due to ill health she had to leave that job. Now she is a home-maker, and exists on whatever her children contribute. Her monthly income is less than twenty thousand rupees.

For her, *Brata* is a ritual of fasting. The most important aspect of *Brata* is the rule of what 'is to be eaten' and what 'not to be eaten'. Fasting is a way of showing loyalty to the Goddess, who shall henceforth be pleased with her sacrifice and grant her a wish. The *Brata* followed by her are *ItuBrata*, *Mangal Chandi* and all other *ShashthiBrata*. On probing the reasons for keeping fasts on specific days, she replies, *I observe ItuBrata so that my daughter is blessed with a son and I perform the rest for the welfare of my family. I hope they stay disease-free, healthy and happy*". She has never thought of herself as a separate individual identity apart from her family, hence her prayers, rituals and thought processes centred on her family.

But as an afterthought she says, "May be the practice of *Brata* will not yield a definite positive result, but I feel satisfied that I have done my part, my Dharma. If God is satisfied, he will look after me and fulfil my wishes. After all, everything is in the hands of the Almighty."

Conclusion

Brata is observed in different parts of India, but the *Bratas* observed in West Bengal are unique in its own ways. It is a ritual accompanied by dietary restrictions for fulfilling their desired wishes. It is beyond the canons of Brahmanical scriptures, rules of austerity and self-abnegation. As a women centric ritual, it is an escapade from the tiring, relentless daily household chores. A Bengali woman who has spent her entire life in the rural areas considers her village land and family as the only reason for her existence. Reared up in this faith, she can hardly relinquish her responsibilities as a mother or a wife. While performance of domestic duty is her priority and, in most cases, the only alternative left for her, she chooses domestic life against the external world, and makes it an integral part of her identity, shrouding it with *Brata* and its religious rites.

A Bengali *Brata* does not imply complete absence of food and displaying signs of torture masked in the garb of self-sacrifice to pacify the Almighty, rather *Brata* rituals in Bengal is lenient in many ways. It prescribes mandatory consumption of certain specific seasonal food items either in raw or in cooked form. The entire essence of Bengali *Brata* lies in its emphasis on commensality. Despite all forms of social, economic or age barriers, *Brata* prayers preach a general and homogeneous welfare of all without creating the rules of social distancing. Hence *Brata* rites of West Bengal carries an educative message with it, that is – social problems

are best dealt with, when common prayers are offered. Praying for others, rather than praying for one's own selfish desire is the essence of *Brata* (Tagore 1919: 7). In certain instances, where *Brata* is a community festival and people rejoice altogether in celebrating it, *Brata* continues to be prevalent as a representation of the community homogeneity.

A common sight, often seen, in the interior areas of West Bengal is rural women clad in sarees, carrying earthen pots that contains some plants, incense sticks, conch shell, flowers and sweets, going to a nearby pond, open field or a temple to successfully complete their *Brata*. After completion of this ritual, they distribute sweet to fellow *bratinis*, children and family members as a symbol of sacredness.

The commonly performed *Brata* in the rural areas I visited continues to be - *Lakshmi*, *Shitala*, *Shashti*, *Itu*, *Chandi* and *Bipattarini*. Many of the respondents could not give a lucid definition of the term *Brata*, regarding it as a compulsory ritual that married women should observe for the welfare of their family. But beyond the obligatory nature of *Brata*, there lays a history of cultural richness. *MeyeliBrata* has acquired its uniqueness not only from being a ritual that is exclusively performed by women but also because it conveys and expresses the finer concerns and qualities about them. The essence of these rituals lay in the daily observances by women for everyday wishes such as longing for good health and life of the husband, desire for male and healthy children, longing for financial security and stability, and removal of hindrance.

Brata is beyond the commonsensical rationality of associating worship penance, sacrifice and fasting. It is a treasure trove of the Indian culture. Unlike daily worship, *Brata* has a definite date and month on which it is to be performed. *Brata* is dependent on month, *tithi*, *nakshatra*, year, *amavasya* and *purnima*. Scientifically calculated to match with the movement of the celestial bodies. Seasonal food is prescribed for each *Brata*, which gives women the luxury to relish these delectable food items that are otherwise denied to them due to the patriarchal organization of the society, or she denies them herself, willingly allowing other family members to devour them.

The sui-generis nature of *Brata* is its holistic approach to the well-being of the family, especially the children. *Bratas* like *Sheetal Shashti*, *Neil Shashti*, *Aranya Shashti*, *ItuBrata* are a few examples of prayers offered to various unusual elements of nature like the Mortar and pestel, saplings, plants, who are personified as Goddesses. The *Brata* worship highlight certain womanly concerns that they identify themselves with. Women

endeavor to seek happiness in these ideals, and pursue them through the guided worship of *Brata* Goddess. Chakraborty (2015) evaluates the feminine qualities of love, care, sacrifice, service that are expressed through the performance of *Brata* rituals. He observes that *Brata* empowers women to act independently in the religious domain by challenging the powers of male priesthood. By underscoring qualities like love, sacrifice, togetherness in the *Bratakatha*, *Brata* performance has become an important agency of socialization by preaching young women to be caring and dutiful to the needs of their husband and children. These qualities are imbibed by Bengali women and when they exhibit these qualities in their daily behaviour, they are appreciated as being *Su-ghrihini*.

Most of the women living in the rural areas are not concerned with the history of evolution of *Brata* and have not even bothered to think about motivations behind performing *Brata*. Yet for ages they have been believing, practicing and preaching this age-old ritual. Regarding it as their *dharma*, an essential part of Hindu religion and have transmitted the knowledge of *Brata* orally across generations. Therefore, an element of obligation has always been associated with *Brata* rituals. *Brata* has been observed with an element of fear, as non-performance of *Brata* shall cause harassment and obstacles in life. In course of time, *Brata* has become an obligatory, compulsory ritual that has to be rendered by married women to beget blessings for the family. Her auspiciousness and evaluation are associated with the success of the *Brata*, which is assessed by the economic prosperity, agricultural fertility and wellness of the children.

Women in the rural areas of Bengal have extreme faith in the goodwill of the Almighty. They love, revere, pray, propagate and preach the teachings of the God to their fellow villagers. There has been a perceptible change in the orientation towards *Brata* among the young educated women who aspire to be independent, think ahead in life beyond the confines of rules of domesticity. The few newly educated, first generation learners, look beyond religious rituals in their life. Not that they disrespect their elders performing *Brata*, but they would prefer to avert the ritual, which they feel are time consuming and unnecessary. In spite of the few structural changes that has occurred in the *Brata* performance, for instance construction of temples for *Brata* Gods, in spirit *Brata* continues to be women's forte.

In an age when time is significant and busy time table dominates life, most of the *Bratas* are either fading from memory or losing their practical significance yet women associate the dichotomy of *paan punya* with *Brata* observance. The belief that non-observance of *Brata* shall have a

contradictory impact on their lives continues to prevail. Fear of the consequences that might result from the break off from an age-old tradition is the major reason for the acceptance, prevalence and continuity of the *Brata* rituals. Some *Brata* rituals are made elaborate some have restrained procedures nevertheless the essence of *Brata* lies in its spirit of fellowship, love and altruism laid out in women's domesticity.

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Body and Ornaments: A Reflection on Ghurye's Perspective

Sylvia Raha

Abstract: *G. S. Ghurye, one of the founders of Indian Sociology, wrote on an unconventional subject like “Indian Costume”, which bears relevance to the study of aesthetics and fashion in modern India. Taking cues from Ghurye’s ideas the present paper will highlight the underneath meaning of wearing ornaments on women’s body. Since the time of Indus Valley Civilization Indians have developed a rich culture of making, trading and wearing ornaments for different parts of the body to beautify and celebrate the human body. A costume, as Ghurye defines, is to cover and protect the body and the design of costumes attracts the attention of the viewer. Parallel to this, ornaments not only serve to please the eyes of the beholder but also fulfil a sense of aesthetic pleasure of the wearer. Thus, this article will highlight the relation between body and ornaments.*

Keywords: Ornaments, body image, aesthetics, costume, fashion.

I

Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1984) is widely regarded as the “father of Indian sociology” for his unique contribution in the field of Indian sociology. He attempted to understand, through his writings, the essence of Indian Society by excavating the past from the written literature and from historical records. For him, excavating the past not only gives a better understanding of the present society but also gives an interpretation of the development of society and human progress (Upadhyaya 2007). One of his prime objectives was to formulate sociology of knowledge in an institutional structure through the interpretation of Indological texts. This underneath meaning of the ancient texts constituted the basis of his sociology of knowledge and that of modern sociology.

As an Indologist Ghurye studied Vedic India, Family, Kinship, Caste, Tribe, Sadhus, Religion, Social Tensions and many other subjects which encouraged later generation of Indian scholars to undertake research in

these fields. Many sociologists, his students and followers, have followed his path in exploring the thoughts he has left behind. However, a very few have followed his interest in Indian Costume or *Bharata Natya and its Costume* for further research. I find Ghurye's work on Indian Costume, based on archaeological evidence, rather than literary sources, an exceptional one to understand the aesthetic taste and pleasure of Indian people in wearing a costume. Ghurye has explored the history of costumes over the ancient (Vedic) period to present (20th century) day, covering the Indian subcontinent and Afghanistan. In Momin's view, Ghurye's work created a base for studying the 'sartorial histories, task and erotic-aesthetic' and for investigation the underneath significance of Culture and Practice (Momin 1996). In this paper I have argued that ornaments reproduce the aesthetic erotic magic in a similar way as that done by costumes. Costumes and ornaments in reality supplement each other and work for beautification of the body of the women.

II

A costume, as Ghurye defines, is something to cover and protect the body; and the design of costumes draws the attention of the viewer. Parallel to this, an ornament not only serves to please the eyes of the beholder but also fulfils a sense of aesthetic pleasure of the wearer. Ornament plays a very crucial part in adorning the body. It is an object of beautification, which can be made up of selected material such like flower, bones, roots and metals. Since Indus Valley Civilization 'gold' metal is used for adorning human body (Nanda 1992)¹. This wearable object that catches the eyes of the viewer towards one's body also satisfies the ones who wear it. The main purpose of the ornament is to decorate the body. This decoration of the body gives the women a sense of power, security and self-confidence. Since the society at large and the women in particular value beautification of body through costumes and ornaments there has been a continuous research and innovation in designing different kinds of ornaments for different parts of the body. This creative invention of the people had opened a new occupation of jewellery making using different kinds of metals right in the Vedic society and a new occupational group called Sonar or Swarnakar had evolved. Women and Ornament are inseparable when it comes to Indian Society and Culture. The women feel incomplete without the ornaments and this is associated with social expectations, behaviours and the symbolic order of a society in a given point in time. The society has

symbolically legitimized adoration of body with ornaments since there are specific religious, spiritual, and scientific meanings behind wearing ornaments. That meaning varies from the wearer to the viewer and to the maker of the ornaments. The beauty of the ornaments conveys deeper meanings that “heighten the charm of a person” (Ghurye 1947: 105). Those who beautify themselves with ornaments do it in order to (1) comply with the cultural standard, (2) have a feeling that they are looking good (and hence for self-satisfaction), (3) to look good and attractive to the viewers. They do it either consciously or unconsciously, although the expectations and the outcomes may not always match. The viewers may or may not find value the aesthetic sense thus created by the wearer of the ornaments. The women would still wear the ornaments compulsively and thus endorsing the mystic value of the jewelry reproduced by the culture and the market. For an ornament maker (or *karigar* the craftsman), designing the ornament stems from his imagination of the body of the women, his mastery over the craft, and an assessment of the changing tastes and market. The body of the women remains the central concern of the designer. The culture, the traditions, religiosity also play a part in sustaining interest in ornaments. The Hindu Gods and Goddess are imagined as the ones adorned with heavy gold ornaments and so are the kings and queens in the epics. They thus set a standard for the women, across classes and cultures, who use different types of ornaments in different observable parts of their body. Apart from the decoration of body, ornaments, the gold-made ones in particular, demonstrate the status of the women and the family they belong to. Sexuality, aesthetics, status, identity, fantasy, religiosity, tradition and culture and so many other dimensions constitute the essence of gold ornaments in India society. Here, I would try to explain, in general terms, the underneath meaning of use of ornaments for the Indian Women.

- a) Wearing of ornaments reflects the **aesthetic sense** of the user and that of the close collectivity. The larger world the media can hugely contribute to the building of the ever-evolving aesthetic sense at the local level. In terms of self-perception and presentation of self, wearing of ornament has a greater value than that of wearing clothes, since the former is generally perceived as scanty and precious. Ornaments are like the final touches for making oneself delightful. The aesthetic value of ornaments has been widely displayed in the ancient temples, especially in Southern and Western India (Ghurye 1947:99, 101).

- b) Since ancient times, there has been a whole **body of beliefs** associated with the use of ornaments. In ancient times, Indians used to wear handcrafted gold and silver ornaments. Each ornament was taken to carry a symbolic meaning and function for the persons wearing it and for the community. Some of these beliefs were scientifically reasoned out. For example, it was believed that silver reacts well with the earth's energy, while gold reacts well with the body's energy and aura. That is why, silver was worn in the form of anklet, and toe rings (Kumar 2002: 20); while gold ornaments were used for the other upper parts of the body. It was believed that women having pierced nose experience less pain during childbirth. It was also believed that the nose ring enhances the emotional, romantic, and sexual appeal of a woman by vitalizing the health of the female reproductive organs. Further, it was believed that a pierced nose, though its control over the brain waves, would prevent women from being hypnotized (Thakur 2004).

A silver made waist chain or hip belt is believed to help a pregnant woman to have a healthy foetus and safe delivery. Another associated belief is that it helps to woman remain slim and fit, since it prevents accumulation of extra fat in those parts of the body. The bangles used by women in the wrist create continuous friction with the body, thus enhancing the blood circulation and overall health. The electric waves passing through the outer skin due to the chafing of ornaments get reverted to one's own body because bangles propel the energy into the body (Thakur 2004). The Hindus in ancient times gave shape to this item called bangles and, later on, they have proliferated into many shapes and designs to add to the beautification of the wearer.

- c) Ornaments, since ancient times, have been believed to have **erotic value**. Ornaments are the objects that attract the eyes of the others towards the location (erogenous zone) of the body. According to Freud, an erogenous zone in the body part arouses the sexual curiosity and draws men's attention towards women's body. Erogenous is an area of the human body which stimulates a sexual response (Freud 1920: 33, Slade 2017: 16). Commenting on dance and costume, Ghurye has said: 'the purpose of the artfulness might be concealing the erogenous zone' (Ghurye 1995: 18). Ghurye missed the point that there could be unconscious expression of

sensuousness in hiding as well. In contrast, the artfulness of ornament highlights the erogenous zone. Ornaments show off subtle attribute that enhances the attractiveness of women's body. For example, wearing sari may accentuate the shape of one's body but ornaments can bring to attention the relatively less noticed parts of the body. Examples could be a lovely neckline with necklace or chain; or fingers with finger rings. The neck is one of the erogenous zones of women's body. It has been an important site of decoration and aesthetic, sensuous communication. In cultural terms, necklaces communicate grace, wealth, power, affiliation, prestige, levels of resources and elements of identity and position. For women, the following necklaces are often considered alluring:

Chokers

Collar-length necklaces

Mid-chest pendants on chains

Long pendant necklaces nearing a woman's cleavage

Thus, necklaces worn near the heart and are believed to be an artistic means to enhance and express sensuous emotions, which, in turn, may have a bearing on the management of relations.

- d) Ornaments cannot be limited to material values; they always have **metaphysical and symbolic value**. Such symbolic values, attached to the ornaments are transported in metaphorical language from the wearer to the viewer. In India, it is generally perceived that any part of the body covered with ornament is beautiful. Adorning of women's body with ornament makes her more valuable and beautiful. Some ornaments, which are particularly associated with married women in India are Mangalsutra, Shaka Pola, toe ring and so on. Other than this, the design/symbol of the gold jewellery is also believed to play a crucial part in protecting women from the evil forces. It is largely believed that the ring finger nerves are connected to the heart through the brain. A marriage ring thus helps cement the physical and emotive bond between two bodies and souls (Kaur 2012).

III

I have tried to show, in this short note, that wearing of ornaments by women has immense aesthetic and sensuous sides, apart from its material, cultural and status value. The erotic value of ornaments is much higher than that of the costumes. The eroticism and therefore fetishism are thus closely connected, as they work on the presentation of the body in the social field. Aesthetic value, on the other hand, is tied to emotions. For example, a married woman adorns her body with specific kinds of ornaments in love and marriage. This wearing of ornament creates a bond between the woman's body and the viewers – the lover, the husband and the members of the society at large. So, ornaments are aesthetically emotional and sensuous. The attraction of women towards the ornaments, which is socially reproduced, is universal. The crafting of designs by the ornament makers, the selection and use of ornaments reflect the aesthetic sense of the time and space. Ghurye, opined, “ornaments beautify the body is the popular belief... the value of ornament is the makeup of beauty” (Ghurye 1947: 99).

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Aesthetic Imageries: A Look at the Ideas of Sartre and Levi-Strauss

Sanjay K. Roy

Abstract: *The purpose of the paper is not to do a review of the theories of art and aesthetics but to focus on the contrasting views of the two French scholars, Jean Paul Sartre and Claude Levi-Strauss with a view to prepare the launch-pad for an exploration into the world of art and aesthetics, without which, I firmly believe, there cannot be any form of creation (not even in the field of social sciences). It primarily deals with the contrasting views on the modes of aesthetic creations and examines whether aesthetics is founded on the concrete or is completely an act of imagination.*

Keywords: Existence, nature, aesthetics, imagination, perception, nihilation, structuralism.

Introduction

We, human beings, make a lot of effort to live a good life, and therefore use our individual and collective labour, physical and mental, to meet our material/physical needs. We observe the bounty of nature and shape them into consumable items through production and reproduction. We do not stop at coercing the nature; we create social divisions, the powerful and the powerless, institutionalizing patterns of control over the forces of production, and cast a kind of social relation, where the powerful subjugates and coerces the powerless. This could be one of the ways of looking at the progress of human civilization from a presumed state of prehistoric “wild”.

The other way is to take note of an inevitable and long history of aesthetic creation, right from the so-called wild state of human existence to the present state. While working on or with nature, in coercion and empathy, people have always keenly observed nature and created the world of art and aesthetics, signs and symbols or the collectively shared elements of culture. Once created, such cultural elements went on adding to the richness of art and aesthetics by engaging in an endless process of production and reproduction and exchange across space and time. Aesthetic creations,

thus, have been a part of human existence in all phases. The primary question, therefore, is, whether there is a particular method to artistic or aesthetic creation, or there are many. How do we move from the concrete objects of nature, from the materiality of life to the aesthetic and the symbolic world, mediated through perception, abstraction, and creation of imageries?

Claude Levi-Strauss has devoted a full book, *The Savage Mind* (1966) and a good number of articles in explaining how we move from concrete to the symbolic. He saw an integrated whole in the natural/physical objects, their hidden interlinkages, the sensation, thus observation and perception, cognition of the concrete and abstraction through aesthetic creation. The method, for him, is the same for science and aesthetics, in savage and the modern. The other French Scholar, Jean Paul Sartre also had a rich theory of aesthetic creation, who, contra Levi-Strauss, proposes “nihilation” of the object and sensory experiences for creation of aesthetic imageries. Foucault, a post-structuralist scholar, argues, in agreement with his friend Deleuze, that any system or school of aesthetics is like an archive and can have a delimiting and disciplining effect on aesthetic creation, which, in all circumstances, has to be non-archaic and therefore free-flowing and decentred (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 192). The members of the German Critical school have left a rich tradition of Marxist interpretation of art and aesthetics. Besides, we have a famous book by Michel Foucault, named *Aesthetics* (1994) which adds riches to the discourses on aesthetics. It is quite a task for a student of social science, who has trained in empirical tradition, to grasp the abstract, rich theoretical, philosophical writings on art and aesthetics, a subject which has been fine-tuned, thus partially obviated, to be taught at the university level globally; albeit difficult, it could be a journey full of aesthetic pleasure. The understanding of aesthetics is so fundamental to the growth of a scholar in particular and a human being, in general; an exposure to the world of aesthetics enriches an individual in her/his social as well as intellectual existence.

The purpose of the paper is not to do a review of the theories of art and aesthetics but to focus on the contrasting views of the two French scholars, Jean Paul Sartre and Claude Levi-Strauss with a view to prepare the launch-pad for an exploration into the world of art and aesthetics, without which, I firmly believe, there cannot be any form of creation (not even in the field of social sciences).

What is aesthetics?

In ancient Greece, the word *aisthesis*, which is taken as the root of modern-day word aesthetics, was used to mean “life experience” or “feeling” at the level of perception that follows sensation. It was taken as a body-mind play in unison. In modern time, the word aesthetics has evolved in its meaning. Foucault, for example, found an obscure but articulate engagement with experiences in the works of Surrealists, albeit many modern philosophers (one being Sartre) have ignored the connection between the sensory experiences and aesthetic creations (Faubion 1994: XIII). A subjective sense of what is beautiful connects heart with mind to generate a moment of elation and ecstasy, or elation, followed up with imageries of aesthetic creations in different forms of art, writings, to be imbibed into the individual self. This moment of elation or “feeling extraordinary” finds translation in artistic creations of different forms. In my understanding, there cannot be any creation, not even social science writings, unless it is founded on artistic realizations or aesthetics.

The subjective sense of aesthetics is rooted in its historical understanding and in collective reproduction in the field of culture. The late 19th-century European art movement established the idea that art should be for the sake of its beauty alone. Immanuel Kant, for example, proposed that aesthetic standards should be separated from morality (*Britannica Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1: 26). Conceptually, art should not be utilitarian; but in reality, utilities cannot be separated from creation of art forms. The creation of an art form is an act in self-expression, hence, the element of self-satisfaction; the craving of the artist for recognition cannot be ruled out. An object of art - poems, music or paintings - become a source of aesthetic pleasure, and sometimes (for professional artists) they are exchanged for a material value. Even when the objects of art are exchanged as cultural obligation or an expression of love or care they have their utility in cementing social relations and cultural bonds between the individuals and groups involved. If we take art as the face of the artist then art cannot be bereft of morality since we cannot think of human beings without morality (or a commitment to the collective or social) and a philosophical/ideological understanding of reality. Let me illustrate the point with what Levi-Strauss saw in an act of magical healing performed by a Shaman in primitive communities. Levi-Strauss saw it as a theatrical performance by the Shaman with all his props and unintelligible chanting that create a magical moment for the audience and the ailing individual. This, in the eyes of the members of the community, is an aesthetic as well as a utilitarian moment (Levi-Strauss 1963a: 179).

The act of artistic performance, belief, the morality and the utility are thus integrated into a structural whole and therefore inseparable. The performance art thus gets socially acknowledged, hence institutionalized, and culturally reproduced, although, in Levi-Strauss, the aesthetic creations are essentially independent of a utilitarian end.

We cannot think of an individual or a collective that does not have an aesthetic sense or some sense of art forms. Even the cave men, illiterate peasants, the tribal people living in forest villages sing, paint, play flutes or drums, make and reproduce myths as an expression of their will to aesthetics, in their search for beautiful as a part of their “unconscious” efforts to live a good life. Even when they make tools for cultivation or for fishing or cooking utensils, aesthetics finds its expression in the associated craft works and designs.

The aesthetic moment and after

We move around, get into sensory interaction with elements and events in nature, fellow human beings, artefacts, the artistic creations, at the level of concrete materiality, and are often awe-struck by something extraordinary and exceptionally beautiful and we try to capture that moment of magic in our mental camera to make abstract and aesthetic images. Not everything catches our poetic or aesthetic eye, only some extraordinary frames do; we select these artefacts or events on the foundation of our existing (and subjective) aesthetic epistemology and begin to make (new) mental aesthetic images to be internalised into our selves. This is how we go on adding to our subjective aesthetic capital, which in turn and through empathetic sharing becomes shared cultural capital. The magical moment of connect with the beautiful, the extraordinary, “the absent in the present” is, according to Levi-Strauss, the first step to aesthetic creation. Levi-Strauss has recorded many accounts of such aesthetic moments in his autobiographical book *Tristes Tropiques* (1963b). Here is an illustration of how the aesthetic moment appears:

And sometimes the miracle happens. On one side and the other of a hidden crevice we find two green plants of different species. Each has chosen the soil which suits it; and we realize that within the rock are two ammonites, one of which has involutions less complex than the others. We glimpse, that is to say, a difference of many thousand years; time and space suddenly [become one]; the living diversity of that moment juxtaposes one age and the other

and perpetuates them. Thought and sensibility take on a new dimension, in which every drop of sweat, every movement of muscle, every quick-drawn breath becomes the symbol of a story; and, as my body reproduces the particular gait of that story, so does my mind embrace its meaning. I feel myself [immersed in a denser form of intelligibility, in which time and space answer one another and speak languages that we have at least been reconciled] (Levi-Strauss 1963b: 60).

After the magical connect with the objects the mind becomes active in capturing the moment and the beautiful, the moment of realization and, hence, joy and emancipation. The mind goes on making aesthetic images that the poet (the romantic self) in the human beings carries in her/his aesthetic treasure, to complete the cycle of aesthetic creation. Levi-Strauss thus looks at the process of poetic/aesthetic creation as a structural whole. He argues that the act of aesthetic “representation” necessarily involves a sensory simplification or “reduction” of the original object, which loses one or more of its “original” dimensions. A keen observer of painting, Levi-Strauss thus creates his own imagery or understanding of a painting while leaving out the painter, his thoughts and his lines of expression. The imagery, thus created, becomes the creation of the observer and not that of the painter (the original creator).

One can question whether an aesthetic creation, stored in the mind of the observer, is fixed in its shape and content or not, or if the observer stops reflecting on the very moment of the magical connect; or does the artist-agency visit the moment again and again to come up with new images. These are the post-structuralist questions and the post-structuralist answer would be in terms of multiple reflections and multiple imageries. Because, the agency in the artist is always active, creating and recreating (in a deconstruction), and therefore an image cannot be frozen in a time and space. Applying phenomenological reduction, the subjective aesthetic creation of an object, event, a poem or a painting can go through several rounds of modifications; (1) through repeated reflections on the object and (2) through dialogues with the other observers of the same object or event. Going a step further, we can say that the artist is not bound by any commitment to stick to the original imagery that was construed at the magical moment; rather, he can transcend from one imagery to the other, thus abstracting himself from the original in shaping a piece of art. I would call this aesthetic freedom of the creator.

We have to understand that there are varied and highly sophisticated interpretations of the modes of aesthetic creations. In the following section, I would discuss the views of two French scholars, Sartre and Levi-Strauss.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean Paul Sartre, outlined his phenomenological conception of aesthetic image in the last section of *L'Imaginaire* (1940), translated into English as *The Imaginary* (2004). Sartre identified imagination as a special faculty, which is distinct from the mental representation of the perceived objects. The mental image is construed as a double of the thing-in-itself, upon immediate sense contact on one hand, and from recollection, on the other. In his understanding, image making (of an object) or “imaging” consciousness posits its object and non-being. In other words, it “nihilates” its object, which is taken as “irreal” (2004: 191). For him, *image-making consciousness* is distinct from *perceptual consciousness*. In the former the object is bracketed but in the latter the object is altogether banished as the consciousness is not taken as the representation of the object. Sartre elaborated the distinction further saying:

... the object as imaged is an irreality. Without doubt it is present but, at the same time, it is out of reach. I cannot touch it, change its place: or rather I can indeed do so, but on the condition that I do it in an irreal way, renouncing being served by my own hands, resorting to phantom hands ... to act on these irreal objects, I must duplicate myself, irreal myself (2004: 125).

The mode of existence of imagined images are taken as “totally inactive”; they are neither the effects nor the causes.

Sartre’s core argument is that the imagined image is the seedbed of all forms of art and music. In the work of art, the mental image is attained through an external object – the work of art itself - which he terms as an “analogical representative” or *analogon*. The work of art construed as an *analogon* is no more than the means of generating the true object through the imagined work of art. The aesthetic experience requires a dissolution of the *analogon* (the material object), which vanishes into an “abyss” (2004: 189) of nothingness as soon as the imagined object appears. In Sartre’s illustration, the aesthetics of a painting (say, the portrait of Charles VIII) is not there in the frame, the colours and the shades; the realizing consciousness is hidden beyond all this materiality. The realizing consciousness is a part

of perception but the imaging consciousness is completely independent of the objective reality. In order to draw an imaging or imagining consciousness one has to 'nihilate' the material part of a painting. Sartre said: "It appears the moment that consciousness, effecting a radical conversion that requires the 'nihilation' of the world, constitutes itself as imagining" (2004: 189).

Art, in Sartre's understanding, is irreal, a "nothingness: the aesthetic object is constituted and apprehended by an imaging consciousness that posits it irreal" (2004: 191). The work of art appears only with the total 'nihilation' of the materiality of a piece of art (or the thing-in-itself). This happens with non-figurative art (such as music) as well; what is experienced is never what is immediately given to perception, but "a phantomatic double of the object" (Wiseman 2007: 98). Illustrating on Beethoven's Seventh Symphony Sartre wrote: "the symphony is not there, between those walls, at the tip of the violin bows ... I do not really hear it; I listen to it in the imaginary" (2004: 192-93). In case of natural yet aesthetic event like sunrise or sunset on the sea one has to forget about the actual event and remember the imagery of it, independent of the actual even. The virtual (unreal) object thus created in mind becomes the true source of aesthetic emotion. Thus, Sartre arrived at a general rule of aesthetic appreciation as thus: "the aesthetic enjoyment ... is nothing but a manner of apprehending the irreal object and, far from being directed on the real painting, it serves to constitute the imaginary object through the real canvas" (2004: 191).

The idea that objects are to be taken as irreal and the imageries real, as Sartre perceived, seems to be problematic. It is true that our imaginative power and hence the power of aesthetic creation is infinite and which may not directly be indexed to the real objects, but all the imageries although fictional are provoked by and inspired into something concrete. Some events in nature or culture, which create a magical moment, are taken further in imagination culminating into an aesthetic creation. In the writings of Sartre, this perpetual dialogue between the perceptual order and the world of imaginations is missing as for him the world of aesthetics has nothing to do with materiality. The poems, the paintings, songs are often inspired by real and every time we reflect back on the event we may come up with different kind of aesthetic imageries. Similarly, we take poems, music or art as "discourses" (in Foucaultian sense) they can definitely shape our perceptions and actions. At this juncture we would move on to discuss Levi-Strauss's position on the problematic.

Levi-Strauss

All the works of Levi-Strauss has a “mythopoetic” content (Wiseman 2007: 217). In all his anthropological works, he sought a reconciliation of nature (reality) and culture. In structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss, in contrast to Sartre’s views, imagining (or imaging) and perceiving are integrally interconnection. “Levi-Strauss’s anthropological analysis of totemic, mythical and poetic thought reveal the imbrication of the creative imagination and sense perception” (Wiseman 2007: 98). For Levi-Strauss, precepts, images and signs are connected in a single chain of symbolic production. Levi-Strauss uses his idea of “bricoleur” to explain how the symbolic system is created:

Images cannot be ideas but they can play the part of sign, or to be more precise, co-exist with ideas in signs and if ideas are not yet present, they can keep their future place open for them and make its contours apparent negatively. Images are fixed, linked in a single way to the mental act which accompanies them. Signs and images which have acquired significance, may still lack comprehension; unlike concepts they do not yet possess simultaneous and theoretically unlimited relations with other entities of the same kind. They are however already *permutable* (1966: 20).

In Levi-Strauss’s model, the *percepts* (or non-signifying images) drawn (hence removed) from the reality are converted into signs (or signifying images) and then integrated into the broader symbolic order, called culture. Thus, contrary to the position of Sartre, Levi-Strauss did not see any discontinuity between the concrete, the *percepts*, mental images and sign systems; he, in reality, saw a gradual progression from one to another. The imagery in Levi-Strauss is based upon the foundation of the object, its physicality and not through “nihilation” of the objects or the reality.

For Sartre, the object or the real-life experience itself is not the source of knowledge, but Levi-Strauss shows that for the mind in its wild mode of operation it may be a tool of understanding. Criticizing Malinowski’s crude functionalism, Levi-Strauss has asserted that plants are not only good to eat, but “good to think with”. Levi-Strauss’s aesthetics is founded on the concrete existence of the objects, a foundation that Sartre negates and nihilates and terms it unreal. For Levi-Strauss, the meaning of the aesthetic object is sought in the body of the image. Illustrating the point, Levi-Strauss observed how the Cunas differentiate kinds of leaves based on how they are folded by the wind, or how the Blackfoot used to forecast the arrival of

spring by observing the evolution of the foetuses of bison. Levi-Strauss, in his structuralism, noticed an inherent nature of human mind and that is to minutely observe the concrete reality, which he has termed as the wild mode, which serves as the first step towards production of the aesthetic and symbolic order. The dialogue with nature for the primitive scientist as well as the modern artist is the foundation of abstract, aesthetic creation. On this Levi-Strauss observed:

Savage thought is definable both by a consuming symbolic ambition such as humanity has never again seen rivalled, and by scrupulous attention directed entirely towards the concrete, and finally by the implicit conviction that these two attitudes are but one (Levi-Strauss 1966: 220).

Whether the stages can be separated, whether or not the observation of the concrete, percept formation and aesthetic creation happen simultaneously or chronologically in progression. Primitive aesthetic sense; the universal movement from concrete to abstract. Whether one concrete results into one image only. The ways we relate to the concrete – all continue to impress our cognition and keep the endeavour to dive into aesthetic experience alive. However, Levi-Strauss refused to reduce artistic creations or the imageries as mere reflections of the perceptual order; they are much more abstracted from that as they happen in the world of imaginations and dynamic reflections.

Conclusion

Aesthetic imagination and artistic creations, the use of signs and symbols and cultural reproduction have been a part of human existence since time immemorial, irrespective of the wild or modern ways of life. One can see a journey here - from concrete to abstract; if nature is concrete, art (or any other form of aesthetic creation) is abstract as the latter finds its fruition in the romantic space of the creator(s). The question is whether they are discrete or continuous, whether the artistic creations can happen independent of the observations of the concrete (or natural) objects or they are just stages in a process of transformation. Whether the aesthetic creations are rooted in concrete objects or completely decentred, whether aesthetics follow ethics and a system (or ideology) or are completely free of any system of thought – these are some of the questions that intrigue me.

In this paper we have dealt with two contrasting approaches to aesthetics, one is by Levi-Strauss and the other is in the tradition set by Sartre, Deleuze and Foucault. In the first, we come to know that aesthetics, although in romantic tradition is rooted in the objects and aesthetic events and a psychic moment of aesthetic elation; as Levi-Strauss claimed that aesthetics is a part of holistic human existence. In the latter tradition, aesthetics is decentred and can be made possible only by nihilating the object or concrete; aesthetics is non-archaic, non-systemic, and discrete. The latter argument, especially by Foucault and Deleuze, brings forth ideas how any patterned (by ideology or discourse) aesthetics has a delimiting and hegemonic impact on the artist, who cannot operate in an ambience of absolute freedom. Foucault is in favour of decoupling even the ethical issues from aesthetics.

The question that continues to haunt me (at the end of the exercise of writing this paper), is whether we can think of a human being (every single human being has some aesthetic sense), who can be totally decentred from concrete existence, a sense of value or ethics, and ideology. My answer would be a “no”, and hence the rootedness of the artist is bound to find reflection and representation in all forms of artistic creations. Then comes the question of whether the artist can be absolutely free of the systemic forces, the market, and the pressure of the forms and trends that are the creations of time and space, and interest, both individual and collective. An artist has to respond to the tensions created by these pressures, which want to discipline the artist, on the one hand, and the will to aesthetic freedom, on the other. The tension never deserts the artist.

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BOOK REVIEW

Roy, Sinjini, 2019, *LIFE OF THE MIDDLECLASS AGED IN KOLKATA*. Kalpaz Publications: Delhi. ISBN110052. Pp. 255, Tables 35,
Price: Rs. 850.

There are innumerable narratives from all over the world, detailing the phenomena of sunset years of their respective populations. Despite availability of adequate details of such facts of life of the elderly persons, nowhere as it appears, the societies and cultures have been in a position to tackle the issues related to their problems with adequate confidence. Somewhat puzzling though a reality that almost all societies looked upon this very natural phenomenon as if a nagging problem. According to chronological analyses, exactly at what historical phase this apparently obvious natural phenomenon of ageing assumed the character of a serious problem is still a subject of mere speculation. Significant differences across societies and cultures notwithstanding, it should have been possible to associate this very phenomenon with the sequences of development of societies and cultures. Somewhat strangely though, the narratives often seem to prefer remaining rather vague. Traditional India, instead, appears to stand out somewhat distinctly in this respect. When through their approach of *chaturashram*, the people tended to look upon at this very fact only as an expression of a unique natural process, through application of the method of extrapolation, it should not have been altogether impossible to determine the cultural stage or point of time, since when this practice got into general usage in public behaviour.

According to Hindu Sacred Law, when a householder is greeted with grandchildren, that announces the time for him to become a hermit, leaving all earthly pleasures, material as well as non-material, behind. This stage of life or *vanaprastha*, is further followed by *sanyas*, a stage ever-eager to meet the ultimate.

Opinions differ among scholars, whether such a way of life of the elderly citizens was ever in usual practice in real life or the stages just indicate an

ideal, ever to be aspired. In either way, this suggests a cognition yet to be found anywhere else. Therefore, whether life-style of the aged is a problematic or otherwise, could be analysed without necessarily assigning any value judgement.

Life of the Middleclass Aged in Kolkata by Sinjini Roy is a welcome addition to the literature of individuals belonging to the sunset years. It is no doubt a fairly intimate description of what is happening to the elderly people of the middleclass no matter howsoever defined, particularly in terms of what may broadly be categorized as the family relations in an ever-changing urban social space of contemporary Kolkata. As the author highlights the limitations of scope of the present exercise, she also proposes that the study has been designed to explore the basic processes that transform the multi-generational large family set ups to single-member units, resulting in sharp loss of family-care system. In fact, her emphasis has been to examine in the context of urban middle class and the validity of the predominant discourses on aging in India, which by and large propagates that the rush for materialism that encourages individualism among the new generations, in fact practically leaving the aged rather lonely, if not somewhat uncared.

Her basic assumption is that the middle class often provides the cultural space where elements of tradition as well as modernity seem to closely interplay. To be relatively more specific, her significant question is, the middle class being the target of the ever-growing consumer culture, how do they negotiate with the pressures of tradition as well as modernity? The impact seems obvious to her. When the elderly individuals need the warmth and care of the family most, they are scarcely to be found. This results in a care crisis situation, intricacies of which are not yet sufficiently explained. How do the middleclass aged comprehend the crisis and what have been the strategy for adjustment to the new situation remain to be adequately known.

In Roy's study, research samples have been drawn from among two sets: (i) those who live in their own houses along with some family members and also (ii) those who shifted to old -age homes. The former is likely to demonstrate continuity, to what extent the traditional family system is still in a position to act as the binding force. The latter is supposed to highlight the pressures that compel the aged to seek shelter in old-age homes. Nevertheless, the major part of the study devoted itself to reflect the nature and character of relationship of the aged and their respective children, particularly in highlighting the nature of problems the aged suffer from.

The overall picture further demonstrates the character of family support system, as still exists as a binding force. Although the author notes with apparent awe, the pre-dominance of female inmates in the old-age homes, her analysis tried to offer an explanation. She further demonstrates the process through which the families of orientation over time lose members, ultimately leaving the elderly of the family rather lonely. This, to the author, appears to be the integral part of the modern urban middle-class families.

As Roy asserts in this context, elderly persons who continue to live in their respective houses, still value a great deal the notions of family, kinship, community, neighbourhood, family care, support system, empathy, traditional way of life, and such others. For those, whose support system is weak or non-existent, no matter whatever the reasons may be, are rather compelled to move to the old-age homes.

Growing life expectancy, down-sizing of the family as such, and dispersal of family members together create a crisis situation for the aged in general, and particularly for those who have moved to the old-age homes. Nevertheless, the author establishes with an appreciable degree of confidence that despite stresses and strains of the wider social forces, the institutions like family, kinship, community, neighbourhood, friendship, and values like care, support, empathy, etc. have not altogether become redundant yet in the life and living of the urban middle class.

Chaturashram, either as practice or ideal, obviously refers to the life-style of pre-industrial, pre-urban societies and cultures. In the contemporary context, they are almost nowhere to be available. There is sparingly any society or culture, where penetration of urban-industrial forces is yet to be sufficiently experienced. Thus, problems related to aged are several though, going to stay. Under the circumstance, as pointed out by Sinjini Roy, strategies toward stress-free adjustment seem to be the only way out.

By way of drawing up her conclusions, the author observed that the seminal issues covered by the account under review are stresses and strains of the larger social forces internal as well as global, notwithstanding the fact that the institutions like family, kinship, community, neighbourhood, and friendship and values like care, support, empathy, etc. have not altogether been redundant yet in the life and living of the urban middleclass aged populations. The author considered it important to touch upon issues related to most of the major sociological thoughts, several among whom do not necessarily extend or receive any direct support from the data so meticulously generated

by the scholar. Nevertheless, a close editing, particularly to eliminate avoidable repetitions, could have immensely enhanced the value of this otherwise excellent study.

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