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Perspectives on the Impact of Indology on Historiographical and Educational Discourse in India

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Abstract

The present essay critically examines the existing scholarship on colonial Indology, or the orientalist framework of the study of Indian history, society, and culture. How the Orientalist or Indological style of writings about India commenced in the late eighteenth century? What have been the salient features of Indology and Orientalism in the Indian context? What have been the major changes and continuities within Indology itself? Despite many challenges posed by newer developments in the domain of research during nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the foundational structure of Indology, how the Indological-Orientalist outline continues to enjoy a lot of influence in the way we tend to think about history, knowledge, language, community, and nationalism in context of South Asia? The essay also shows how India was portrayed as a corollary opposite, a primitive other of the industrializing Europe through Indological studies? At the same time, the essay examines that what are contemporary perspectives about the Saidian framework of the study of

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orientalism. How should historians or social scientists deal with Indological or the Orientalist material without dumping it because of its inherent biases and yet freeing themselves from its deeply problematic assumptions and implications?

Key words: Indology, orientalism, India, colonial, national, knowledge, education, language

Introduction

The modular discourse of modernity has been marked by unprecedented emphasis on the power of science, scientific attitude and economic progress as opposed to primitive, barbaric or inferior pre-modern. Ignoring the levels of technical achievements of other societies, as for instance documented by Dharmpal and Irfan Habib (Dharmpal, 1971 and Habib, 1996) for pre-colonial India, newer yardsticks for judging civilizations were adopted where machine became the measurement of civilizations (Adas, 1992). Following the scientific revolution, the classical antiquity of non-European societies was appreciated or condemned through certain cultural or civilizational perspectives as opposed to the modernity of induatrializing Europe. The European Indologists assumed for themselves the power of knowing these scientific essences (Inden, 1986). While we need to eschew complete debunking of modernity within 'post-modernist fashion or Foucauldian framework (Gupta, 2021 and Foucault, 1972 and 1977), the point developed within the present essay is that eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the growth of a particular kind of study of non-Western societies including India within a comparative framework which is variously called Indology, Orientalism, comparative philology or what later came to be known as Indic Studies. This scholarship established a hegemonic discourse on the origins of languages, nature as well as status of civilization in India in comparison with Europe owing to the presuppositions that colonial scholars brought with them from their own societies.

The growth of Indological scholarship or the interest in non-Western civilizations as a counter other of Europe as well as an object requiring sympathetic attitude towards the ancient culture and the treasures of wisdom preserved in the classical languages of Indian subcontinent was coterminous to certain processes and trends during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This included imperialism; the emerging transnational phenomenon of 'comparative literature's' and 'world literature' or the 'study of literature across the frontiers'; Romanticism; cosmopolitanism; natural law tradition derived from Scottish enlightenment; and liberalism with its attendant belief in the hierarchy of civilizations in the ladder of progress.

According to Uday Singh Mehta, liberal thinkers viewed empire paternalistically. The peoples of the empire were regarded by them as children to be brought up into the civilized world (Mehta, 1999).

In his hugely controversial work on Orientalism, Edward Said reviewed European literature of about last four thousand years about the Middle East. He deployed theGramscian concept of 'hegemony' and the Foucauldian notion of 'power / knowledge' to argue that the distinctive identities of oxidant and orient are human or discursive creations, instead of merely a natural phenomenon. Said suggested that over the centuries, there may be manifest differences in discourse, but the underlying latent orientalism is more or less constant. Orientalism in this sense is a discourse about the Orient as the other of Europe, which confirms Europe's dominant position (Said, 1978).

In Said's work, major focus was on the Middle East, and not so much on South Asia. But there are scholars who have successfully studied the growth of orientalism in the Indian context and its implications even prior to Said. Two most important names with differences of emphasis in their writings are Bernard H. Cohn (Cohn, 2004) and David Kopf (Kopf, 1969). While Kopf's approach was more celebratory of the contribution of orientalism, Cohn's was very critical. The post-Said scholarship on Orientalism either

in the context of India or otherwise is different from the earlier one in the sense that it has been influenced by Saidian framework: either in support or in refutation or at best in its attempt to modify Saidian formulations.

Various tenets of this Indological scholarship continue to influence popular memory of the bygone era as well as historiographical, political and educational discourse in India till date. The pervasive impact of Indology continues even though many of its central features have been reassessed by historians and other scholars for quite some time. It continues to remain one of the most contentious aspects of Indian historiography. I have briefly hinted towards some trajectories of Orientalism recently in a survey of historiography of education in modern India (Gupta, 2021). Besides elaborating some of these trajectories in the present paper, I will describe some salient characteristic features of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Indological scholarship through existing historical works. In other words, the present essay reviews the scholarship on Indology: its implications for the nature of language orders and knowledge production, educational discourse, politics of historiographical frameworks, and social divisions and relations in India.

Beginnings of Indology

British Parliament passed the Regulating Act in 1773. Warren Hastings became governor-general and a council was formed to assist him. Now, with the establishment of 'British suzerainty' in the later eighteenth century, the knowledge about Indian society began to be accumulated more systematically and swiftly. The English East India Company (EIC) began realizing that accumulation of systematic knowledge about the structure of Indian society might prove helpful for administrative reasons (Cohn, 2004).

According to David Kopf, Warren Hastings wanted to understand Indian culture as a basis for sound Indian administration. Himself being proficient in Indian languages,

Hastings decided to work within the existing indigenous institutions and started creating an 'Orientalized service elite competent in Indian languages and responsive to Indian traditions. However, for Kopf, ultimately this move towards the discovery of past helped Bengalis or Indians to bring a Renaissance meaning self-awakening and reformism (Kopf, 1969).

For Michael S. Dodson, Hastings believed that 'the key to the Company's successful governance of its Indian territories lay in the conciliation of 'native sensibilities''. He thought that 'this goal would be best served by modeling the Company's rule to take account of Indian societal norms and values'. According to Dodson, his vision of legal administration in India was guided by the 'principles of common, or natural law, systematized by Sir William Blackstone in England in the late 1760s'. In this Blackstonian view, law was considered to be 'the product of an on-going rational process'. It reflected the values and concerns of the society which it applied to (Dodson, 2010).

J.E.M. Derrett underlined that the colonial government required legal codes to run its government in India. These legal codes were compiled during eighteenth century from classical texts. This necessitated the need to engage in the translation and transliteration of texts written in classical languages. For this, the officials of the EIC organized dialogue amongst Pandits and Molvis on their scriptures and compiled their conclusions in English language as definitive legal texts (Derrett, 1969).

Within this context, some European officials of the EIC began to learn classical languages of India and involved themselves in translation activities or writing legal treatises. Nathaniel Halhed prepared a code of Hindu laws in 1776. He also published a Grammar of the Bengali Language. Similarly, Charles Wilkins translated the Bhagavat Gita in 1783 (Cohn, 2004; Dodson, 2010; Kopf, 1969).

Besides this, there could have been another political reason. The Company saw itself as a successor to Hindu and Muslim rulers who encouraged higher learning in classical languages by

establishing madrassahs and pathshalas; bestowing marks of honor or pecuniary grants to learned Pandits and Moulavis; and by endowing educational institutions for higher religious studies. Therefore, the Company felt that it must continue the patronage to the traditional education in order to conciliate the Hindu and Muslim social elites by demonstrating some degree of continuity with the previous ruling powers. It also wanted to educate sons of influential Indians for appointing them on some posts under Government. Accordingly, Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781. The courses taught at Calcutta Madrasa included natural philosophy, Koranic theology, law, geometry, arithmetic, logic and grammar. The medium of instruction was Arabic, not English (Kopf, 1969).

Asiatic society of Bengal was founded in 1784. This provided William Jones and other orientalist scholars a platform to publicize their oriental learning (Kopf, 1969).

Jonathan Duncan was an able translator of Bengali and Persian and author of scholarly articles in the *Asiatic Researches*. He advised for the establishment of a Sanskrit college in Benares in 1792 for preserving and cultivating the laws and literatures of the Hindus (Kopf, 1969).

Lord Wellesley established in 1800 a college at Fort William for the training of the servants of the East India Company. Besides Latin, Greek, and the English classics, the arrangements were made for the teaching of Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and six Indian vernaculars. Alongside the English law, Muslim and Hindu legal traditions were also taught. Wellesley also organized a course in cooperation with the Asiatic Society of Bengal called the History and Antiquities of Hindustan and the Deccan (Das, 1978 and Kopf, 1969).

The intensification of missionary activities further contributed to the growth of this tendency of studying India, its languages and literature. Their contribution in the shaping of modern Indian languages as well as in the study of classical texts was very significant. Christian Missionaries demonstrated keen interest in

preparing grammars and dictionaries in various Indian languages. They introduced the printing press in India and began the printing of books in Indian languages (Oddie, 1999; Priolkar, 1958; Mir, 2010). Christian Missionaries took keen interest in reading the translations of ancient Indian classics carried out by the early Indologists. Like the Orientalist Indologists, missionaries also brought with them a whole world of imaginings when they entered the mission field. These presuppositions and imaginings shaped their depictions and representations of Hinduism. Furthermore, their interpretations of Indian religion were then exported back to Britain and reinforced through the medium of the missionary societies' periodical literature. As a result, missionary images of Hinduism were simplified and popularized, or 'edited, repackaged and presented for the consumption of the British reading public'. Moreover, despite the fact the missionary approach softened somewhat over the years as a result of various developments in and outside the mission field, stereotypical impressions of Indian religion and 'the Hindu' had become firmly entrenched in the British psyche by the beginning of the twentieth century (Oddie, 2006).

Thus, according to Bernard S. Cohn, three major traditions of approach to Indian society became visible by the end of the eighteenth century. These traditions were (a) The Orientalist (b) The administrative and (c) The missionary (Cohn, 2004). However, here it needs to be clarified that these were not mutually exclusive trends. They had overwhelming similarities as well as differences. Further, none of these trends were completely homogenous. In addition to these trends, there was an Anglicist perspective. It had various shades from Evangelicalism of Charles Grant and Grand Duff to Utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill. For our purpose, it is important to note that even they relied largely on the material produced by the early Orientalists.

Moreover, these traditions of studying India would not have been possible without the cooperation of learned Indian scholars with Europeans (Bayley, 1996). Of course, altered circumstances

caused by the decline of traditional Sanskrit institutions and pedagogy and its replacement by modern educational institutions established by, or with support of colonial state and growing criticism of Hindu philosophy and religion significantly weakened conventional agency of Pandits (Hatcher, 2005). Nonetheless, the early Indological scholars as well as their many later counterparts well understood the importance of the authority of Pandits on Hindus; the significance of their Sanskrit knowledge; and the relevance of their citations in the European debates about India (Bayley,1996;and Dodson,2010).

Therefore, as Dilip Chavan underlines, there is the need to go beyond the suppositions of social change inaugurated via the policy of English education and to see how colonial state tried to maintain social hierarchy through its differential language policy which was operationalized by means of diverse kinds of institutions for different social groupings. He says that the colonial state pursued policy of reconciliation towards the Indian elites. For instance, it made provisions for teaching classical languages for traditional elites for their reconciliation in Poona Sanskrit College. The result is that Sanskrit has continued to dominate 'the Indian linguistic scenario well into the post-colonial era as a presumed conduit of national culture and as the alleged mother of all Indian languages'. At the same time, the colonial state taught some of the elites in English language in the Elphinstone College for creating newer intermediaries in commerce and administration. The students of this college also overwhelmingly came from the upper-castes and classes. On the other hand, the colonial state made arrangements for learning in the vernaculars for the masses who were largely drawn from socially excluded groups like Dalits. Thus, Chavan demonstrates how the colonial policy actually perpetuated existing social hierarchies, despite apparent modifications. However, rather than only blaming the colonial state, Chavan also underlines the power of non-state actors such as the indigenous elites to shape language policy (Chavan, 2013).

Complex Nineteenth Century Trajectories

The period between last three decades of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century has been generally seen by historians as a phase of close contact between the Indian intelligentsia and the Indological scholars. Yet there were significant changes from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when colonial state and Western intellectuals (barring some exceptions) began to maintain distance from their earlier attraction for India. According to Trautmann, by and large, an apparently favorable attitude towards ancient Indian classical traditions started giving way to more clearly perceptible cultural and political arrogance towards Indian antiquity and people (Trautmann, 2004).

At the same time, we must not suppose that at any particular time during colonial rule, all the scholars of Indological studies were guided either by 'indomania' or 'indophobia'. In fact, the historical development in this regard have been more complex. For example, precisely at the time of Macaulay's condemnation of the Eastern classical heritage and in the subsequent decades, Delhi witnessed 'Oriental renaissance' (Minault, 2000). 'Constructive Orientalism' became the norm in Banaras College under James Balantyne (Dodson, 2010) as well as in Serampur in Bengal (Sivasundaram, 2007).

Moreover, even the most 'romantic' phase of Indian studies or Indology came only in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the colonial power was at its peak in India (Trautmann, 2004; and Dodson, 2010). It was otherwise the same period when the colonial attraction towards Indian antiquity and people was diminishing into cultural/political arrogance. Rather than the colonial project of Indological studies which began under the East India Company as noted above, it was German scholarship which was associated with the romantic phase of Indology in the second half of the nineteenth century. This phase is also very often cited as the romantic phase of Orientalism (Trautmann, 2004).

Salient Features

Through the comparison of Sanskrit with other ancient European languages, such as Greek and Latin, William Jones underlined common origins of languages of the Indo-European people. However, William Jones criticized Jacob Bryant's for practicing the speculative' or conjectural etymological method to use language historically for understanding cultures and people on the basis of mere similarities of vocabularies. Jones argued that mere etymological analyses, or similarities in vocabulary cannot prove historical relationship between languages. It should also include analysis of the 'extrinsic' evidence, such as the comparison of respective grammatical structures; philosophical and religious texts; remains of sculpture and architecture; and written memorials of Sciences and Arts (Trautmann, 2004).

Jones presumed unity of cultures through his understanding of the common origins of languages and in terms of the similarities between Vedic literature and other comparable works of philosophy of ancient world. He suggested that the Greeks, Romans, Indians, and Egyptians were originally one people. They separated into many branches and migrated to their respective countries from a common center in the Middle East, namely Chaldea or Iran (Trautmann, 2004).

Colebrooke argued in 1801 that all the modern languages of India were descended from Sanskrit. He thus presented the doctrine of the linguistic unity of India (Trautmann, 2004).

Colebrooke devised a new composite image of the Indo-Aryan period as a golden age. Therefore, in his schema, all subsequent developments implied the degradation, perversion or deviation from the pure Vedic essence. Colebrooke demonstrated from textual sources that the voluntary immolation of widows was a departure from the authentic tradition. He investigated the historical origins of the Indian caste system. He discovered many discrepancies between ancient textual requirements and actual contemporary practices. He traced a monotheistic tradition in Vedic period. He juxtaposed this monotheistic tradition with contemporary polytheism (Trautmann, 2004).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Indological scholars began to make close association between language and race. For instance, this is evident in their portrayal of the Indo-Aryan people of the Vedic age. Friedrich Max Müller not only treated the speakers of Indo-European languages as Aryans, but also emphasized their physical characteristic features, such as robust body, fair skin, broad nose and good height etc. Müller romanticized the virtues of the Aryan inhabitants of north India in the second millennium B.C. According to Max Müller, instead of being introspective and other-worldly, the Aryans were outgoing and non-mystical. They were pictured by him as a 'robust, beef-eating, socially equalitarian society'. The image of the defeated non-Aryan people, who lived in north India at the time of Aryan immigration was constructed as a 'counter-other' of Aryans. Although in his later writings, Müller clarified that Aryan was not a race, by that time, this view had been firmly engraved in the popular as well as scholarly thinking (Trautmann, 2004).

Thus, colonial philologists believed in language as an organism that developed through linear historical stages towards constant improvement as they thought about human societies. Therefore, a progressive notion of history entered its discourse and shaped the way language was thought about. The philologists not only believed that there was a historical relation linking Sanskrit with Latin and Greek, they also felt the need to understand why vernacular languages, Telugu for instance, were so underdeveloped compared to their European counterparts. The philological studies of languages, the production of grammars and dictionaries and the compilation and printing of definitive editions of literary manuscripts had long-lasting effects not only upon the classical languages of Sanskrit and Persian, but even more significantly upon the regional languages and literary traditions in India. Even though the regional literary cultures had a longer history of unification and standardization, colonial philology could manage to erase it, bring down the vernacular literary cultures to a 'ground zero' point from which new and modern literary languages were constructed and 'reformist' drives could be

launched in order to facilitate modern literary production, the development of new genres of writing and modes of communication (Mantena, 2005).

Historical Challenges to the Framework of Indology

Unlike the Orientalist scholars of Indology, who talked about the past uniformity of languages and people, some of the Christian Missionary evangelists laid emphasis on the differences between Indians and British. For instance, Charles Grant was a Scotsman, an officer of the East India Company, an Evangelical Missionary who became very influential in the Indian affairs on his return to Britain. He wrote a paper titled as the Observations on the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain in 1796. In this paper, he argued for an Anglicizing and Christianizing approach toward India and its culture. His approach was opposite to the prevailing Orientalist policy of patronage and respect for Indian laws, religion, and customs. In this paper, besides making prescriptions for British policies towards Indians, Grant also attacked Hinduism and Indian civilization (Viswanathan, 1990).

The Early years of the nineteenth century was also the time when in Britain, the attraction for utilitarian ideology was growing. It was felt that in order to increase the market of European manufactured goods in India, the introduction of European tastes amongst the Indian people is a must (Stokes, 1959). Western style education was seen as a means to achieve this end in view.

One representative of Utilitarian ideology for India was James Mill. He never visited India and knew no Indian language. Still, he expressed his authoritative opinion about India. Mill laid the foundation of tripartite division of Indian history as Hindu period, Muslim period and British period. Notwithstanding many differences, according to Javed Majeed, there were important similarities between Mill's work and early Orientalist scholarship. For example, we find elements of cultural comparison in the analysis presented by Jones and Mill. Their comparison was finally

directed to evaluate the status of Indian civilization with respect to Europe. By relying on the works of earlier Orientalists, Mill's History also indirectly adopted the same Orientalist historiographical mode of analyzing Indian society through a reading of Sanskrit texts. It too thereby reproduced a textualized, Brahminical vision of Hindu social and religious practice generalized for entire Hindu or ancient civilization of India (Majeed, 1992). Mill's History of India and his views were quite widespread as it was prescribed for young civil servants in training for service in India (Mantena, 2005).

Following the path shown by missionaries like Charles Grant and Utilitarians such as Mill, subsequently Macaulay also condemned classical languages and literature of the east. However, as Zastoupil & Moir have shown, certain sections of Indian elites were active participants in the Anglicist Orientalist debate in Bengal leading to the Minute of Macaulay and Bentinck's resolution of 1835 favoring English language based education and European knowledge (Zastoupil& Moir, 1999).

The ethnological and linguistic terrain of India was explored further by scholars during the nineteenth century, which led to the shift away from the unity-of-origin doctrine toward the three-language-family doctrine. For instance, Ellis demonstrated in 1816 that the languages of the Dravidian family are not descendants of Sanskrit. Stevenson and Hodgson argued during 1840s that a unitary aboriginal language existed even before the arrival of Sanskrit into India, which was spoken by the Dravidian and Munda families. Thereafter, Caldwell argued in 1856 that the aborigines have a separate ethno linguistic entity, distinct from the Aryan and the Dravidian (Trautmann, 2004).

By the second half of the nineteenth century, scholars began to realize the difference between the conclusions derived from the study of languages and those derived from the study of races. The development of Darwinism or race science made it evidently clear that the racial differences have emerged over a much longer period than what was presumed earlier. It became increasingly clear that

the formation of races followed a much slower tempo than the formation of language families. It posed a challenge to an ethnology that attempted to correlate race and language; and on this basis pronounced the doctrine of the unity of origin (Ibid). The archeological discoveries of human remain adjacent to long-extinct animals revealed that human beings have occupied the earth for a much longer time than presupposed by the Indologists (Ibid). The discovery of Indus Valley Civilization clarified that the roots of civilization in India were much older than what was hitherto supposed by the Indologists. In fact, it has triggered new debates regarding the actual authors and destroyers of Indus Civilization: Whether Aryans had come from outside or they were indigenous people; whether the authors of Indus Civilization were Aryans or indigenous people; and who destroyed it? (Singh, 2008) Even when some of the Indological scholars started agreeing that Aryan invasion is a myth, they still upheld that Sanskrit and Vedas were the achievements of the people who came from outside (Singh, 2008).

Despite these challenges, the continued impact of Indology can be gaged by the fact that Aryanhood, one of its central tenets became a matter of pride for many Indians. Even those Indians like Phule who were critical of the notions of Aryan superiority used it to mount a critique of Brahminism (Deshpande, 2000). On the other hand, B.R. Ambedkar wrote on 'Shudras versus Aryans' in 1946 citing extensively from the Vedic sources to argue that the distinction between an Arya and a Dasa/Dasyu was not a racial distinction of colour and physiognomy and thus the origin of Sudra could not have anything to do with race. Even the professional historians now recognize that the Vedic evidence was subjected to a consistent over-reading by Max Muler and other Indologists to work out a racializing interpretation. They imposed the 'image of the dark-skinned savage' on the Vedic evidence with a considerable amount of 'text-torturing, both substantive and adjectival in character' (Trautmann, 2004). The concept of Arya was a socio-linguistic concept. It did not signify racial distinctions (Thapar, 2002 and 2006). Still, it is difficult to presuppose that we

have been successful to reckon with the kind of passionate emotional attachment that was produced by the Indological framework of history

Concluding Observations: Contemporary Perspectives on Indology and Saidian Framework of Orientalism

While for some historians, it has become essential to critique certain tenets of Indology as these do not fit well with their framework of cultural nationalism, for others, archeological sources are preferable over Indological writings owing to the biases inherent in them. Yet, these are not sufficient grounds to give up use of Indology for the writing of Indian history. The need is for more careful and historically sensitive handling of these textual sources. It might be appropriate to be alert about the main problems with Indology and handle this material accordingly.

For instance, Dilip K. Chakravarti (Chakravarti, 1997) underlined within Indology a feeling of superiority of European Indologists in relation to India, especially modern India and Indians; the assumption about India as 'steeped in philosophical, religious and literary lores'; and racism in the sense of a generic feeling of superiority in relation to the natives. Chakravarti (1997) further underlined that nationalists historians tried to counter many of the Western assumptions about the Indian past, however, by accepting the arguments about the glories of ancient India, they accepted the basic structure of interpretation built up by Western Indology.

Similarly, Ronald Inden (1986 and 1990) also underlined the manner in qhich the indological scholars presented a hegemonic view of Brahminical, textual, static,timeless picture of Indian society without taking congnizance of any regional variations and disjunctions between perscriptive normative statement and the actual behaviour people. Asiatics were seen as those who excelled in imagination, but reason taste were seen as to be the grand prerogatives of European mind. They presuppose that there is a homogenous, and almost-Platonic essence or nature which can be

directly intuited by the Indological expert. They used metaphors like machine to describe society and left no room for the agency of the individual. They characterized Indian thought as a dream; India as a female; caste society as a centrifuge; and Hinduism as a jungle or even a sponge. They constructed a caste centered view of Hinduism with the characteristic features of effeminacy as a counter other to the superior and rational religion of the Christ. Besides this, they also constructed the antiquity of rural India as a self-sufficient but closed economy and the narrative of oriental despotism. Through a romatic image of ancient India. They portrayed Indian culture as profoundly spiritual, idealistic and mystical as the mirror-opposite of Europe. They presupposed that the Indians lacked those essences or characteristics which are typical of the West, such as individualism, political freedom, and science. The European scholars and the colonial administrators and traders assumed for themselves the power to know these hidden essences of the Other and to act upon them. Besides this, they also constructed the antiquity of rural India as a self-sufficient but closed economy and the narrative of oriental despotism in the context of medieval India. It is not that these practices influenced only India, rather they have been central as a counter other to the self-image of the West during last two hundred years.

As we have seen throughout this essay, the approach of Edward Said towards the study of Orientalism has been seminally important in alerting us about the hegemonic politics of this discourse. Still, there are some cautions to be observed while dealing with it. For instance, David Kopf (Kopf, 1980) argued against a highly polemical writing of Said which also applies to Inden's work that it highlights only the negative features of orientalism. Kopf critiqued Saidian framework for providing an overly negative and one-sided analysis, as it fails to take into account the positive elements within Orientalist discourses. Kopf maintains that British Orientalism gave birth to the Bengal Renaissance since it helped Indians to find an indigenous identity in the modern world. For Kopf, the orientalist helped in the modernization of Indian people through what he calls the Bengal

renaissance. In fact, he makes a separation between modernization and Westernization. However, on the other hand, there are scholars like Sushobhan Sarkar and Sumit Sarkar who even questioned the application of the term 'Renaissance' for the early nineteenth century developments in Bengal, as the presence of colonialism differentiated nineteenth century Bengali society from its European counterpart of the sixteenth century. This debate has been surveyed by Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee, 1998: 1-25).

Three other interrelated objection to Edward Said's framework of Orientalism have been that first, while describing orientalist constructions, it does not consider any scope for the agency of Orientals in this process; second, it does not leave the possibility of any influence of those informants who supplied information to the orientalist scholars ; and third, its emphasis upon the orientalist constructions implies a complete rupture with the pre-colonial past. For instance, the essays of Jamal Malik, Gail Minault, C.A. Bayly and Avril A. Powel published in an edited volume by Jamal Malik (Malik, 2000) and the writings of Richard King (King, 1999) and Michael Dodson (Dodson, 2010) among others have drawn our attention to those communities within India, such as the Brahmins, who exerted a certain degree of influence upon the Western Orientalists. They show how these members of domestic intelligentsia contributed to the construction of the modern, Western conception of Hinduism and how this affected both continuities as well as ruptures with the past. The orientalist scholars generally found in the Brahminical 'priest' and pandits a receptive audience because they were already convinced of the degradation of contemporary Indian civilization in the present era of Kaliyug. This also implies that the orientals did possess their own discourse of decline and that accordingly they participated in the shaping of orientalist knowledge.

However, Nicholas Dirks (Dirks, 2002) and Michael Dodson (Dodson, 2010) believe that such emphasis on the participation of Indians imply blaming the victim for their own exploitation rather than the process of limiting the forms of their agency. It implies their complicity in their own oppression. They underline a

problem with the use of terms like 'dialogue', 'exchange', and 'conversation' for describing knowledge processes under colonialism.

Scholars have identified yet another problem with Said's framework that it lumps together various kinds of orientalisms. Peter Heehs (Heehs, 2003) for example, distinguishes six different styles of colonial and postcolonial discourse about India. Similarly, Denis Vidal (cited in Heehs, 2003) insists that colonial orientalism of the nineteenth century and the sort of orientalism highlighted by Said are two entirely different things. The orientalism of the nineteenth century itself had two sides, one scholastic, the other romantic, and Said's definitions cannot account for this distinction.

Trautmann (2002) draws our attention to the fact that after all British champions of Indian languages and culture who were called Orientalists were opposed by another set of Britishers who were the proponents of English education and known as Anglicists. Thus, both sides were championed by the Oxidant. However, Said's framework creates confusion in this matter as it portrays all Europeans alike.

However, Michael Dodson (Dodson, 2010) broadly supports the arguments of Edward Said with a slightly different focus. He shows how the agency of Pandits, their traditional authority and erudition were utilized in the colonial project of orientalism to make it seem more authentic. Thus, Dodson shows important continuities in the overall framework of colonial scholarship on India from the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century. Though he does not fail to mark the shifts, but his argument is that there remained important similarities in this body of scholarship over the said period. Therefore, he does not have disagreement with the central argument of Said about complicity of orientalism in imperialism.

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Nigerian Land Conflict: A Story of Taraba

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Abstract

Nigeria is home to more than 200 distinct ethnic groupings, about 500 different native tongues, and some of the world's biggest Muslim and Christian populations. Inadvertently, this leads to conflict, and such conflicts have been a recurrent issue in human cultures since the birth of mankind. The conflicts and disagreements traditionally sparked by competition over lands and resources are a key component of the national issue within the discourse on Nigeria, where a considerably higher emphasis is laid on loyalty to one's ethnic group than on national allegiance. One such example is Taraba, where land has a special role as a basic and highly symbolic resource and is therefore met with competition and conflict between the Herders and Farmers. This article talks about the main reasons behind the different ethnic groups that are fighting over land and land resources in Taraba.

Keywords: Competition, conflict, ethnicity, indigenes, settlers

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Introduction

Nigeria's fight between farmers and herders, which currently claims more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency, has emerged as the country's worst security threat. It has caused tens of thousands of people to be displaced and heightened racial, regional, and religious tensions. Nigeria is a federal republic made up of 774 local government units and 36 states. With 130 million inhabitants, it makes up over 20% of Sub-Saharan Africa's total population. The nation's per-capita gross national income is under $300. Nigeria is an agrarian nation, and a large proportion of its farmers live in rural areas where farming is typically their only source of income. Nigeria's most significant business is agriculture because a large portion of the people depends on it for both their well-being and means of livelihood (Agboola A.A. and Eniola, HT,1991). Despite this, there were a number of violent clashes that took place in Nigeria's numerous rural villages primarily in the states of Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa, and Taraba. According to Agboola, A.A., and Eniola, H.T. (1991), internal boundary disputes, the conflicting interests of nomads and sedentary farmers, and the agitation for higher prices for agricultural commodities and an improved standard of living by groups of farmers or peasants in some local government areas are all contributing factors to these conflicts. Two well-known theories could explain the struggle between Herders and Farmers over land and land resources: Karl Marx's Social Conflict Theory views social life as a struggle and concentrates on the allocation of resources and power, both of which are not equally endowed by nature. Marx's theory was influenced by the idea that nature does not distribute resources and power evenly. According to the social conflict theory, one of the primary reasons for conflict in society is competition for positions of power and authority. Conflict arises when two or more groups compete with one another in social interaction, mutually exercising their social strengths in an attempt to achieve objectives that are either scarce or incompatible with one another and preventing the other group from achieving their own goals. Similarly, John Dollard, Leonard Doob, Neal Miller, Robert

Sears, and Orval Mowrer were the ones who first suggested the Frustration-Aggression theory in the year 1939 which stated that the conflict between farmers and herders is a good example of how this idea might be used. Both farmers and herders want to have complete authority over the scarce resources, such as land and water; however, these resources are currently in the hands of either the farmers or the herders, who have prevented the other from having access to it. Both farmers and herders want complete control over the resources. The refusal to acknowledge the problem ultimately led to irritability, which led to hostility.

Land holds a distinctive place in African cultures and economies because it is a resource that is both essential and highly symbolic. One of the most crucial elements in the Nigerian discourse on the national issue relates to the conflicts and disagreements that have historically been sparked by rivalry for land-based resources. Tensions between herders and farmers have existed since before European colonisation. However, the conflicts were properly managed and contained, and as a result, they did not have the same negative effects on Nigeria's internal security and agriculture as they do now. This is due to the effective management of the conflicts (Benjaminsen and Ba, 2009). Herders have a long history of migration to the west, where they come into contact with sedentary farmers. As a result of these contacts, they coexist and cooperate with shared resources (Cabot, 2017). Although there is little historical evidence of precolonial farmers and herders clashing, it has been suggested that the two groups interacted cooperatively between the 12th and 13th centuries (A. G. Adebayo, 1991). The conflict between colonial farmers and herders marked the start of changes to the environment and society. This decreased the informal land tenure and resource exploitation that had previously prevailed, as well as the compatibility between the farmers and the herders. The indigenous people were not familiar with the dispute resolution techniques that the colonists brought with them, yet these techniques served the purposes of their oppressors in the colonial authority (Davidheiser and Luna, 2008). This led to a decrease in

the number of native people who owned land, which eventually caused a shortage of resources and a worsening of the environment (Adeoye, 2017). The basic ideas and routines of land management are typically viewed from different angles by both agriculturalists and pastoralists. For instance, disputes frequently occur close to waterways since that is where farmers grow vegetables during the dry season and where cattle herders water their herds. Conflict emerges when vegetable growers assert their right to farm vegetables close to water courses and demand that the herdsmen stop harming their crops in the event that crop damage occurs, as it typically does. The herders, on the other hand, will perceive this as a sabotage attempt that proves the cattle need to be watered elsewhere. Nigeria has seen, and is constantly experiencing, a string of skirmishes between farmers and ranchers since the foundation of the Democratic government there in 1999. These disputes are still present. In Nigeria, there has been a sharp rise in the conflict between farmers and herders, which is currently concentrated in the Middle Belt but is heading south. The conflict's centre is in the Middle Belt. Over 1,300 of the at least 1,500 fatalities that have occurred since September 2017 have happened in the first half of 2018. This is roughly six times as many civilians as Boko Haram killed in the same time frame. The first half of 2018 has seen more fatalities and violent incidents than any previous prior six-month period since the conflict's escalation in 2014 began. More than a hundred violent incidents have occurred. The states of Plateau, Benue, and Nasarawa, which are situated in the North Central geopolitical zone, as well as the neighbouring states of Adamawa and Taraba, which are situated in the Northeast zone, are those where the increase in violent acts is most pronounced. Land resources and the settler phenomenon have been at the centre of the conflicts in Taraba State. Many homes and entire communities were destroyed, and people were killed, during the conflict. Many of these conflicts have resulted in the loss of lives and property, the destruction of agricultural products, the displacement of people, and a significant financial outlay on the part of local, state, and federal governments to set up committees

to seek resolutions or resettlement camps for the displaced. Resources that ought to be used to advance other businesses are instead used to settle disputes between farmers and herdsmen. In terms of the resources involved in resolving them as well as the increased unemployment that has occurred as a direct result of the conflicts, the effects of these conflicts have a significant impact on the economy of the country. According to reports from both foreign and local media outlets, a considerable number of people died as a result of the fighting between farmers and herders (Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018). As a direct result of these tendencies, the conflicts have caused population displacement, a decline in agricultural productivity, and an increase in the unemployment rate (Odoh & Chilaka, 2012). The agricultural industries, which frequently employ both children and adults who make valuable contributions to society, are now insecure and tense. Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have been connected to the ongoing migration of people away from rural centres (local government). Due to the competition for opportunities created by this migration, farmers and ranchers battle in metropolitan areas. The importance of the agricultural sector's contribution to the growth and development of the Nigerian economy cannot be overstated. As a result, a loss of agricultural product supply will have negative effects on the national economy and security of the country, as well as fear, unhappiness, a lack of food security, and other factors.

Taraba: A Background

For good reason, Taraba is frequently referred to as "Nature's gift to Nigeria." In the north-east geopolitical region of Nigeria, Taraba State is divided into sixteen local government districts. Ardo Kola, Bali, Donga, Gashaka, Gassol, Ibi, Jalingo, Karim Lamido, Kurmi, Lau, Sardauna, Takum, Ussa, Wukari, Yorro, and Zing are these regions. On August 27, 1991, the Gongola State that had previously existed was renamed Taraba by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. The Muri, Mambilla, and Wukari divisions of

Taraba State date back to 1976. Gongola State was transformed into Taraba State. The state's name is derived from the Taraba River, which flows through the state's southern section. On August 27, 1991, the Gongola State that had previously existed was divided by the government of General Ibrahim Babangida, who was in office at the time. The state of Taraba takes its name from the Taraba River, which flows through the state's southern region. Jalingo is Taraba's capital city. In the north-eastern part of Nigeria, Taraba State covers a total area of 54,473 square kilometres. Taraba State's eastern boundary is shared with Adamawa State and the Republic of Cameroon, while its western border is shared with the states of Plateau and Nassarawa. Gombe State encircles Taraba State on its northern boundary. The state of Taraba is mostly located in the geographic centre of the nation, and its geography is characterised by rolling hills and a few isolated mountain ranges. The Mambilla Plateau is one of them and is renowned for its magnificence and beauty. Low woodland, a species of vegetation, covers the southern part of this state, while grassland covers the northern part. With an elevation of 1,800 metres (6,000 feet) above sea level, the Mambilla Plateau experiences mild temperatures all year long and this region of the State offers a lush, tsetse-fly-free highland terrain that is perfect for livestock farming. One of Nigeria's regions with the highest density of cattle is this one. Along with this, the area is home to sizable herds of cattle, sheep, and goats, especially on the Mambilla Plateau and all along the valleys of the Benue and Taraba rivers. By far, Taraba State citizens' primary source of income is agriculture. Cash crops that are permitted in this state include cotton, coffee, tea, and groundnuts. Maize, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava, and yam are some additional crops that are produced in sufficient quantities to be marketed at a commercial level. People engage in a variety of large-scale animal production activities, such as breeding pigs, rabbits, and poultry, as well as rearing and producing poultry. Taraba State is one of the leading states in the nation for animal production because of its dairy farms in Jalingo, Gembu, and Nguorje. Communities that are situated along the banks of the rivers Benue, Taraba, Donga, and Ibi engage in year-round fishing activity. Other professions that

are practised in various parts of the state include blacksmithing, carving, weaving textiles, dyeing, making mats, and pottery. Blacksmithing is another typical profession.

MAP OF TARABA STATE

Google. (n.d.). [Google map of Taraba state in Nigeria]. Retrieved September 22, 2022 from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Nigeria-Showing-Taraba-State_fig1_360457286

The Ethnic Groups Involved In The Taraba Land Conflict

The JUKUNS

The word "Jukun," which is used to refer to the Jukun-speaking people of the Middle Belt region today, is derived from apa-juku, the Jukun compound word for "man" or "people." In other terms, the term "Jukun" refers to the Jukun language speakers. However, their history was probably unknown before the 13th century

THE JUKUN MEN OF TARABA

Note: From Google. (n.d.). [Google image of the Jukun men of Taraba] https://www.naijaland.com/2306155/history-jukun-people-northern-nigeria/

because, so little was recorded about it. Their history wasn't finally recorded until they got in touch with the literate Hausa states. Nevertheless, from the 13th through the 18th centuries, the Kano Chronicle focuses nearly entirely on the military accomplishments of the Jukun. Those who speak Jukun can trace their descent to the monarchs of the kingdom of Kwararafa, which existed from the 14th to the 18th centuries and was situated in Western Africa. The Fulani conquests at the beginning of the 19th century had a direct impact on the political division of the Jukun-speaking population into a number of regional factions. The majority of the Jukun people, also known as the Wapa at the time, lived in and around Wukari by the 1920s. They were under the local king's and his government's control there. The states of Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Adamawa, and Gombe in Nigeria, as well as a few areas of north-eastern Cameroon, are home to the Jukun people.

The TIVS

Between 1750 and 1800, when all of the villages in the Apa region of the Kwararafa were in chaos, the Semi-Bantu Tiv moved to seven hills in the west of Cameroon. They were originally from the Katanga region of Congo-Zaire. So, it was easy for the invading Tiv to fight their way into the area until they reached the banks of the River Benue and Katsina-Ala. This forced other people, like the Idomas, to move farther to the west. By the year 1800, everyone who would eventually live in the area that is now Benue State had moved there and learned how to live together peacefully. The Tiv people who live in Benue State are spread out among the state's fourteen local government areas. There are also large numbers of Tiv people in the states of Taraba, Nasarawa, and Plateau.

THE TIV ETHNIC GROUP

Note: From Google. (n.d.). [Google image of the Tiv people of Benue] http://www.lambarna.com/benue-state/ethnic-composition/the-tiv-people-of-benue-state/

The Causes Of Land Conflict Between JUKUNS and TIVS

The epicentre of inter-tribal strife in Nigeria is Taraba State, which is home to more than 80 different ethnic groups and dialectical divisions. The Tiv-Jukun battle is the bloodiest, second only to the Biafran civil war (1967–1970) and the 1994 Hutu Tutsi ethnic cleansing in Rwanda in Africa. Both Jukuns and Tivs are found in good numbers in the Nigerian states of Taraba and Benue. The Tiv-Jukun quarrel has a long history of happening and coming up again. Conflicts have frequently resulted in the destruction of property, the displacement of entire populations, and the loss of life. Before the discord, the two ethnic groups enjoyed a good relationship but are now at odds. On citizenship, they have disagreed with one another. Generally speaking, the Jukun considered the Tiv to be immigrants and claimed to be the native inhabitants of Wukari. The Tiv, who assert that they are marginalised and shunned in Taraba, disagreed, arguing that since they had also lived there for a long time, they are entitled to the same privileges. Similarly, Benue's Jukun minority complains of their marginalisation, lack of employment opportunities, and sense of vulnerability. The right to political representation is one of several rights that are denied to the Tiv, who are viewed as "settlers." The Tiv contend that as inhabitants of Taraba state, they are fighting for equal rights to which they are entitled. Over time, the communities have faced increasing difficulties trying to live in harmony. It is commonly said that the state of Taraba is for Jukuns and Benue is for Tivs and this scenario gives impetus to political polarisation, which has gradually transformed into physical segregation. As the violence in Taraba has gotten worse, an increasing number of Tiv have relocated to Benue (incidentally its neighbouring state). The severity and frequency of these disputes have either risen or decreased throughout time, depending on a variety of factors such as the economy, the environment, and other situations. For instance, as a consequence of the increased herd numbers that resulted from the better circumstances of the cattle, the herders of the cattle were compelled to search for additional pastures outside of their designated region. The effects of climate

change have created a serious risk by putting immense strain on the land and leading to tensions among those who live on it. Because to rising population levels and improvements in medical technology, there is now a much greater demand placed on the land. The Tiv have historically used their numerical advantage over the Jukun to decide elections in Wukari and throughout Taraba state. This has not been acceptable to the Jukun.

Taraba State, the second-largest state in terms of landmass and the Federation's most culturally varied state, has the highest concentration of ethnic groupings in Nigeria. Since the country's creation in 1991, there have been a number of confrontations between the diverse ethnic groups and municipalities. Competition over land has always been at the core of this conflict between the Tivs and Jukuns, along with gaining control of material resources and political influence. The border between the states of Taraba and Benue has been disputed, which has led to a disregard for boundary signs and an unstable political grip on the border towns and villages. Historical sources indicate that Jukun, the former Kingdom of Kwararafa, existed as early as the 17th century. The Tiv people relocated from Cameroon to the Benue basin in the 18th century. The rich soil of Wukari drew a large number of Tiv farmers to Taraba State. Land fertility is a factor that should be considered in order to understand how land use principles and practises are seen and how it is culturally generated in various situations and is essential to understand multiple points of view on land use principles and practises. Land has a lot of symbolic significance in addition to being a subject of wealth and power. Land is a necessity for existence and acts as a link between this world and the next since people spend a large amount of their lives on it from birth until death for outward preservation inside the land. Therefore, how people understand land culturally may have a big impact on how problems between agriculturalists and pastoralists as well as between land resource searchers are handled. It is typical for agriculturalists and pastoralists to have differing ideas and practises about the usage of land. For instance, disputes may occur close to the streams where farmers grow

vegetables during the dry season and herders water livestock. The herders should stop harming their crops when crop damage happens, which it frequently does, and the vegetable growers should assert their right to cultivate vegetables close to water channels. But the herders will see this as sabotage and decide that their cattle need to be watered in some way. The Jukun's slow rate of population increase and the Tiv's rapid rate of population growth led to the violent conflict between the two groups. The majority of the Jukun are sedentary and fiercely obedient to established authority. The Tiv, on the other hand, were roaming, ferocious republicans. Tiv and Jukun had a prosperous economic partnership before the crisis, where one provided farmland and the other with labour in exchange. In other words, Tiv and Jukun had a friendly connection before the battle started. The mentality of claiming someone else's property and the propensity for lawlessness to instigate violence were the main causes of conflict. Many individuals died as a result of the numerous battles between the two ethnic groups between 1990 and 1992, which also halted economic growth, destroyed property, and drove farmers off their land. "Operation Sweep," a second bloody conflict that took place in the afflicted villages under consideration in 2000 and 2001, resulted in the burning of fields, the destruction of homes, and the deaths of both children and adults. Farmers who utilise adversarial or destructive conflict resolution techniques endanger the two communities. The implementation of unfavourable conflict management techniques in the Taraba-affected areas led to the loss of lives and property as well as the diversion of funding meant for development to conflict resolution, as is shown from a variety of sources. It deteriorated the socioeconomic conditions of the inhabitants and led to a significant migration of farming families, making life increasingly harder for them. According to Akombo (2014), due to the Jukun people's long-standing native authority, administration, and chiefdom, the British colonists found them to be more cohesive than their Tiv counterparts in the Old Wukari Federation. The colonisers promoted Jukun domination over their Tiv neighbours as a result, introducing the idea of exclusive tribal

lands for the former in addition to other advantageous rights (Akombo, 2016). Supporting this argument, examples of politically motivated crises from 1959 when a Tiv man, Charles Tangul Gaza won the seat to the Federal House of Representatives for Wukari Constituency, the appointment of Simon Iorter Musa, another Tiv man as Wukari Local Government caretaker chairman, (1981-1983) by Abubakar Barde (Governor of defunct Gongola State), and the appointment of some Tiv people into the government of Rev. Jolly Nyame (former governor of Taraba State), supposedly leading to the 1990-1992 crises. From 1928 to 1937, the Tiv population of the state increased by over 2.5 times more than that of the Jukuns, going from 11.3% to 37.3% versus 8.6% to 10.0% for the latter group during the same period (Akombo, 2016). Despite making up around half of the Old Wukari Federation by 1948, the former were socially barred from a number of opportunities (including running the Wukari Native Authority) (Akombo 2014, and Agaba and Akintola 2012). Therefore, the dispute between the two candidates was made worse by the preference for those of Wukari descent to enjoy social rights and benefits (Adesoji and Alao 2009, Akombo 2016, and Albert 2001). According to materialists like Stuart Hall and Karl Max, the decision to have an economic advantage over others has a significant impact on how members of a community behave. Tensions between the Jukuns and Tivs in the Taraba State, Tiv-Jukun issue were stoked by the Jukuns' desire to retain or regain economic control over the land and other resources in the area, which the Tiv people challenged.

A Concept of "Indigene Versus Settler" In Taraba

Even though Nigeria's constitution guarantees everyone the right to live anywhere they choose inside the country, the politics of "indigene vs. settler" play a significant part in the discrimination against particular communities. The state of origin is given preference over the state of residency; this is a prevalent practise throughout Nigeria. People frequently clash with non-indigenous people over resources and power in different parts of Nigeria, which has a severe impact on their ability to receive academic

scholarships, direct political participation and representation, and indigene certification. The emergence of unhealthy rivalries between natives and settlers in the majority of Nigeria has been one of the key causes of the unresolvable interethnic violence that has plagued the independent nation of Nigeria for many years. The indigenous and settler phenomena are malignant diseases in any nation's body politic, much to how cancer affects the physical body system. It has catastrophic implications for nation-building and national integration because if the problem is not identified early enough and successfully treated, it could spread to other bodily parts and either cause irreversible health issues or entirely destabilise the system. Since conflict is a reality of social relations at the individual, group, organisational, community, and society levels, issues verging on intercommunal and interethnic crises have cropped up regularly throughout human history. As late as the pre-colonial period and during the colonial era, many African ancient kingdoms engaged in inter-kingdom dynastic feuds or inter-community fighting. The conception, definition, and perception of what it means to be an indigenous person and what it means to be a settler—which defines the rights indigenous people have over non-indigenous people—are at the heart of the unresolvable conflicts that have resulted from the history of indigenous people and settlers in different parts of Nigeria in contemporary society. In the unconstrained fight for scarce resources to meet the competing needs of interpersonal interactions in a defined society, the value of "indigene status" evolved as a result of the emergence of diverse interests, goals, and aspirations with bad ethnic foundations. Due to the trend's intransigence, millions of displaced people have been exposed to mistreatment (such as rape, hunger, infections, and epidemics), as well as other related consequences. Additionally, several settlements have been destroyed. Women and children are the biggest lawlessness victims/casualties. Indigene and settler issues centering on intracommunal conflicts, intercommunal feuds, and ethno-religious crises are a common occurrence in Nigeria.

Nationally, the Plateau, Nasarawa, and Taraba Tiv people of Nigeria, who are located to the north and east of Benue State, have a same cultural heritage. There has been constant conflict between the Tiv and Jukun throughout recorded history. According to Moti (2010), there have been intermittent outbreaks of conflict between these two tribes since the late 1950s. These epidemics took place in 1959, 1964, 1976, 1990–1992, and once more in 2000–2001. The violence has regularly resulted in loss of life, destruction of property, and internal population displacement. Before the hostilities, the two ethnic groups enjoyed a good relationship but are now at odds. On citizenship, they have disagreed with one another. Generally speaking, the Jukun considered the Tiv to be immigrants and claimed to be the native inhabitants of Wukari. The Tiv, who assert that they are marginalised and shunned in Taraba, disagreed, arguing that since they had also lived there for a long time, they are entitled to the same privileges. Benue's Jukun minority complains of their marginalisation, lack of employment opportunities, and sense of vulnerability. Many rights afforded to indigenous people are denied to the Tiv because they are considered "settlers," including discrimination in employment, political representation, economic opportunities, and education. The Tiv contend that as inhabitants of Taraba state, they are fighting for equal rights to which they are entitled. Over time, the communities have faced increasing difficulties trying to live in harmony. Like Israelis and Palestinians, these two tribes have a history of animosity toward one another and continue to contend with one another while coexisting and depending on one another. The Jukun state of Taraba and the Tiv state of Benue are sometimes used interchangeably. This scenario gives impetus to political polarisation, which has gradually transformed into physical segregation. As the violence in Taraba has gotten worse, an increasing number of Tiv have relocated to Benue, a neighbouring state. The Tiv have historically used their numerical advantage over the Jukun to determine elections in Wukari and across Taraba state. This has not been acceptable to the Jukun.

Conclusion

Land is a vital resource for the survival and continuous existence of man, and that because of man's overwhelming desire to own it, land has become a contentious topic. A large number of people have died, and their homes, automobiles, crops, animals, and other belongings have all been damaged or destroyed in Taraba. Population growth, agricultural cropland expansion, grazing reserve encroachment, and pasture depletion have all contributed to conflicts between crop farmers and cattle herders. The politicisation of these conflicts has significantly increased over the past few years, giving rise to potentially deadly religious and ethnic overtones. The conflict between farmers and herders has persisted for a long time as a direct result of the breakdown of traditional dispute-resolution methods that were employed in rural communities of Taraba. A culture of dread and insecurity has been deeply established in the majority of rural communities as a result of the increasing frequency of conflicts between farmers and herders, which have resulted in significant loss of life and property. Agriculture production has decreased as a result of this, which has had a considerable impact on grazing activities in addition to crop farming. It would be feasible to resolve the disputes that have emerged, nevertheless, if Nigeria's government were to implement policies that addressed climate change and could result in a better and more fair management of natural resources, such as water and land would be vital in solving disputes over land and land resources in Taraba. Such land reforms that would allow a significant number of small-scale agricultural producers and cattle herders to buy land appropriate for agriculture and grazing, respectively, is necessary in order to prevent societal tension and conflicts. All land transfers involving customary or family lands ought to be registered, and the federal government ought to make it simple for people to obtain title documents for these types of properties. This is because disagreements over who owns the land play a significant role in Taraba's land disputes. To further prevent the property that is invaded by trespassers, distinct lines should be drawn between the

boundaries of the land that belong to each person or group of people. Realizing how damaging violent disputes can be is the most crucial lesson that society and future generations should learn from these land conflicts in Taraba.

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In Search of the National Music: Hindustani Music on All-India Radio

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Introduction

With its reach to 99 per cent of the population of India, with its 229 transmission centres, All-India radio is the largest broadcasting service in the world. It broadcasts programs in 24 languages and 146 dialects of the country. While the radio has affected every form of music, in one respect or another, it is in the realm of Hindustani classical music that its influence is the most noticeable. This paper tries to document how Hindustani music was administered on All-India Radio from its inception to the first fifteen years of independence of the country. We shall first talk about the problems that the colonial administrators came across with regard to broadcasting of music and the experiments they undertook with Indian music. Then we will discuss how the broadcasting of Hindustani music was thought of in the post-independence scenario by the first three information and broadcasting ministers. Most notably we will look at the two ministerial terms of Dr. Balakrishna Vishwanath Keskar, India's first elected I&B minister with a special focus on his policies to

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promote classical music on state-owned AIR. Keskar was celebrated and criticized alike for stern measures like allocating maximum time to broadcast classical music, making audition compulsory for the artistes, establishing Vadyavrinda or Indian orchestra and not allowing film music to be aired on radio. Moreover, Keskar had his own vision of the 'national music'. In addition to writing a brief bio-sketch of his, I examine his ministerial terms (1952-62) in the light of the following questions:

How far did his individual personality in terms of his caste background, foreign education, active involvement in Gandhian movement etc., led him to adopt such measures? What type of musicians benefited from these new state initiatives and who suffered-and with what results? What led him to create a more lenient policy during his second ministerial term? Thus through an examination of relevant secondary literature and archival material etc., I have tried to explore the forces that accorded him cultural and social power; simultaneously the cultural and social restraints that led him to capitulate.

The beginnings of broadcasting in Britain and India were nearly contemporaneous. Yet, while in Britain its progress was comparatively planned and fluent, in India the advent of this new medium, and its reception by the government and the public had a 'chequered history' (Gupta, 2002: 447) (Pinkerton, 2008: 167-91). We can trace the beginning of broadcasting in India to the year 1926, when a private concern under the name of the Indian Broadcasting Company Limited, entered into an agreement with the Government of India, by which it undertook to set up two stations, at Bombay and Calcutta. The Bombay Station was inaugurated on 23rd July 1927, and the Calcutta Station on 26th August the same year, with 1.5 Kw medium-wave transmitters. One could hear the broadcasts only within a radius of thirty miles of these two radio stations. July 23, 1927, can, thus be taken as the date of the commencement of regular broadcasting in India.

Indian Broadcasting Company had an initial capital of 60,000 only and out of which 42,500 Rupees were spent on setting up two

radio stations. The monthly expenditure of the Company was 33,000 rupees. However its income consisted of 80 per cent of the ten rupee license fee charged by the Government from radio owners and 10 per cent of the invoiced value of imports of wireless receiving apparatus. It is important to note here that till the end of 1930, only 7,719 radio licenses were issued by the government. Thus after making some efforts for its survival, the company went into liquidation on March 1st, 1930. When the IBC ran into liquidation in 1930, the Government of India not only bought all its assets but it also decided to bring broadcasting under the control of the Ministry of Industries and Labour. Thus on the first of April, 1930 the Indian State Broadcasting Service was inaugurated on an experimental basis.

On the other hand, before 1927, the successful experiments of wireless transmission were conducted by amateur radio clubs. The first of these clubs was the Madras Presidency Radio Club which was formed on May 16, 1924, and began a broadcasting service on July 31st, 1924 itself. But due to financial difficulties the club could not continue and it gave away its transmitter to the Madras Corporation which started regular service from April 1st, 1930. This transmission service remained regular till June 16, 1938, when the Madras Station of AIR came up with a 10 Kw shortwave transmitter and a 0.25 Kw medium-wave transmitter. Another radio station set up by an amateur club which continued its transmission for almost nine years was established by Young Men's Christian Association, Lahore in 1928. It received an annual grant of 1,500 Rupees from the Punjab Text Book Committee and the balance came from the government. Similar efforts came up in the cities like Allahabad, Peshawar and Dehra Dun during 1930s. The significance of amateur clubs in the history of broadcasting in India lies in the fact that they served as predecessors of regular radio stations at a time when the Government, for various reasons, was unable to make up its mind whether or not to take to broadcasting as a regular public utility service. The financial condition of these clubs was, however, never good and only the

setting up of radio stations on a regular basis saved them from further financial bankruptcy.

In fact, the imperial government was reluctant to promote broadcasting in India due to three major reasons. First, it was quite hesitant to invest precious public funds in the broader field of entertainment (which included radio) for a colonized population. Secondly, especially after the civil disobedience movement, it wanted to provincialize the political aspirations and therefore wished to keep the broadcasting under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments only. Thirdly, the potential of radio as a politically subversive factor also made the colonial officials worried (Gupta, 1995: 447-53). Apprehensive imperialist governments were not the only hurdle standing in the way of the development of broadcasting. Most parts of India lacked electricity until the early 1970s, and the batteries for radios were cumbersome and costly. Therefore radio could not reach the masses until the transistor radio came into widespread use in the 1960s (Jeffrey, 2008:17).

However the colonial government had to invest in its revival due to certain reasons. First, the government was getting handsome custom revenue on transmission equipment. Secondly, there were other developments which made the government worried that broadcasting could be utilized as a portent weapon by its opponents both inside and outside India. For example, during the civil disobedience movement in August 1932, the station director of the Bombay station reported that on three days he had heard an unidentified station on about 400 meters, airing Congress propaganda in English, Marathi and Hindi, advising the boycott of British goods and Britishers. The other threat was from Radio Moscow since the government felt that the communists of USSR could establish direct contacts to Indians through radio. Third, there were certain officials who wanted to utilize radio as a means of educating the rural masses because later there was going to be a massive increase in the number of voters with the enactment of Government of India Act, 1935(Strickland, 1995: 461).

Thus according to Gupta,

> '"The cumulative effect of these pressures made the Indian government ask the imperial authorities in February 1934 for approval of a proposal to reactivate the Indian State Broadcasting Service which would also involve the erection of a transmitting centre at Delhi, whose aim would be to reach the large Urdu- and Hindustani-speaking areas around it, possibly to cover the area from Lahore to Allahabad."' (Strickland, 1995: 462)

After many negotiations, it was finally decided that the radio had to be a branch of a government department (industries and labour), and that there was no possibility of an autonomous corporation on the BBC model. Furthermore, it was also decided that creation of radio stations was to be taken care of by the central government and this task was to be financed from the central revenues. The provincial governments were asked to facilitate by paying the salary to the staff appointed at the radio stations.

P. G. Edmunds was appointed the first Controller of Broadcasting in 1934. In August 1935, Lionel Fielden from the BBC arrived in India to take up charge as the Controller of Broadcasting. Fielden's appointment marks the beginning of the co-ordinated development of broadcasting in India and numerous of the present day traditions can be traced to his genius. In order to draw a detailed development plan, Fielden needed the help of an expert and in January 1936, there arrived H.L. Kirke, the head of the research department of BBC to assist him. Kirke toured various parts of India and drew up a plan which emphasized on the setting up of medium-wave transmitters. After five months he left for England and was succeeded by C.W. Goyder from BBC. Goyder joined as chief engineer in August 1936. He differed from Kirke's plan and was of the opinion that if medium-wave transmitters only were used, it would not be possible to cover more than a small percentage of the total area of the country with the funds available. Therefore he suggested to provide a basic short-wave service in order to give at least a 'second grade service' to the whole country

and then to supplement this service with a 'first grade medium-wave service' at important centres. He also suggested if any future funds that might become available would be devoted to the extension of this medium-wave service area. Thus the development that followed was on the lines of what Goyder proposed. Delhi Station went on the air on the first of January, 1936. The same year, on June 8, the Indian State Broadcasting Service was renamed 'All India Radio'. Till 1939, India had nine radio stations. These were Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Lucknow, Lahore, Tiruchirapalli, Peshawar and Dacca. This was the time when the utility of the medium began to be recognized too. This reflected in the rise in the number of radio sets from 38,000 to 74,000 in just three years.

When we talk about the colonial influence on Indian music, we find that as compared to literature, visual art, philosophy, law, and numerous other cultural domains, music was hardly an area of serious cultural encounter between the rulers and the subjects in the Indian case. Indian music was generally an 'unknown category for the British' except for a few orientalist musicologists. For common British listeners and travellers, it was 'limited, irrational, and, frequently, extremely unpleasant'. It was only with the establishment of radio broadcasting under governmental patronage in the 1930s that music became a matter of administrative attention (Lelyveld, 1994: 112). '"For the British authorities in charge of creating a broadcasting system for India, music was at best a lost leader, a device for getting customers into the store."'(Lelyveld, 1994: 113) At the same time, Fielden also found music significant because it neither instructed nor informed even if it consisted $7/8^{th}$ of the total broadcast time. He believed that cultivating good music taste was the responsibility of the broadcasting authorities. However he was of the opinion that Indian music lacked accepted standards and the only distinction between 'classical' and 'light' was in the content of the words, 'religious' or 'erotic', and the social status of the musician (Lelyveld, 1994: 113-4). Interest in the classical was in any case restricted to a very small number of listeners. Fielden's *Report on*

Broadcasting (1940) mentions the following main trends in Indian music, which created problems in the beginning:

(a) A rigid interpretation of the rules of classical music by schools which hold that Indian music have reached perfection and that no departure from tradition should be permitted;

(b) The combination of light and classical Indian music and the encouragement of amateur singers in order that Indian music may, on the one hand, meet the changing tastes of the people without fundamentally altering its character and, on the other, be redeemed from the distaste associated with its present exponents;

(c) A definite breaking away from present standards combined with the adoption of notation and harmony (Awasthy, 1965: 37-8).

Indian music, in Fielden's opinion, thus required substantial modification if it was to be brought on air. It lacked sufficient variety to attract the continuous attention of a large audience. Along with that, questions like the language of the lyrics and the religion or caste of the performers also became important. At the same time, music needed to be restructured according to the precise schedule of the programs. The element of variation and precise scheduling could be brought by preparing composed musical pieces and for that, the musicians were to be trained to read musical notation. Therefore AIR appointed two European musicologists, John Foulds in Delhi and Walter Kaufmann in Bombay, to take care of Western musical programming but also to experiment with a new Indian music.

John Foulds (1880-1939) could serve for a very short span as he died of cholera in Calcutta. It was Foulds's idea to prohibit the harmonium from the radio, except as incidental music in a drama, since its well-tempered scale could not do justice to the microtonic intervals or shrutis, characteristic of Indian music. He also formed an ensemble of traditional Indian players, and experimented with

works combining eastern and western instruments (Krishnamurti, 1949: 46-9).

Walter Kaufmann (1907-84) was the Director of Music in AIR Bombay from 1937 to 1946. Before that, from 1935 to 1937, he was the composer for Bhavnani Films and for Information Films of India, and was the Musical Director of the Bombay Chamber Music Society. It is he who composed the signature tune of the AIR. During his stay in India, he devoted a lot of time to study Indian music. His famous works on Indian music are: *The Ragas of North India* (1968) and *The Ragas of South India: A Catalogue of Scalar Material* (1970).

It was very easy to fit in light music items like *ghazals* and *bhajans* for broadcasting because of their pre-composed nature. Moreover, Indian artistes, already exposed to recording, had also become accustomed to perfectly accomplish an item in three minutes and 20 seconds. However, with regard to the broadcasting of classical music, there were certain problems. First, as remarks K.S. Mullick,

> "The elevated ustads in the employ of princes and plutocrats did not take too kindly to the radio which, they feared, would 'cheapen' their art by making it available to 'all and sundry'. And even when one of these celebrities deigned to accept a broadcast engagement, he put forward demands which were not always easy to satisfy."' (Mullick, 1974: 30)

On the one hand AIR offered an artiste a very low performance-fee, and on the other hand, they were supposed to perform in a closed studio, without getting a feedback from the audience. Telling six or eight weeks in advance, which raga, s/he would sing or play for the radio was another problem which made the ustads uncomfortable. Another thing was the time and duration of a performance. The great ustads found it insulting to finish their recitals in just an hour whereas the colonial administrators found *alap* as a warming up exercise for the musician only (Goswami, 1996: 36-7).

Mullick recollects one such incident in a very interesting way.

> "Clad in a kimkhwab achkan, cream-coloured churidars and a pair of purple velvet shoes, with a henna-dyed beard and a flowing pink turban completing the ensemble, the ustad arrived at the radio station at the head of a retinue of accompanists and disciples... After the usual pleasantries had been exchanged, the Station Director informed the ustad that a period of one hour had been assigned for his recital. This was enough to send the maestro into a towering rage. "Do you take me for a bazaari gawayya who sings according to the whims and fancies of the wayside crowd?" he demanded. An artiste of his calibre, he went on, needed two hours simply for 'warming up', and once that stage was reached, time stood absolutely still. His recitals in the august presence of His Highness the Maharaja never ended before day-break—and invariably with a Bhairavi thumri as the finale, without which no concert could be considered complete."' (Mullick, 1974)

This put the Station Director (SD) in a dilemma. He never wanted to let the maestro go without performing but at the same time, the whole schedule could not be disturbed because of the performance. The Program Assistant suggested the SD by whispering something in his ear and that made him delighted.

The SD requested the artiste to sing for one-and-a-half hour but the artiste demanded at least three hours. The SD agreed to this and the ustad along with his entourage was taken to the studio earmarked for music. The SD next informed the ustad that he was to start his performance the moment he saw a red light appear over the Studio door, and that the red light would stay there for the full three hours.

What happened thereafter is a peculiar story filled with humour in the history of broadcasting. At 6 p.m. sharp, the red-light of the studio came on but the studio was not connected to the broadcast circuit. Meanwhile, the program for children followed by that for rural listeners went on from the other studios smoothly

as per the schedule till 7 p.m. After closing the rural program, the announcer introduced the maestro and the studio was connected for transmission. Thus the ustad's music was aired from 7 to 9 Pm as the Station Director could spare utmost two hours for him. One can ask here if the artiste did come to know about the trick played on him when he reached home and talked to his friends and family. Fortunately for AIR, the town in which he resided was too far away from Delhi to receive the broadcast. Therefore the maestro remained blissfully ignorant of what had actually happened (Mullick, 1974: 30-2).

Since the entertainment and especially music was supposed to cover the most of the broadcast time, it was the responsibility of the Station Director and the Program Assistants to arrange and persuade the artistes for the broadcast. In spite of all the reservations and apprehensions of the maestros, the Delhi station of AIR, within the first fortnight of its opening, was able to bring well-known musicians like Fayyaz Hussain Khan, Vinayak Rao Patwardhan, Nazir-ud-din Khan, Wazir Khan, Majidan Bai, Hafiz Ali Khan, Abdul Aziz Khan Beenkar and Bundu Khan Etc. for the broadcast (Goswami, 1996: 36) (Luthra, 1986: 96-7). However, in the absence of any norm and policy for planning, production of music programs and screening of artists, the primary objective in those days was to keep the program going. Audition was arranged by the Program Assistant, in charge of music and another senior official such as Assistant Station Director or Station Director generally heard the artiste. That's how AIR in its initial phase searched for all the artistes before an elaborate audition system came into existence. Goswami mentions Mr. Kristie writing to Lionel Fielden in May 1938 and suggesting him to convene a conference of music critics in order to have their suggestions on the policy for the broadcasting of music. Fielden rejected to this idea and responded that such conference would not lead AIR anywhere in view of sharp disagreements between the various gharanas of Indian music. Fielden, instead, wrote to Tagore and asked for his advice if it would be good for AIR to have an expert for directing music programs. To this, Tagore replied that it was impossible for

one person to direct music for all the stations and therefore four directors should be employed to take care of music for North, South, Bengal and Bombay separately. Fielden, however, wrote to the government that instead of creating four special posts of music directors, that Tagore suggested, the Program Officers in charge of music should be given a higher grade. Further, in 1941, the Station Directors were asked to suggest the names of the musicians who, as assistants, could support the Station Director in the planning and production of music programs. For example, Prof. S.N. Ratanjankar, the Principal, Marris College, Lucknow was also requested by the Directorate to provide the list of music schools, universities and other organizations in order to have an idea from where these new people have to be recruited. Among those appointed thus were Prof. B.R. Deodhar at Bombay, Dr. Sachin Das Motilal and Smt. Bijon Ghose Dastidar at Calcutta etc (Goswami, 1996: 44-8).

As mentioned earlier, classical music had a very niche audience and AIR had to take care of the majority listeners too. Hence a balance between light and classical music had to be maintained. There were hardly any amateur performers in north India at that time and therefore the women singers who came forward for broadcasting, belonged to the community of hereditary professional women musicians. The courtesans turned to radio since they found this new medium as a welcome source of both additional income and gratuitous publicity. Their recitals on radio however became a matter of concern for some members of the legislative assembly. Sant Singh, an M.L.A., drew the government's attention to the Delhi Radio station, having invited 'nautch girls' and professional singers to broadcast music programs, and questioned if it was aware of the strong feelings of the people in this regard. It had to be explained to the questioner, as also in reply to similar criticism in the press and letters received from individuals, that AIR had to make use of appropriate musical talent wherever it existed, and that it was a fact that the position in North India was such that music was practised by a class of professionals not well thought of socially, and that there were not

enough of amateur musicians belonging to respectable families to fulfill the requirements and expectations of the radio stations. While responding to a similar question asked by Govind Vallabh Pant, another M.L.A., the comment published in the *Indian Listener*, 7th May, 1936 also needs to be quoted here in order to show the practical attitude of the broadcasting authorities:

> "He objected to professional singers, not on artistic but ethical grounds. Is Indian State Broadcasting Service expected to set up a Committee of Morals to examine all artists before broadcasting? And how shall we classify the 'professional' singer who may claim to be modest, or the amateur who may look upon 'modesty' as a Victorian concept?" The respondent further asked if there was sufficient amateur talent in India to replace the professional to the entire satisfaction of all or even most of the listeners. The comment also mentioned that the attitude of amateur singers towards public singing varied from individual to individual. "Some go so far as to complain of neglect if they are not invited, and others take offence at the mere suggestion that they should perform in a broadcasting studio. Between these extremes, are amateurs willing to sign provided their names are not revealed, or provided they can adopt a pseudonym, provided they are not out of pocket, or the word payment is never mentioned, provided no professional steps into the studio when they are singing or provided no person of other sex is in the vicinity?"[1] (Luthra, 1986: 104-5)

The comment reveals that the colonial broadcasting authorities were hardly bothered by the courtesans' presence on the radio; moreover, they dismissed all such ethical questions while taking this issue as an occupational hazard.

Mullick informs that due to a sizeable presence of these professional women singers, the Delhi radio station acquired the nickname of 'Sarkari Chawri Bazaar' (official Chawri Bazaar) after the well-known street where singing and dancing women had

their dwellings. He believes that this 'notoriety of the radio' kept both established musicians and the performers coming from respectable middle class background away from AIR as 'the thought of being found at a place which was frequented by persons belonging to a questionable social milieu was repugnant to them'. (Mullick, 1974: 33) Saida Bano, the first woman announcer at the Lucknow Station also recalled the strong opposition of her orthodox family to her working at a place where she might come into contact with 'immoral professional singing girls'. She had to give her parents an untrue assurance that such women used a separate entrance to the studios (Luthra, 1986: 105). G.D. Shukla who joined Delhi station of AIR as a Program Assistant in 1942 also comments about how people perceived radio that time. He writes that people thought of radio as an arena of courtesans or a throng of buffoons only. "*Virle hi radio ko wajib izzat bakshte the*". (Very few accorded due respect to radio) (Shukla, 2005: 15). Shukla describes how singers like Bibbo, Chhoti Motibai, Munnibai, Champa Bai, Gulab Bai, Ikbal Bano and others used to come to the Delhi station very frequently and how he felt shy in front of these women singers (Shukla, 2005: 30).[1] He remarks that those who came for the programs were already very well-off which reflected in their life-styles. Being aired on radio was more important than money for the professional women singers and they used to come to Zafar, the Program Assistant and other program officers so that they might get radio programs regularly. It was difficult enough for the radio staff to get some of them to come into the studio. In Delhi a special truck had to be fitted out to bring Mustari Bai, a famous singer, who was too large to fit into an automobile (Lelyveld, 1994: 125).

AIR's charge, after shuttling between different departments, finally came under the Department of Information and Broadcasting since September 10, 1946 which became an

[1] Shukla also gives a vivid description of his visit to the residence of Iqbal Bano and Gulab Bai.

independent ministry after independence. At the time of independence, there were a total of nine stations in undivided India, five others being run by princely states.[2] There were six radio stations in India located at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Tiruchirapalli and Lucknow covering 2.5 per cent area and 11 per cent population in 1947. The remaining three went to Pakistan at Peshawar, Lahore and Dacca. Thus British bequeathed India in 1947 a national radio system designed by an authoritarian colonial government to fulfil its own needs but aware of a public-broadcasting philosophy originating from the BBC. From the colonial masters, AIR inherited 14 radio stations, a shortwave service, an established bureaucracy and an apparatus for official censorship.

According to Robin Jeffrey, the subsequent ruling elites represented by Congress had their typical doubts and fears about broadcasting. It was something to be taken care of after the nation becoming industrialized or to some stalwart followers of Gandhi, 'entertainment' was even culturally tainted; it could advocate courtesans, prostitution and Muslim influence (Jeffery, 2008: 18). We should not forget to mention that Gandhi himself being a master journalist and an instinctive communicator through pre-modern channels was not very enthusiastic about film, radio and recording; for, to him, these ranked as distractions and temptations, capable of diverting people from the national mission for freedom and reformation. Furthermore, the plans of a decentralized and fragmented broadcasting proposed by Kirke and Goyder were rejected on nationalist grounds as they were done by their predecessors on imperialist reasons. It is noteworthy that the first three Ministers of Information and Broadcasting were staunch Gandhians for the first 15 years of independence: Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950) from 1947 to 1950, R. R. Diwakar (1894-1990) from 1950 to 1952 (having been the junior minister under Vallabhbhai) and the legendary Dr. B. V. Keskar (1903-84)

[2] These were Baroda, Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Mysore and Trivandrum.

from 1952 to 1962 (Jeffery, 2008: 18-20). Goswami points out that during the first five year plan, broadcasting was not given much importance as it was taken as an unproductive expenditure, and not as a significant activity for economic development of the country. This is evident from the fact that the People's edition of the First Five Year Plan brought out in January, 1953 did not mention broadcasting. Broadcasting found a place only in the appendix giving statistical tables under the head 'Transport and Communication'. 3.52 crore rupees were allocated for the development of broadcasting (Goswami, 1996: 100).

One of the most formidable steps taken by Vallabhbhai Patel as first Minister of Information and Broadcasting, even before independence was that he instructed that no one whose 'private life was a public scandal' should be given work at AIR. The hereditary matrilineal women musicians had to be victim of the indignity imposed by AIR insisting that its female singers be married. A separate entrance for them was also prescribed so that their presence at recordings wouldn't offend regular, 'well-born staffers' (Kidwai, 2003). Awasthy writes that this order was, 'in effect, an expression of the puritan streak in governmental thinking'. According to him, the order itself was poorly worded. There was no public scandal as such attached to the private lives of these musicians; rather it was their public life which was not seen with grace and respect (Awasthy, 1965: 39).

Mullick describes how this order caused a stir throughout the organization. How could a Station Director make judgmental remarks about the private life of an artiste? Did he need to compile a dossier of a person's past background and present activities? Or should the names of the artistes be sent to the police first? These and other questions were addressed to the Controller by several heads of stations when the notification of the Minister's order reached them. Mullick writes that some of the SDs were really doubtful about how to implement the order but the others were affected personally by the directive, because these officials, over the years had developed an intimate relationship with the professional singers, the order was aimed at. Patel wanted to move

ahead with the cleaning up process without any doubt or delay. When the controller approached Patel with this regard, he paid no attention to his request. Then the Station Directors had no choice and all started working in the direction of complying with the order. Each of them showed no delay in preparing the list of the 'banned artistes' longer with reasons and relevant data to support the ban. The lists of 'banned', 'retained' and 'borderline' artistes thus started reaching the Controller's office and he signed these without any delay (Mullick, 1974: 33-4).

Mullick regards Patel's order very revolutionary as this paved the way for non-professional artistes for broadcast engagements and due to the opportunity given by the radio, many from respectable families started learning music seriously. While Awasthy tells that the ban was very short-lived and the adverse effects of this order were temporary. The 'baijis' soon acquired respectability and returned to radio as 'devis' or with some other name (Awasthy, 1965: 39). Luthra tells that the impact of the order was not felt at all in the East and the South and the Bombay station was also partially affected. The most drastic impact was felt in the North which the stations like Delhi and Lucknow witnessed. He further writes that the artistes were banned from the studios only and their recordings and gramophone records were not barred. Therefore he believes that the actual impact of the ban was in effect neither very great, nor very long lasting because many of the singers changed their names from 'Bai' to 'Devi', changed their life styles a little perhaps, and 'trickled back to the studios gradually'. Only for some time, singers like Sidheshwari, Badi Moti Bai, Rasulan Bai and others were denied access to the microphone (Luthra, 1986: 162-3).

Upon Sardar Patel's death on 15 December 1950, the charge of the I & B Ministry passed on to his deputy, Mr. R. R. Diwakar, who continued to hold his rank of Minister of State in spite of his being given independent charge of the ministry. According to Mullick, Diwakar was a man of 'placid temperament' who believed in exercising a kind of distant benign influence over those working

under him and not generally interfering in their normal working (Mullick, 1974: 121-2). Jeffrey regards him as someone, 'more committed to Gandhian ideas than Gandhi himself' (Jeffery, 2008: 19).[3] The only notable event during his regime was a slow but steady beginning towards AIR's development, in the form of a chain of low-powered 'pilot' stations.

Balkrishna Vishvanath Keskar was born in a Pune based Brahman family in 1903 and got his education at Kashi Vidyapith. He started his career as a lecturer in Banaras and joined the Indian National Congress during the Gandhian Noncooperation movement in 1921. Keskar went to jail along with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1930. He remained a bachelor throughout his life.

In late 1930s, he went to Sorbonne (Paris) to earn a doctorate in political science with the help of private stipend from Jawaharlal Nehru (Lelyveld, 1994: 116). He was also the secretary of International Youth Club, Paris. He emerged as one of the middle-rank prominent leaders of INC and served as the secretary, Foreign Department, AICC in 1939-40. During the Quit India Movement, he was again imprisoned along with other notable nationalist leaders. He became the General Secretary of INC in 1946 and was also a member of the Constituent Assembly representing the United Provinces. In independent India, he was made the Deputy Minister, External Affairs from December 1948 to 1952 and was one of the members of the Indian delegation to UN General Assembly in 1950 also. From March to May 1952, he was given the additional responsibility of Deputy Minister, Railways and Transport.

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[3] Diwakar was a Brahmin, educated in Pune. He started his career as a college lecturer in English before joining the first non-cooperation movement in 1920 when he was imprisoned for the first time. He emerged as one of the staunch middle-level leaders of the Gandhian nationalist movement. After leaving legislative politics at the first general elections of 1951-52, he was appointed a state Governor and then dedicated himself to his first love, transmitting the message of Gandhi, all over the World through the organizations like Gandhi Peace Foundation.

In April 1952, Keskar won the Loksabha election from Musafirkhana (Uttar Pradesh) and was given the portfolio of Information and Broadcasting in the first elected council of ministers of India. However, he was not given the cabinet rank and the Information and Broadcasting was further downgraded to the status of Minister of State when he took it for the second term[4] during 1957-62. Jeffrey attributes this to 'his slight political influence' (Jeffery, 2008: 20). Thus he served as the Information & Broadcasting Minister for ten years which has been the longest inning by anyone in the same till date. "Himself a connoisseur of classical music, the lanky bespectacled,soft- spoken Dr. Keskar championed the cause of Indian classical music and did much to encourage and promote performing artistes, who were facing a tough time due to lack of patronage in the suddenly changed postindependence social milieu.", The Times of India remembered him on his death (TOI, 1984: 1,7).

In 1962, he contested Loksabha elections for the third time but lost from Fatehpur. The final blow came to his active political career when he was defeated by Ram Manohar Lohia from Farrukhabad in the by-elections in 1964. He was the transport minister from 1965-67 and chairman of the Road Transport Taxation Enquiry Committee. He remained active as an author and even headed the National Book Trust of India; and later the Cement Corporation of India before he died at the age of 81 on August 28th, 1984 (TOI, June 1984: 1, 7) (TOI, September 1984: 4).

In 1967, came the compilation of his articles and speeches on music to which the famous musicologist and music historian Thakur Jaidev Singh wrote the forward (Keskar, 1967). This collection gives us an entry point to understand the thought process behind the measures that he initiated as Information and Broadcasting Minister with reference to music. Thakur Jaidev Singh informs us that Keskar learnt Dhrupad from Harinarayan Mukhopadhyay while he was in Banaras. He hails him as a

[4] Keskar again won the Musafirkhana Loksabha seat in 1957.

missionary not only for his moves related to AIR but also for his encouraging support given to Tansen a Tyagaraj festivals etc. He also talks about the impetus provided to folk music by him but in his eyes, he was the one who could salvage the classical music of India which was on the verge of extinction due to merger of princely states in the Indian Union and the abolition of landed elites, its erstwhile patrons. Almost all the essays in the collection repeatedly stress the following points:

Indian music has passed through decline and degeneration due to the British imperial neglect as well as declining status and changing tastes of the princely rulers (Keskar, 1967: 36). More fundamentally he placed the responsibility upon the shoulders of North Indian Muslims, both the rulers of past centuries and the Muslim musicians who, in his opinion, had appropriated and distorted the ancient art, turning it into the secret craft of exclusive lineages, the *gharanas.* Being ignorant of Sanskrit, they detached music from the religious context of Hindu civilization (Keskar, 1967: 7). Furthermore, they destroyed the unity of Indian music by creating a 'Hindustani' variant as against the still safely Hindu 'Carnatic' one. Moreover, he believed that in Muslim hands, the music no longer remained 'spiritual'; it had become merely 'erotic,' the special preserve of dancing girls and prostitutes.

Keskar believed that a nation which hadn't got its music and arts had neither a personality nor a soul of its own (Keskar, 1967: 67). To him, standardization based on ancient theoretical texts of music was the first priority because, "Unless we follow some procedure for selecting the best according to traditions, *shastras,* knowledge and performance, we are in danger of being swamped by the music mob" which could either be old and disreputable hereditary musicians or the cheap, vulgar and westernized film industry (Keskar, 1967: 31). Therefore, he believed that this standardization should be accomplished not by musicians but through state-run educational bodies whose job was to train the best critics, competent teachers and dynamic listeners.

Keskar was looking for a national culture with not only Hindi as a common language but also having an 'All-India common food', a common dress-code, along with a national music, combining virtues of Hindustani and Carnatic traditions (TOI, 1956: 3) (TOI, 1957: 3) (TOI, 1958: 14).

While reading Keskar we can hardly discern how far he was revivalist and how far he was nationalist. Actually, in case of many political leaders it is very difficult to label them nationalist or communal/revivalist. In his writings, one can hear the echoes of modern educated upper caste, middle class agenda of making classical music a symbol of the nation's cultural heritage. David Lelyveld rightly remarks that Keskar, though educated from Paris, was among the new generation of Maharashtrian Brahmins that Bhatkhande and Paluskar had ushered into the study of music as a requirement of a good education (Lelyveld, 1994: 116).

> "There could be no real revival of music in the country unless it was understood and appreciated in every home and unless it formed a part of the cultural education of every child. . . . The absence of State patronage was leading to sporadic efforts towards musical development. The State would have to take interest in music and channelize its development in the right direction. Otherwise, chaos was likely to continue. . . . There could be no full cultural development in the country unless classical musical traditions developed in their greatest height. Today the patronage of Princes and Maharajas in the field of music had gone. A democratic State should take up their job and, in this respect; the greatest responsibility now fell on the radio as a means of mass communication for dissemination of culture and traditions of the past. The radio therefore had a great role to play in disseminating the classical music in every home and to develop in them the taste of hearing."[1] (TOI, 1953: 3)

According to Keskar, it was only through radio broadcasting, that the music of India could be saved. AIR was supposed to play the

role of the preserver and patron of classical music because the country was passing through a transition; and with the disappearance of the princes and the landed aristocracy, and in the absence of opera houses and concert halls, the practitioners of traditional music could turn only to AIR. Therefore, it was with the assumption of office by him as Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1952 that a conscious music policy came into being. According to Awasthy, '"Dr. Keskar was fortunate in being at the helm of affairs for ten years and thus able not only to put his policies into practice but also to see the results."' (Awasthy, 1965: 40) With regard to classical music, Keskar brought in a new audition system, popularizing classical music more than any other form, the national program of music, annual radio sangeet sammelan, Indian Orchestra (Vadya vrinda) and light music production units.

As AIR set out to be the most significant patron of the classical music, a large number of musicians were to be recruited as producers, instrumentalists, and accompanists and most important as performing artists. For this, an elaborate audition system on the model of the Public Service Commission and other selection board's procedures was established which included not only the performance and recording being approved by a jury and an audition board but also the questions designed to test their knowledge of theory. In order to discover and classify the talent in music for AIR, an elaborate audition system was introduced in 1952. Both casual and staff artists were to be reauditioned. Keskar's very close associate Dr. S.N. Ratanjankar, a musicologist and then Vice-chancellor of Bhatkhande University at Lucknow (earlier known as Marris College) was appointed the Chairman of the jury for Hindustani music. The other two members of the panel were PT. Vinayakrao Patwardhan and Ustad Vilayet Hussain Khan. Since Vilayet Hussain Khan was the chief Producer of music in Akashvani and Patwardhan was busy with his programs and heading his own music institution at Bombay, Dr. Ratanjankar did the entire reauditioning almost single handedly (Pratap, 2009).

Many artists found it humiliating for themselves to appear before a jury for the audition. Their main objection was that the tests were aimed more at examining the theoretical knowledge of the artists than their musical virtuosity. The artistes were abruptly stopped while rendering a particular raga and were asked to switch over to the other. Ratanjankar might sing a phrase and ask the examinee to name the raga. Therefore the artists found themselves being treated as students (TOI, 1953: 11). The jury not being represented by all *gharanas* of music and Keskar's own biases against certain artists were the other objections raised by them. Although artists of repute were granted exemption from the audition yet some like Khadim Hussain, Latafat Hussain, Swami Vallabhdas, Kapileshwwari Buwa, Kausalya Mangeshkar, Anwar Hussain etc. were not exempted from audition.

The artistes united to raise their voice against all this and they found Bharatiya Sangeet Kalakar Mandal with Vilayat Husain Khan as the president and S. Kavalekar as vice-president. Arvind Parikh and others also joined the organization (Nadkarni, 1984: 40-1).[5] In a meeting held on May 13th, 1953, the Mandal decided to boycott the AIR programs. Great musicians like Ajmat Husain Khan, Vilayat Khan, Amir Khan and Allah Rakha were present in that meeting.

Three resolutions were passed in the meeting: first,

> "The present system of audition followed by All India Radio is unjust and insulting, defeating the very purpose for which it was contemplated; concentrating discretionary powers in the hands of the musical jury and therefore this association, Bharatiya Sangeet Kalakar Mandal, strongly protests against this system and urges upon all the artistes, professional and amateur, to boycott forthwith AIR till such time as the system of audition is

[5] There is also a view that Mogubai Kurdikar was the president of the Mandal, but Arvind Parikh told the researcher in a seminar that Vilayat Husain Khan was the president and he, the joint secretary.

> abolished from AIR." The second resolution stated, This Association empowers the managing committee to take all steps necessary to see that the system of audition is abolished from AIR." The third resolution asserted that "the Association shall help the artistes in every way in case the artistes suffer any fine or penalty due to the cancellation of the contracts ii pursuance of the first resolution." (TOI, 1953: 1, 6)

In its meeting on 4th June, the executive committee of the Mandal also passed a resolution requesting AIR authorities for not to play the recorded music of all those artistes who were boycotting the AIR programs in response to the Mandal's call. Each artiste was asked to intimate the AIR authorities individually too for the same. This was done in order to clarify the artistes' view-point to the common public that they were not participating in AIR's programs. The committee also drafted a resolution to be signed by the AIR musicians all over India that they would not participate in any of its program anywhere in the country until the dispute between them and the authorities was resolved or the Mandal gave them the mandate to the contrary (TOI, 1953: 3).

The Mandal was demanding that audition tests should be conducted without the knowledge of the artiste and without submitting him to an examination. It should be judged and reported by a jury, adequately representative of well-known schools of music; and also with a right of appeal to the artiste against whom an adverse report is made. The artistes also believed that the jury represented only one school or *gharana* and it was ready to have a dialogue with the authorities regarding an alternative jury. The AIR authorities said that though the jury represented only one *gharana* but it was impartial and had shown no discrimination towards any school or *gharana*. Allegedly one jury member called the agitating artistes goondas and quacks. The Mandal believed in constitutional agitation. One of its vice-presidents even approached Keskar and Maulana Azad but nothing fruitful happened. The Mandal was being supported by

leaders like Dr. M.R. Jayakar, Then Vice-chancellor of Poona University (TOI, 1953: 2).

There was picketing by the artistes at the AIR office and studios in Bombay while the auditions were going. On June 8th, 1953 there were 120 artistes in the demonstration to show their solidarity since it was the last day of the auditions in Bombay. The artistes like Omkarnath Thakur and music directors like Anil Biswas, then president of Cine-music Directors Association also wrote letters to the Mandal showing their solidarity (TOI, 1953: 3). Picketing by the artists was also reported at Dharwar on 27th June, 1953.

To Keskar, however, the Kalakar Mandal was not the body which represented all the musicians. As he told in a meeting of artistes in Bombay that In Calcutta as well as in the city, hundreds of artistes were not in favor of agitation. He said that out of over 5,000 'casual' artistes on the rolls of All India Radio, only less than 200 had boycotted the AIR and that too, in Bombay and Dharwar only. To him, selection of personnel of the audition committees was totally the discretion of the ministry of I&B. Therefore the matter needed no discussion with anybody. According to Keskar, the agitation of the artistes was based on '"intimidation, threats and vilification"' (TOI, 1953: 9).

The authorities started capitulating from July, 1953. On July 12th, 1953 the 'jury' was renamed as Music audition committee. There were two such committees, one for Hindustani and the other for Carnatic music. Both together constituted the music audition board. The Director General of AIR and the audition committees had the power to exempt an artiste from audition whom they considered deserving. However, the audition was not scrapped off for the new artistes. Each station was supposed to have a preliminary audition committee consisting of one or two non-officials, the station director and a staff well-versed in music. An artiste had to appear for the audition before this preliminary committee first. By July 13th, 1953, 1700 artistes working within AIR and outside were auditioned (TOI, 1953: 9).

On August 5th, 1953, the three months long boycott of AIR by the artistes came to an end with the intervention of S.K. Patil (M.P. and the president of Bombay Congress Committee), Prithviraj Kapoor and N.V. Gadgil. Patil wrote to the Mandal that if the artistes called off their boycott then he might be instrumental in making the negotiations with the minister possible. The general body of the Mandal took cognizance of his letter and passed a resolution to end the boycott. 105 artistes voted in favor of the resolution and there were eight who dissented. It was also informed that 130 artistes boycotted the AIR programs and six were defaulters. The Mandal also decided to get the registration done and carry further its activities (TOI, 1953: 1, 7). The protest was a success since the authorities had to relax the policies and the most famous musicians were allowed to skip the audition. After calling off the boycott, the musicians' fraternity kept on organizing concerts in order to collect funds to help the artistes and in one such gathering Keskar was also invited. The Mandal lasted for three-four years more (TOI, 1956).

In 1952-53 the slogan[1] "Popularizing Classical Music"[1] went round and stations were asked to report periodically about what they were doing in this direction. Therefore, mechanically every station went out of its way and beyond its artistic resources to do what it thought would popularize classical music (Awasthy, 1965: 44). As a result, all the stations quickly increased to the maximum extent their broadcasts of classical music regardless of regional predilections. The stations were also directed to broadcast classical music of regions other than their own which meant putting out South Indian music from stations in North India, and vice versa. Awasthy observes that the easiest thing for most stations was to pump up recorded classical music in the afternoon transmissions, much to the loss of their popularity.

Keskar initiated the National Programme of Music on July 7, 1952 and the inaugural national program was a 'Surbahar' and Sitar recital by Ravi Shankar who was then a member of AIR staff. Before that, the Delhi station had a program titled 'The Music of

India' which according to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting's annual report for 1950-51, presented outstanding Hindustani as well as Carnatic musicians as a regular feature relayed by other stations. Keskar was so particular that for the national program the choice of the artists could not be finalized without his approval.

The very same year, AIR orchestra came into existence with 27 instruments of both North and South which was called *Vadya Vrinda*. Actually its beginnings go back to 1949 and the Carnatic wing of the orchestra was set up in 1951 (Awasthy, 1965: 48-9).[6] The Hindustani and Carnatic Sections of the *Vadya Vrinda* were taken care of by Ravi Shankar and T. K. Jayarama Iyer as conductors. When Pt. Ravi Shankar left AIR, flute maestro Pannalal Ghosh took over but unfortunately he passed away very soon. In 1956 the Vadya Vrinda went on tour to Bombay, Madras and Calcutta to perform before invited audiences there. AIR Vadya Vrinda was also recorded for the BBC by their TV crew which came to India especially for that purpose.

On February 27th, 1953, Keskar wrote to then D.G., AIR with regard to organisation of music concerts and competition around Dussehra and Diwali. Before that also, on June 13, 1952, he had made a suggestion to organize annual or half yearly festivals of music at suitable stations and prizes offered to the best performers. When it was communicated to the station directors, it was opposed by those of Calcutta and Madras on different grounds (Luthra, 1986: 312). The *Akashvani Sangeet Sammelan* started with a three-day concert on the 23rd of October, 1954, at Sapru House, New Delhi. According to Jawhar Sircar, Keskar's intervention was timely because the musicians had just lost the patronage of some six hundred princes and nawabs of British India, and were 'indeed, a very very worried lot' (Sircar, 2014). Initially, only great masters

[6] We have mentioned John Foulds' experiments earlier. Jivanlal Mattoo at Lahore and D. Amel at Bombay also composed very good orchestral compositions before Vadya Vrinda formally came into existence.

were invited and these concerts were broadcast live, but as the *Sammelan* spread to other important cities of India, AIR decentralized its broadcast and dissemination, to its regional networks and Akashvani reached the common man's home, as classical music never had, previously before. Gradually the young or relatively junior artistes were also called to perform for the sammelan. AIR also organized a Sugam Sangeet (Light Music) Sammelan on April 8th and 9th, 1962 in which eleven well-known light music artistes participated. The National Program of Operas was started in 1956 (Luthra, 1986: 312-3).

Along with these, also came various other measures like annual music competitions for both Hindustani and Carnatic music for young artists (1954), music lessons for novitiates and music appreciation' programs. *'Subaddha Sangeet'* were the recordings of short classical compositions by eminent artistes, done at some stations, for a duration not exceeding 3 minutes and 20 seconds each and presented in a manner which a layman, not very familiar with classical music would also find interesting (Luthra, 1986: 313).[7] Programs based on prerecorded items were also introduced, usually distributed from Delhi to various stations with a view to ensure economy. The other aim behind the move was to minimize the dependence of these stations upon the local talent and to supply them a variety of items from all parts of the country to air which would eventually be helpful to create a national music. Folk music was also given a special attention as a special category. Thus by 1957 , Indian classical and folk music constituted about 50 per cent of the content broadcast on AIR and in one year alone, 41,987 hours of Indian music were broadcast from the different stations (Mathur, 1957: 65).

Keskar regarded film music as an entertainment of a low standard since it was vulgar, erotic, excessively Westernized and too steeped in Urdu (rather than Hindi). Therefore he imposed a quota of 10 to 15 per cent of all program time. This goal was to be

[7] These recording were started in 1957.

achieved within six months and total exclusion of film songs in 18 months. A committee was also constituted to screen the selection of songs so that the more objectionable content would not be given further exposure. Even the title of the film from which the song came, was also forbidden to be announced on radio since it was thought as an advertisement (Skillman, 1986: 133-44). In 1954, negotiations with the Film Producers Guild of India for rights to film songs also broke down; so that for a short time, they were nearly missing from AIR. In 1953 Keskar made a concerted effort to create an alternative popular music by establishing '"light music units"' at the various stations, which employed classical musicians along with poets to compose two songs a week.

While Keskar was trying to create a new 'light music' with lyrics having poetic beauty and set to simple classical or folk melody, listeners across India began tuning in to Radio Ceylon for film songs. As one often-quoted survey of listener preferences noted, 'out of ten households with licensed radio sets, nine were tuned to Radio Ceylon and the tenth set was broken'. The hit parade of film songs sponsored by a Swiss company named CIBA, '*Binaca Geet Mala*' *which was broadcasted from Radio Ceylon on Wednesdays,* was so popular that Wednesdays came to be known as '*Geet Mala* days'. People used to congregate at one place to listen to this program and the show attracted so much attention from the audience that there were as many as 400 radio clubs all over India which used to respond for the top songs to prepare the count down.

Keskar's efforts of altering the popular taste came under scrutiny in the Parliament too and members like Harindranath Chattopadhyay and Sardar Hukum Singh expressed their concern about AIR's inability to please its listeners through classical and new 'light music' and increasing popularity of Radio Ceylon (Sircar, 2014). Chattopadhyay even called Keskar 'a first class bungler'. He commented on Keskar's new move of 'light music production' that the music was really light but the money spent on it was really heavy (TOI, 1954: 5). Prof. Diwan Chand Sharma

asked why most of the artistes were out of AIR. Keskar responded that some of them were rejected by the jury while some boycotted the new audition system and withdrew themselves from the AIR. While great maestros like Kesarbai, Omkarnath Thakur and Ariya kudi Ramanuja Aiangar demanded heavy fee but AIR authorities did not find any logic in maintaining any distinction with regard to their fee (TOI, 1954: 11). When asked about the increasing popularity of Radio Ceylon, he responded that it was more popular with children and teenagers but the grownups didn't want that (TOI, 1957: 5).

Even the audition system introduced by him in order to find out the best talent could not yield the desired results. In 1958, the Director General issued an order that those graded as 'C class' would not be given solo performances. The 'B class' artistes were also discouraged by an order of 1961(Awasthy, 1965: 42). The 'national program' too was not based on any conscious and well thought out plan to bring Hindustani and Carnatic music closer to each other, nor did it represent the initial step in the direction of the evolution of a unified system of music which could be characterized as 'national'. It was 'national' because the artistes participating in it came from all parts of India and it had a nation-wide audience; and secondly, it represented both Hindustani and Carnatic music (Awasthy, 1965: 48). The problems with the 'light music' measures have already been discussed.

Thus Keskar's inability to create a new music by administrative decree made him capitulate and on 3rd October, 1957 a new special service, 'Vividh Bharati' was launched having the national coverage, consisting of variety entertainment programs, with a heavy ratio of film and popular music. With Vividh Bharati, AIR could win back its listeners and therefore proved itself somewhat victorious in the competition with Radio Ceylon (Sircar, 2014).

His legacy however continues in the form of the national program and Akash Vani Sangeet Sammelan which have regularly

been going on for more than 60 years. The audition system that he introduced, is also almost the same since then and being a radio artiste adds another feather in the cap of a musician even till date. Especially for the accompanists, being a staff artist became a mark of respect. Neuman, while doing an ethnographic study of musicians in early 1970s showed that All India Radio proved to be the major source of support for the rank-and-file musicians regularly employed there. Its patronage of casual artists was also considered significant for those who lived on otherwise occasional engagements along with private tutoring (Neuman, 1980: 182). Neuman further points out that '*Khan Saheb*', an honorific suffix which is added after the names of Muslim musicians, is the contribution of All India Radio only.

As discussed earlier, it was John Fouldes who was responsible for banning the harmonium accompaniment to vocal music (Lelyveld, 1994: 113). Fouldes objections to the harmonium were based on 'tightly bounded notions of Western and Indian intonation' (Rahaim, 2011: 673-4). In 1938 Fouldes published an article in *The Indian Listener* 'The Harmonium' in which he suggested to ban it because its tuning was unsuited to Indian classical music. Like Margaret Cousins, he also called it the 'Harm-Onium' but more important thing was that he called it 'un-Indian'. Fouldes believed that not only its tempered tuning could not jell well with the microtones of Indian vocal music but the harmonium also overshadowed the singer during broadcast. This motivated Fielden to send out a circular banning the harmonium as an accompanying or solo instrument in Indian classical music broadcasts. The circular also ordered all the SD's to auction off all the harmoniums they had, and to give extensive publicity to the ban imposed. Mullick describes an interesting event about this:

> '"One SD had a brain wave. He placed all his eleven harmoniums on what looked like a bier, formed himself and his senior colleagues into a party of 'pall-bearers', and organized the rest of the staff into a 'funeral procession'. Next morning the newspapers carried photographs of the weird looking assemblage as it wended its way from the

> station building to the outer compound, where the 'body' was lowered into the 'grave' dug for the purpose. At a suitable moment after the 'final rites' had been performed and the 'mourners' had gone away, the person who had given the highest bid at the auction held earlier in the day, came and took possession of his property."' (Mullick, 1974: 38-9)

This ban was welcomed by many theorists and politicians like Tagore, Sir Raza Ali, Dr. Zakir Hussain, S.N. Ratanjankar and T. Lakshman Pillai. On the other hand, great vocalists had no inhibition towards harmonium accompaniment. In 1959, when Nazir Ali Jairezbhoy interviewed the singers like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Amir Khan, they not only disagreed with much importance being given to Shrutis but also told that they had no problem with harmonium.(Jairezbhoy, 1984: 38, 37, 63) Till 1971, violin, *sarangi*, *esraj*, and, occasionally, clarinet were used as accompanying instruments with vocal performances instead of the harmonium on radio. In 1970, AIR and Sangeet Natak Akademi organized a seminar on harmonium and Indian music which was published by the Akademi in 1971 as a special issue of *Sangeet Natak*. In that seminar, P. Sambamoorthy pointed out the limitations of harmonium in producing microtones and delicate graces which are very significant in Carnatic music (AIR, 1971: 6-7). S.N. Ratanjankar said that the seminar on harmonium was wastage of time and money. Even in Europe, where it was invented, it was not preferred for any serious music; rather, mendicants in the streets used it. With regard to its use in Indian music, he commented, '"Harmonium is a cheap instrument and is likely to bring music down to its own level of cheapness."' (AIR, 1971: 6-7) Dr. Premlata Sharma was also not in favor of the use of harmonium.

On the other hand, P.V. Subramaniam, while speaking in support of harmonium first pointed out that all greats like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Amir Khan, Begum Akhtar and Lakshmi Shankar favored the harmonium accompaniment. They preferred

it because its notes are flawless, unsagging and constant. Secondly, if the harmonium could not yield *gamakas* then so, couldn't the instruments like jalatarangam or mandolin. Then why were they not banned from AIR? Thirdly, the present harmonium was very sophisticated as compared to the primitive one (AIR, 1971: 8-10). V.H. Deshpande remarked that the harmonium was controversial only in the four bends of the Broadcasting stations in the country and in a small coterie of orthodox academicians, who refuse to listen to the counsel of reason and logic on behalf of the performers. Besides, this was only an artificially created controversy in the sense that the harmonium had been a uniformly accepted instrument for accompaniment since the time it first came into use and it was only AIR authorities and not the musicians that banned the instrument. He further said, if the harmonium overpowers the defects of the artiste then it is not appropriate for AIR to call him for the broadcast. Secondly, the defects should be covered, and not be made evident. Third, the artiste should have the freedom to decide which accompaniment s/he likes. Deshpande believed that *sarangi* was perfectly alright in the spacious olden days of kings or queens and zamindars, when before the select small audiences in the privacy of their chambers, there was no hurry about anything on the surface of the earth; the *sarangi* could then take as much long time as it wanted to be tuned. The resonating strings of *sarangi* take a long time to be tuned properly. Therefore it is not appropriate for modern stage and studio atmosphere. Moreover, its sound doesn't suit with powerful and sonorous voices of mail singers. He also pointed out to the diminishing number of *sarangi* players (AIR, 1971: 15-20). Dipali Nag also talked of its indispensability in present music teaching scenario; while Jnan Ghosh advocated for harmonium as a solo instrument too.

In 1971, the ban was partially lifted by the AIR authorities and harmonium accompaniment was allowed for top-grade and A-grade artists, qawwali parties and choral groups. Solo harmonium broadcasts however were prohibited. The ban was lifted totally in 1980.

The first formal review of the working of the official media in India came about with the appointment by M.I.B. of a committee under the chairmanship of Asok K. Chanda, former auditor general, government of India, in 1964 to '"examine and evaluate the operations, policies, programs and production of the various media units of the ministry"'. It warned that '"AIR should not overdo its educative role"'. The committee also suggested commercializing Vividh Bharati channel to ensure boost in the revenue. Following Chanda committee's recommendations and being aware about the easy availability of cheap transistors, on November first, 1967, Vividh Bharati launched Commercial Broadcasting Service.

At present, AIR is struggling hard to compete with the invasion of both TV and private FM channels while encountering the serious problems of staff and money (Ninan, 2002). People with specific specializations retire such as in-house accompanists to musicians but cannot be replaced because of the recruitment freeze. At the same time, there is serious lack of funds also. Since 1990s, there has been a colossal decline in the listeners of radio because of the advent of satellite TV. Now radio is no more an evening entertainment; people listen to radio while driving. There also, new FM channels are trying to attract the people. After 1995, various private channels have appeared on the scene, some of them being run by established newsgroups. For these private FM channels, the target is to woo the emerging neo-rich youth and advertisers. Therefore they play only film and pop music.

When we talk about the peripheral position of classical music on radio, we cannot blame the commercialization only. We have already talked about the listener revolt of 1950s. A Radio Audience Survey also reveals that avid listeners of high-brow music are very few (AIR, 2007: 145-84). In Delhi, no classical music program is in the top-ten list for the listeners. Sangeet Sarita, a 15 minutes program from Vividh Bharati is at fifth number with 20.05 per cent listeners liking it in Patna and in Kolkata, it is on tenth position with 0.25 listeners only.

As compared to other countries like Britain and USA, radio as a mass-medium developed quite slowly in India. Along with the fears and doubts of the imperial government there were infrastructural challenges that inhibited its growth. Moreover, AIR's pre-war history is that of a financially starved government department. Music became the matter of concern for the British when it came to be broadcast. The British had their own preconceived notions about Indian music but it was still important as it neither informed, nor educated. Moreover, it could encourage people to listen to radio. Therefore along with doing some experiments with Indian music and encouraging small and composed items for broadcast, they invited the professional women singers on radio. Some Indian officials also put their sincere efforts to agree great maestros to perform. The most important and controversial legacy of the colonial era was the ban on harmonium which lasted for more than three decades.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was both Home Minister and I&B Minister in the interim government (formed between December 1946 and August 1947, to facilitate the transfer of power to Indians from the British) issued the first policy directive which banned the performances of professional hereditary women singers in the name of morality. This ban had mixed repercussions. The tendency of refining the taste of the nation for music reached its zenith during the two ministerial terms of Dr. B.V. Keskar who believed that in the postindependence context , classical music could only be rescued by state patronage; and radio was the most important means for that. While in office, he brought a new audition system, national program of music, Akash Vani Sangeet Sammelan and Indian orchestra. His scornful attitude towards film music led him to produce new light music by AIR artists only. His new audition system was resisted by the artists; and the overdose of classical music along with the new variant of light music turned the listeners away from radio. Robin Jeffrey rightly remarks, '"The nation of popular Hindi and classical music was not the nation of most Indians. A medium that seldom spoke to them seldom attracted them."' (Jeffery, 2008: 15-6) Keskar was criticized

in Loksabha too for these measures and finally AIR had to launch the *Vividh Bharati* service in order to bring back the listeners.

The first enquiry committee suggested AIR to lessen its educative role. Today, the voice of India is not only running short of personnel and funds and planning to discontinue its medium-wave services. The onslaught of private FM radio stations and satellite TV channels are providing the public a variety of entertainment. All this has changed the preferences of the listeners to a very great extent.

I will however not conclude on such a dismal note. One can hardly think of a single famous artiste who did not begin his or her career in AIR. Even maestros like Pt. Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan joined as staff artistes of AIR. Though the policies of Keskar may be controversial yet his contribution to Indian classical music is undoubtedly acknowledged. AIR emerged as a great patron and employment giving body to the musicians in the absence of their erstwhile patrons. AIR archive possesses the largest number of the recordings of classical music. Some of these have been released by *Prasar Bharati*. Finally, in what is a good piece of news for the aficionados of classical music, on the Republic Day of 2016, AIR launched its satellite channel *'Ragam' which is available on DTH and through the mobile app of the AIR. It operates from Bengaluru and broadcasts 24x7 both Hindustani and Carnatic classical music.*

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Text, Context, and History: Bhai Vir Singh's *Bijay Singh*

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Abstract

This paper illustrates the relationship between literature and history by analyzing Bhai Vir Singh's novel *Bijay Singh* (1899) as a social document. Its relationship with the author's earlier novel *Sundari* (1898), which is commonly considered the first Punjabi novel, is also brought out. Both historically and ideologically, Bhai Vir Singh is generally regarded as a product of the Singh Sabha movement which emerged in Punjab in 1873. The larger colonial context, however, is overlooked by scholars which is taken up in this paper. It also shows how *Sundari* as the seed book is supplemented and complemented by *Bijay Singh* which may be seen as its sequel. The two novels share the same ideological stance and lay emphasis on distinctiveness of Sikh identity. They share a common historical setting and concern for the future of the Sikhs. But, as a whole, the second novel presents a fuller social picture and a better integrated text. Notwithstanding the avowed apolitical stance of the Singh Sabha movement, the author's

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disapproval of colonial situation too is evident. In *Bijay Singh* it is possible to see the evolution of Bhai Vir Singh's social and political consciousness and also of his craft.

Keywords: Bhai Vir Singh, *Bijay Singh*, Singh Sabha movement, *Sundari*, colonial Punjab, communitarian consciousness, Sikh identity

The interrelationship between a literary text and its context is integral to historical approach. However, 'a work of literature has to be unwound, so to speak, to get at the historical situation that produced it', says the eminent historian J.S. Grewal. 'This does not mean', he suggests, 'that a literary work is a direct reflection of the total historical situation. The exact relationship has to be discovered rather than assumed in the case of every writer, in fact, in the case of every literary work' (Grewal, 1983:1). The present paper analyses Bhai[1] Vir Singh's novel *Bijay Singh* (1899) as a social document. By far the most important literary figure in the history of modern Punjabi literature, Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) had published his hugely popular *Sundari* only a year ago. It is generally regarded as the first Punjabi novel (Harbans Singh, 1984: 42; Sandhu, 2005:45).[2] *Bijay Singh* may be seen as its sequel. Bhai Vir Singh's 150th birth anniversary is being celebrated in the world of Punjabi literature. Both the novels give literary expression to the ideology and concerns of the Singh Sabha movement (Ganda

[1] The prefix 'Bhai' is used for the respectable Sikhs known for piety

[2] However, a few scholars have regarded the *Jyotirudae* as the earliest original Punjabi novel. Attar Singh. (2000). 'Political Change and Punjabi Literature in the Nineteenth Century'. Banga, Indu, ed. *Five Punjabi Centuries: Polity, Economy, Society, and Culture, c. 1500-1990*. New Delhi, Manohar: 538. In his interview with Doris Jakobsh, J.S. Rahi also seems to be of this view. According to Jakobsh, the *Jyotirudae* is regarded as 'the model for Vir Singh's creation'. Jakobsh, Doris R. (2003). *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning, and Identity*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press:160-61.

Singh, 1973: 27-28). At the same time, these novels and the Singh Sabha movement were the product of a larger historical situation.

Contextually, several causal chains appear to have converged on the creation of *Bijay Singh*. The modern novel as a literary genre emerged in India in the late nineteenth century colonial situation. With the gradual percolation of the cultural influence of the British, the early Indian novels appeared in Bengali, Marathi, and Hindi, besides some other Indian languages.[3] Without referring to the British directly, the authors often advised against blindly copying the West. As the vehicles mostly of reform and nascent nationalism, these novels generally signified attempts of the educated Indians at making cultural adjustments with colonial rule. As a well-known literary critic puts it,

> By constructing a glorious pre-colonial past and imagining and highlighting victories against others and earlier invaders, these novels are indirectly helping to crystallize a sense of nationhood through the valorization of both the physical prowess and the spiritual strength of the community (Mukherjee, 1996: 110).

Significantly, thus, the rewriting of history in a fictional form came to be seen 'as a moral act for the retrieval of the self-respect of a subjugated people' (Ibid:111).

I

The British wrested the Punjab from the Sikhs in 1849. It was the last region to come under colonial rule. Its annexation coincided with the peak of the Industrial Revolution in Britain which facilitated rapid changes in terms of new technology, new means of transport and communication and new contacts with the

[3] For example, *Yamuna Paryatan* in Marathi by Baba Padamji (1857), *Durgesh Nandini* in Bengali by Bankim Chandra (1865), and *Parikhsha Guru* in Hindi by Srinivas Das (1882).

outside world (Douie, 1994[1916]: 127-59). The census operations in the newly conquered region (1855, 1868, 1881, 1891) steadily enhanced awareness about the relative proportions of the adherents of different religions (mainly Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism). Religious identities were made the bases of nomination to government bodies and elections to municipalities in the province. The government jobs began to be given on that basis, though not openly yet. Adoption of Urdu in Persian script as the language of administration at lower rungs and also as the medium of instruction in schools was seen as favoring Muslims to the disadvantage of the Hindus and Sikhs, particularly the latter. While the consciousness of communitarian identities was heightened by these measures, lifting of ban on cow-killing gradually intensified communal bitterness, leading to riots in the Punjab in the 1880s and the 1890s (Sohal, 1984: 83-89).

The new province was also seen as a fertile ground for the spread of Christianity. The stance of neutrality towards Christianity in the early years of colonial rule had gradually eroded by the time of the Charter Act of 1853. Both officially and personally, the British administrators facilitated and supported the Christian missionaries in the north-western region. The first mission in the Punjab had been established in the British territory at Ludhiana in 1834. In the 1840s, several mission stations were set up in the Shimla hills. In less than two decades after annexation, a large number of missions and the related institutions came up in the province. The printing press, schools, hospitals and direct propagation were used to win converts. This was often accompanied by denunciation of the religious and social practices of the Punjabis (Grewal, 1990:625-29). In due course, the Zenana missionaries also started reaching out to the women of the urban households (Webster, 2007: 89-90, 133, 155-67).

In the backdrop of the activities of the missionaries and under the impact of the West, the aristocratic and educated Punjabis felt the need for socio-religious reform. The British officials too were often critical of the people and their ways. A framework of action

under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 was already in existence. Thus, the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Muslim Anjumans, which had originated outside the Punjab (respectively in Calcutta, Bombay and Aligarh), came to have branches in the province as voluntary associations (*samajes, sabhas* and *anjumans*). The Sanatan Dharam as a reformist endeavor arose in the Punjab in reaction more to the modernizing Hindu movements. To provide 'safe' alternatives to the government and missionary systems of education, reformers came up with Anglo-Islamic, Anglo-Vedic and Anglo-Sikh programs of education along with their respective languages (Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi) and scripts (Persian, Devanagari and Gurmukhi) (Jones, 1989: 94-103, 109-121).

The Singh Sabhas were the most important reformist associations among the Sikhs[4]. The formation of the first Singh Sabha in 1873 is generally believed to have been triggered by the announcement of the intent of conversion by four Sikh boys of the mission school at Amritsar. The boys were persuaded not to convert, but this had alarmed the educated Sikhs.[5] The Amritsar Singh Sabha was followed by another Singh Sabha at Lahore in 1879. Thereafter, their number increased rapidly, touching one hundred by about the end of the nineteenth century. These voluntary associations were concerned about the affairs of the Sikh community as a whole, like the advocacy of true Sikh religion and correct socio-religious practices, promotion of education, Punjabi language and journalism, and uplift of women and the low-castes. As a matter of policy, the Singh Sabhas avoided criticism of the government. Interest in the Sikh past for inspiration and guidance was an essential element of their program. Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Prakash* (1880) was followed by his *Tawarikh-i Guru Khalsa*

[4] It may, however, be pointed out that before annexation two reformist movements among the Sikhs had emerged. Known as the Nirankari and the Namdhari, these are generally regarded as sectarian (Grewal, 2009: 266-68).

[5] It is not surprising that there is no evidence to this effect in mission records (Webster, 2007:135-36 n.6).

(1892). A number of books in Punjabi were published on the lives of the Sikh Gurus, institution of the Khalsa, and the later history of the Sikhs, most notably by Bhai Ditt Singh. It may be pointed that the ideological positions, specific interests and contributions of individual leaders varied. In the 1880s, the differences between the Amritsar and Lahore leaders surfaced over issues like distinctiveness of Sikh identity, accommodation of low-castes, reform of Gurdwaras, and rejection of gurudom (Grewal, 2009: 268-75). At the time of writing *Bijay Singh*, Bhai Vir Singh was ideologically closer to the Lahore leaders. The *Khalsa Akhbar*, edited by Bhai Ditt Singh of the Lahore Singh Sabha, had already been denouncing caste system and visits to sepulchres (*marhi masaani*), and advocating widow remarriage (*bidhva da Anand*) (*Khalsa Akhbar*, 1893-1899).

Bhai Vir Singh gave intellectual impetus to the programme of the Singh Sabha movement through discursive processes in which religion, reform, literature and history were intermeshed. He was born at Amritsar on 5 December 1872 in a family with a tradition of literature and learning. His father, Dr Charan Singh, was a poet of Braj and published several works while Bhai Vir Singh's maternal grandfather, Giani Hazara Singh, was an acclaimed Sikh scholar. Giani Hazara Singh was associated with Guru Singh Sabha of Amritsar since its inception and Dr Charan Singh also became an active member of the Singh Sabha. Bhai Vir Singh was clear about his vocation early in his life. After passing matriculation from the mission school with a good result, he declined a government job. At the age of 19 he bought a printing press jointly with Wazir Singh and started a regular publication programme in 1893 with the monthly *Nirguniara* which carried religious tracts written by Vir Singh himself. It became the organ of the Khalsa Tract Society established by him in 1893-94 in association with Bhai Kaur Singh Dhupia. Bhai Vir Singh started the weekly *Khalsa Samachar* in 1899 (Ganda Singh,1973: 21-22,27-28). It may be noted that as the seed book for Bhai Vir Singh's novels situated in the eighteenth

century,[6] the character of *Sundari* became an important element of the context in which *Bijay Singh* was written.

II

We may begin by unwinding the storyline of *Bijay Singh*. Its protagonist, formerly Ram Lal, was born in a Hindu Khatri family of Lahore. His father, Chuhar Mal, was a rich trader-cum-moneylender (*shahukar*) who was in the good books of the Mughal administration. Ram Lal joined its service in Amritsar. Inspired by the chivalry and valour of the Singhs, he took initiation of the double-edged sword and was renamed 'Bijay Singh'. The novel narrates the steadfastness and travails of Bijay Singh and his family in the backdrop of the repression of the Sikhs by Mir Mannu (Muin-ul Mulk), governor of the Punjab, and the machinations of his widow, Mughlani Begum (*Bhai Vir Singh Rachnavali*, 2011[1973]: 57-118).

When Bijay Singh visited his family, his transformation was visible. His thin and bony frame was now strong like a lion with radiance on his face. His father got angry, his brother was unhappy and his mother became concerned about her son's life. Bijay Singh asked his family if becoming a Sikh was a sin? His mother replied that the Sikhs suffered because the Mughal government was against them. She advised Bijay Singh to discard his *kes* (uncut hair), but Bijay Singh refused, saying that the *kes* was the hallmark of 'Sikhi'. She relented and advised her son to follow it secretly. He began to live in the attic, remembering God's name and reciting verses from Guru Granth Sahib. His wife Sheel Kaur, who was the daughter of a Sehajdhari Sikh, served her mother-in-law with devotion. Mir Mannu was angry over Ram Lal's conversion and

[6] *Satwant Kaur*, the third novel by Bhai Vir Singh, is also placed in the middle of the eighteenth century and takes the story of the political struggle of the Sikhs to the next phase. Its first part came out in 1900, and the second part was published in 1927 (*Bhai Vir Singh Rachnavali*, 2011[1973]: 121-219). For a chronology of Bhai Vir Singh's life and work, Shan,1973:191-206.

he made this clear to Chuhar Mal. To save his position and family Chuhar Mal disowned his son. Bijay Singh decided to leave home, and his wife and five- year- old son Waryam Singh insisted on accompanying him.

They reached the house of a Sehajdhari Sikh, Lala Leela Ram, who kept the appearance of a Hindu to help the Khalsa. At night 50-60 Singhs came there for shelter. A servant of Leela Ram informed the local administrator about them. Bijay Singh and his family along with the Singhs left the house through a secret passage. But as they came out they were attacked by 200 Mughal soldiers. The Singhs fought bravely and escaped. Bijay Singh's wife was hurt in this scuffle and he stayed back to spend the night in the jungle. Later, they were robbed by five Mughal soldiers and thrown into a dark room. Bijay Singh and his wife saw a wounded Sikh woman in the room who told them that her family was looted by the Mughal soldiers. She herself killed one or two '*turks*' while her husband killed five but was thrown into the river by the *turks*. Her son died fighting and she was brought into the dungeon. She added that a Sikh should accept death but not discard his religion. The woman died at night. Bijay Singh chose to cremate the mother and the child rather than flee to safety. After cremation Bijay Singh and his family left the place. In the morning the Mughal soldiers were wonder struck and praised the bravery of the Sikhs.

Bijay Singh's mother missed him acutely. By then she herself became inclined towards Sikh religion and secretly got a copy of Guru Granth Sahib installed at home. She regularly listened to the recital of the *Japuji* from a child in the neighbourhood. She became even more fond of Bijay Singh and appreciated his *kes*. To get news of her son, she persuaded the family priest (*purohit*) to enquire about Bijay Singh and paid 2000 rupees to the *purohit* for his expenses. He hid the money and claimed after 15 days that he had found Bijay Singh's whereabouts. Bijay Singh's mother now requested him to take money for Bijay Singh. However, the *purohit* dug a deep hole in his home to put the diamonds and about a thousand *mohars* given to him for Bijay Singh.

Bijay Singh, Sheel Kaur and Waryam Singh lived in the jungle, made baskets for their living and remained engrossed in the Gurbani. They were spied upon by the priest. He met Bijay Singh and told him that his mother had asked him to enquire about him. The *purohit* told a lie that he was robbed of all the money given for Bijay Singh. Rather, he now needed money for going back. Finally, Sheel Kaur's ring was given to the *purohit* to meet the expenses. He took it immediately but was afraid that if the Sikhs ever became victorious and if Bijay Singh ever met his mother she would know the truth. The *purohit* now planned to have Bijay Singh and his family killed and also earn Rs 80 each for the heads of 3 Sikhs. He informed a '*turk*' in a nearby village. The first party of soldiers sent to capture Bijay Singh and his family was repulsed by Sheel Kaur and Waryam Singh. The *purohit* now complained to the local administrator (*hakim*) who sent another officer with the *purohit*. They captured Bijay Singh and family and presented them before the *hakim*. The Mulla recommended that the three beautiful and brave people should be brought into Islam: the boy should be given to a childless officer; the man should be converted and married to another officer's daughter; and the woman should be given to the Mulla as his wife had died.

Just then the information came that four Mughal soldiers had been wounded and killed by Bijay Singh and his family. The administrator got angry and put them in separate prisons. When Bijay Singh refused to become Muslim, he was beaten up brutally at night which he bore bravely, remembering the Guru. At that moment, a *fakir* entered his cell along with the superintendent (*darogha*) of the jail. The *fakir*, a venerable Syed, rebuked the *darogha* for treating Bijay Singh so harshly. The *fakir* lived outside the town. He had even stayed with Bhai Mani Singh as his disciple. The *fakir* brought Bijay Singh to his establishment (*dera*); attended on him and he recovered. After some days, the *fakir* and Bijay Singh came to the Mughal administrator's mansion to enquire about Sheel Kaur and Waryam Singh. But the *hakim* quickly sent them both to Lahore as captives where they joined the captive Sikh women and children. They were treated badly, but the sacrifices of Guru Arjan

Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh continued to inspire them during these difficult days. Once Mannu also came to tell the women to convert to Islam but they refused. Mannu was furious and he ordered to brutally kill the children in the presence of their mothers. When the turn of Sheel's son came, Mannu was struck by her beauty. He ordered Sheel Kaur and her son to be sent to his palace. Sheel Kaur was persuaded with beautiful clothes and jewellery to become the 'queen of the entire Punjab'. Sheel Kaur was terrified first, but then she made herself strong to face it and try to escape. Mannu's chief wife, Murad Begum (Mughlani Begum), was a clever and beautiful woman. In a state of drunkenness, Mannu blurted out his idea of bringing Sheel Kaur into his *harem*. The Begum made him drink more and went to Sheel Kaur's room, but felt reassured when the Begum saw her praying. Next day, Mughlani Begum met Sheel Kaur, claiming to be her sister and expressing her concern for Sheel Kaur not losing her faith.

Meanwhile, Bijay Singh joined Karora Singh's band (*dal*) to bring back his wife and son. Karora Singh's associates along with Bijay Singh reached the place where Sikh women were held captive at Lahore. They found the Sikh women handcuffed, untidy, some ill, some dead and their children were in disarray. The Singhs quickly cremated the dead and took the women on their horseback. Bijay Singh learnt that Sheel Kaur and her son had been sent to the palace.

After Mannu's sudden death at Pindori, the Singhs punished the oppressive officers and started occupying territories. Mughlani Begum sent secret messengers to Kabul and Delhi seeking governorship for her son, Aminuddin, with herself as his guardian. Before Mannu's death the Begum had been planning to get rid of Sheel but now she found Sheel's advice useful. To make Sheel comfortable, the Begum thought of finding her husband and sent messengers to locate Bijay Singh.

In one clash Bijay Singh had fought bravely in front but got hurt on the thigh and fainted. The *purohit* who had been on the lookout for him chanced to come there with Mughal soldiers and

asked them to kill Bijay Singh. But they refused and took him to the Begum's palace. Sheel Kaur tended to Bijay Singh and he recovered after a few days. Bijay Singh and his family were comfortable in the palace but all the time thinking of how to help the Khalsa. Meanwhile, the Begum's son died of small pox. On Bijay Singh's advice, she took courtiers into confidence and got recognition for herself from both Kabul and Delhi. Bijay Singh advised her to also settle with the Sikhs.

Mughlani Begum became too proud and autocratic. She was enamoured of Bhikhari Khan's handsomeness. On his refusal she had him beaten to death. The courtiers withdrew support and encouraged the Sikhs to attack the Begum. Bijay Singh tried to leave the palace, but was stopped by the Begum who liked to spend time with him. Sheel became apprehensive and talked to Bijay Singh about it. Mughlani Begum had lost her heart to Bijay Singh and wanted to marry him. She tried everything to seduce him but failed.

Now the Begum arrested Sheel and her son and had them poisoned by a slave girl (*goli*). Later, the Begum ordered that they be thrown into the river. However, the men who took them left them on the ground presuming them to be dead and returned. Bijla Singh, a Sikh informer, chanced upon Sheel and her son and brought them to a deserted room (*kotha*) and tended to them. After two days, Sheel was able to narrate her story. Bijla Singh decided to help free Bijay Singh. Meanwhile, the slave girl who had given poison to Sheel and her son, became remorseful. She went to the local Gurdwara and informed a Sikh there. She herself became a Sikh and offered to lead the Sikhs into the fort. Inside the fort several young women were trying to persuade Bijay Singh to say 'yes' to the Begum's proposition. When Bijay Singh firmly declined, the women disappeared and four fierce looking Negros (*habshi*) with drawn swords surrounded Bijay Singh. At that moment, Sardar Karora Singh came there with his men. The slave girl had guided them into the palace, and Bijay Singh was released safely. He was reunited with his family and lived happily for some time. Sheel resumed preparing *langar* for everyone and taking care

of the wounded. Their son resumed his training in the use of weapons.

The author concludes the narrative thus: Mughlani Begum became a victim of epidemic, or was poisoned by the nobles (*amirs*) who had suffered at her hands. Ahmad Shah Abdali gave Jalandhar to Nasiruddin who oppressed people. Sikhs came down to fight with Nasiruddin. Bijay Singh was wounded seriously and died remembering God. Sheel Kaur, who was nursing his wounds, fell on his chest and passed away. Karora Singh adopted Bijay Singh's son who grew up to be a brave warrior (*soorma*) (Ibid: 116-17).

III

Essentially a work of historical fiction, the narrative of *Bijay* Singh is coherent. The storyline has a plot with a beginning, middle and an end. The turns and twists in the novel and the death of the protagonists are accounted for. As in the case of *Sundari* (*Bhai Vir Singh Rachnavali*, 2011[1973]: 5-46), the objective of writing *Bijay Singh* is to inspire and rejuvenate the Sikhs by reminding them of their glorious past. Both the novels are didactic in purpose and have frequent references to the Gurus, Guru Granth Sahib, and the well-known Sikh martyrs. Both lay emphasis on the distinctiveness of Sikh identity and the transformative impact of the initiation of the double-edged sword. Sikh values, especially welfare of others, are underscored in both. There is a marked female visibility and agency. Sundari and Sheel Kaur are thinking and participating agents and manage to save their faith and chastity in difficult situations. The Sehajdhari Sikhs figure in a positive light in the two novels. In addition to some historical characters like Diwan Kaura Mal, Mir Mannu, Karora Singh, and the two Jassa Singhs, the fictional character of Bijla Singh is common to both. In *Bijay Singh* there are allusions even to Sundari as a historical personage. In terms of chronology, *Bijay* Singh begins where *Sundari* ends, though they share the historical setting

of the grim struggle of the Sikhs against the Mughals and Afghans in the mid-eighteenth century. In both the novels the author expresses concern about the present condition of the Sikhs and suggests models of desirable conduct for future.

Bijay Singh presents an advancement over *Sundari* in some important respects. The author lays stress on belief in one God and often quotes from the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas in support. The Singh identity is presented as the predominant identity. The long hair (*kes*) is compared to a crown given by the Guru. Everyone looked alike whether a Khatri or a Jat. Here, the reference seems to the Kesdhari Singhs. The role of some Sehajdhari Sikhs who were helping the Singhs is also highlighted through the fictional character of Lala Leela Ram and the historical character of Diwan Kaura Mal who happened to be the author's ancestor. In fact, Bhai Vir Singh dwells at some length on the efforts of Diwan Kaura Mal for effecting reconciliation between Mir Mannu and the Sikhs which gave peace to the Punjab for three years (Ibid: 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 79, 82, 84, 86, 91, 106, 109).

To emphasize that the Sikh faith is open to all religions and classes, the voluntary conversion of a Muslim slave girl is brought in. Bhai Vir Singh emphasizes that there is no caste in Sikh religion. No one should be considered good or bad on the basis of caste (*jaat*) or appearance (*roop*). The Gurus propagated the principles of equality, social commitment and freedom of conscience which were upheld by the eighteenth century Sikhs at the cost of their lives. The ideal of martyrdom is highlighted as a source of inspiration; the Sikhs were inspired by the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur and sacrifices of Guru Gobind Singh. The selfless sacrifices of Banda Singh, Tara Singh Vaan, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Baba Deep Singh and Baba Gurbakhsh Singh are underlined. For Bhai Vir Singh sacrifices were not confined to the Sikh men alone; Sikh women and children also remained committed to their faith to the peril of their lives. He even suggests that it is the responsibility of parents, particularly mothers, to teach their children about their faith by citing the

devotion and bravery of Waryam Singh, son of Bijay Singh and Sheel Kaur (Ibid: 60, 61, 63, 74, 86, 87, 111).

There is a greater balance in social representation in the novel. Chuhar Mal, a Hindu Khatri, is a person who collaborated with Mughal administration and preferred his wealth and status over the life of his own son. Chuhar Mal's family *purohit* is shown as avaricious, deceitful, and malicious. However, not all Hindus were self-seeking. A Bairagi Mahant is appreciated for saving the life of the Sikh women in village Pindori when it was attacked by Mir Mannu. The Mughal ruling class is shown as unjust, oppressive, and corrupt. However, the Sikhs were not against Islam or Muslims. At places the author defines a good Muslim. A Sufi Syed, Saabar Shah, is shown as a pious and influential person who helps Bijay Singh. Understandably, the author praises Akbar's rule as much as that of Ranjit Singh (Ibid: 70, 72, 73, 81, 82, 94).

As regards gender relations, unlike *Sundari*, the married state (*grihastha ashram)* figures as the norm in this novel. As a faithful wife (*patibrata*) with a truthful conduct (*satvanti*), Sheel Kaur is devoted to her husband. Rather, she calls him her master (*swami*) and herself his slave (*dasi*). However, the virtue of fidelity is not confined to the woman alone. The author has similar expectations of Bijay Singh. It is significant to note that the counterpart of the term *patibrata* is *satibrata* for Bijay Singh who refuses Mughlani Begum's overtures. He trusts his wife and has no problem about accepting her after her forced stay at Mir Mannu's mansion. Monogamy and mutual fidelity are presented as the cornerstones of domestic life (Ibid: 63, 69, 71, 84, 90, 103, 105, 108, 117).

The agency of women is highlighted in some other situations. Sheel Kaur teaches her son about Sikh faith and its values. Her acumen is reflected when she advises Mughlani Begum in administrative and political matters. Sheel Kaur is shown also as a fearless (*nidar*) woman who can wield a sword and successfully fight against the Mughal soldiers. Another Sikh woman bravely fights against some '*turk*' soldiers, killing a few before being captured. A Muslim slave girl voluntarily becomes a Sikh and

helps Karora Singh in securing Bijay Singh's release. His mother advises her husband in political matters. She has Guru Granth Sahib installed at her home without his knowledge. She evinces initiative and resourcefulness in quietly trying to find the whereabouts of her son and his family (Ibid: 67, 74, 97).

Widowhood is specifically brought in *Bijay Singh*. Mughlani Begum, the widow of Mir Mannu, is presented as a willful, haughty and licentious woman who forces a Muslim noble to marry her and on his refusal gets him killed. She then tries unsuccessfully to seduce Bijay Singh. The author adds that among Hindus, widows are respected and called *'bebe ji'*, but those who have illicit relations are condemned, and such women invariably regret later on. He points out that Sikh religion permits widows to remarry. By implication, there is less chance of the Sikh women going astray. (Ibid: 68,103,104,106,107,108,112) However, the author condemns the contemporary Sikh women who believe in superstitions, delusions, empty rituals, and magic and visit *marhi masani* (sepulcher) in the hope of begetting sons. He exhorts them to read about the bravery of Sundari and learn from the conduct of Sheel Kaur (Ibid: 87-88).

Bhai Vir Singh is concerned equally with the problem of self-indulgence and dissipation among the Sikh men of his day. He feels sad over their indifference to their religion and deprecates the problem of alcoholism in several well-established families. He notices the downward mobility of the erstwhile aristocrats and *jagirdars*. He disapproves of some Sikhs marrying white women (Ibid: 108). Even when his disapproval of the colonial situation is implicit, there is a fairly direct reference to the challenge from Christian missionaries. He instructs the Sikhs not to be lured by their offers, gifts and sweet talk. He reminds the Sikhs that even the Mughal administrators had failed to forcibly convert the Sikhs, because they were ready to sacrifice their life but not their religion (Ibid: 90, 96, 108). As in the past, the ideology of the Gurus is the only refuge for the Sikhs in the present, the author asserts.

IV

Bhai Vir Singh specifically mentions the historical works tapped for writing *Bijay Singh*. Besides oral tradition, the author makes use of Persian, Gurmukhi, Urdu and English works like *Gurbilas Bhai Mani Singh*, Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Panth Prakash*, Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Prakash*, Kanhiya Lal's *Tarikh-i Panjab*, Amir Das's *Sri Gurbans Chandrauday*, Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat ut Tawarikh*, John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, Elphinstone's *History of India*, and Syed Muhammad Latif's *History of the Punjab*. However, Bhai Vir Singh uses these books and manuscripts selectively, depending upon the requirements of the story. The author nevertheless captures the optimism and élan of the Sikh tradition, and remains close to the known writings of Sikh history, thereby creating a sense of authenticity. In the words of Gurbachan Singh Talib, 'a significant thing to note about his historical fiction...is the absence of any anachronisms', showing 'an ever-alert scholarly conscience, built upon his vast learning' (Talib, 1973: 13).

Presentation of a moral paradigm through Sikh history is one of the dominant concerns of Bhai Vir Singh. He says that in *Bijay Singh* he gives only a specimen of Sikh history, highlighting the sacrifices of the Sikhs in Mir Mannu's time. Much more needs to be written about the history, bravery, hardship and perseverance of the Sikhs, especially in Banda Singh's time. The author laments that this lies buried in some sources which are difficult to locate. As a result, the Sikhs have no knowledge about their past. They have formed impressions and opinions without reading historical works. He asks his readers to see Elphinstone's history about the heroic manner of Banda's death and martyrdom of his over 700 companions. Bhai Vir Singh underlines that the sacrifices of the Sikhs of the eighteenth century are exemplary in the history of the world (*Bhai Vir Singh Rachnavali*: 98).

In his final appeal (*antim binati*) at the end of *Bijay Singh*, the author says that for forty years after Guru Gobind Singh the Khalsa made sacrifices to protect their religion and country against tyrannical rule. If the Sikh men, women and children read about

this history it will awaken them and arouse their love for their community; they will feel proud of their ancestors. He reiterates that the sources for Sikh history in Persian and other languages are scattered at different places, and regrets that the Sikh community has paid scant attention to their own history. Bhai Vir Singh compares this 'neglect' with 'committing suicide'. He is hopeful that Sikhs can still preserve their history if they take interest in research and collect sources dealing with Baba Banda [Singh] and the atrocities of Abdus Samad Khan and others. The author thinks that awareness of Sikh history can infuse the Sikh community with a new life (Ibid:.118).

Subsequently, it may be added, Bhai Vir Singh himself took keen interest in locating and preserving historical sources in Gurmukhi. He edited the *Puratan Janamsakhi, Sikhan di Bhagatmal,* Bhai Santokh Singh's *Suraj Prakash* (in fourteen volumes), and Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash,* and published *Guru Granth Kosh* and *Kabitt Bhai Gurdas* (Talib, 1973: 13-15; Harbans Singh, 1984:99-100). Bhai Vir Singh was working on the translation, commentary and annotation of Guru Granth Sahib just before his death on 10 June 1957. This work was completed by his younger brother, Dr Balbir Singh. Continuing his legacy, Dr Balbir Singh collected manuscripts, rare books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers and paintings. After his death, his daughter, Mohinder Kaur formed a trust and gifted this significant collection to the Punjabi University, Patiala. Scholars and researchers of Sikh history have benefitted immensely from these sources housed in Dehradun. Bhai Vir Singh's legacy of producing Sikh historical works is continuing through this rich repository.[7]

Significantly, within a decade and a half of the publication of Bhai Vir Singh's first three historical novels (*Sundai, Bijay Singh* and

[7]Scholars and researchers are indebted to Bhai Vir Singh's family for preserving this rich collection of primary sources on the Punjab and Sikh history. I stayed at the centre at Dehra Dun for my own research and received a lot of consideration from the late Mohinder Kaur Ji. I fondly recall her commitment and my conversations with her about this rare collection.

Satwant Kaur, part 1), a number of important studies in Sikh history came out in English and Punjabi. In 1904, Sewaram Singh Thapar published his *A Critical Study of the Life and Teachings of Siri Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism*. Karam Singh made research in history a lifelong vocation and his *Baba Banda Bahadur* came out in 1907, followed by several other works. In 1909, Bhagat Lakshman Singh published *A Short Sketch of the Life and Work of Guru Govind Singh*. Khazan Singh's *History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion* came out in two volumes in 1914.[8] Bhai Sohan Singh's *Banda the Brave* was published in 1915.[9] It may be relevant to mention that Puran Singh, a scientist and a poet, was deeply influenced by Bhai Vir Singh. Puran Singh began writing anecdotes on the Sikh past in the first decade of the twentieth century.[10]

V

As evident from the foregoing discussion, this paper has attempted to heuristically separate the text, context and history, though these are closely intermeshed in *Bijay Singh*. As a whole, Bhai Vir Singh seems to recreate another world in this novel and tries to link it up with the present. Sikh faith and its distinctiveness that motivated the Sikhs in the eighteenth century remain the refrain. The underlying message is that the Sikhs could withstand repression and eventually receive power from their ideology and history. Therefore, the knowledge of Sikh history and religion could rejuvenate the Sikhs in the present also. The author's effort seems to be to mold social consciousness to equip the Sikhs to deal with the challenges posed by the colonial situation. The Sikh

[8] For historiographical analyses of the works of Sewaram Singh, Bhagat Lakshman Singh and Khazan Singh, see Grewal, 2012: 269-94.

[9] For the writings of these authors, see Ganda Singh, 1966: 63.65-66,123, 201.

[10] Some of the early booklets by Puran Singh are: *Heroism of Sikh Women and the Martyrdom of a Sikh* Youth (1906); *The Life and Teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur* (1908); *The Martyrdom of the Four Sons of Sri Guru Gobind Singh* (1908); and *Sketches From Sikh History* (1908) (Ganda Singh, 1966: 104-5).

women are assigned a crucial role in this enterprise. They figure as the participating subjects and the custodians of tradition. *Bijay Singh* seems to supplement and complement *Sundari*. The second novel is arguably more refined, more coherent and better organized; its metaphors, descriptions of nature, and references to the past and present are better interwoven with the narrative.

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Partition, Border, and Identity: A Study of Rai Sikhs of (East) Punjab

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Introduction

Punjab has traditionally remained the locus of partition historiography. However, border making practices and how borderlanders negotiate with these shifting realities rarely figure in Partition studies in India. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival sources, this study has attempted to fill this important gap by studying the formation of the Punjab borderland and how it shaped the fate of communities living on the borderland. By tracing the everyday realities of the Rai Sikh community living in the border belt of Ferozpur and Fazilka districts of Punjab, this paper explores the notion of community and identity in the process of resettlement of the Rai Sikhs on the Punjab borderland. In this way, this study unravels the hitherto untold story of Punjab Partition by delving deep into the politics of the making of the Punjab borderland.

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The partition of British India in 1947 into two post-colonial states of India and Pakistan has been a defining moment in political, economic and cultural history of Modern South Asia. "No issue in modern South Asian history can rival the attention that has been paid to the partition of the Indian subcontinent" (Singh, 2009: 33). Marked by genocidal violence, forced conversions, abductions and rapes, the partition of India witnessed the 'greatest mass migration' (Guha, 2017:86) in the world history. It was also described as the 'largest single flow within South Asia' and perhaps the 'largest international flow in world history' (Weiner, 2003:269). Partition shocked the countryside like an earthquake and left death and destruction in its trail. The refugees who came to India after Independence numbered close to 8 million (Guha, 2017:101), among them approximately 4.7million (Yadav, 2012: 283) were from West Punjab only. This was greater than the gross population of small European countries such as Austria and Norway, and almost same to that of the population of the colossal continent of Australia (Guha, 2017:101). Scholarship on the partition of British India is very rich. Rarely would one come across an issue in the history of modern South Asia which can compete with Partition in terms of both quantity and quality of research. And yet the existing historiography on Partition is far from exhaustive. There are several stories which have not yet been fully captured or explored. The politics behind the making of East Punjab borderland is one such story. This study seeks to look at partition from the perspective of the politics of making of borderland. By tracing the everyday realities of the Rai Sikh community living in the border belt of Ferozpur and Fazilka districts of Punjab, this paper explores the notion of community and identity in the process of resettlement of the Rai Sikhs on the Punjab borderland. In other words, this study highlights the politics behind the resettlement of the Rai Sikhs in Punjab borderland. Privileging the vantage points of the borderlanders, it seeks to understand and analyze how border defines and redefines the notions of identity and community. The study of borderland communities from such a perspective not only allows us to put the borderlanders on the

center stage of enquiry, but also us enables to question the sanctity of the security-centric framework which invariably hogs the limelight in much of the literature on partition historiography.

In the context of South Asia, it was the partition of British India which created new states and provided legitimacy to the borders. Forging of international borders between the two new states has been a core theme in partition studies, while borders themselves remain largely invisible in these accounts. This has led to a situation wherein numerous questions regarding the everyday lived experiences of the borderlanders remain unanswered. Social scientists have shown little interest in listening to the voices from the borderland. Borders have always been looked at through the lens of partition. However, the borderland experience of partition was immediate and acute and therefore differed from the experience of partition in other parts of South Asia. Borderland is where partition actually happened – and as many borderlanders would assert, continues to happen. Although attempt has been made to study the border from the perspective of borderland, it remains limited to Bengal borderland (Samaddar, 1999, Chatterji, 2007, Schendel, 2005, Banerjee, 2010, Banerjee and Chaudhury, 2011) and Punjab border is yet to receive any systematic attention from this perspective. Punjab, which has otherwise attracted huge attention in partition historiography, continues to remain neglected in the perspective of the borderland studies. The role of Punjab borderland in shaping post-partition society, economy and politics remains unexplored. Strong emphasis on 'high politics' in the context of partition studies on Punjab actually glosses over the border as a lived reality. All this has resulted in lack of understanding about varied complex processes in the social, economic and political life of the people living on the Punjab borderland.

In sharp contrast to high-politics-dominant partition discourse, which looks at border as a significant marker of national identity, this study explores the question of 'community identity' in the process of resettlement on the border from the perspectives of the East Punjab borderlanders. This study thus sheds new light,

as the statist discourse or official account treat resettlement as a 'well-settled' process, leading to the neglect of its long-term social and political implications. It explores the account of 'resettlement' on the borderland from the vantage point of marginal and weaker sections of the society i.e., the Rai Sikhs. The Rai Sikhs were resettled on the borderland in such a way that suited the national project of making of the modern nation-state. Along with the creation of the physical border, the state also tried to create the social border by settling this community on the border. This issue has remained unexplored in the partition historiography of Punjab. How did the process of resettlement of people in Punjab borderland actually take place? Who were the people who were selectively chosen for resettlement in the borderland? What was the politics behind the making of Punjab borderland?

A Brief History of Rai Sikhs

Rai Sikhs, also known as Mahatams, live in the border areas of East Punjab. They are concentrated in *Bet* (low lying land along river) areas of border districts, mostly Ferozpur, Fazilka, and Amritsar. Other than border area, they are also living in some pockets of Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Kapurthala districts. Before partition, the community lived in the area stretching from the Dera Ghazi Khan to Lahore (Karachi, Montgomery, Sheikhupura and Bahawalpur, regions of Pakistan). After partition, most of them migrated from Pakistan (though a few of their villages existed here even before the partition) to settle in their present inhabited places (Singh, 1998:2922-23). According to the 2011 Census report, the total population of Rai Sikhs in Punjab was 5,16,695 lakhs. Out of the total population, 3,74,192 lakhs are living in the border areas of Ferozpur and Fazilka[1] districts (District Census Handbook, 2011). The Rai Sikh community is believed to possess special expertise in reclaiming wasteland along the river-bank. A majority of the Rai Sikhs living in the border area continue to subsist on the agricultural land that were allotted to them in the aftermath of the partition.

The community members trace their origins to the days when they were called *Mahatam*. The term Mahatam has been assigned two meanings. According to one, it has been derived from the word *matam* which means 'grief caused by death.' In the second meaning it is *maha uttam* which means 'best person' (Singh, 1998: 2922). During the field study, it was observed that most of the respondents from the community considered the word Mahatam as derogatory and abusive because of its oblique reference to the incest between the mother and the son. Even today the usage of this word invokes the feeling of insult among the Rai Sikhs. It is widely believed that the Mahatam identity was imposed on them by the rural Muslim elites. Muslim elites hated them because of their habit of eating wild pig. They used to taunt them by calling them Mahatam. Therefore, the relation between the Rai Sikhs and the Muslims of the area was very hostile and strained in the past.

Like several other nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, the Rai Sikhs also trace their genealogies to the Rajput heroes. In their self-perceptions, they situate and identify themselves, as a '*marshal Qaum*' or a race who is always fighting against all forms of injustices. Almost all the old persons of the Rai Sikh community who were interviewed during the fieldwork traced their past to the warrior class of Rajputs and chose to identify themselves as Rajputs or Rai Sikh Rajputs. Almost all the respondents not only narrated the story of Jaimal and Fatha who had valiantly fought against the tyranny of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, but also proudly self-identified themselves with the valor of such heroic figures who hailed from the Rajput community.

In much of the available record, they are depicted as vagabonds and hunting tribe (Rose, 1919, Ibbeston, 2008, Kaul and Wilson, 1903, District Gazetteer Montgomery, 1883, Amritsar, 1904, Ferozepore, 1915, Lahore, 1916). They are depicted as a people with vagrant habits, wandering from place to place for the sake of food, living in make-shift shelter, and making utensils (*chhabias*) from river shrubs. Their traditional occupations were mainly petty crimes, illicit distilling, hunting and eating wild pig and fowling (NCB, 2000: 105). In terms of their location in the caste

hierarchy, they were very low to the extent that they were almost treated as outcastes. They used to lead a secluded existence on river banks and jungles away from main settlements. Later, they adopted the occupation of rope making, sirki-making (Mats) from raw material of *sarr* (reed or wild grass). As makers of ropes, the Mahatam came to be known as Rassiwat or Rassibat, and as a dweller in *Sirkis* or wattled screens, they were called '*Sirkiband*' (Rose, 1919, Ibbeston, 2008, Bhatti and Singh, 2001, and Bareta, 2008) a name which is still popularly used.

Lack of means of earning and abject poverty forced them to take to criminal activities which supposedly later became a tradition and a part of their heritage (NCB, 2000:105). They were branded as the 'criminal' tribes during the colonial period and restrictions on their movements were also imposed (Major, 1999: 682). Adult male members were forced to give roll calls at least twice a day at the designated police post in each village (Bareta, 2008, Singh, 1998, Singh, 2010). Notably, it is also mentioned that only certain sections of the Mahatam community were classified as criminal and not the whole community unlike Sansis and Bawarias who were classified as criminal tribes across all the districts of Punjab (PSA, 1955, Kaul and Tomkins, 1926). Only the notoriously criminal sections (Ikwan, Kashauri, Sirari, Savni) of Mahtams have been notified as criminal in Punjab (Rose, 1919, Singh, 1998). They were categorized as criminal in Police Station Sherakpur, Distt. Sheikhpura (now in Pakistan), Police Station Attari (Dhakkar Village), Distt Montgomery (now residing in the state of Punjab), and Police stations Mamdot and Fazilka, District Ferozepore of erstwhile Punjab (Kaul and Tomkins, 1914, Singh, 1998). But in the official account, Mahatams were collectively labeled as 'Criminal'. Owing to their 'criminal' status, the community was deprived of land allotment in the canal colonies. Land in canal colonies was allotted to only those who were recognised as 'Agricultural tribes' by the colonial government (Ali, 1997, Bareta, 2008). The community was also banished from recruitment in the army.

In 1931, Mahatam was also included in the list of Depressed Classes in the erstwhile Punjab on the basis of social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the custom of untouchability. Depressed Classes later came to be known as Scheduled Castes in 1936 and 'Mahatam' was declared as Schedule Caste in Punjab under the Government of India (Schedule Caste) order 1936 (Rai Sikh Annual Magazine, 2009). This tribe later embraced Sikhism to overcome all the pervasive social disabilities. In order to reduce the impact of the untouchability, the name of the tribe was changed from Mahatams to Rai Sikhs on 18-11-1942 (PB Notification, -1942, NCBC, 2000). Over the years, the Mahatam community has got divided into three groups – Mahatam, Rai Sikhs, and Sirkiband. In other words, they were different sections of one community. Those who were Hindus remained Mahatams, the Sikh converts became Rai Sikhs, and those who specialized in the profession of making Sirkies and settled in urban centers came to be known as Sirkiband (Bhatti and Singh, 2001).

The Schedule Castes list was redrawn under the Constitution (Schedule Caste) Order, 1950. The caste named '*Mahatam*' disappeared under the revised order. It was so because the category of 'Mahatams' was not mentioned at that time due to change of its name from Mahatam to Rai in 1942. But the Sirkibands were accorded the status of Schedule Caste in Punjab. Further, the Kaka Kalelkar Commission recognized Rai Sikh as 'Most Backward Class' in 1953-54. Since then, the Rai Sikhs have continued to struggle for getting the status of Scheduled Tribes in Punjab. The Constitution (SC) Order (Amendment) Act 2007 observed that Rai Sikhs have been traditionally known as Mahatams, and that on the basis of their lower status (in the past record) and socio-economic backwardness; the community must be recognized as Scheduled Caste of Punjab. Following this observation, the Rai Sikhs came to be formally registered as Scheduled Caste in Punjab under the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order (Amendment) Act 2007(Gazette of India, 2007).

Rai Sikhs and Punjab Partition

Like many others marginal and untouchable communities, experiences of Rai Sikhs remain unexplored and overlooked in Partition historiography. Given the extent of their marginalization in Partition historiography, the Rai Sikhs are often referred to as 'a people without history'. Actually, the history of Partition is popularly imagined as the history of upwardly mobile upper caste Hindus and Sikhs, who were forced to move in the middle of all the chaos and violence. Therefore, the partition migration stories that we know of till now are mostly of the upper caste, middle class refugees stories that have contributed to post-colonial historiography (Kumar, 2016). The absence of Dalits or marginal refugees from the present historiography according to Kaur does not mean that they were 'physically absent from partition trauma' (Kaur, 2007: 158) She refers to them as untouchable migrants of partition. Of late, attempts have been made to explore the question of Dalits and their status in Partition historiography (Bandyopadhyay, 2000, Menon and Bhasin, 1998, Sen, 2012, Panday, 2009, Kaur, 2008). But the experiences of criminal tribe refugees have rarely figured in Partition historiography.

Although the criminal tribes are rarely, if ever, acknowledged in official, popular, or scholarly narratives of Partition, they also fled across the border in vast numbers to seek refuge with their co-religionists. Like many other low-caste or untouchable groups, these communities did, contrary to dominant assumptions, face violence, forced conversion or ejection from their localities, often with little or delayed assistance from the state.[ii] Criminal tribe refugees were the worst victims of Partition because they did not have the resources to flee immediately and required government's help for the purpose of evacuation. Rai Sikhs also faced communal violence, forced conversion and their women were also abducted. (PSA, LV 23/46a) They were already hated by the Muslim for their habit of eating wild pigs. Partition-led violence provided an opportunity to Muslims to target them. They were targeted by the both Muslims and Hindus. The incidents of their subjection to physical harassment and loot both at the hands of Hindus and

Muslims during partition were recounted by an overwhelming majority of the respondents in the field study. Piaro Bai shared her experiences of suffering during the upheavals. She narrated several stories of physical assault at the hands of the Muslims while in their Pakistani villages. She expressed her suffering as following:

> "When Vadda Rola (Partition) took place, we ran away from our village chak no. 32. Muslim attacked on us in which our three people including one female were killed by them. We escaped through canal rout and reached to Sulemanki headwork. Here again Muslims caught us and started to kill the non Muslims." (Piaro Bai).

When they reached at the Sulemanki Headwork they were targeted by Hindus as well. It was very difficult for them to prove their identity because Rai Sikhs did not adhere strictly to any particular religion before Partition. They were Hindus, Muslims as well as Sikhs.

Report on the Administration of Criminal Tribes in East Punjab also mentions the brutal incident of violence against the Mahtams and other criminal tribes in Multan district (PSA, B/8660, 1947). According to the report, such incidents led to an extensive migration of non-Muslim criminal tribes from West Punjab to East Punjab. The refugee members of the criminal tribes were resourceless and suffered untold hardships till steps were taken to rehabilitate them. Until March 1948, the policy of Punjab government was to treat the criminal tribes who had been displaced during the violence as 'on leave from their places of detention in West Punjab (NIA, 1949).' It was also revealed during the fieldwork that members of of the Rai Sikh community living in villages, particularly those villages which came under the direct control of Criminal Tribes Act, were not allowed to migrate, immediately after the Partition. The researcher was informed by the respondents that their villages were surrounded by the army. At that time, the officials were of the view that if inhabitants of

these villages were allowed to move, they would create law and order problem.

Other than the stories of these villages, there was also other villages inhabited by the Rai Sikhs which did not receive any support from the government for their migration to India. They were forcefully converted to Islam. There were a total of seven villages in Ukara tehsil and Baloch areas like Dera Gazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan whose inhabitants were exclusively Rai Sikhs and did not migrate to India during the Partition (Singh, 2012). Data from the field revealed that all of them were forcibly converted to Islam.

By one estimate, approximately 50,000 Rai Sikhs were displaced only from Montgomery (PSA, 1955). They opted to cross the border in foot columns rather than train because of the fear of violence. This also corroborates Kaur's argument that the 'fastest and safest means were seldom available to under privileged sections' (Kaur, 2006). During Partition, majority of them had migrated from Karachi, Montgomery, Shekhpura and Bahawalpur regions of Pakistan to settle along the banks of the Sutluj river in the districts of Ferozpur, Amritsar, Jullunder, Ludhiana and Kapurthala (Singh, 1998). They are concentrated in Fazilka, Ferozpur, Guru Harsahai, Jalalabad, Ajnala, Sidhwanbet, and Sardulgarh areas of Punjab. In addition to the displacement of communities from Pakistan, local Rai Sikhs within Ferozpur itself were also uprooted. They had been the tenants of Muslim landowners all of whom had migrated to Pakistan and were thus consequently ejected from the agricultural land on which they worked and also from the houses that became declared as evacuee property.

Resettlement of the Rai Sikhs: Making of the Punjab Borderland

During Partition, thousands of Rai Sikhs were settled in Ferozpur after their displacement from the district that fell to West Punjab, predominantly Montgomery. The Rai Sikh population in the

district of Ferozpur alone numbered over 82,505 (Gandee, 2018:563) after Partition. Most of the Rai Sikhs were settled by local authorities in the Tehsil of Fazilka and Ferozpur, adjoining the Indo-Pakistan border. Faced with uprooted population, district offices allotted them temporary land along riverine tracts stretching from *Jagewala* village on Jalandhar side of the district *to Pucca Chisti* near Sulemanki headwork, covering a distance of around 100 miles along the border. One of the immediate reasons for settling the Rai Sikhs in this stretch was that in keeping with the land redistribution policies of East Punjab government, many of them had cultivated similar land in West Punjab (Singh, 1952). Members of the community informed that they heard from their relatives and other persons that the Government is giving land to the Rai Sikhs on Punjab border. When they approached the government, they were allotted temporary land, four acre per family. They were asked to reclaim this inundated land from the reed grass also called *Jhall*. The Rai Sikh community is widely believed to be endowed with expertise in reclaiming wasteland along the river-bank. Temporary allotment scheme was replaced with 'Quasi Permanent Settlement', members of the community had also submitted applications for grant of evacuee land on lease basis. District administration had received 7,000 applications for leases of evacuee land from members of the Rai Sikhs community. The majority of these applications remained unentertained in the early 1950s (PSA, 1955) with the consequence that the community remained largely landless. It was only later during the post-independence period that the Indian government and the government of Punjab took interest in the rehabilitation process of the community and land was leased to the Rai Sikhs on very nominal rates.

But the rehabilitation of the Rai Sikh community on Punjab borderland was not an easy task. It was a long process and mired in various complexities, uncertainties and paradoxes of the post-partition state. They were resettled on Punjab borderland for strategic purposes. After Partition, local state actors in East Punjab were uncertain and contingent about the delineation of the border.

In order to overcome these uncertainties, local state official in collaboration with the provincial and national authority constructed the collective identity of Rai Sikh community in terms of 'criminality' which helped them to bring the border into effect. Paradoxically, this constructed criminal identity was further utilized as a border 'defense weapon'. Their rehabilitation on the Punjab border reveals the uncertain nature of the postcolonial state about border demarcation. These are the issues which remain unexplored and need to be critically analyzed. This will also contribute to our understanding of the role that the border played in both generating and overcoming uncertainties over state authority and control.

Immediately after Partition, the East Punjab Government declared the border area tract as evacuee land. At that time local state actors who were working on boundary demarcation were very uncertain about its delineation. This was the area which was full of reed grass called *Jhall* and also criss-crossed by the River Sutlej. It took long time for both the newly states to reach an agreement to share the revenue record for actual demarcation of its jurisdiction. Given this situation, it became difficult for the state officials to rehabilitate the area. No communities wished or wanted to settle in this tract. This was a barren and inundated land criss-crossed by the Sutlej river. There was a widespread sense of ambiguity over the jurisdiction of the delineated tracts of land both amongst the general public as well as the government officials as to whether such tracts belonged to India or Pakistan.

Given the fuzziness of the border, there were frequent incidents of transgression as both people and livestock often traversed across the border wittingly as well as unwittingly. It thus proved to be a very challenging task for the local officials to either regulate or check the cross border movement and quotidian activities. Even in Punjab, the Indo-Pakistan border was seen in relatively fluid terms for many years after Partition (Zamindar, 2007, Chatterji, 2012). Under such a scenario, transborder movement of people was relatively easier in the absence of any clear notions about the actual line of control until it was

demarcated in 1960s. They generally cross the border for their quotidian activities i.e. grazing of cattle, purchasing domestic goods, to meet friends and relatives as well as for hunting wild pigs etc. Existence of *Sufi Pir* shrines[iii] on East Punjab border also provided a reason for people to often transgress the border. On every weekend, fair was celebrated to commemorate the *pirs*. People from both sides came over to pay their obeisance to *Pir*. They mixed up with each other and used this opportunity to transcend the border, purposefully. Closer proximity of the local population to the unmarked border, prompted them to traverse the border either incidentally or purposefully. It is also noted that while residing in India after Partition, some of the Rai Sikhs continued to cultivate the land of the Muslim landlords as tenants or share cropper in the Pakistan side till the actual demarcation of the boundary took place. These networks represented transgression of the sanctity of the border and thus the legitimacy of the state itself. In such a situation, postcolonial state actors particularly the local people were very naïve and uncertain about border demarcation in the initial years after Partition.

In order to overcome these uncertainties over the border, state apparatuses on both sides introduced various techniques of control and regulations. From July 1948 onwards, both states introduced customs duties, permits and regulations to control the movement and activities across the border. These control regimes enabled the state officials to delineate the permeability of the border by criminalizing the cross-border movement and networks. With the inauguration of these regimes, the preexisting movements and flows of labour, goods and trade across the border was increasingly interrupted, blocked or criminalized. In effect these preexisting movements were reconfigured into what William Van Schendel calls 'illegal flows' (Schendel, 2005:40). Through the criminalization of certain forms of cross-border movements, these state practices produced the border as a natural, tangible and territorially defined line on the ground. Therefore, after Partition, the tag of criminality in relation to border attained greater significance in the bureaucratic and discursive practices of

the state. In other words, criminality construction of cross-border activities was one such means in the bureaucratic practices to overcome the uncertainties over the legitimacy and authority of the state.

We found that such type of discursive constructions of criminality also flourished in Ferozpur border with regard to the Rai Sikh. In order to overcome the uncertainties on border in Ferozpur, local state actors in their communication with the provincial and national authority, constructed the collective identity of the Rai Sikhs in the form of criminality which in turn brought border into being not only locally on the ground in the borderland of East Punjab, but also in the national imagination of the state. State authority constructed criminality of the Rai Sikhs in relation to border particularly through redefining the categories of identity, specifically the label of the criminal tribe. Major argument in the subsequent parts is that the criminal construction and recognition of the Rai Sikh by the post-colonial state was directly linked to the establishment of the border. Their identity was constructed and reconstructed in such a way which mostly suited to the demarcation and delineation of the border.

It is already noted that Rai Sikhs were given the temporary allotment on Indo-Pak border particularly in Ferozpur sector after Partition. It was hoped and anticipated that the Rai Sikh community would reclaim the inundated land alongside the river because they are better known for it. Soon however, this reasoning changed in 1953. The question that had arisen was whether the settlement of Rai Sikhs along this tract would compromise or indeed fortify the border?

There were reports on increased criminal activities on the border by the displaced criminal tribes from West Punjab (NIA, 1948). Their migration was quickly conflated with an increase in reported crime particularly theft. The East Punjab government was concerned about the ongoing raids and exchanges of stolen cattle across the border – a practice in which the Rai Sikhs were said to indulge (Ibid). In November 1947, for instance, three Rai Sikhs

from Ferozpur were implicated in raiding cattle from the *Khiwa* (now Fazilka) village, as it was reported that they swamped across the Sutlej and took away 7 heads of cattle found grazing on the river bank (Chestor, 2009:152). There were reports that displaced criminals had already started getting together and forming themselves into gangs and collectives in their newfound locality across the Border. The arrivals of these so-called criminal tribes into new environment with little or no documentation generated acute fears among certain state authorities over their criminal intent.

By this time, the Rai Sikhs had also attained notoriety in the national press for dacoity (armed robbery). During the years 1949-54, press regularly reported the unlawful activities of a high profile 'gang of dacoits' who belonged to Rai Sikh community and operated in the borderlands of Punjab region (The Tribune, 5 September, 1951, 30 October, 1952, 15 June, 1953 and 28 December, 1954). In 1949, the Tribune reported that, in the immediate aftermath of Partition, the East Punjab government had to "trace and locate who were hiding or living under assumed names and castes" in order to commit "serious crimes" (The Tribune, 2 March, 1949) Therefore, criminal refugees particularly the Rai Sikhs within East Punjab were considered a threat to law and order primarily because of their unregulated movements, since Partition allowed them to evade surveillance. Local bureaucracy reframed local and circumstantial incidents within an overarching narrative of cross-border activity. This has shifted the understanding of criminality alongside the border in the practice of the state.

State officials in the region and consequently the local press had begun to portray the Rai Sikhs increasingly in terms of collective identity that was defined by dacoity, danger, and disruption of the border. Local officials in Ferozpur began reporting to the East Punjab government who in turn reported to New Delhi about incidences of illegal cross border movements made by the Rai Sikhs especially smuggling networks. Local state official warned the East Punjab government that these border networks are "full of dangerous potentialities" and would need

"checking with a strong hand" (PSA, 1955). In official discourse, such types of cross border networks are not simply illegal in the sense that they represented potential transgressions of the law, but additionally, and more importantly, they represented transgressions of the sanctity of the border, and thus the legitimacy of the state itself.

Local officials worked to situate the Rai Sikhs more conclusively within the boundaries of criminal tribes by constructing their supposed criminality in relation to the border. Through their actions, local state authorities popularized and wrote into administrative records the Rai Sikh's collective identity as criminal, framed primarily in terms of their ability to transgress the space of the border. The Inspector General of Police (IGP) reported to East Punjab Government in 1953 that "I am...in no doubt that these Rai Sikhs, especially those who came to Ferozpur after Partition, were notorious for cattle-lifting, burglary, dacoity, illicit distillation and counterfeiting coins" (Ibid). His statement, however, referred to the Rai Sikh collectively as a homogenous community with shared characteristics, principally an inclination for illicit activities. While reporting to the East Punjab government, state officials fabricated "almost all" of the Rai Sikhs had been notified under the criminal tribes act prior to 1947. The inspector general did refer to eleven villages in the Attari district of Montgomery, potentially alluding to the villages over which the criminal tribes department had assumed control in the 1940s. In the narrative of the State, Rai Sikhs were considered as dangerous to border.

It was not their actual transgression of border but their supposed ability to traverse and in effect transcend the border that was on the target. In the official discourse, both the symbolic line of the international border and the physical boundary of the Sutlej itself had purportedly proved little hindrance to their movement. "They are not above smuggling and coming to an arrangement with nationals of Pakistan for such activities," (Ibid) reported by S. Vohra the than Deputy Commissioner of Ferozpur. By supposedly colluding with "nationals of Pakistan" especially in the context of

fluctuating tensions between the two nations, the Rai Sikhs had seemingly undermined the very identity and legitimacy of the nation through their behavior. Although the actual incidences of their physical movement across the border were relatively rarely reported, their perceived use of cross border communication and networks was portrayed as a thoroughly organized and deeply entrenched puncturing of the border. However, in the course of the regular correspondence fielded between the Ferozpur officials and East Punjab government, there were few references about the arrest or imprisonment of Rai Sikhs. Although the Criminal Tribes Act remained in place until 1952, there is no evidence to suggest that greater numbers of the Rai Sikhs were notified under it. Their close proximity to an increasingly militarized and often hostile international border surely brought opportunities and barriers alike. Certain individuals may have been impelled by the prospects of personal gains or forced by the hardships that followed their displacement from the land. However, while there have been individual instances of members of the Rai Sikh community transgressing across the border, sometimes even for criminal ends, there is little evidence to support such official claims of criminality on the part of the Rai Sikhs as a collective group. That was at odds with their status during the colonial period, when only a small minority of the community had been incorporated within the purview of the Criminal Tribes Act.

The criminal construction of the Rai Sikhs in official discourse after 1947 was largely for strategic purposes. By constructing the criminality of the Rai Sikhs in relation to the border, local state actors helped to perform such an act. Through these constructions of criminality, the state authority also justified an extension of state presence to the peripheral reaches, particularly in terms of the increased armed presence and militarization of the border. In this way, they had brought the border into being. Their repeated articulations of the threatened sanctity of the border made an unnatural and artificial boundary appear permanent and real. At the same time, these portrayals were translated into state initiatives that aimed to materially demarcate the border, not

merely in dialogue or imagination, but more tangibly in physical terms on the ground. They ascribed the border with an actuality that was borne out through their everyday actions and dialogue, thereby bringing the border and the Rai Sikhs' supposed criminality alongside it into effect. The border thus provided the means through which the uncertainties and flux it had produced could be overcome.

From Dangerous to the Border To Defender of the Border

Paradoxically, the constructed criminal identity of Rai Sikhs in the years after 1947 made them particularly indispensable to this process of 'border making'. Their 'criminality' was further utilized or translated into the border defense making project. Rai Sikhs, who had remained at the margins of the dominant historiography and were treated as criminal in the colonial period and decisively associated with criminality in bureaucratic discourse after partition, came into limelight with their resettlement on the East Punjab borderland. Rai Sikhs now came to encompass a distinct and cohesive category of identity in the narratives of the state defined simultaneously in terms of *"dangerous to the border"* and *"defenders of the Border"* (Gandee, 2018: 566). This was the inflection point in the identity construction of the Rai Sikh in the narratives of the state.

This period also coincided with the most sustained interest of the East Punjab government in the matters relating to the Rai Sikhs. From the early 1950s, a series of state initiatives sought to physically situate the Rai Sikhs more decidedly in the border zones. Local authority, particularly then Deputy Commissioner of Ferozpur Mr. Vohra, was the central figure in this process. Frequently engaging in dialogue with those in the higher rungs of the state, Vohra repeatedly reiterated the criminality of the Rai Sikhs, but now more with the intent of concretely demarcating the border. He decisively translated their criminality into material practice for the state, "We need to take steps to root this tribe more firmly on the border by giving these landless persons a stake in the

soil over there" (PSA, 1955). He embarked on the scheme, included the provision of educational facilities, compulsory attendance at school, the introduction of civil and veterinary dispensaries, and the development of infrastructure in the region for the rehabilitation and uplift of the Rai Sikhs on borderland settlements, ostensibly to reform the community from its perceived criminal proclivities. These schemes were undertaken with the aim of more deeply entrenching the Rai Sikhs in close proximity to the Indo-Pakistan border.

Logic of the local State authority for rehabilitation and uplift of the Rai Sikhs on the borderland can explained at two levels. First, the reputation of the Rai Sikhs as a dangerous community would deter incursions by Pakistani officials or citizens across the border. It was hoped and anticipated that they would act as a 'barbed-wire' (Dhall, 2000:95). Second, and perhaps more important, the rehabilitation of the Rai Sikhs warranted an extension of state development funds and influence to the furthest of its jurisdiction. In effect, the moral reclamation of the Rai Sikhs legitimatized a greater state presence in the border regions of East Punjab.

In 1953, Ferozpur District Authority had been queried by the East Punjab government about the possibilities of permanently settling the Rai Sikhs along the border.

> "Have they settled down satisfactorily on the Border? Are they or are they not useful on the border as a check against any Pakistani inroads? The incidence of criminal propensity among them now as compared with pre-Partition times.... How have they behaved on being entrusted with Border Defense Weapons? How have they settled down as cultivators? Has there been any tendency among them to go away from the border?" (PSA, 1955).

This statement reveals the increased interest of the East Punjab government in the Rai Sikhs as a potential means of defending the border in the context of increasingly fraught relations between India and Pakistan.

The criminal constructions of the Rai Sikhs since 1947 were a necessary precursor to Vohra's identification of them as a potential means to bolster the border's defense. In a seemingly contradictory policy, the very threat narrated by the local state authorities that the Rai Sikhs could transgress the border also determined their perceived utility in defending the border from similar, but Pakistani incursions. Inspector General of Police (IGP), Punjab reported that "I entirely agree with the DC that we could not find any other tribe better qualified than the Rai Sikhs to protect our border with Pakistan" (Ibid). This is in spite of the fact that in his earlier sentence, he had remarked that "they have since the Partition continued to commit crime especially highway robberies and dacoity" (Ibid). Their perceived danger was thus translated into a potential means of defense. Rai Sikhs had also been issued with rifles under the border defense scheme inaugurated to prevent encroachment by Pakistani authorities or persons across the border. As observed by the Deputy Commissioner, "This was necessary from the point of view of border defense" (Ibid).

In their self-perceptions, Rai Sikhs also justified their presence on the border as a 'deterrent community'. They consider themselves as arch rivals of Muslims. They perceive their presence on the border as a deterrent to potential Pakistani incursion and also as a means to protect the honor of the nation on the border. In their Annual Magazine *Virsa*, they clearly underline such types of perceptions by reiterating "that their forefathers wanted to ensure that their grandchildren might not lose their deep patriotic spirit. Thus, they decided to settle themselves village after village very close to the memorial of Shaheed Bhagat Singh on international border on the Sutlej River at Hussainiwala, district Ferozpur between 1947 to 1961" (Virsa, 2009:13). Annual Magazine further underscores that the "Indian Government took into account and gave due recognition to their patriotic spirit by settling the Rai Sikhs on the border. Keeping in view their great sense of patriotism and their past impeccable track records, the Government of India in their wisdom settled them along international borders in Punjab and Rajasthan. The government was fully aware of the fact they

would never play in the hands of the enemy and would rather defend the honor of the country and this theory is time tested" (Ibid). Such types of perceptions are mired in the language of their self-identification as 'martial race'. In this way, they are project themselves as 'buffer population' on the border.

Though Rai Sikh was still marked out as a distinct community, but at the same time they became an object for state welfare and development. By emphasizing the backwardness of the Rai Sikhs, primarily articulated through the lens of criminality (particularly cattle theft and illicit distillation of liquor), Deputy Commissioner of Ferozpur justified the extension of infrastructure and state development to its peripheral reaches. He wrote "it is true that they are addicted to illicit distillation and drinking, but they also do not get a chance to improve in view of the bad reputation with which they have been saddled and will no doubt respond to extension of development activity in the area" (PSA, 1955:18). He had also reported to the Punjab Government that "the number of Rai Sikhs who were educated was infinitesimal" (Ibid). Their rehabilitation from moral turpitude, official noted the clearly perceived benefits to the security of the nation as well. Noted by an advisor to the chief Minister "that would, I think, pay the government good dividends also, because we do need tough people like these fellows to be on the border where they are in that very difficult tract of the country" (Ibid). Once, local authority had satisfied the East Punjab government that the Rai Sikhs would certainly hold their own in day to day give and take across the border and would thereby deter Pakistani encroachment, higher authority advised them to make "special efforts...for looking after the welfare of these people. More in the way of schools, roads, dispensaries etc., is needed" (Ibid). Later on, the Central government also responded in similar manner and advised the provincial Government "to give emphasis to areas inhabited by backward people" (Ibid). National, provincial and local authorites coalesced largely over the settlement and reclamation of the Rai Sikhs. Thus the central government's recognition of the demeanor of Rai Sikhs was inextricably linked to the border making process.

Constructing the criminality of the Rai Sikhs thus worked to reimagine the overlooked border tracts of Ferozpur into a space of national interest, both in terms of border defense and by delineating the Rai Sikhs as part of the state's project of welfarism and development. Rai Sikhs had a long-standing demand for rehabilitation, but it was not realized. Their rehabilitation and social-economic status therefore became a concern of the East Punjab government only when the issue of defense of the border became a priority. We also learnt during the fieldwork that Giani Bakhtawar Singh, who belongs to Rai Sikh community, was elected as Member of Punjab Legislative Assembly (MLA), and it was he who had suggested to the then Chief Minister of Punjab to resettle the Rai Sikhs on the Punjab border. He made a fervent appeal to the Punjab government that the Rai Sikh community would protect and rehabilitate the border if they were made stakeholders in the protection of the borderland. Earlier in 1949, Bakhtawar Singh along with other influential members of the community had given representation for allotment of agriculture land to the community on the Punjab border and Rampura forest of Uttar Pradesh (Singh, 2012:109).

Ever since the Rai Sikh community came to be formally seen as a 'deterrent community', numerous initiatives were undertaken at the legislative level to accord legal and permanent status to their resettlement on the border. However, it was only in 1961 that the Punjab government came up with a policy for permanent resettlement of the Rai Sikhs on the border. Under this policy, each Rai Sikh family had been given 10 acres of land on lease for a period of ten years at the rate of 12.5 rupee per acre within the radius of 10 km in the border area (GOI, 1(7) (45), 1961, PBG, 9329/9329/3699, 1961). This policy was again revised and extended a number of times. In the official record land under the possession of Rai Sikhs on the border was shown as "grabbed" land. Over the years, they have been engaged in struggles for ownership right of the evacuee's land under their possession. In the 1970s, this community participated in a struggle which was launched by the Communist Parties to gain ownership rights. This shows the

prevalence of a strong sense of attachment of the community with the land. This demand had become the rallying point of the community, and ultimately, they succeeded in retaining the agricultural land under their possession after paying a nominal price to the government. In 1997, the Punjab Government came up with a policy (PBG, LR-3/2857, 1997) for disposal of the unauthorized surplus rural evacuee land on the border. This led to the legalization of the land under the possession of Rai Sikhs.

Conclusions

This paper traces the trajectory of the evolution of the Rai Sikh community since the colonial times. While the colonial regime categorized only a small minority amongst the community members as "criminal" under the Criminal Tribes Act, the post-colonial state after independence brought the entire community under the same category. However, the post-colonial context was very different from that of the colonial times. Under the colonial practice, the label of 'criminal' was used as an administrative tool, whereas during the post-colonial times it was deeply embedded in the state-building project of border-making.

In the post-colonial state, Rai Sikhs were seen as integral to the border making process in East Punjab. The identity of the community was shaped and reshaped in association with the border. After partition, the Rai Sikh's identity was decisively constructed with criminality within the bureaucratic discourse of the state. This was the consequence of local (and at times congruent provincial and national) imperatives to delineate the newly imposed but not yet demarcated border. Local state actors emphasized the ability of the Rai Sikhs to traverse and in effect transcend the border. In this process, these state actors brought the border into effect. Therefore, the state authority framed the collective identity of the community as 'criminal' in terms of their ability to transgress the space of the border. By constructing the criminality of the Rai Sikhs in this way, the local authority justified the extension of state presence to the peripheral reaches

particularly in terms of the increased armed presence and militarization of the border. This is how the border was brought into being. The social marginality of the Rai Sikhs coalesced with the political craft of border-making, resulting in the construction of the new identity of the Rai Sikhs as 'criminal', 'dangerous', 'backward', and 'turbulent.' Even after more than 70 years of Indian Independence, the Rai Sikh community continues to live with the label of 'criminal' originally given to them by the colonial master.

End Notes

[i] Fazilka was declared as new district of Punjab in 2011 which as added to the Ferozpur district in 1884.

[ii] The large-scale evacuation of untouchable refugee from Pakistan only began in January 1948 after the majority of Hindu and Sikh refugees had already been evacuated. On December 2, 1947, GianiGurmukh Singh Mussafir raised the topic of incidences of violence being perpetrated against untouchable groups in the Constituent Assembly, The Tribune, December 3, 1947.

[iii] There are four Shrines of *Sufi pirs* on border in East Punjab, named, shrine of PirRehmat Ali (popularly known as *PirBurgiWala*) in Walle Shah Hithar (GulabhaBhani) village of Fazilka tehsil and district; *Pir Shams Ke* (popularly known as *PirBohharWala*) near village KhaneKeHittar, in Jalalabad tehsil of Fazilka district; *PirJalleh Shah* (popularly known as *PirBeriWala*) near village SethanWali, in tehsil Guru HarSahai of Firozepur district; and *Pir Sheikh Brahm* near Mianwali village, in Khemkarn tehsil of Tarn Taran district.

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Representing Bishnois: Locating Academic and Popular Discourses

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Introduction

The Bishnois, a hindu sect of north India occupied a liminal and syncretic space in the past as shown by different reports and other documents of the colonial and post-colonial era. The 'liminality' of the community found its expressions in the form of inconsistent and contradictory ethnographic accounts of the colonial census reports and gazeteeers while the community itself contests it and defends the Hindu identity. In addition to this, in the last two or three decades, the sect has been refashioned according to the discourse of environmentalism as it has had a history of protecting the trees and animals. This paper attempts to analyze the diverse representations of the community and its concomitant shifts in different phases in the academic and popular discourses of the colonial and post-colonial times.

A herd of Blackbuck grazes peacefully near the roadside; chinkara nibble at bushes; a covey of partridge's scurries across the road and he realizes that real trees cover with the farms and

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villages. In a devastated world it seems unbelievable. But it is real. This is the land of the Bishnois, a Hindu sect for whom protection of trees and wild animals is a religious duty. (Sankhala 1984:2006)

When the workers got ready to cut the trees for fuel, they found that the Bishnois would not let touch the trees...the axes were raised and the whole village gathered. (Gadgil 2001:175)

Despite the several common elements of Hindu and Muslim practices and ideas in this community, at present the Bishnois reject any connection with Islam... When I asked the local Bishnois about the lack of idol worship as a potential influence of Islam on their sect, they immediately rejected my speculation. They rather compared it with the ancient Vedic practices of similar fire rituals. (Jain 2010)

Two different narratives pertaining to the Bishnoi community emerge from these academic excerpts. One, it is a community that is committed to the protection of environment. The community members consider it a religious duty to protect nature and they put up a tough resistance to those who destroy nature in their territory. Two, the issue of religion is critical to understand the identity of the Bishnois. The syncretic nature of the sect has been discussed by the academicians while the community itself contests it and defends the Hindu identity. Discussions about the community in the academic literature are informed by these two concerns. This paper is an exploration of how the Bishnoi community of North India has been framed in two kinds of literature-academic and popular. In the process, the paper explores whether or not there have been shifts in the framework used to understand the nature of Bishnoi identity.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the writings which look at the Bishnois as a community within the framework of religion. The Bishnoi sect occupies a liminal space wherein one could notice the influence of some Islamic customs and practices on the Bishnoi community which otherwise claimed it to be a Hindu sect. The scholars mention that the community is

evolving into the framework of Hinduism in the post-independence period. The second part focuses on the literature on environmentalism which discusses particularly the eco-culture of the Bishnois. In the studies on Indian environmentalism, the authors have either given passing remarks about the community or have completely bypassed it (Jain 2011). But even these brief mentions of the community are significant given the remarkable unanimity in the references made to the community. Prominent among these inclusions are the tales of martyrdom of the community members in the past to the cause of protection of nature. The reason is the specificities of the Indian environmentalism. The Indian environmentalism is concerned with the issue of equity and justice along with sustainability. Therefore, it has focused on those communities or people whose livelihoods have come under threat. But the environmental activism of the Bishnoi community stems from their religious tenets and not out of any concern with the issue of survival.

Upon analyzing the literature, we notice a shift in the way the community has been conceptualized. Except a few studies in the past as well as the present which focus on the "Hinduization" aspect of the community, a large part of the discussions of the community revolves around its culture of nature protection in the last three decades. The cultural practices which were earlier understood in the framework of religion began to be reinterpreted within the paradigm of environmentalism. For instance, the Bishnois customarily bury their dead. It was earlier understood as an Islamic influence on the Bishnois. Now it is argued that these customs are inspired from the logic of saving the environment since cremation requires the cutting of trees for wood and the smoke produced during the funeral process harms the environment. Before discussing the two narratives, a brief introduction of the Bishnoi community would help in locating it both temporally and spatially.

The Bishnois of North India

The Bishnois are a sect-turned-caste at the upper end of the caste hierarchy in Hinduism. The community is found in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. It is primarily an agricultural community but has diversified and adopted other occupations such as trading and government services in the post-independence period. Its estimated population is half a million (Chandla 2001, Singh 1998)

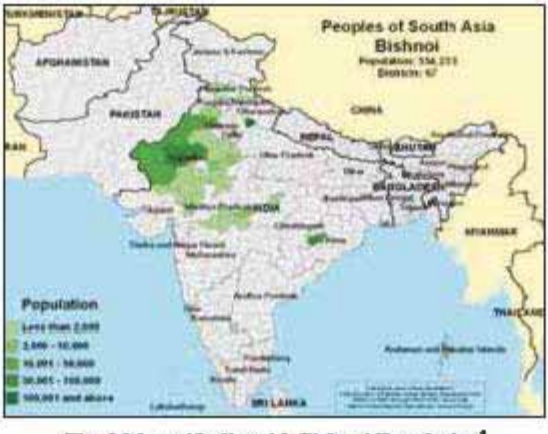

Fig. 1 Map of India with Bishnoi Population[1]

In 1485 A.D people from diverse social groups joined the religious order established by a Bhakti saint Guru Jambheshwer (1451-1536).[2] Collectively these people came to be known as Bishnois. Guru Jambheshwer preached 29 rules[3] to his followers. These rules

[1]Map source: Global Mapping International, Joshua Project http://www.gmi.org/

[2]The Samadhi of Guru Jambheshwer is situated at Mukam (Bikaner District) in Rajasthan. It is the prominent place of pilgrimage for the Bishnoi community. The community people assemble twice a year here on important fairs.

[3]The list of these rules are: 1 Observe 30 days' state of untouchability after child's birth 2. Observe 5 days' segregation while a woman is in her menses 3. Bathe early morning 4. Obey the ideal rules of life: Modesty 5. Obey the ideal rules of life: Patience or satisfactions 6. Obey the ideal rules of life: Purifications 7. Perform

are a set of religious duties, moral obligations, health prescriptions and environmental decrees. For instance: perform Yajna (Havan) every morning, do not steal, do not cut green trees, have compassion upon living creatures, do not consume alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and non-vegetarian food etc.

The sect or religious order formed by Guru Jambheshwer was inclusionary till the time period of Veelhoji (S.1589-1673)[4]. People from diverse castes and religion were admitted into the fold. AfterVeelhoji it closed its doors to outsiders and turned into an endogamous group. The reasons for it turning into an endogamous group and the time of this change remain unexplored. More than 90 % of the Bishnoi population traces their lineage to the Jat stock. The rest belong to the Brahman, Bania, Rajput and Sunar castes. The Bishnois of Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh are exclusively Jats. The Bishnois of Uttar Pradesh are divided into sub-groups such as Jat Bishnoi, Brahman Bishnoi, Bania Bishnoi, Nai Bishnoi, Chauhan Bishnoi, Ahir Bishnoi, Sunar Bishnoi etc. They follow the rule of gotra exogamy. For instance, a Jat Bishnoi will marry only a Jat Bishnoi.

Sandhya two times a day 8. Eulogise the God, Vishnu, in evening hours (Aarti) 9. Perform Yajna (Havan) every morning 10. Filter water, milk and firewood 11.Speak pure words in all sincerity 12. Adopt the rule of forgiveness and pity 13. Don't steal 14. Do not condemn or criticize 15. Don't lie 16. Don't waste the time on argument 17 Fast and offer prayers to Vishnu 18. Have pity on all living beings and love them 19. Do not cut green trees on Amavshya, save the environment 20. Crush lust, anger, greed and attachment 21. Accept food and water from our purified people only 22. Provide a common shelter for male goat/sheep to prevent them from being slaughtered in abattoirs 23. Don't sterilise ox 24. Don't use opium 25. Don't take smoke and use tobacco 26. Don't take bhang or hemp 27. Don't take wine or any type of liquor 28. Don't eat meat, remain always pure vegetarian 29. Never use blue clothes.

[4]Veelhoji was a Bishnoi saint who is credited with bringing back the Bishnois to the path of religion. After the death of Guru Jambheshwer, the story goes; people had lost faith in the religion and began to desert it. Veelhoji used the dual tactic of force and persuasion in enforcing the 29 rules among the community members. Also he organized the sect by establishing institutions. He organized the councils to adjudicate on matters relating to the social and religious affairs of the community. For more information see Maheshwari (1970: 440-441).

Due to the 29 rules the Bishnois are popularly known as "Twenty Niners". They believe in the ideology of the caste system. If we go by the colonial descriptions of the community, it did not mix with other communities out of the belief that others would pollute them. A colonial account of the community put it as:

> *...it is a common saying that if a Bishnoi's food is on the first of a string of twenty camels and a man of another caste touches the last camel of the string, the Bishnoi would consider his food defiled and throw it away (Rose and Maclagan 1919).*

A more recent description of the community recounts:

> *...people belonging to this community consider themselves as pure, clean and highest among the neighboring communities for their cleanliness and vegetarianism (Singh 1998).*

The word Bishnoi is derived from the numerical logic of 29 rules (*Bis+Nau*=20 +9). The community members subscribe to this theory. However, Maheshwari (1970) disputes this claim by arguing that the word Bishnoi comes from the word Vishnu because the community people worship the Hindu God Vishnu and that no religion is named after a numerical number. Contrary to this, Chandla (2001) shows that Terapanth (a sect among the Jains) word is based on a numerical number. In the absence of concrete evidence, he supports the theory held by community people for practical reasons while not refuting the argument of Maheshwari.

Unlike the Jats, Yadavs and Gujjars who are similarly situated agricultural groups in the caste hierarchy, we do not see political mobilization of the community at a wider level in the post-independence period. In the states of Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh the community is numerically insignificant, escaping the notice of major political parties. In the state of Rajasthan, however, the vote share of the community exceeds 5% of the total votes. Thus in the context of Rajasthan, the community has always been a force to reckon with in the state politics. When elections are near, the politicians of Rajasthan could be seen in the important fairs and other programs of the

community. On 11 March 2013 VasundhraRajeScindia (Chief Minister of Rajasthan) addressed the community at Mukam on the auspicious fair.[5]

The Bishnois and Hinduization

Few studies have been done on the Bishnois. The reason is the lack of sources about the community. Unlike many other communities of India, the Bishnoi community has not written its history. Due to this not much has been found about the past of the community. Maheshwari (1970) finds that colonial rulers were the first one to mention the community in their administrative reports and censuses. The pioneering research on Bishnois was done by him in 1970. His work was published in two volumes. The first volume contains chapters on the life story of Jambhoji, detailing the context in which Jambhoji emerged and the development of the sect. The second volume is a literary analysis of the *Saakhis* (poetry) written by the Bishnoi saint poets since the origin of the sect. It took him nine years to accomplish this research. He collected the materials lying unnoticed in the homes of Bishnois in all the states. The book also presents the details of the materials collected to help researchers. Apart from Maheshwari, Jain (2010), Khan (2003) and Chandla (2001) are the scholars who have researched on the community. These scholars analyze the customs and practices of the Bishnois within the framework of religion.

Khan (2003) and Jain (2010) study the religious transformations that the Bishnoi community has undergone in the post-independence period. In the past the community was located on a syncretic space due to the presence of customs of both religions Hindus and Islam but now it has been reshaping itself in the framework of Hinduism. Their claims are based on the colonial reports, direct observation and vernacular sources (largely of religious nature) of the pre-colonial period available with the

[5]Source: from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6rAglx_c8w

community people. Maheshwari (1970) and Chandla (2001) do not expound directly on the question of religious identity of the community. However, both of them defend the Hindu identity of the Bishnois in the past as well as present in their studies of the community.

In the present context, the Bishnois are considered a caste-group in the Hindu religion. The community people of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Punjab continue with the old practices and customs. But the Bishnois of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have done away with all those practices considered Islamic. They now cremate the dead. The marriage ceremony is performed according to the Hindu religion. The people belonging to the community of these two states changed their cultural practices under the influence of Arya Samaj movement in the first half of the 20th century. The Arya Samaj movement 'purified' such communities and resulted in the elimination of those practices which were attributed to the influence of Islam during the medieval times (Chandla 2001)

> *The Arya Samaj was particularly successful among Muslim groups which were only partially Islamised and had still retained many of their older Hindu customs and beliefs. Thus, for instance, the Sheikhs of Larkana (Sind), a low half Muslim half Hindu caste, were converted by the Sukkur unit of the Arya Samaj as early as in 1905. Similar was the case with the SubraiLabanas of Ludhiana (Punjab) and the Maiwaris of Ajmer (Rajputana), who, like the Larkana Sheikhs, followed a curious mixture of Hindu and Islamic practices*(Sikand 1994)

Jain (2010) argues that in the post-partition period, due to the polarization between the Hindus and Muslims, Bishnois were Hinduized like other "liminal communities". To prove the Islamic connection, he refers to Marwar Gazeteer of 1891 in which Bishnois were clubbed together with the Muslims. The Samadhi of Jambhaji was earlier covered with green cloth which is a symbol of Islam. Now it is wrapped with the saffron cloth which is a symbol of Hinduism. The Bishnois have put up a large image of Guru

Jambheshwer in the main temple at Mukam; the image was not present there earlier especially since Guru Jambheshwer had condemned idol worship in his preaching. Also, he maintains that Maheshwari's claimthat the word Bishnoi has its origin in Vishnu (a Hindu God) itself reflects the process of Hinduization. However, in his field survey his Bishnoi informants reject all these Islamic connections with their sect.

Khan (2006) argues that initially Bishnois were a branch of Nizari Ismailis (a Shia sect in Islam). Shortly afterwards it severed its connection with the Ismailis and became an independent religious order while continuing with practices of Nizari Ismailism which had been introduced in the beginning. This is reflected in the presence of certain customs and rituals which have the bearings of Islam. She finds analogy between the hymns and devotional songs of Ismailis and Bishnois. She says that the rituals of Daswandh[6], Jama[7], reference to Almut (the holy place of Nizaris in Iran) in Shabdvani (Holy Book of Bishnois) point to the connection between the Bishnois and Ismailis. Chandla (2001) takes a different position by arguing that these are later interpolations introduced by the local Ismailis in the Bishnoi tradition. She also refers to the colonial reports in which mixed practices of Bishnois have been described.

Khan holds that the Ismailis had the tradition of adjusting local tradition with the Nizari principles. It led to curious mixture of Hindu and Islamic practices. The Ismailis took the ideas of ritual purity, non-violence, morning ablutions and prohibition on blue color which are found among the Bishnois from Vaishnavism and Jainism. The idea behind the adoption of these principles was to create a familiar environment for the local followers so that they could feel at home in a new religious order. She argues that it

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[6] It is a custom of donating the one tenth of the income. Khan claims that the concept of Daswandh was found in the Nizari Ismailism.

[7] Jama is a religious congregation of the followers found among Ismailis according to Khan. It is still present among the Bishnois.

was easy for the Bishnois to re-Hinduize themselves in the 20th century due to the presence of these rituals associated with the Hinduism.

The colonial reports[8] upon which most of these claims have been made notes that the customs and practices of the Bishnoi community was a blend of both Hinduism and Islam while discerning that the community is reverting back to Hinduism. The community people worship a Hindu god Vishnu and perform Havan (a Hindu practice). On the other hand, they bury their dead which is considered an Islamic practice but contested by different scholars claiming that this practice is found in other religions such as Hinduism and Christianity as well. They observe the marriage ceremony and the festival of Holi (an ancient Hindu religious festival) differently from Hindus. Unlike the Hindus they do not keep scalp lock. The Brahmans are not employed in the ceremonies by the community people.

In the marriage ceremony of Bishnois, *pheras* (circle round the Holy fire) are not performed which is a Hindu practice. Rather, the crucial ceremony signifying marriage is *piribadal* or exchange of stools by taking bride and bridegroom's hands who also take each other's hands. Some of the colonial reports (particularly of Uttar Pradesh) mention that verses of *Kuran* (holy book of Muslims) are read along with those of Hindu scriptures during the marriage ceremony. It also includes the information that Bishnois of some areas use the title of Sheikhji and bore Muslim names.

> *Only a century back they used to pray in Mohammaden Mosques, their marriages were contracted in Nikah (marriage ceremony in Islam) form– their names were mohammaden and their dead was buried. But they have reverted to Hindu form in regard to marriages and funerals (Census of India 1867).*

[8] In the colonial reports we notice that the word Bishnoi has been spelled in different ways such as Bishnoi, Vishnoi, Beshnoi, Bisnoi, Bishnawi, Bishnavi, Vishnowi, Bishnowi, BaishnawiVaishanvi.

Another colonial account of Bishnois records:

It is only in Merrut, Moradabad and Bijnore that the Vishnois have in some cases adopted a Muslim names and for this reason they were much oppressed by the Mohammadens and at one time nearly exterminated on the account of the murder of a Kazi by one of their members, at length with a view to conciliate the Mohammadans and adopted Muslim names... but since the advent of the British power these customs are dying out...Ram Ram has again taken the place of salam(Atkinson 1876: 293-294).

An 1896 account of the community says:

The Bishnois of Bijnore appear to differ from those of the Punjab in using the Musulman form of salutation and the title of Sheikhji. (Crooke 1896)

The colonial imperative to exercise control over the Indian society led them to conduct censuses and surveys to collect information about the Indian masses. This colonial reporting of communities was full of inconsistencies and contradictions which can be attributed to the inadequacy of the tools and techniques used in comprehending the complexity of Indian societies. These tools were informed by colonial interests in creating a pan-Indian charter of Indian communities. But as a result, the census enumerators faced practical difficulties on the ground.

The census required a scheme of classification. Caste and religion became the principal basis of classification. In the religious classification two primary categories Hindus and Muslims were made. However, caste and religion did not exist on the ground in the same manner as the colonial masters had imagined. Their understanding of caste continued to change as they faced practical difficulties in their census operations. In the beginning they understood the caste through the principle of *varna*. This left out the agricultural communities and the Shudras which did not fit into the *varna* structure. In 1881 the castes were ranked according to occupation and occupations was ranked higher or lower on the basis of theory of materialist evolutionism. According to this

theory each community passes through several stages in a linear way. Each stage corresponds to a certain occupation. On the category of religion, the Hindus were defined as:

> a native of India who is not of European, Armenian, Moghul, Persian or other foreign descent, who is a member of a recognized caste, who acknowledges the spiritual authority of Brahmans, who venerates or at least refuses to kill or harm kine, and does not profess any creed or religion which the Brahman forbids him to profess. The census had not only tried to define Hindus but it had gone further to identify 'genuine Hindus'. In the census of 1911, the provincial superintendents were asked to enumerate the caste and tribe, returned or classed as Hindu separately who did not conform to the following criteria: (i) deny the supremacy of the Brahmans;(ii) do not receive the mantra from a brahman: or other recognized Hindu guru; (iii) deny the authority of the Vedas;(iv) do not worship the great Hindu gods; (v) are not served by good Brahmans as family priests; (vi) have no Brahman priests at all;(vii) are denied access to the interior of ordinary Hindu temples; (viii) cause pollution by (a) by touch (b) within certain distance; (ix) bury their dead; and (x) eat beef and do not revere the cow (Bhagat 2007:4354).

However, there were no communities who fulfill all these criteria. For example, the Bishnois do not deny the authority of Vedas but at the same time do not consider Brahmans superior. So, we find the Bishnois put into different categories at different points of time at different places in the colonial reports about the communities. In the Census of Marwar 1891 they are clubbed with the Muslims. In the Hisar Gazeteer 1915, Rajputana Gazeteer 1879 (Vol 2) and in most of the other gazetteers and censuses it has been reported as a Hindu sect.

On the question of entry of Islamic rituals there is no strong evidence of when and why these practices entered the Bishnoi sect. One viewpoint is that Bishnois are a syncretic cult which emerged

during the Bhakti and Sufi movement in medieval India. The preachers of the Bhakti and Sufi movement synthesized the practices of Hinduism and Islam to bring closer the two communities who were at loggerheads on the issue of religion in medieval India. The other perspective is that Islamic rituals were a forcible intrusion into the Bishnoi sect by the Muslim rulers. Chandla (2001) speculates that the Bishnois might have adopted these rituals to avoid religious persecution during the time period of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb is considered a fanatic Mughal ruler who ruined Hindu temples and converted Hindus to Islam by force. Randhawa (1959) provides a geographical logic in the evolution of the practice of burial which is considered Islamic among the Bishnois. Like Islam the Bishnoi religion emerged in the desert region. Deserts are characterized by the scarcity of wood. The scarcity of wood in the desert region made both communities adopt the practice of burial. However, this does not explain why the custom of cremation is widely prevalent among the other communities such as Jats and Rajputs in the Thar Desert.

Chandla (2001) and Maheshwari (1970) defend the Hindu identity of Bishnois in the past as well as the present. Both oppose the viewpoint that Bishnois are half-Muslim or were influenced by Islam in the medieval times. Those customs and rituals of Bishnois which are considered Islamic, they point out, are also found in Hindu religion. The custom of burial has been prevalent among the Hindus since ancient times. Among the Hindus, the dead bodies of saints and spiritual persons are buried not cremated. Lingayats (a Hindu community) of south India bury the dead. Bishnoi men used to sport a beard. The ancient Hindu sages also sported beard.

The Bishnois and Environmentalism

The Bishnois have been fiercely guarding nature from the early years of the formation of the sect. They do not allow the cutting of trees and the killing of animals in their territory. The *Khejra* (a tree found in the desert) and deer are considered sacred by the

community people. *As Bishnois provide special protection to deer, Fisher writes that the".....relationship with deer is one of the defining characteristic of the Bishnois in the minds of other castes"(1997:66).* Their love for nature is inspired from the teachings of Guru Jambheshwer. He preached to his followers to have compassion on living creatures and not to cut trees. These maxims are included in the 29 rules. This is how the Bishnois have come to consider it a religious duty to protect trees and animals.

The history of the community people is replete with numerous stories of resistance put up by them against the state and other communities who tried to destroy nature in Bishnoi territory. On several occasions they have made sacrifices while guarding nature. One such popular incident is recounted as having taken place in the 18th century in the Khejarli village of Jodhpur where 363 Bishnoi men and women sacrificed their lives while protecting the Khejra trees. Maharaja Abhay Singh of Jodhpur needed firewood to build a palace. The servants of the Maharaja decided to cut the *orans* (Sacred Groves) of Bishnoi inhabited areas. When the servants moved forward to cut the Khejra(a tree), a Bishnoi woman named Amrita Devi Beniwal hugged the tree and warned them that they would have to kill her before cutting the tree since their religion does not permit the destruction of nature. The servants did not pay attention to his warning and killed her to cut the tree. On hearing news of this incident, the Bishnois of surrounding areas assembled to perform the same sacrifice. The servants did not relent and a total of 363 Bishnois were killed. When the Maharaja came to know of the incident, he apologized to the Bishnois and prohibited the cutting of trees in Bishnoi inhabited areas. (Bishnoi 2001)

Respecting the religious sentiments of the community, the pre-colonial and colonial powers disallowed hunting and the cutting of trees in the Bishnoi dominated areas. Maharaja Ajit Singh issued a *parwana* (official order) restraining the cutting of green trees in 1754vs./A.D. 1697 (Sanad ParwanaBahi, 1754 vs.). Anup Singh, the king of Bikaner prohibited cutting of green trees in the villages dominated by the Bishnois in 1752vs./A.D. 1695. Similarly, in 1878

vs./A.D. 1821, Man Singh, the king of Jodhpur, issued a similar order with respect to the *khejri* tree. King Takht Singh in 1900 vs./A.D. 1843 extended the scope of this legislation by prohibiting slaughter of any animal in the villages occupied by the Bishnois(Kumar 2005:143). The colonial administration of Hisar district issued orders not to kill or hunt the animals in the territory of the Bishnois.[9] In 1975 the Punjab government declared the Bishnoi belt of Abohar area as a wildlife sanctuary due to the pressure exerted by the AIJRBS (All India Jeev Raksha Bishnoi Sabha).

In the post-independence period since 1980 the conservation practices of community have been attracting the attention of scholars, media and other organizations engaged with the protection of nature. The *Hindustan Times* reported the eco-practices of the community people in 1980 under the title "The Tale of Bishnois" which was later included in the form of chapter in Madhav Gadgil'sbook *Ecological Journeys (2001:172-177).* The conservation practices of the community people were mentioned in a working document prepared by International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1985.[10] Guha briefly describes the community while making his argument that pre-colonial India had seen the evolution of ecological prudence over a long period of time in his book *The Fissured Land: Towards an Ecological History of India* in 1992. Since the Bishnois are considered a caste group in Hinduism and their religion inspires them to protect the nature, O P Dwivedi (1993) includes Bishnois in his discussion to show that Hindu-based rituals incorporate the idea of protection of environment in India. Vandana Shiva mentioned the Bishnois from the perspective of eco-feminism in her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and survival in India* in 1988. While these mentions

[9]Revised Instructions for Sportsmen other than soldiers issued under Panjab Governemnt Orders contained in their circular No. 1-115 dated 3rd February 1898.

[10]Sankhala, K S. (1984). *People trees and antelope in India in Mcneely& Pitt (Ed.) Culture and Conservation: Human Dimension in environmental planning* (p: 206)New York, USA: Bernan press. pp.205-210.

of the Bishnois are usually brief and these writers have not subjected the practices of Bishnoi environmentalism to any sustained analysis, it is important to note that any discussion on the ecological traditions of communities of India invariably cite Bishnois as an example and draw attention to the specific customary practices of the Bishnois as evidence.

Apart from the environmentalists, several natural scientists highlighted the conservation practices of the Bishnois. According to Dwivedi (1993), of late, the natural scientists have acknowledged the cultural dimension of the ecosystem. New disciplines have emerged such as ethnobotany, ethnobiology to study the interface between the two. They examine how cultural factors impact the ecosystem. Hall (2011) explores the link between human beliefs and practices and the survival of species as Blackbuck, Khejra (P. Cineraria) and vultures. She compares two villages; one Bishnoi dominated village and the other with non-Bishnoi population. She found that the number of *Khejra*, blackbuck and vultures in the Bishnoi dominated village hugely outnumbered those in the non-Bishnoi village due to culture of eco-preservation of Bishnois.

The 'Salman Khan incident'[11] in the 1990's turned the national spotlight on the community. It was widely reported in the print and electronic media. Every time the legal process moves on that case and the court hearings take place, the community comes into focus in the media which describes it in ecological terms.

[11]Salman Khan is accused of poaching three chinkaras and a black buck near Jodhpur (Bishnoi dominated area) in September-October 1998 while shooting for 'Hum SaathSaath Hain'. After protests by the Bishnois, case was registered against him for poaching. On 17 February 2006, Khan was sentenced to one year in prison for hunting the Chinkara, an endangered species. The sentence was stayed by a higher court during appeal. On 10 April 2006, he was handed a five-year jail term and remanded to Jodhpur jail until 13 April when he was granted bail. On 24 July 2012, Rajasthan High Court finalized charges against Salman Khan and his other colleagues in the endangered black buck killing case, paving way for start of the trial. On 9 July 2014, Supreme Court issued a notice to Salman on Rajasthan government's plea challenging the HC order suspending his conviction.

Since its establishment in 1992, the environmental magazine *Down to Earth* has regularly documented stories pertaining to the conservation efforts of Bishnois. Between 1992 and 2014 five to ten articles have appeared in the context of conservation practices of Bishnois. The Khejarli incident was also published in the magazine in 1993. In one article entitled "Home where the Blackbuck roam"[12] it explains that due to the "positive approach" of Bishnois in the Abohar (Punjab), the numbers of Blackbucks which had been dwindling has increased. However, we do not find a comprehensive analysis of the ecological practices of the community in the literature, but just brief remarks to show the exemplary acts of nature protection. As Srivastav succinctly observes:

> *Whenever the newspaper report of miscreants terrorizing the wildlife, killing it for sport or food or of contractors felling trees for commercial purposes in these states, they also report of exemplary acts of Bishnois who are regarded as the protector par excellence of their environment (2003:163).*

Almost all of the scholars who discuss the eco-practices of the Bishnois invariably always cite the Khejarli incident. A team of researchers on the Rajsthan communities mentions that this story was internationally known in early nineteen eighties (Gold and Gujar 2002:249). In 1976 and 1977, Manilal and Bhagirathrai Rao, residents of a nearby village, researched various accounts and published the names of those who perished: 69 women and 294 men, including 36 married couples. Since 1978, an annual fair has been held in Khejadali to commemorate the massacre (Chapple 2001:340).

One possible explanation for the lack of sustained attention to the Bishnois is the specific nature of Indian environmentalism. Guha (2006) differentiates between Indian environmentalism and FirstWorld environmentalism. The questions of equity and justice are central to

[12]Home where the Blackbuck roam" from
http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/search/?q=bishnois&page=2

the discussions of Indian environmentalism along with sustainability. The State's developmental projects and forests policies have threatened the livelihood of people and also have dangerous consequences for the environment. All this has led the affected people to not only articulate their opposition, but also collectively rise against these policies and projects. On the other hand,FirstWorld environmentalism has a post-materialist concern. It talks of the quality of life such as clean air, better health etc. Therefore, Indian environmentalism has largely focused on the people whose livelihoods have been threatened by ecological destruction and how such wanton destructions have been both opposed by and found expression through people's movements like the Chipko movement or the Narmada BachaoAndolan.

The environmental activism of the Bishnois,however, does not arise from the logic of survival and they do not have connections with the other environmental movements in India and across the world. It is embedded in their religion which instructs them to protect nature. Jain argues that the eco-religion of Bishnoi does not fall into the category of 'Political Ecology' put forward by Guha. The conservation of eco-system is ingrained in their way of life.They are not a marginalized community dependent on natural resources as is the case with other natural resource-dependent communities in India and elsewhere.

Political ecology is an enquiry into the political sources, conditions and ramifications of environmental change. This approach came up in 1970's. It takes into account the policies of state and global capitalism to analyze the impact on environment and people. Blaikie (1985) explores how capitalism affects the peasants and the pastoralists and the ways in which they use the environment. Capitalism extracted surplus from the peasants and pastoralists who then in their need for money over-utilized natural resources thus degrading the soil and forests. Thus it explains the unequal relations between the different actors in the interaction between the society and environment (Sridhar 2010).

The political ecology approach has been largely used in the Global South to examine the struggles initiated by the people to protect the environmental foundation of their livelihood. Also, it has been employed

to understand the costs the socially disadvantaged groups have to bear due to environmental change. Ramchandra Guha is credited with establishing this field in India. In The Fissured Land, he examines the impact of colonial state policies on the livelihood of forest dwellers. Due to the growing need of forest resources to fuel the colonial economy, the forest people were denied access to the resources which in turn generated conflicts.Guha and Gadgil (1992) attributes ecological degradation to the modern capitalist forms of resource use inaugurated by colonialism and then continued by the independent Indian state. The need for development according to the logic of industrialization and modernization meant that natural resources came to be seen as the property of the state which would then allocate it to private or state enterprises for industrial use. Development policies pursued by India post-independence thus set up a clash for resources between those communities who had been traditionally dependent on it and the new actors of the market economy. Further this paradigm of development required a whole new system of knowledge and technology thereby rendering the traditional knowledge of the communities redundant along with their traditional patterns of resource management. The communities itself have been confined to the margins of society and have come to be known as the victims of development.

The environmental movements of India have been a reaction to and a rejection of this logic of development and the policies followed therein. Whether it is Chipko or Narmada or the recent Niyamgiri or anti Posco agitations, these movements have witnessed the assertion of the rights of the people over their traditional resources. In this struggle they have asserted the primacy of their way of life and knowledge over the modern developmental process. Further, they have connected their traditions to the future of life on the planet by arguing that the scale of ecological crisis witnessed by the world today requires a paradigm shift in the way of conceiving development and progress. The cultural practices of the traditional communities are provided as one such solution to ecological sustainability. So those communities whose cultures carried an imprint of sustainability came to get attention. For instance, the 'Tuaregs' of Niger, the 'Kuna' of Panama, 'Kayapo' of Brazil came to the notice of scholars who are protecting the environment through their indigenous methods from several centuries. Among the communities which

came into the notice is also the Bishnois(Quereshi). Prasad (2006) argues that reason for giving more attention to these communities is the scholarly interest in looking for alternative to modernity. Their opposition to extreme individualism brought in by modernity has led them to look for communities living in harmony with nature.

Thus while some scholars argue that the political ecology approach may not apply in the case of the Bishnois since they are not a vulnerable community wholly dependent on natural resources, their cultural practices which include the ethic of eco preservation make them a valuable resource for the environmental movement.

Some scholars of environmentalism argue that these traditional communities have been misrepresented in the literature on environmentalism. Rather a romanticized view of these communities has appeared (Prasad 2006, Sarkar 1995). Of particular importance for us is Sarkar's (1995) critique of romanticization of forest people for their conservation ethos in the literature on environmentalism. He points to the 'Khejarli Massacre' of Bishnois which has been cited in the ecological literature to show the ecological wisdom of people of pre-industrial era. He pointed out that Bishnois had a material interest in protecting Khejras. Cutters also had a material interest. It was a conflict over resource use in pre-colonial times. Hence, he argues that there is an ambiguity whether the environmentalists support the beliefs of these indigenous communities or their actual practices.

The representation of Bishnois as stewards of eco-preservation has indeed been romanticized in the scholarly writings on environmentalism (Morrison 1985, Sarkar 1995). One of the most important implications of the romanticized accounts of Bishnois in the framework of environmentalism is the making of Jambhoji and the figure of the Bishnoiitself into environmental icons. Jain (2011), Srivastav (2003) and Gadgil (2001) assume that Jambhoji anticipated environmental degradation and that is why

he formulated ecological rules. Reflecting on the thought processes of Guru Jambheshwer in the aftermath of a drought which wreaked havoc in the Thar desert, Gadgil thus observed:

> Jambhaji saw that man would have to live in a different way, and according to different tenets and beliefs. Jambhaji wanted the earth to be covered once again with an abundance of Khejri, Ber, Ker and Sangria. He wanted herds of blackbuck to frolic again and he wanted men to work for this (2005:174).

Gadgil did a case study of a Bishnoi village in the Jodhpur region in 1999. He concludes that conservation practices can be enforced by a dominant community in a stratified society. Bishnois emigrated to the village in the beginning of the 20th century. Due to the population pressure, the areas under protected patches declined. Earlier, the village belonged to the Rajpurohits who enjoyed political and economic clout in the village. Since 1970's the Bishnois attained a position where they could enforce their culture of conservation. They began to protect the *oran*(sacred grove) in strict manner. Other communities like sheep rearing Raikas and Meghvals demanded access to the *oran*, but were not allowed by the Bishnois, as they consider the *oran* sacred and leave it undisturbed.

These authors consider Jambhoji the first environmentalist of India. Bishnoi (2002) argues that nature conservation is the essence of Jambhani (the teachings of Jambhoji). According to Srivastav (2003), Jambhoji thought that the only way to make people eco-friendly was to include the rules of eco-preservation in the 29 religious tenets. Before forming the sect Jambhoji witnessed destruction of nature caused by a famine. It forced people to kill animals and cut trees to feed themselves. Jambhoji witnessed this struggle between nature and human beings, making him realize the need for re-establishing the relations between humans and nature on harmonious terms by preaching the maxims of ecological protection.

Maheshwari (1970) however contextualizes and traces the emergence of the eco-rules within the 29 rules in the Bishnoi sect to the presence of several cults like Vaishnavism, Jainism, Sakta etc. Both Vaishnavism and the Jainism emphasize on non-violence. But the environmentalists look at the rule prohibiting the use of blue color and the custom of burying the dead among the Bishnois in ecological terms. They hold that Jambhoji taught these rules to protect biodiversity. The preparation of blue color and cremation requires the destruction of trees. However, the practice of burying the dead is not included in the 29 rules. So, it raises the question whether this custom was preached by Guru Jambheshwer or it entered the sect in the later period.

Khan (2003) attacks the belief that protection of nature is original to Bishnois. She argues that the tradition of protecting the nature has attracted the attention of western journalists and film-makers but the phenomenon has not been completely explained in the Indian context. She challenges the claim that the protection of blackbuck is an original custom of Bishnois. The deer has been a symbol in Aryan Hinduism. The Bishnois prefer to live in their farms rather than in the village. This idea might have been inspired from the mythic *rishi* (sage) tradition of ancient India. The *rishis* used to live in an isolated place surrounded by trees and hunting was prohibited. According to Khan (2003) this tradition might have been inspired from the Nizaris who wanted to improve the living conditions of their followers. She traces the genealogy of the Bishnoisfrom a branch of Nizari Ismailism.

Quereshi (2004, 1992) in his field observation of two Bishnoi villages Kalwas (Haryana) and Khejarli (Rajasthan) found that the experiences of development are weakening the religious beliefs and norms of Bishnois about eco-preservation. However, he observes that the community people still regard trees and animals' life as sacred. He observes that the process of differentiation has started in the villages which is evident from the fact that the elders feel that younger generations are not committed to the ecological values

Conclusion

The Bishnois have been represented in academic and popular literature within two main frameworks of religion and environmentalism. Of the two, we find that only a few accounts debate on the religious origins of the Bishnois. Most accounts work with the idea that the community is part of the Hindu fold. These studies show that the community has undergone the process of Hinduisation in the 20th century. The interviews and ethnographic accounts show that Bishnois have reported themselves as Hindu. The scholars report that the community people altogether deny their links with the Islam in the past. Also, the state has recognized it a Hindu community. Therefore, it raises concerns over the contemporary significance of Bishnois' religious identity in the present context.

As far as the narrative of environmentalism is concerned, we see how the eco-practices of the community have increasingly come into public and scholarly attention through numerous brief and some detailed studies. A huge number of environmental writings, media, magazines and NGO's romanticize the practices of the community. Thus, the dominant framework in which the community has been studied and understood has seen a shift from the frame of Hinduization to the frame of environmentalism. Those customs and practices which were interpreted in the framework of religion are now located within and reinterpreted in the paradigm of environmentalism. Consequently, Guru Jambheshwer and the Bishnoi community members have been made into environmental figures. The reader gets the impression that in the worldview of the community the eco-protection has the maximum and absolute value.

Paradoxically, this form of representation is happening at a time when the eco-commitments of the community people are declining as noted down by Quereshi in his field survey. This raises the question regarding the self-perceptions of the community. Does the community share this framework in its understanding of itself? How has the community responded to the

attention by the media and scholars? How has it related the framework of environmentalism to the declining eco-commitments by the community people?

Both questions can be explained by looking at how the community has perceived itself in the last 50 years.

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Article

Exploring International Migration through IELTS in Chandigarh

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Abstract

The ability to communicate in English language is being increasingly viewed as an essential skill requirement globally today. The availability of better prospects and higher living standards in developed countries have propelled people from Third World countries to obtain proficiency in English language. IELTS as an English language proficiency testing system evaluates an individual's core competency in English, and is considered mandatory for anyone planning to move to Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and of recent, the Unites States for work or study purposes. A field-based study was conducted from 2015 through 2017, using convenience sampling and participant observation across four IELTS institutions at Sector 17 in Chandigarh. The paper focuses on the role of IELTS institutions in facilitating migration across borders. Additionally, it also lays emphasis on the structure of IELTS and captures the

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demographic and socio-economic profile of the IELTS test takers in Chandigarh.

Keywords: IELTS, Migration, English, Language, Canada

Introduction

Mankind's entire history has been a history of migration. The earliest man was a hunter and gatherer who wandered from place to place in search of nourishment, and the process continued even after establishing residence. Migration, therefore, has been indispensable to human cultures and civilizations. It is the movement of people from one place to another for the purpose of taking up a permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across a political boundary. Ibrahim, Min and Jing (2014) explained a variety of scales at which migration occurs, some of which are inter-continental (between continents), intra-continental (between countries on a given continent) and inter-regional (between countries). People can either choose to move (voluntary migration) or be forced to move (involuntary migration). Migration as a phenomenon spans cities and countries, and it has been identified in various forms such as *internal* migration, which is the movement and relocation of peoples inside one country; external *migration*, which refers to moving from one country to another; *immigration*, is moving into a different country; *emigration* is leaving one country for the other; *return migration* or *circular migration* which relates to the voluntary movement of immigrants back to their place of origin; *chain migration* — a series of migrations within a family or a defined group of people.

The phenomenon of international migration with respect to the international language assessment tests in English-speaking countries has been overlooked in the past. At several stages of migration, education and skill acquisition have played an important role. Migration is often viewed in the same way as

education: as an *investment in the human agent*. Apart from economic causes as a chief determinant of migration, factors such as the level of education had a rather significant bearing over migration (Lucas, 1981). The paper, therefore, focuses on the role of IELTS institutions in facilitating migration across borders. It further lays emphasis on the structure of IELTS and captures the demographic and socio-economic profile of the IELTS test takers in Chandigarh.

IELTS facilitating Migration

The spread of English language as a global lingua franca has given a sharp impetus to various tests surrounding the teaching and assessment of English, with the intention to ensure accurate and efficient proficiency of test takers in the language. Of late, English has emerged as a necessary skill for obtaining well-paid jobs around the world, and is known to facilitate migration to developed countries (OECD 2014). Several countries in the recent decades have introduced English language programs as a part of school curriculum, which has helped expand the demography of English learners, ranging from primary school level to adult learners. Language skill assessment is a high-stake industry, and new forms of migration are taking place through education, employment and marriage, which is increasingly becoming a favorite route for people who long for permanent residency in English-speaking countries. Education is emerging as the newest form of overseas migration for the younger population from developing and underdeveloped countries (Brown 2017). Over the past three decades, IELTS has been taken up by private bodies, professional associations and governments to fit a number of different purposes requiring assessment of language. One of the more recent uses of the testing system has been as a gateway for people seeking to immigrate or to work or study in a foreign country.

The International English Language Testing System, abbreviated as IELTS, is a popular English language proficiency test for people intending to pursue higher education or work in countries where the language is used as a prime medium of communication. It is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP (International Development Programme): IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment for universities in Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand among other countries where English is widely spoken. IELTS was formerly called English Language Testing System (ELTS) back in the eighties, when it took over English Proficiency Test Battery (EPTB) which was used by the British Council in "overseas student recruitment operation" (UCLES, 2001) during 1960s and 1970s. IELTS was launched in 1989 with the purpose to measure the test seekers' ability to communicate in four language skills viz. Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking on a band scale of 9 offered in two modules: Academic and General Training (GT). It was later revised and further modifications to the test were brought in 1995 where changes were introduced in Writing and Reading section. The speaking section was updated in 1998 and a revised IELTS speaking test was introduced in July 2001. Four years later in 2005, digital (computerized version) IELTS was launched at numerous test centres.

People willing to migrate on the basis of education, work or permanent residence in almost all English-speaking countries are required to get a stipulated band score as accepted in the destination country. A growing number of countries such as New Zealand, Canada, Australia and especially the United Kingdom consider IELTS for processing immigration and student visa applications, with the United Kingdom recognizing IELTS as the basic assessment need fulfilling many of the criteria closely considered by the immigration authorities in the country. It employs more of British and Australian version of English, however, other language tests such as TOEFL or PTE are more

American-centric. Because of high quality controls in IELTS examination, it is now being recommended by many universities even in the United States. The Band score which is measured on a scale of 9 varies accordingly in different countries. While some have strict immigration rules and a high band score requirement, there are some nations that require a minimal band score of 5.5 or even less for immigration. Australia is fast emerging a destination preferred by a large chunk of Indians. In 2015, more visas were granted to Indian students even though the number of Chinese students applying for visa far outnumbers those from India. As per a representative from Australia's Department of Immigration of Border Protection, "on June 30, 2015 there were 4,419 Indians holding subclass 485 visas representing 16.8 percent of all visas in this category (Kably 2015)." The Canadian immigration authority, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), also accepts IELTS results of potential immigrants in a move to allow Canadian citizenship to them. The country has a long-standing history of dual language policy: its employment of two official languages—English and French. The result is further presented as a part of the application requirements in the country.

Methodology

In order to trace the role of international migration through IELTS, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies have been incorporated into the study. A structured interview schedule was developed and convenience sampling was applied to study the responses of 97 respondents, of which 33 were females and 64 males, from four IELTS coaching institutions namely—Grey Matters, British Council, Touchstone and Western Overseas situated in Sector 17. These institutions were selected on the basis of their high enrolment ratio in the city. In addition to this, participant observation was conducted from 2015 through 2017, where I worked with IELTS institutions for a total period of one year.

IELTS coaching institutions in Chandigarh

The International English Language Testing System assessment is gauged on the basis on four modules that the test seeker needs to qualify. As discussed above, these four modules include listening, reading, writing and speaking for both IELTS Academic and General Training, with Reading section being the most difficult to crack, and Listening, the easiest. The exam for the first three is conducted on the same day, while test for the speaking module is taken separately on a different day, usually after a gap of some days. Offered up to four times a month each year, IELTS is offered as a paper-based test or computer (online) test, depending upon the preference of an individual. It spans through major cities in India and can be taken up to forty-eight times a year it is held in approximately 140 countries at over one thousand locations with over two million tests being taken every year. Its result is usually available in 13 calendar days. An IELTS test score is valid for a period of two years, allowing the candidate to retake the test any time for improvement in band score. The total test time is 2 hours and 45 minutes, however, the Speaking component can be completed up to a week before or after the other tests.

There are a number of coaching institutions within and outside of India that help people prepare for English tests that can qualify them to go to foreign countries, in particular, English-speaking countries. For the purpose of studying abroad and/or acquiring permanent residence (PR) status, the students are generally required to take a different test system depending upon which country they intent to migrate to. International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Pearson Test of English (PTE) are some of the tests that are deemed necessary to gain entry into either of the English-speaking countries, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the U.S. and the U.K.

Located at the foothills of Shivalik hills, Chandigarh—a union territory of Punjab and Haryana lies in the northern part of India. It was designed by French architect Le Corbusier and the foundation stone of the city was laid in the year 1952. Its compact yet spacious layout and stringent policies make it different from other major cities of the country. As an educational hub, the city apart from being well organized and planned, attracts youngsters from various regions of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The city has several coaching institutions that prepare the students for various competitive exams. There has, however, been an upsurge in the language testing centers that prepare people for language assessment tests such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), PTE or GRE, that helps them migrate abroad on an education or a work visa. There are over 300 institutions in the city alone that train students to compete in the IELTS test, however, an absence of data on the exact number of IELTS institutions is a serious limitation as many private and unregistered IELTS coaching institutes have opened up. Although all IELTS institutions and immigration agencies in Chandigarh and Punjab districts are mandated to register their businesses under the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act 2012, many institutes are still unregistered.

The more popular IELTS centers are situated in the commercial hub of Chandigarh– Sector 17. Most of the institutions in this sector have the largest proportion of students enrolled with them. Students from rural areas of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh mainly undergo IELTS coaching at institutions located in Sector 17. The percentage of test takers for Academic in the year 2015 was much higher than that for General Training. IELTS is conducted by the Cambridge English Language Assessment, the British Council and IDP-Australia. Several educational institutions as well as employment centers prefer a language certificate that indicates the proficiency of a non-native to converse in English. IELTS is not recommended for students under

16 years of age; only those who have attained 18 years of age are eligible to sit for the language test.

Interestingly, all four institutions – Touchstone, Grey Matters, British Council and Western Overseas render visa services. Grey Matters is a popular center that trains the younger lot in acquiring a higher band score in IELTS test. A few of their students approached 'Fly Foreign' visa service centre – a sister concern of Grey Matters for visa consultation and visa filling purposes. The students, however, prefer to get their visa application processed through centers that have been built-in solely for visa purposes. The State Assembly passed the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act in 2012, in a bid to thwart unlawful practices that got the several youth duped and stranded abroad with fake documents. Three years after the Act was passed, in 2015, the Deputy Commissioner mandated that every travel agent, IELTS coaching institute and consultancy register themselves at the SDM office.

IELTS test takers and Visa processing

Although some of these institutions have their separate units acting as visa center, there are only fewer students who prefer to process their file via IELTS institutions. This is because these institutions have not yet attained the reputation of successful visa offices. People still believe that travel agents can help them migrate offshore. IDP, which is one of the co-owners of the International English Language Testing System, forwards students' file for visa processing. It is owned by public and private funded universities and colleges overseas. Because it co-owns IELTS testing assessment, people willing to migrate abroad on academic grounds find it easier to approach IDP.

Socio-economic profile of IELTS test takers

Chandigarh attracts a number of students from Punjab, Haryana

and Himachal Pradesh, and almost all test takers were either locals or they belonged to these three states. Most students were between 18 and 32 years of age. Sex composition is yet another crucial factor that requires close examination in order to ascertain the trend of emigration. This is so because in the past, females have shown a reduced trend in migration, however, after the advent of New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1991, where education largely became privatized and foreign affairs of India improved with other countries, an increasing number of people have begun flocking to foreign lands in search of better job opportunities and higher education. However, it was found in the study that families with an annual income between Rupees 5,00,000 and 10,00,000 churned out maximum number of prospective emigrants. Most IELTS test takers belong to families that own an agricultural land and an immovable property. The dominance of economic factor in the process of migration from a developing to a developed country plays a greater role in defining what economic strata gets the opportunity to move abroad (Mahmood & Gunatilleke, 1991). Students who could not afford to pay a high fee preferred studying or working in India. In order to get a good job in a foreign country, it was also required by the immigrants to pursue their undergraduate and postgraduate degree in the host country, failing which they were offered labour jobs there that included working at a store, petrol pump, butcher house or any other occupation which offers low wage. Just like in India one has the option to continue either a degree programme or a diploma among many other options, students are presented with this choice there as well, however most of the respondents chose diploma instead of a degree programme. This was owing to the fact that degree was costlier than diploma, which discouraged them to pursue any course in degree. Another reason that was observed during the research was that the ultimate aim of most of these students was to settle in a foreign country or just use it as a route to some other destination, and not to seek education for which they were originally migrating over a long distance.

The educational qualification of the respondents willing to migrate abroad was another important parameter. It is on the basis of the educational credentials, when appearing for IELTS test, that an individual can migrate abroad for higher studies, diploma or work purposes. It is important to note the educational profile of the respondents as it will help to ascertain the frequency of emigration with respect to their educational qualification. As for educational credentials, most candidates had recently passed higher secondary examination. It was observed that only those individuals who came from rich families could afford to give IELTS exam and migrate to an English-speaking country.

The findings suggest that by 21 years, younger males had higher probability to migrate abroad on their own, and females over 22 years were considered capable of attaining education in a foreign land. Also, families were reluctant to allow their young daughters to enrol in a foreign varsity because they unsure whether the younger females would be safe on an alien land. This feeling of insecurity and fear was prevalent, owing to their belief that women formed a vulnerable section and were an easy target.

An inverse relationship between migration and age was also revealed. In other words, migration is not directly proportional to age. As the age of the respondents increased, they were less likely to migrate abroad, and participants below 22 had an increased propensity towards emigration. This was because of the immigration laws and easier admission to the foreign colleges where the respondents are offered a variety of options offshore in both degree and diploma programs—this made it easier and lucrative for them to migrate right after their schooling. It therefore becomes evident that as the age increases, the incidence of migration to a foreign land decreases, thus establishing an inverse relationship between migration and age. In other words, younger male respondents were more susceptible to migrating abroad than female respondents who chose to move abroad after they have grown older (above 22 years), and only after completing their

graduation or post-graduation. However, those above 25 years, generally apply for IELTS General Training (GT) that will help them get work visa or obtain Permanent Residence (PR) abroad.

An incredibly large number of respondents come from Punjab, but female participation in migration was highest among those from Chandigarh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Respondents from Himachal Pradesh formed the lowest number of students enrolled in IELTS coaching institutions. Students from Chandigarh had second highest percentage seeking language test coaching followed by those from Haryana. Punjab, a state where Punjabi population is overwhelmingly dominant, records a high number of emigrants from India. According to an article published by The Hindu in 2015, India was the second-largest origin country of nurses, hailing from southern part of India. When discussed with the respondents, it was revealed that they as well as other people of their village had a deep interest in going abroad and settling there. This interest was infused in them when they heard stories of how their counterparts became rich and successful after they settled abroad. A craze for migration was noticed amongst the people of Punjab particularly those belonging to rural areas.

Most females, however, preferred to work in more respectable jobs that paid them well. They were supposedly more cautious of their social prestige and position in the society, on account of which they chose to stick to academic field including medicine, nursing/midwifery or social science. Hardly any of them wanted to do a labour job or business in the host country. Almost all male respondents said that they would not shy away from working in restaurants, petrol pumps or local shops as their primary objective for migration was having good earnings.

Why people migrate abroad?

Hanlon and Vicino (2014) in their work on global migration illustrated five major components of individual decisions, family and community influence, dual labor markets, migration

networks and the migration industry, and globalization processes influencing the entire migration process. The economic factors along with the educational factors play an integral role in determining the reason for emigration. Another significant factor that explicates the course of migration is reflected in the Dual Labor Market theory of migration, where global migration is largely driven by the demand for skilled workers bifurcated into low- and high-skilled labor. Low-skilled jobs include but are not limited to occupations such as that of a domestic worker, taxi driver, gardener, janitor, childcare worker, hairdresser, waitress or security guard. High-skilled jobs, on the other hand, have a high salary and better working conditions; it includes occupation related to engineering, medical doctors, Information Technology (IT), lawyer, teacher or scientist, among others. The global market is largely driven by the demand for low-skilled workers which comprises mainly males. In fact, in a couple of developed countries, certain jobs have been identified as migrant jobs, typically "3-D" (dirty, dangerous, difficult) jobs. The participants did not want to migrate in pursuit of better education abroad, rather they wanted to move offshores as they felt they could earn substantially higher and lead a better standard of living in developed countries. A few female participants wanted to move abroad so they could find suitable (preferably an NRI (Non-Resident Indian) groom for themselves, and in that way, establish themselves permanently in host countries without having to undergo any hassle.

The study revealed that most of the male respondents had an inclination towards low-skilled labor jobs abroad which contrasted with female respondents' preference for a more reputed and a high-skilled job. This was because the male respondents stated that they wanted to migrate to a developed country so that as soon as their education was completed, they could easily apply for a work visa and eventually a Permanent Residence (PR) there, that would enable them earn a high amount of money, a part of

which, they could send back home.

Poverty and unemployment prevalent in the home country are often considered the push factors, and better economic opportunities in the destination country are taken as pull factors. Migrating from one country to another is an arduous task that requires an individual to go through a complex system of documentation, verification of the testimonials, getting through the required eligibility criteria. Most of the migrants working abroad send money in the form of remittances to their families or communities living in the home country. The money sent back home by the migrants offers protection from income instability among emigrant families. This phenomenon of chain migration is palpable in the rural areas of Punjab, where an emigrant paves way for other people to migrate overseas. People flock in large numbers to the foreign hinterlands in want of better life but the main reason for their emigration lies in their craze for English-speaking countries.

The respondents, as young as 18 or 19, freshly school pass out, had little or no idea of what they wanted to study in the foreign university they would be later applying to. They relied heavily on IELTS institutions or immigration agents for guidance and information on countries, foreign varsities, their fee structure, subjects, and syllabus, among other things, to name a few. While many of the respondents were males, the female population formed an integral part of those respondents who decided to stick to their academic specialisation. One reason for this was their age; the older they grew, the better they knew about the choice of academic course or work they wanted to engage in. Apparently, females did not prefer to switch over to any other profession, particularly a downgrading one, unlike their male counterparts who, owing to their craze for a foreign (English-speaking) land, were ready to work in odd jobs in the host country, given better standard of living and higher monetary yields. They had, therefore, already decided to get into the labour industry and

work in transportation, logistics, hotel management, restaurants, food industry or local shops to earn a living abroad. Education to them meant a safer and an easier medium to land on a foreign shore. A few of them did not even have the intention to complete their education–they had pre-planned to leave it midway as soon as they found any job out there.

Conclusion

Besides just the craze for a foreign land, factors such as high earnings and better living standards in the destination country played a bigger role in forcing youngsters to consider international migration. Females were fearful of the ever-pervading precariousness surrounding their safety within India, and quite a large number of them who were looking for nursing profession abroad were disappointed by the manner in which this profession was treated and looked down upon in the home country. In a country that is home to a fifth of the world's population, problems of massive unemployment, unequal wage rate, lack of an efficient education system, lagging research and development, coupled with more serious issues operating at the macro level such as corruption, reservation and nepotism were dominant push factors that impelled them to take a decision to emigrate to places that offered better economic opportunity, better education and a higher standard of living.

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Hierarchy in Marginalities: A study of Adi Dharm Samaj Movement and Cultural Assertion of Balmikis in Punjab

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Abstract

The present paper seeks to understand the cultural assertion of Balmikis: an extremely marginalized caste group among Dalits through the Adi Dharm Samaj Movement in Punjab. This movement has adopted the new modes and mechanisms and also subscribes to the philosophy of Ad Dharm in order to formulate distinct religious identity (separate from Hinduism and Sikhism) for Dalits. Interestingly, it has also adopted a separate path of Dalit social mobility without following the dominant modes like sanskritisation and conversion in the State. To understand this new development regarding Dalit identity formation and assertion among the vulnerable section of Dalits, this article has been divided into two sections. It begins by contextualizing the notion of caste and the social position of the Balmikis in the society of Punjab. It also brings into sharp focus their historical struggle to attain equality, dignity and diverse identity amid the emergence of the Ad Dharm movement against the backdrop of the politics of

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religious co-optation by the mainstream communities (Sikhs and Hindus). The second section explores the cultural assertion of Balmiki community that is mainly centered on the newly constructed heritage of their patron sant/guru Valmiki in Punjab. In this context, the role of Balmiki leaders particularly the leadership of Darshan Ratan 'Ravan' and his movement (i.e., Adi Dharm Samaj) are the major concerns of the paper.

Key words: Valmiki, Balmiki, Dalit, cultural heritage, Ad Dharm, Adi Dharm Sama, Social Vision, Akali Dal.

Introduction

'We are not Hindu, Sikh, Christian or Buddhist' avers Darshan Ratan 'Ravan', who belongs to Balmiki community and is the founder head of the Adi Dharm Samaj movement. This is an anti-caste movement of the Balmikis of Punjab. It was started around 1990s with the aim of reviving the aboriginal past of the Dalits to secure respectful social identity and equality for the extremely vulnerable Dalit caste community of Balmiki, who are pejoratively known as Chuhras in Punjab. In his speeches and writings, Ravan has clearly stated that '*our qaum* (community) is *Adivasi;* the original inhabitant of this land. Here, Ravan eulogizes the ideology of Ad Dharm movement of the 1920s. Interestingly, Ad Dharm movement came into existence in 1925 to fight against the system of untouchability. It draws its inspiration from Bhakti movement especially from figures like Valmiki, Ravidass, Kabir and Namdev. It aims at the emancipation of the Dalits and their 'empowerment through cultural transformation, spiritual regeneration and political assertion' (Ram 2004: pp-323-349). It was one of the earliest *Adi* movements of India that brought the downtrodden together to fight for their cause. The movement aimed at securing a distinct identity for the Dalits independent from (Hindus and Sikhs) time immemorial (for details see: Juergensmeyer 2009).

Historically, Chuhras and Chamars have been considered as the two major untouchable communities in Punjab. Chuhras along with Chamars have played significant role in the formation of the Ad Dharm movement. Later on, the structural dominance of the Chamars over the Ad Dharm movement has excluded the Chuhra caste group. The socio-cultural and political divisions are getting sharper among them in the recent times due to caste consciousness and the politics of Dalit identity assertion in Punjab. This notion of internal division among Dalits and the patterns adopted by extremely marginalized like Balmiki for their social mobility in Punjab has been discussed in a comprehensive manner in the first section of the paper.

Noticeably, the leaders of Balmiki community particularly Darshan Ratan 'Ravan' is fully aware about the historical exclusion of their community in the past and is also equally conscious about the socio-economic constrains in the path of their empowerment in Punjab. Therefore, he launched the Adi Dharm Samaj movement for the social mobilization of his community with the larger aims of securing distinct socio-religious and political identity in the State of Punjab. The second section of the article has focused on the religious leadership of Ravan and how his movement (i.e., *Adi Dharm Samaj*) have played a significant role in consolidating the religious boundaries of the community by formulating their own diverse rituals, symbols, scriptures, salutations, nomenclature and an alternative religious philosophy which is based around the newly built cultural heritage of their sant/guru Valmiki. This section also argues that the alternative social vision and agenda of the Dalit agencies of the past has never lost its enigma while defining distinct Dalit religious identity in comparison to the mainstream religious communities (like Hindus and Sikhs) in contemporary Punjab.

I

Caste hierarchy and Balmikis: A case of identity formation among marginalized within Dalits in Punjab.

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) constitute 31.94 per cent of Punjab's population in comparison to 16.6 per cent in the entire country[1] (Census 2011). But like their other counterparts in the country, Dalits in the state do not form a homogenous identity. Instead, they constitute a conglomerate of thirty-nine[2] caste groups with 'varying numerical strength, geographical spread, religious and political affiliations, social status, economic conditions and cultural outlook' (Ram 2017: p. 55). Within thirty-nine caste groups, the two major groupings the Chuhra (Balmiki and Mazhabi) and Chamars (including Ad Dharmi, Ravidasia, Raidasia and Ramdasia) together constitute 80 percent of the total SC population (Ram 2017: p. 55; Jodhka & Kumar 2007: pp. 20-21).

Other SC groups are not only numerically less but also highly underprivileged[3]. But the Chuhra-Chamar caste groups are highly segmented along endogamous layers with distinct social boundaries and varied economic levels. They also observe hierarchy of high-low social status. Ravidassia Chamars considers themselves socially superior in comparison to Balmiki Chuhras in

[1]Online available at: http//www.censusindia.gov.in/2011 census/SCST-Series14.html.

[2]Ad-Dharmi, Balmiki (Chuhra, Bhangi), Bangali, Barar (Burar or Berar), Batwal, Bauria (Bawaria), Bazigar, Bhanra, Kabirpanthi (Julaha), Khatik, Kori-Koli, Marija (Marecha), Mazhabi, Megh, Nat, Od, Pasi, Perna, Pheera, Sanhai, Sansi (Bhedkut, Manesh), Sansoi, Dhogri (Dhangri, Siggi), Dumma (Mahasha, Doom), Gagra, Ganddhila (Gandeil), Sapela, Sareta, Sikligar, Sirkiband. Mahatma/Rai Sikh has recently been included in the list of the Scheduled Castes in the Indian Constitution (Scheduled Castes Amendment, No. 31, 29 August 2007).

[3]Out of such numerous Dalit groups, thirteen are officially listed as 'Depressed Scheduled Castes (DSCs)'. Sansi, Bangali and Bauria are the three communities were listed as 'Criminal Tribes' in colonial times. After independence, they came to be known as 'Ex-Criminal Tribes and much later as 'Vimukta Jatis' or 'Denotified Tribes' and assigned them the SC status in Punjab (Puri 2004: pp. 3-4).

Punjab. According to Juergensmeyer, Balmiki is the 'lowest of the untouchable's castes' (Juergensmeyer 1982: p.169). They are a highly stigmatized Dalit caste community and are assigned the most degrading occupations (i.e., mostly as sweepers and scavengers). In his field study entitled, 'Problem of Untouchability among Sikhs in Punjab', Rashpal Walia found that though the Mazhabi Sikhs have abandoned their traditional occupation of removing human excreta, their status in Sikh society still remains the lowest (Wallia: pp. 264, 266-267).

Joyce Pettigrew has observed that: 'They (Jats) did not visit the houses of Mazhabis, take food from them, eat with them or intermarry with them' (Pettigrew 1978: p. 48). Jat Sikhs continues to identify the *Ramdasia* and *Mazhabi* Sikhs by their earlier titles – Chamars and Chuhras (Ibbetson: p.268-269). The latter even today sit separately along with their Hindu Dalit counterparts in a corner at the entrance of the gurdwaras (Bhuller 2007: p. 2). The fact is that even in contemporary Punjab in more than 60 per cent of Punjab villages the Mazhabis and other Sikh Dalits have their separate Gurdwaras (Charchrari 2003: p. 33). They are still living within their segregated Dalit locations[4] and have built their separate *janjghars* (marriage centers) and cremation grounds. Such social exclusion from the mainstream religious institutions has forced the Dalits to establish their own separate religious centers interchangeably known as Deras. One writer wrote that out of 12780 villages in Punjab, there are separate Dalit Gurdwaras in about 10000 villages. Such Dalit Gurdwaras are not simply the place of worship; these are in fact the symbols of resistance and assertion of caste identities. (Charchrari 2003: p.33).

Interestingly, Ravidassia Chamars have excelled virtually in every sphere, be it in education, urbanization, occupations, cultural advancement or political mobilization. Many of them have settled abroad (in Europe, North America and the Middle

[4]It is contemptuously called 'vehras', Thhattis' and are located to the periphery on the western side of the mainstream village settlements.

East) and have provided monetary support to their brethren back home, including the support for forming a separate cultural heritage for the cultural and social advancement of their community. (Puri 2004: p.4). On the other side, the equally populous Balmikis remain highly backward in education, government employment and also in ventures abroad. They hardly have access to the new avenues of financial stability like settling abroad or having benefits of state's affirmative actions like the Chamars in recent Punjab. Therefore, Balmiki and Mazhabi in Punjab forged a common front against the Chamar caste cluster and demanded for separate reservation in Scheduled Caste category. Balmiki leaders, including Darshan Ratan 'Ravan', have alleged that the benefits of state reservation in public jobs and education are largely secured by Ravidassia Chamars. To this effect, Balmikis have organized a strong movement under the *Balmiki-Mazhabi* Reservation *Bachao Munch* demanding for separate reservations within the Scheduled Caste category.

In Punjab, Chuhras like their other Dalit counterparts are largely landless[5]. However, Jat Sikh is considered a dominant caste with its hold on agricultural land. Although the numerical strength of Dalits is almost equal to Jat Sikhs, but their share in ownership of land is negligible (Ram 2012: p.660). Scholars have argued that this aspect has provided a unique outlook to the structure and dominance of caste system in the context of Punjab (Prakash 1976: p. 8; Tandon 2000: p. 73; Puri 2004). Unlike the other states in India wherein Brahmins are placed at the top of the caste hierarchy within the traditional Hindu social order, the nature and forms of caste hierarchy in Punjab is very different (Ram 2004: pp. 896-900).

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[5]Historically, The Land Alienation Act of 1900 debarred the non-agricultural castes, including Dalits, from buying land. It was only after India's independence that such laws were declared null and void through the concerted efforts of Dr B. R Ambedkar, chief-architect of the Constitution of Independent India and the messiah of the downtrodden. For Details see, Webster, A Social History of Christianity, pp. 138-139; Ram, "Beyond Conversion and Sanskritisation", pp. 659-661

In Punjab's agrarian society, caste pride and social status is closely associated with the ownership of agricultural land. It has been mentioned that Dalits cultivate only 0.4 percent of all land holdings, occupying 0.72 percent of the total cultivated area in the state. 'Nowhere in India according to Ram, 'Dalits are so extensively deprived of agricultural land as in Punjab' which has severely undermined their social ability to participate in the local power structure in the state. (Ram 2004: pp. 898-899). Consequently, acute landlessness among Chuhra caste cluster has made them dependent on the landowning castes for farming employment in the absence of alternative jobs (Ram 2012: 659-661). Therefore, Balmiki in the cities is engaged in the profession of cleaning and scavenging and their fellow caste – the Mazhabis are largely working as the farm laborers in the countryside.

As against the Hindu *Dharamsastra,* the Sikh doctrine does not assign any importance to the institution of caste. Therefore, the Brahminic influence was 'probably never as strong in Punjab as it was in most of the parts of India' (Ibbetson 1916, rpt. 1987: pp. 14-15; Puri 2004: p.6). But this does not mean that caste never existed in the social practices of the Sikh community. The survival of caste system despite the egalitarian philosophy of Sikhism and its condemnation through the teachings of Sufis and Sikh Gurus of the region is a case in point. Contrary to their expectations, conversion to Sikhism and Christianity in Punjab[6] has failed to liberate Dalits from the abyss of untouchability (Ram 2012: pp. 648-658). In fact, the deep-rooted caste hierarchy and discrimination are also responsible for the failure of reformatory measures adopted by various social reform movements (Arya Samaj, Khalsa Diwan and Singh Sabha) of the 1920s in Punjab (Jones 2006, 310-311; Judge 1997, 61-62).

[6]Punjab has its own story of conversion, primarily to Sikhism and Christianity. For a detailed account of the caste system among the Sikhs see (see Ibbetson 1883; Puri 2003.) The agenda of Buddhist conversion and Sanskritization have had failed to replicate in Punjab as it has had certain presence in other parts of the country. For details see (Ram 2012, 648-658).

Apart from dominant socio-religious movements, Dalits particularly Chuhras have established their own caste sabhas and have been actively involved in the Ad Dharm movement for their separate religious and political identity in twentieth century. However, the participation of Balmiki leaders in the formation of Ad Dharm is not covered in the otherwise detailed and seminal work of Mark Juergensmeyer[7]. In fact, he mentions that Mangu Ram[8] denies their involvement in the inner circle of Ad Dharm movement. (Juergensmeyer 2009, 60). On the contrary, there are evidences in the form of the Ad Dharm Mandal report[9], memoir of the Balmiki leaders and activists that substantiate the claim of their participation. This is more than evident from the writings of Balmikis themselves who argue about the emergence of a strong sense of assertion among the Chuhras with the formation of caste sabha in the beginning of the twentieth century. *Balmiki sabha* was

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[7]The first body of Ad Dharm Mandal as reported by Pandit Bakshi Ram stated Mangu Ram as President, Chunni Lal as Vice-President, Thakar Das as General Secretary and Shaadi Ram as Co-General Secretary and Ghaniya Lal as treasurer, while Shivcharan as editor of Adi Danka (Ram n.d, 14). The memoir of Bakshi Ram has placed much credit on the leaders of Balmik Sabha. Another point of contention in the narratives is that Chunni Lal who was an important figure of the Balmik Sabha was unrecognized in the discourses recorded by Juergensmeyer.

[8]Mangoo Ram was one of the founders of the Ad Dharm movement. He was born in 1886 to a Chamar family in Mugowal village, Hoshiarpur District, Punjab. In 1909, he emigrated to America and came in close contact with the Gadhar Party, a militant nationalist organization. On returning home in 1925, he started organizing SCs against system of untouchability and formed the Ad Dharm movement. In 1946, he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. On August 15, 1972, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi honored him with an award and pension for the services he rendered for India's freedom. He died in April 1980.

[9]Mark Juergensmeyer translated the Ad Dharm Report into English with the assistance of Surjit Singh Goraya and Hassan Hamdani. The report was originally published on 15 May 1931 in Urdu. A major part of the report is also included in Juergensmeyer, Religious Rebels, pp. 290-308. According to the Ad Dharm Report, some of the early leaders in the Ad Dharm were Balmiki Chuhra: the report has mentioned the several local leaders who may be clearly identified as Chuhras.

established in 1901 by Balmiki leaders[10] at Jalandhar (Ram n.d, 13) long before the rise of the Ad Dharm of 1920s in Punjab. Sabha was a symbol of 'retaliation against the most inhuman and degrading treatment meted out by Hindus and Mussalmans' and played a pivotal role in forging 'unity' and inculcating a spirit of self-respect (Farquhar 1915, 370).

The central agenda of the Sabha was to protect the religious identity of Balmikis from the cultural assimilation by Hindu and Sikh organizations in Punjab (Ram n.d, 23-24). It has also been decided by the members of the Sabha to recognize themselves as "Balmikis" instead of 'Chuhras'- a derogatory title imposed by the colonial and dominant native agencies to untouchables (Ram n.d, 13). Sabha played a significant role in the veneration of sant Balmiki/Valmiki[11] and in the propagation of myths that tried to prove that historically sant Valmiki was linked with the Chuhra caste. It has been said repeatedly that Valmiki belonged to a lower caste. His low-caste status has also been cited in the Guru Granth Sahib in the verse of Ravidas. The verse goes like "Why lookest thou not a Balmik? From what a low caste, what a high rank obtained he? Sublime is the lord's devotional service" (AG 1124).

But a radical transformation in the cultural life of the Balmiki community happened around the year 1926, when they joined the Ad Dharm movement (Ram n.d., 14-16; Sangar 1980, 1-8). To strengthen the point of their separation from Hindus, particularly the Arya Samaj, Balmiki leaders accepted the ideology of Ad Dharm by propagating the myth that 'they are original inhabitants' and their religion is Ad Dharm. The Hindus, according to this

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[10]Babu Gandu Das, Pandit Kirpa Ram, Mahatma Garib Das, Shyam Chaurasi, Babu Suryan Das, Pradhan Dogarmal were the founding leaders of the sabha. Pandit Bakshi Ram, Balmukund, Fakir Chand Nahar, R.R. Shubh, master Rakha Ram and Garib Das Gill made it more organized and provided a new direction and ideological structure (Ram n.d, 13.

[11]I have used the word 'Valmiki to address the sant/guru and the word 'Balmiki' is referred to the community in this article. In Punjab, the term 'Valmiki' is used interchangeably with the term 'Balmiki (Takhar 2005, 125).

popular myth, came from outside and enslaved the Dalits. It also states that Adivasi Dalits had a glorious past and history which has been destroyed by the Hindu Aryans. It portrayed that the history, culture and memory of their glory has been destroyed by the invasion of Aryans. Such ideological construction of 'glorious past' and present exploitation by the Hindu organization has allowed the Balmiki leaders to sharply assert their claims of differences from Hindu community particularly from Arya Samaj in 1920s (Prashad 2000, 83-84; Takhar 2005, 132-133).

Ad Dharm had also facilitated the institutionalization of an alternative Balmiki culture in the cities as well as rural areas of Punjab based on the teachings and life style of the sant-poet Valmiki. In fact, the image of Valmiki has been projected along with other Dalit *nirguni* (devotee of God without attributes) low-caste sants like Ravidass and Kabir (Ad Dharm Report, 37). The leaders of Ad Dharm exhorted the people to meditate every morning and to worship one of the gurus as they argued that 'to live without a guru is sin' (Ibid, 37). Interestingly, they used the term 'guru' to refer to living holy men from lower caste communities. This has resulted in separating the image of 'Adi guru' Valmiki from integrative myths of Hindus by following the distinct theology of Dalits popularly known as *sant parampara*. They also mark their separation from Sikhism because their sants are no longer regarded as simply Bhagats, but gurus in their own right and thus the progenitors of an entirely new faith (Juergensmeyer 2009, 53).

During this radical phase of Dalit[12] assertion notes Bakshi Ram, 'our community has started to celebrate the *Valmiki Jayanti*

[12]The term Dalit (literally, grounded, oppressed, or broken) is the "politically correct" nomenclature that came to be used by the Mahar community in the late twentieth century for the "untouchables" (the people who have traditionally occupied the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy). The term includes Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. However, in current political discourse, the use of Dalit is mainly confined to Scheduled Castes.

(birth anniversary) and building the separate religious space for the worship of their guru throughout Punjab' (Ram, n.d. 62). The leadership of the Ad Dharm placed more emphasis on Valmiki's untouchable defiance than upon his Brahman acceptability. In songs, speeches and articles, Balmiki activists showed that the 'Adi guru' Valmiki hold a superior status than Brahmans. In this context, Bakshi Ram wrote a book *Hum Hindu Nahi* (We are not Hindu) and contested the dominant idea that 'Valmiki belongs to upper caste and wrote Hinduism's great epic, the *Ramayana*' (Ibid., pp.62-68). In his memoir, he also discusses various strategies adopted by Ad Dharmi activists to mobilize untouchables to enlist themselves as distinct religious identity in 1931 census (Ram n.d, 67-68).

Ad Dharmi's efforts bore unexpected and unprecedented results in the 1931 census. The census results came as a shock to everyone. Approximately 4,18,789 people identified themselves as Ad Dharmis that includes Chamars, Chuhras and other untouchables (Khan 1933, I). Khan further noted that in the same census, 3,152 Punjabis mentioned 'Balmiki' as their religion (Khan 1933, II: 277). Although Ad Dharm as a political movement petered out in post-partition Punjab[13], but as a religion of the downtrodden it continues to flourish even today. Such alternative vision of the untouchables in the past has not lost its significance in the cultural and political imagination of the Balmiki leaders in the present context as well.

Adi Dharm Samaj under the leadership of Darshan Ravan is taking rigorous steps to secure a dignified social identity for Dalits. It has also projected the distinct religious identity for the socially vulnerable particularly Balmiki in contemporary Punjab. For this, Ravan has adopted the mechanism of the politics of negotiation with the state governments in Punjab. This has resulted in building

[13]Intra-Dalit tensions and caste consciousness within Dalits are the major reasons which are also responsible for the demise of Ad Dharm movement in the changed circumstances of the post-partition Punjab.

a separate cultural heritage for the community in 2016 which has emerged as the central religious place for the millions of Dalits. However, the discourse of the politics of Dalit negotiation with state for securing an equal footing in the political and economic life in the caste- ridden society of Punjab is not a new phenomenon. Its roots are deeply entrenched in the historical methods and strategies adopted by the leaders of Ad Dharm that were used to assert an independent socio-religious identity for Dalits in the colonial period (Juergensmeyer 2009: 140).

But in the changed circumstances of internal caste cleavages, politics of co-optation which led the extremely vulnerable sections like Balmikis to construct their alternative social path for mobility and assertion in Punjab. In order to construct their distinct path, the Adi Dharm Samaj and its leadership has played a significant role particularly in consolidating the religious boundaries of the community through the making of Valmiki heritage. After the making of this heritage, Ravan expressed that 'Valmiki heritage has been constructed beyond our imagination' (The Indian Express: November 21, 2016a). The foundation stone was laid down by the then Chief Minister, Prakash Singh Badal on December 1, 2013 and was completed in 2016. On the occasion of Valmiki Jayanti (birth anniversary), during his speech at Valmiki Tirath, Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal said that 'it is a matter of pride for the state government that is offering tribute to Bhagwan Valmiki by developing the site for devotees' and dedicated this heritage to the Balmiki community. It subsequently came to be regarded as a symbol of pride and self-respect for the millions of marginalized Dalits and has emerged as an epicenter for constructing their distinct religious identity in contemporary Punjab.

II

Adi Dharam Samaj and Balmiki: Formation and assertion of distinct religious identity of Dalits around the Valmiki heritage in contemporary Punjab.

Pukhraj Singh writes that 'before the emergence of this Valmiki heritage, his community consecrated their identity and heritage in barebones temples, overshadowed by the mighty village gurdwaras' (Singh 2014). A local Balmiki leader and activist in a celebratory note said that 'now we have a separate religious space like other religious communities of Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab'[14] (From the beginning of the Adi Dharm Samaj in 1990s, the head of this movement, Darshan 'Ravan' made concerted efforts in mobilizing his community in the hope of stitching a new alliance with the Akali Dal and breaking-away from the Congress. Therefore, Raavan has supported and appreciated the efforts made by the Akali Dal towards the betterment of their community. He also alludes that Akali Dal has taken various 'Dalit-oriented steps like legal stay from the Supreme Court in a case related to the Balmiki-Mazhabi reservation issue, reservation in the judiciary, regularization of sanitation workers after twenty-five years' (The Indian Express 21, 2016a). Such attempts, however, also contribute to consolidate the intra-Dalit conflicts among the major Dalit caste groups of Chamars and Chuhras. Interestingly, it has been argued that Ad Dharmi Chamars and Balmikis are the traditional supporters of the Congress Party in Punjab (Ram 2017: p. 55). And on the other side, the Akali Dal and its leadership have been taking various steps to strengthen and enlarge their Dalit support base in the state politics (The Indian Express, December 2, 2016b). It is important to note that SAD supremo Prakash Singh Badal and President Sukhbir Badal attended the annual religious

[14]The information is based on a long conversation with Om Prakash 'Anarya', held on 18 December 2019, during my fieldwork in the city of Amritsar.

congregation organized by the Adi Dharm Samaj at Dana Mandi (grain market), Amritsar.[15]

During the time of the construction of Valmiki heritage, Ravan was provided much leverage while deciding the architectural design and other cultural artifacts including the idol, symbols, flag and scriptures in the premise. For Ravan, the construction of the heritage is crucial in the formation of 'an independent identity of the Balmiki community' (The Indian Express, November 21, 2016a). Therefore, he demanded for a distinct architectural design for the heritage, which 'should neither look like a Hindu temple nor a Gurdwara' (Ibid: 2016a). In this context, leaders of the Adi Dharm Samaj made several objections and negotiated with the State agencies at various levels, particularly over the architectural design of the heritage, the idol of the lord Valmiki and the installation of religious scripture in the central premise of the Valmiki heritage.

For the making of architectural design of the Valmiki heritage, the State government provided this task to the Architecture Department of the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. One of the members of the committee, Dr. K. S Chahal confided thus 'we have been given instructions by the State government to build the design of the heritage according to the wish of the community members.' He stated that the entire process was very hectic because of diverse suggestions given by the stake holders of the community who were very keen and conscious about the development of the architecture of the Valmiki heritage. According to Chahal, the religious sants, leaders, activists and intellectuals of the community have one common point about the making of this building and that is that 'it should neither look like Hindu temple nor a Gurdwara' (Indian Express 2016).

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[15]The information is based on the participation and observation in the Yogima Parv, a festival that is celebrated annually on 31 December at Dana Mandi (Grain Market) Amritsar by the Adi Daharm Samaj.

'Idol of the lord Valmiki was also asked to be recreated because the previous one seemed to be more Hinduized and failed to highlight the personality of 'Adi' Guru Valmiki' according to Ravan. Therefore, it has been changed and reconstructed. The new image along with 'Kalam' (the pen) in Valmiki's hand represents the slogan given by Dr. Ambedkar to 'Educate, Organize and Agitate'. Appropriating the image of B.R. Ambedkar is again a matter of intra-Dalit conflict among two major Dalit castes (i.e., Ad Dharmi Chamars and Balmiki). Before the installation of the Valmiki idol at the central premise, the state government organized a special arrangement in the state. The idol of guru Valmiki was taken on a special fabricated bus for the six-day statewide tour prior to its installation (Times of India, 2016). Now, a new 80 kilogram and eight feet tall idol of Bhagwan Valmiki has been installed in the premise of the heritage.

The image of Valmiki has its own significance in the old religious philosophy of the extremely marginalized communities like Balmikis in Punjab. In fact, Ad Dharm movement projected the image of Valmiki as a Dalit nirguni (devotee of God without attributes) along with Ravidas and Kabir to mobilize the untouchables in colonial Punjab. It has resulted in separating the image of guru 'Valmiki' from the integrative myths of Hindus and founded the expression of alternative Dalit theology in comparison to mainstream religious identities (Takhar 2005: 132-133). In the long run, Balmiki sabhas facilitated the institutionalization of an alternative Balmiki culture in the cities as well as the rural areas in the state, based on the teachings and lifestyle of the saint and guru Valmiki. In fact, this lustrous image of 'Adi Guru' played an instrument role in mobilizing the outcastes especially the Chuhras of Punjab. Leaders and activists also formed separate worship places for their guru and started to celebrate the *Valmiki Jayanti* (birth anniversary) in Punjab (Ram n.d. 62).

Yoga Vasistha has been placed in the central premise of the temples along with the idol of Valmiki which is another marker of

difference from mainstream religious identity. Adi Dharm Samaj objected to install the Ramayana written by Tulsidas because it promotes the notion of avatar that gives prominence to lord Rama and Hindu philosophy. On the other hand, *Yoga Vasistha* expounds the theory of *nirguna* Brahman. It is because of the philosophy of the nirguna concept of the divine; that the concept of avatars is not acceptable (Takhar 2005, 139). In accordance with the teachings of Valmiki, the community does not offer *bhakti* (devotion) to Rama. In fact, the concept of worshiping Rama and other major Hindu Gods is not prominent among Balmikis of Punjab.[16]

Apart from such efforts to disassociate from the mainstream religions, *Adi Dharm Samaj* and its leaders and intellectuals have made concerted efforts. They have formulated new rituals, symbols, nomenclatures, salutations etc. to re-establish the aboriginal identity of Dalits particularly Balmikis in recent Punjab. In this context, they have written their own religious texts in order to build their separate religious identity. The central religious tract of Adi-Dharm Samaj is Adi-Nitnem which begins with a stuti (adoration) of Valmiki. It closes with the utterance, *Jo Bole So Nirbhay, Srishtikarta Valmiki Dayavaan Ki Jai* (fearless is the one who utters: victory to Shrishtikarta Valamiki Dayavaan); whereas in the Sikh religion, the Ardas concludes with *Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal* (Blessed is the one who utters: True is the Immortal One).

The reference to *nirbhay* (fearless) is 'not only symptomatic of the historical oppression of the Dalits at the hands of the upper castes, but is also reflective of their determined willingness to confront it head on' (Ram 2008, 1358). The salutations are formulated selectively in order to project their unique and independent religious identity. The followers of Adi Dharm Samaj have adopted the greetings of *Jai Guru Valmiki* (Victory to Guru

[16]Information retrieved from the oral narratives of the community and also observed through their everyday religious worshiping during the fieldwork conducted in the Balmiki settlements at Amritsar (from January 2018 till February 2020).

Valmiki) in comparison to other religious communities. *Sat Shri Akal* (True is the Immortal One) is the greeting of the Sikhs. *Jai Ram Ji Ki* or *Jai Sita-Ram* (Victory to Ram or Victory to Sita Ram) is the greeting of the Hindus. It has become a sign of departure from mainstream religious identity in Punjab.

In the religious tract, the days and months are also mentioned distinctly as compared to the Hindu calendar. For instance, Monday is named after *Adi*, that is, Lord Valmiki, the supreme creator of universe, Tuesday is 'Madduvaar' which reminds one of a valiant aboriginal hero 'Madhu' who was killed by Hindu, God Vishnu through deceit. Similarly, in the case of monthly calendar where January is rechristened as 'Shristi' – the supreme nature – and July is named after the aboriginal icon *Meghnaad* as *Megh*. Certain expressions are also used after the names of the followers which denote their aboriginal past. The most commonly used titles are *Ravan, Adivanshi, Daitya, Daanav, Anarya, Shambook, Lankesh and Meghnaad* etc. The women have similar titles to their names as used in the Adi culture like *Tungbhadra, Keksi, Tamsa, Vrinda, Pracheta, Sujata* etc. while formally addressing to a fellow male the term *Veer* (brave man) is used and *Veerangi* (valiant woman) is used for females.

Spiritual and religious gatherings are known as *Yogamrit* (satsang) and the religious place of worship is named as *Anant* (Aadi Dharm Temple). The marriage ceremony performed in accordance with the prescribed rituals by *Adi Dharm Samaj* is known as *Aatamyog* (i.e., as two souls come together to carry on the lords' creation). These marriages are performed in a special way where four vows are exchanged by the couple and their families too. All ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death are performed according to *Adi*-customs which is prescribed in the *Adi-Nitnem*. *Adi-Nitnem* is distributed among the prospective members and those who want to become the members of Adi-Dharam Samaj, by the dharm pracharaks when they go to proselytize. All the disciplinary affairs during religious gatherings are organized by the volunteers. The male volunteers are called as

Eklavya Rakshaks and female unit is named *Jhalkari Vahni*.

Adi Dharm Samaj has its own flag of sky-blue color in which the religious insignia of *Adi Pavan Satya* (looks like an English alphabet 'V') is inscribed. It has been adopted as Kaumi Nishan of the Balmiki Samaj that clearly distinguishes it from other religions. Narrating the significance of this flag, Ravan observed that 'it is the symbol of Dalit's past and evidence of their Aadivaasi identity' (Ravan 2014: 12-18). The Dalits, especially the Balmikis of Punjab, proudly hoist flags with the symbol of *Adi Pavan Satya* inscribed on their religious places and on vehicles during the religious processions and occasions (based on observation).

Adi Dharm Samaj under the leadership of Ravan organises seminars and workshops to awaken the Dalit youth about their socio-political and religious position in the society. In this context, mass rallies and religious processions are organized in the various parts of Punjab. Ravan himself writes on issues like caste discrimination, Dalit atrocities, social injustice and struggle for dignity and self-respect in a radical manner. His speeches and ideas are compiled in the form of books, pamphlets, leaflets, booklets and magazines by their own publication press (i.e., ADHAS). Such writings are available at nominal prices and mostly free of cost at the religious congregations and seminars of the Adi Dharm Samaj.

Conclusion

Stuart Hall, a prominent cultural theorist and critic regards negotiation as a moment of struggle and resistance (Hall 2016: pp. 187-188). This method has been adopted by the marginals among Dalits particularly the Balmikis through the Adi Dharm Samaj movement. This movement has provided them the opportunity to stitch new political alliance with Akali Dal amid the politics of intra-Dalit conflicts and formation of distinct Dalit identity in Punjab. For instance, the making of Valmiki heritage is the major achievement of this movement towards securing a dignified social

identity and self-respect for Dalits. This heritage has become the vehicle of their social mobility and cultural assertion and further consolidates their religious boundaries through the formulation of the separate religious scriptures, architectural design, ritual, symbols, salutations, flag etc. as discussed in the article.

The emergence of Dalit cultural heritage on the landscape of the 'holy city' of Amritsar has triggered a new debate in the realm of identity politics in Punjab. Dominant historical narratives and historiography of Punjab have fixed the spatiality of Amritsar around the Sikh and Hindu religious identity. This is because of the existence of their religious shrines of Darbar Saheb (Golden Temple) and Durgiana Temple. In this context, Snehi has argued that nationalist and religious 'historiography proposes fixity of religious boundaries; thereby almost erasing the role that "other" narratives play in shaping city's history' (Snehi 2018: pp.1-3). The significance of this heritage lies in the fact that thousands of devotees from Punjab and abroad visit this sacred space.

Notes

1. *Ad Dharm Report* is translated by Mark Juergensmeyer into English with the assistance of Surjit Singh Goraya and Hassan Hamdani. The report was originally published on 15 May 1931 in Urdu. A major part of the report is also included in Juergensmeyer, Religious Rebels, pp. 290-308. According to the Ad Dharm Report, some of the early leaders in the Ad Dharm were Balmiki Chuhra: the report has mentioned the several local leaders who may be clearly identified as Chuhras.
2. The term *Dalit* (literally, grounded, oppressed, or broken) is the "politically correct" nomenclature that came to be used by the Mahar community in the late twentieth century for the "untouchables" (the people who have traditionally occupied the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy). The term includes Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. However, in current political discourse, the use of Dalit is mainly confined to Scheduled Castes.

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Living the Border Life: The 'Displaced' in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

On 15th August 1947, the British divided India into two independent countries, India and Pakistan. A hasty partition on religious lines and the subsequent geopolitical tensions have led to frequent skirmishes on the border between the two. A part of this border that falls in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is home to frequent cross-border gun and mortar fire, which leads to migrations of the border residents to safer places in the interiors of the country multiple times a year. This article is based on field interviews conducted by the authors with these migrants who fall victim to a violent assertion of sovereignty on a daily basis. The displacement and the impoverishment of the border migrants are understood by employing Michael Cernea's Impoverishment Risk, Risk Management and Reconstruction (IRR) model. In light of the

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policy response by the Indian government, it is explored how the IRR model can act as a guide towards making rehabilitation policies for the border migrants.

Key words: India-Pakistan border, involuntary migration, Jammu and Kashmir, displacement, armed conflict.

Introduction

Historically, borders have been regarded as a tool in the hands of a state to assert, maintain, and spread political power (Brambilla & Jones, 2020). Deployment of the military at borders is common if 'two neighbouring states do not share friendly relations' (Sangra, 2014). The India-Pakistan border is a typical example. The 3323 kilometres long hostile and heavily guarded border is marked by a barbed-wire fence. It is an example of what Oscar Martinez (1994) calls 'alienated borderlands', for there exists a physical barrier, a barbed-wire fence, that prevents interaction between them due to animosity. It is 'beset with exercise of sovereignty and territoriality with severe control and surveillance' (Meena, 2019). These deployments often turn violent when there is a rise in diplomatic tensions between the two countries and both sides resort to gun and mortar firing.

Borders are fundamental to a state's security, economy, identity, and geopolitics (Shahriar, Qian, & Kea, 2020). But for the residents on the India-Pakistan border, the border creates a situation of insecurity that makes even everyday life difficult. Wilhelm Van Schendel (2004) looks at the India-Bangladesh 'border as a landscape of fear, originating in partition, where both civilians and state personnel fall victim to violence almost on a daily basis.' The same stands true of the India-Pakistan border. 'It is the border fencing which is in one way ensuring the security to more than 1.2 billion Indians but at the same time depriving and pushing back many of our own country people in a situation of threat and insecurity' (Datta, 2018). Uncertainty that prevails on

both sides of the border because of sudden government orders for evacuation multiple times a year disrupts physical, social and economic safety nets. These frequent migrations, coupled with poor health and physical infrastructure, push the border residents into a state of marginalisation and impoverishment.

A brief history of the conflict on the India-Pakistan border

At midnight of 15th August 1947, a hasty partition struck British India, resulting in two independent nations - India and Pakistan. As poorly planned as it was, it showed little concern for the historically established large population and, within months, left behind a trail of unimaginable destruction and bloodshed, with at least one million dead and ten million displaced (Chaturvedi, 2005). It was 'not one partition, not even two, nor even three...but several partitions...of several territories, several units, several solidarities, several identities, several entities, and several visions' (Samaddar, 2005). An armed attack from the Pakistani side within two months of partition led to the creation of the disputed region of Pakistan Occuppied Kashmir (POK) and Line of Control (LoC). The LoC today separates POK from a part of the Indian Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir. The UT, thus, came to have two kinds of border with Pakistan; the disputed LoC and the International Border (IB) established at the time of partition.

After the LoC was drawn, India and Pakistan became the fiercest geopolitical rivals and have fought three wars ever since i.e. in 1965, 1971 and 1999. These wars and the intermittent rise in tensions on the border became the prime reason for migrations on the border. The tensions on the border also escalated in the wake of the attack on Indian parliament in 2001, pushing both sides to put a ceasefire arrangement in place in 2003. Peace did not last long as the year 2005 witnessed the first violation of the ceasefire, leading to a watershed in the number of violations in 2008 following the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks which marked a low in India-Pakistan diplomatic relations. Security forces on both sides suffered multiple casualties.

The year 2008 onwards, ceasefire violations on the border have touched a new high almost every subsequent year, as can be gauged from the data on ceasefire violations in Table 1. So much so, that some families now keep a small bag always packed just in case they have to rush for safety. The first Indian civilian casualty to the ceasefire violations post 2003 was reported in 2010. Subsequently, such incidents have been on the rise, and people have had to migrate multiple times a year, for up to fifteen days at a time. In September 2016, over 20,000 people migrated due to heavy cross-border fire in the wake of the surgical strikes conducted inside PoK by the Indian Army (IANS, 2016). In May 2018, 40,000 people migrated (IANS, 2018). Suraj Dev, a respondent, says,

> Since 2008, the situation on the border has not been peaceful. Migrations have become very frequent and sudden. We have had to migrate at least twice every year since then. The cross-border fire that occurred on 23rd May 2018 was terrifying. We usually migrate for three to four days, but at that time, we had to migrate for 15 days.[1]

While diplomatic setbacks between the two countries take a visible toll, important domestic political announcements also sometimes lead to repercussions for the border residents as more often than not they are accompanied by a ramping up of cross-border fire. For instance, India embarked on an ambitious project to fence its borders with Pakistan, first a single-wired fence in 1986 and then a composite barbed-wire fence in 2002. However, the construction of the fence was not very peaceful as heightened cross-border fire was witnessed during the construction years. A respondent Ram Prasad mentioned during an interview:

> When the fence construction began in 1986, every village on the border was evacuated by the government. We had to migrate twice. Once, the firing went on continuously for six hours. I remember there were a few deaths also and massive loss of cattle and property. In the year 1987, a war-like situation was created on the border.[2]

In another instance, the Indian government abolished Article 370 of the Constitution of India and divided the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories *viz* Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, on 5th August 2019. This led to the worst ceasefire violations since the year 2003. Of the total 3,479 ceasefire violations in the year 2019, 1,586 were post 5th August 2019 (PIB, 2020). During this year, eighteen civilians and nineteen security personnel lost their lives on the Indian side, while 127 civilians and 122 security personnel were injured.

Table 1

Data on Cease-fire violations on International Border/LoC between India and Pakistan*

Year	No. of Cease-fire Violations	Civilians Killed	Security Force Personnel Killed	Security Force Personnel Injured	Civilians Injured
2010	70	2	5	20	1
2011	62	0	3	7	1
2012	114	2	4	9	3
2013	347	0	5	33	26
2014	583	14	3	28	101
2015	405	16	10	26	71
2016	449	13	13	99	83
2017	971	12	19	72	79
2018	2140	30	29	116	143
2019	3479	18	19	122	127
2020	2952	15	8	62	38
Total	**11572**	**122**	**118**	**594**	**673**

**Data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, in response to an RTI application filed by an RTI activist Raman Sharma. Available at: https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net/line-of-conflict-over-8500-ceasefire-violations-claim-119-lives-on-loc-ib-in-three-years*

Methodology and IRR Model

This study was conducted in 2019-2020 on the International Border in the Kathua district of UT of Jammu and Kashmir. With a population of 615,711 (ORGCCI, 2011), the district has 512 villages. Out of these, 23 lie along the India-Pakistan border and have a population of 7,268. These are those villages where the people own land adjoining the international border with Pakistan. In this article, these villages have been called 'border villages' and their residents' border residents'. Five border villages, all located within 500 meters of the border, were surveyed by the authors. These are *Bobia, Bhati Mehru, Chan Tanda, Krohl Krishna,* and *Maniari.* In-depth interviews with the border residents yielded the empirical data for this study. The narratives and stories of the border residents were analysed to gauge the effect of the border on them. The people of these villages are very wary of strict government surveillance in border areas, and hence their names have been changed.

The authors tried to scope and place the border residents in International Law relating to the migration of people due to armed conflict. These people did not fit the criteria to be refugees as they have not crossed an international border. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) include those who 'have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence' (UN Human Rights Council definition). Most researchers on IDPs (Lee, 1996; Van Hear, 2000; Davenport, Moore, & Poe, 2003; Gillard, 2005; Ehrkamp, 2016; and Cantor, 2018) cite only those examples where people have migrated for an extended period of time, say one year or more. The border residents, however, are also internally displaced as they fit the new criteria which have taken 'the definition of displacement beyond its usual acceptation as geographic relocation, to include also occupational and economic dislocation not necessarily accompanied by the physical (geographic) relocation of the local users' (Cernea, 2006).

This article attempts to understand the impoverishment of the border residents by utilising Michael Cernea's Impoverishment

Risk, Risk Management and Reconstruction (IRR) model as a diagnostic and prescriptive tool (Cernea, 1997). Cernea outlined eight risks associated with displacement *viz* landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, food insecurity, marginalisation, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property resources, and community disarticulation. While he gave this model to understand the impoverishment processes in development induced displacement, Abhimanyu Datta's (2018) research has shown that the model can be used in border areas as well. In the discussion that follows, each impoverishment aspect given by Cernea is identified and remedies suggested in case of the border residents.

Living the border life: Applying Michael Cernea's IRR Model

The border residents of Jammu and Kashmir have become pawns in the violent exercise of sovereignty from both sides. The risks identified by Michael Cernea (1997) are amplified for them as they are risk-averse at their homes as well as migrant camps.

1. *Landlessness*

As much as sixty per cent of the population of the border villages depends directly on agriculture for survival. 'The military border fencing', however, 'separated 15,000 people from their land in Jammu and Kashmir State in 2009' (IDMC, 2010). The border residents used to cultivate their lands adjoining the border twice a year for Paddy and Wheat until 1986 (exceptions being the war years of 1947, 1962, 1965, and 1971). But as the fence construction on the Indo-Pak border started, cross border firing disrupted the farming pattern. Also, the fence was constructed 150-200 meters inside the Indian territory leading to quite a chunk of land being left across the fence. In the Kathua district alone, 520 hectares of land have been left across the fence. This land belongs to seventeen out of the twenty three border villages. Out of the 520 hectares, people of *Bhati Mehru* own fifteen hectares, *Bobia* 117 hectares, *Chan Tanda* fifty-five hectares, *Krohl Krishna* fifteen hectares, and *Maniari* twenty hectares.

This has alienated the people from their traditional livelihood. Until the erection of a permanent fence started in 2002, people were allowed to cultivate the land across the fence under the watch of security forces. But since 2002, the cultivation of the land across the fence has come to a halt. Sanjhi Ram, a farmer who owns eight hectares of land, five of which are across the fence, thus observed:

> From the unfortunate year of 1986 till today, we have been facing problems in the proper cultivation of our lands. I don't remember having an adequate harvest for both crops (wheat and paddy) in any year since then. From the Kargil war (1999) till 2002, I could get only two crops from my land across the fence, and none after that.[3]

2. *Joblessness*

The quality of education in the border villages has been marred by various factors mentioned later in this discussion. This reflects in the border residents' ability to get jobs. For instance, in the recruitment of 120 Special Police Officers (SPOs) in the Kathua district in 2020, only five from border villages could make it, even though the minimum qualification required was only tenth grade. Dilbagh Kumar, a respondent, remarked rather succinctly:

> Completing a 10+2 standard education is a privilege in our village. And even if someone somehow does complete it, he is not able to get a job. After all, they never got a chance at a proper education. There are only two government servants in our entire village, both constables; one in police and the other in the Army.[4]

Under such conditions, a permanent out-migration has started in border villages. These are mostly those who have jobs and do not depend upon farming for their livelihood. Those who can get a job outside the border areas vacate their houses and move to nearby towns. Saagar Singh, a farmer, recounted his experience:

> As many as twenty-five households have migrated out of our village permanently. Those who have jobs can afford to migrate. We depend on our land to survive. We have no

> other option but to live here unless the government provides us alternate land for cultivation, somewhere far from the border.[5]

Small businesses also suffer equally from the cross-border fire. Saajan Kumar, a shopkeeper, observed, 'My shop has been hit multiple times in the recent cross border fire. I have barely received any compensation for it.'[6] When asked how badly it was hit, he immediately rushed to pull down the steel-shutter of his shop. Unfortunately, the shutter was just a namesake. You could easily reach out through the big holes caused by mortars and grab items from inside the shop.

3. *Homelessness*

A home is meant to be a safe place that protects people from the environment and the weather. It is, however, not so for the border residents. They are the victims of a unique kind of displacement. Even when they have permanent houses, they are forced to migrate to safe places in the interiors of the country multiple times a year. As a result, they live a life of uncertainty as they do not know which days they will be spending in their home and which at migrant camps. Many border residents also do not have adequate housing, especially those belonging to the *Gujjar* tribal community who still live in thatched-roof houses that provide little or no protection against cross border fire. Severe mortar shellings damage the houses on the border and the residents have to spend their already meagre income on repairs of the broken walls and ceilings. Sohan Lal, a respondent, recalled the losses he had incurred rather graphically:

> The ceiling of my home has a hole from the mortar shelling last year. I haven't had the money to repair the damage ever since. In summers, we almost forget about it, but the winter was very hard. I do not even know if I should even get the damage repaired; who knows when my house will be hit again.[7]

4. *Food insecurity*

The peasantry in India, in general, has been facing an unprecedented crisis due to declining income and rising agricultural costs for the past few decades (Gill & Gill, 2006). Added to these woes is the man-made misery imposed on the farmers in the border belt. 'The affected farmers attend to their fields with prayers on their lips and hearts in their mouths' (Sekhon, 2014). Cultivable land ensures food security for the border residents. However, this is disrupted mainly due to four reasons. *Firstly*, when mortar shells fall on the ground, they destroy the crops within a certain radius. *Secondly*, when the residents migrate, their fields are left unattended. *Thirdly*, when there is tension on the border, people are not allowed to tend to their fields close to the fence. If the tension escalates, the defence forces lay down land mines in the fields, damaging any standing crops. Moreover, people cannot tend to their fields when mines have been laid down. Take the following instance.

In the wake of the terrorist attack of 2001, a war-like situation was created at the Indo-Pak border. Both sides had mobilised their defence forces, and the border residents were asked to migrate. At that time, the standing wheat crop was nearing harvesting season, but the farmers were not allowed to go to their fields. The Army laid down mines in the border areas, damaging the standing crop. While the deployment continued for about one and a half years, it took another year for the fields to be cleared of mines. Sarvanand, a respondent, observed:

> When the firing occurs, it might be the right time to irrigate our crops or put fertiliser. If not done on time, we have a meagre harvest. Sometimes, we have to migrate when it's time to harvest our crops. By the time we return, the crop is destroyed.[8]

Fourthly the farmers are not allowed to have a crop of their choice. The farmers on the border have been cultivating the 'Basmati' variety of rice for many generations. These villages are part of the

region that holds the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for this variety. This variety of paddy sometimes attains a height of up to four and a half feet, and the security forces do not allow its cultivation very close to the border, citing security concerns. Ramesh Kumar, a respondent, shared his dilemmas thus:

> We would have never thought twenty years ago that we will not be allowed to cultivate our own lands, that we will not be able to decide what crops to grow, that we will not be able to tend to our fields when we want. Now that it is happening, we don't see a very bright future for ourselves. People have started looking for other odd jobs in nearby towns. After all, it's all about survival.[9]

5. Marginalisation

The India-Pakistan border is 'paradoxically one of the most guarded areas by the army and the most neglected by the administration' (Kaur, 2010). Human development indicators paint a bleak picture in the absence of good schools, health centres, and skill development centres. All this, coupled with erratic power supply, bad roads and unreliable public transport, push the border residents into a state of marginalisation. India does not have a central policy or agency to protect people in situations of armed conflict. This makes it difficult to estimate the conflict induced migrations (IDMC, 2010). The onus of response in such a situation usually falls upon the state governments. Different states have responded differently, given the limited resources and jurisdiction at their disposal.

The central government has a Border Area Development Programme (BADP) to provide funds for building infrastructure like roads, schools, health centres, common service centres, skill development centres, etc., for people living up to fifty kilometres from the border, with a preference for people upto ten kilometres (MHA, 2020). However, the affluent villages farther away from the border corner the scheme's benefits more than the border villages. A report by the NITI Aayog highlighted the problem of political intervention by local Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs)

and Members of Parliament (MPs) (NITI Aayog, 2015). The report also found that the government of Jammu and Kashmir utilised as much as forty five per cent of the 117 Crore worth of funds from 2007-08 to 2010-2011 from BADP for education and health alone, but the results remained negligible. The report by NITI Aayog also stated that in fifty per cent of the states covered, the allocated funds were not adequate. Pavitar Sharma, a respondent, observed:

> Nowhere beyond a distance of three to four kilometres is the effect of the cross-border fire felt. The influential villages corner any schemes which are meant to be implemented at the border. The bigger and already more developed Panchayats (local self-government institutions) get funds from other sources as well, while we do not. We only get the remnants of the funds. You must have seen the pathetic conditions of life here.[10]

6. *Increased morbidity and mortality*

As many as 122 civilians have lost their lives to cross border fire from the year 2010 to 2020. As many as 673 civilians were injured during the same period (Table 1). However, a Community Health Centre (CHC) with basic first-aid facilities exists only in seven out of the twenty three border villages. These are *Bobia, Chak Changa, Chan Lal Din, Kandiyal, Loundhi, Pansar,* and *Rathua.* Moreover, none of the twenty three border villages has access to a secondary health facility within fifteen kilometres (ORGCCI, 2011). This, combined with poor roads and public transportation, spirals up the problem manifold.

Michael Cernea's 'differential risk intensities' (2004) analyses how children and women are the worst sufferers in cases of displacement. On the one hand, children find it challenging to move to positions of relative safety in times of cross-border fire, and on the other, their hearing is affected by loud sounds. Also, it is nearly impossible to get medical help if a child falls sick or a woman undergoes labour pain amidst cross-border fire or at night. They are also vulnerable in times of migration to poorly managed

government camps. Sarita Devi, a respondent, recalled the multiple challenges of living in such camps:

> In government camps, life isn't as good as the administration portrays. It is complicated for us women because there is no privacy, no proper bathrooms or sanitary facilities. Those who have well off relatives migrate to their homes; we can't even do that. We have no other option but to stay in the camps.[11]

7. *Loss of access to common property resources*

Since the fence was constructed several hundred metres inside the Indian territory, it disconnected the border residents from the common property resources beyond the fence. These include but not limited to natural water channels, grazing fields, cultivable land, and forest resources. This kind of loss is also not compensated for by the government schemes. The imminent danger of cross border firing also restricts access to the resources on the Indian side. A linked risk is the loss of access to public services like education and health facilities (Mathur, 1997). The fence construction has also led to the severing of trade connections across the border. Atma Ram, a respondent, recounted his woes thus:

> For generations, we had been utilising the resources that today lie beyond the fence. Even after partition, we were allowed access to them. But the fence has changed the equation altogether. Our lands lie across the fence, and there is a water channel across the border in the village (mentions the name of a Pakistani village) that we used for irrigating our fields. Child, we even used to trade small items with them through barter.[12]

Another respondent, Shashi Bhushan, observed:

> We are hopeful that we will be compensated for the losses we bear for being on the border, one day. One day there will be better health care and education for us. But I don't think we will ever be compensated for what's left beyond the fence.[13]

8. Social disarticulation

The border residents, as a community, have been deprived of everyday joys like the celebration of festivals. Religious festivals invoving music and crackers have now become a silent affair. People from the interiors do not wish to visit their relatives in the border areas, especially during festivities. For instance, during a visit to village *Maniari* three days before *Diwali*, the festival of lights and crackers, the people did not seem very enthusiastic. On inquiry, Bachan Singh, a respondent, shared his experience rather despondently:

> The enthusiasm of Diwali has been taken away from us for many years. The administration will ask us to either go into a complete blackout (i.e. not to keep any lights on during the night) or not burst any crackers. They say it will make us the target of cross-border firing from the Pakistani side. They are right too. Every year the Pakistani side ramps up firing during the days approaching Diwali. But what is Diwali without lights and crackers![14]

The stories of such problems being faced by the border residents have not stayed within the border regions. Society at large understands that life is difficult in the border villages (Kaur, 2014). This has created family and marriage problems for border residents as well. Sat Paul, a respondent, remarked thus:

> Nobody is ready to give their daughters in marriage to our sons. People are fearful for their daughters due to frequent firing incidents. Several marriages have failed when brides refuse to live under the torture of constant loud sounds of bullets and mortars.[15]

9. Education

Mahapatra (1996) has suggested that 'to the eight-fold impoverishment risk model one may add the educational loss affecting children.' Such losses are quotidian for the border residents on four grounds; *one*, the schools on the border are closed in times of cross-border fire; *two*, students are unable to attend

schools when they have migrated; *three*, there are no proper roads or public transport to ferry them to better schools; and *four*, there is no internet facility due to security concerns. Moreover, to maintain efficiency, schools with small enrolment numbers have been clubbed together and many have been shut down. For instance, primary schools have been shut down in *Bobia, Chak Gojar, Chan Tanda, Krohl Krishna, Krohl Matherian, Loundhi, Maniari, Panjgrain Brahmana,* and *Rathua* among the border villages. There is only one village, *Kandiyal,* out of twenty three with a secondary school (tenth grade) and no village with a senior secondary school (twelfth grade).

Added to this is the mental trauma associated with loud firing sounds. Take the following instance. The nearest school for the children of *Bobia* village is the Government Middle School at village *Ladwal,* at a distance of about two kilometres. This school has its back towards the fence, which is not more than a kilometre away. In the cross-border fire that followed the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, bullets hit the walls of the classrooms of this school, and the school was closed for almost six months. However, on the initiative of a local MLA, an earthen wall was later built behind the school to protect it from cross-border fire. Such is the situation in which the children of these villages are getting their education.

Cernea's Resettlement model: popular demands and government response

In 1992, a Border Welfare Committee (BWC) was set up by one Nanak Chand to give voice to the demands of the border residents. This committee is a registered organisation and currently led by Mr Bharat Bhushan of village *Krohl Krishna.* This committee has actively raised the voice of the border residents since its inception. Some of its demands have been met, while most have not been (Pathak, 2016). The following discussion analyses the government's response to the popular demands in light of the resettlement model given by Michael Cernea. It has to be

understood that only a comprehensive rehabilitation approach can bring the border residents into the mainstream, and a cost-benefit approach is bound to fail.

1. *From landlessness to land-based re-establishment, from homelessness to house reconstruction and from food insecurity to adequate nutrition*

The issue of landlessness, homelessness and food insecurity can be solved through land allocation and compensation. A major demand has been regarding compensation for the land which the government of India has acquired on the border for various defence purposes. For example, a forty four-foot wide strip of land was acquired all along the border to construct the temporary fence in 1986, and a strip of 135 feet was acquired to build the barbed-wire fence in 2002. The land was also acquired for at least four other defence purposes; *one*, the construction of Border Out Posts (BOPs) for the Border Security Force (BSF); *two*, the construction of approaching roads for the BOPs and the fence; *three*, the construction of Ditch-cum-Bandh (DCB - a defence structure); and *four*, the construction of bunkers for military use during war times. Except for purpose *one*, people have not received compensation for any of the other acquisitions. While the land used for the construction of Ditch-cum-Bandh was taken on rent by the government, no rent has been paid since 1996. Added to this is the land being wasted due to the still-standing temporary fence constructed in 1986. For instance, the old dilapidated fence stands for seven kilometres between villages *Thaggali* and *Maniari*. Proper compensation for the acquired land and alternate land for cultivation would solve 'landlessness' and 'food insecurity'.

Another demand of the border residents is to provide them with a five-*marla* (1,360 sq ft) land plot away from the border to shift their homes. Such land plots have already been given to the people living on the LoC as it solves the problem of 'homelessness'. The government, instead, is building concrete bunkers for every household to use as shelter during sudden firing (NDTV, 2018). Though such a demand was never made, people welcome the

initiative, but are not very impressed by the way it is being implemented. The idea was to build bunkers within the courtyard of each house so that it can be accessed quickly in times of firing. But since every household did not have that kind of land, the idea was extended to have land within fifty meters from the house, then to hundred, then 200, and so on. Tilak Raj, a respondent, has the following story to tell:

> We have never put forth the demand for a bunker. Today there is a bunker in our village that has been built half a kilometre away from the family's house. How is one supposed to reach that bunker when it's raining bullets and mortars? Moreover, a bunker is only a temporary solution. Families cannot stay in bunkers every night.[16]

2. *From joblessness to re-employment*

Poor quality education and a lack of employable skills are the primary reasons for unemployment in the border villages. There exists a scheme for constructing skill development centres under the BADP programme, but funds have barely been allocated for the purpose. In group discussions with the border residents, it was found that they have been demanding specialised boarding schools for their children on lines of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (boarding schools of the Indian government) where there children can study safely and unaffected by the daily trauma. Another solution is the long standing demand to hold special recruitment rallies of the Army and Border Security Force for the border youth. Standing on a newly-built bridge on the river *Tarnah*, overlooking the Pakistani side, Jagan Nath, a respondent (aged 79), observed rather pithily:

> Where will we go, my child! We have been living here for years. We will live here and die here. If our children get educated and achieve something in their lives, it would be enough for us.[17]

The government of Jammu and Kashmir announced conditional reservation in jobs and higher education for the border residents in

2019. This reservation was to be given to people residing up to six kilometres from the border and has therefore not met with much enthusiasm on the part of the border residents. While the Government of India originally released a list of seventy three villages that would fall under the reserved category in Kathua district, the list now approaches a hundred. This has generated a fear that the reservation benefits would be cornered by affluent villages away from the border which do not experience the everyday violent reality of the border. In response to this, the BWC has submitted a memorandum to the UT government to use a GPS-based calculation of distance and restrict the reservation to three kilometres to benefit the actual sufferers. Jangi Ram, a respondent, questioned the rationale of such a reservation policy thus:

> We who live on the zero line from the border have been granted a reservation that will also apply to villages six kilometres away. People living six kilometres from the border barely even hear the sound of bullets and mortars, let alone experience the constant torture. Even the camps that the government shifts us to in firing for safety are within six kilometres. How does the government justify this? This is just vote-bank politics.[25]

3. *From social disarticulation to community reconstruction, from marginalisation to social inclusion, and from expropriation to restoration of community assets*

One of the solutions for community reconstruction is to compensate people for the loss of cattle and property. Milch and draught cattle domesticated by the border residents are often killed during cross border fire. Also, when people migrate, their cattle are left behind to bear the brunt. The death of these animals is compensated at nominal rates fixed by the government. However, these rates fail to justify the loss of income for the victims like milkmen or horse-cart owners. Also, the damages caused to the houses of people are meagrely compensated. Bua Ditta, a respondent, observed thus:

> We are compensated only for the actual material required for repairs of our homes damaged in firing. The government does not consider that once a mortar shell has hit our roof, it is so shaken that it starts seeping in the rainy season even if it doesn't seem broken.[19]

Some analysts have suggested that the government intends to use civilian damages as a counter against Pakistan at international forums (Roy, 2019). Nonetheless, the sufferers are the border residents in a violently imposed backwardness. In such an atmosphere, a prerequisite for the restoration of community assets is peace. There is a need to hold public outreach campaigns to establish trust in the border residents' minds and acquaint them with various growth opportunities. Given the socio-economic underdevelopment that they face, the border residents have been placing two significant demands before the government on the development front; one, the criteria for the utilisation of the BADP funds be changed and limited to a shorter distance from the border, and two, the proposals that the border Panchayats regularly send under the BADP program be respected. There is also a need to establish new common property resources like hospitals and schools, and restore the exisiting community assets like grazing grounds and irrigation channels. These solutions, coupled with that of reservation above, can help bring the border residents out from a state of marginalisation.

4. *From increased morbidity to better health care*

Daily cross-border firings at night were going on at the time of conducting these interviews. The Indian government is constructing an earthen defence wall (10-12 feet high) just along the fence. This wall, called *Tussi* by the local people, is being built to act as a barrier to bullets from across the border. However, as the construction of this wall progresses, cross-border fire has followed along to disrupt/protect the wall's construction, as is the case for any other defence installation. Thus, the border residents are at risk of getting hit by cross-border fire at any time of the day. When an article was published regarding this in a local newspaper, a 24x7

bulletproof ambulance was stationed at the centre of a few villages (Dixit, 2019), but was recalled within a week. While a bulletproof ambulance can be a temporary solution, a fully equipped health centre in the centre of clusters of few border villages each, with first aid and medical consultation facilities, is needed in the long run.

Conclusion

The Indian state has been failing the border residents domestically as well as internationally. While the construction of an earthen wall does give some respite from cross-border fire, the search for a peaceful life remains a pipe dream. The absence of a dedicated government policy or an agency for the border residents coupled with the slow rate of compensation reflects upon the ad-hoc nature of the state in the border villages. Moreover, the daily violence on the border triggers a direct violation of the fundamental human rights of the border residents, like the right to life, right to food, right to livelihood, right to an adequate standard of living, right to health, and right to housing among others. The government needs to step up its efforts to provide a better life to the border residents. A beginning to mitigate their woes can be made by accepting the demands that they have been raising for decades. Fulfilment of these demands in line with Cernea's rehabilitation model will help bring the border residents out of a state of socio-economic poverty.

The prerequisite for lasting peace on the border is diplomatic endeavours of both the countries that go beyond just a ceasefire agreement because no matter which side fires the first bullet, people on both sides of the border suffer alike. The peace process between India and Pakistan, which has been de-railed since 2016, needs to get back on track. This can eradicate the root cause and help establish peace on both sides of the border. Towards the conclusion of fieldwork, the authors visited a fortified Border Out Post (BOP) of the Border Security Force, about 500 meters from the fence. After being introduced to the guard by a resident and a

security check, they were asked to wait to meet the officer-in-charge. '*Sahab* has not been able to sleep last night. He is agitated about the firing situation', said the guard. After about half an hour, they were called to meet the officer. Though the officer did not respond to many of their questions due to cited security concerns, he did say, 'Peace is the best fence.'[20]

Endnotes

1. Based on an interview at village *Chan Tanda* on 12th December 2019.
2. Based on an interview at village *Krohl Krishna* on 3rd November 2019.
3. Based on an interview at village *Bobia* on 8th August 2019.
4. Based on an interview at village *Bhati Mehru* on 13th September 2019.
5. Based on an interview at village *Bobia* on 27th June 2019.
6. Based on an interview at village *Bobia* on 18th April 2019.
7. Based on an interview at village *Bhati Mehru* on 15th June 2019.
8. Based on an interview at village *Maniari* on 13th October 2019.
9. Based on an interview at village *Chan Tanda* on 14th May 2019.
10. Based on an interview at village *Bhati Mehru* on 26th September 2019.
11. Based on an interview at village *Maniari* on 2nd March 2019.
12. Based on an interview at village Chan Tanda on 16th March 2019.
13. Based on an interview at village Maniari on 10th February 2019.
14. Based on an interview at village *Maniari* on 25th October 2019.
15. Based on an interview at village *Chan Tanda* on 29th April 2019.
16. Based on an interview at village *Krohl Krishna* on 16th November 2019.
17. Based on an interview at another border village Ladwal, on 26th September 2019.
18. Based on an interview at village *Maniari* on 19th October 2019.
19. Based on an interview at village *Bobia* on 14th August 2019.
20. Based on an interview with the officer in charge of a BSF Border Out Post on 29th December 2019.

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Bazaars of 17th Century Shahjahanabad as Spatial, Symbolic and Cultural Spaces

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Introduction

The growth and development of the city of Shahjahanabad reflected a dynamic process of social and economic transformation where the planned expansion of the capital city played a significant role for the first time in the seventeenth century. It was in Shahjahanabad that one could discern the process of establishment of markets as a social space, where each category of the market carried out a specialized socio-economic function through which it integrated itself with the more prominent politico-administrative structures of the Empire and became an integral part of an urban development process that gave distinct identity to the city and established a benchmark to be followed and emulated from hereon in the other subas (provinces). In planning the city, the Mughal Emperor ensured the creation of common open and semi-covered public spaces that included bazaars as commercial spaces apart from gardens, religious monuments and dargahs (sufi shrine). Retail space reflected the maturity of market

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relations as they became the centres of social interaction. People belonging to heterogeneous cultural groups came together to exchange commodities and capital and live in the vicinity, giving the bazaars a distinctive socio-cultural shape and structure that added a new chapter in the history of Delhi. This established an intangible web of growth and development in the city's internal dynamics that later assisted in evolving a distinct Delhi culture based on new patterns of social interactions, structures and ideologies.

Spatial Spread of Shahjahanabad

The rapid pace at which Shahjahanabad got populated from 1648 onwards and integrated with the Mughal economy was based on many factors that were taken into account when selecting the city as a geographical space for the development of the new walled imperial capital of the Mughal Empire[1]. The spatial history of Delhi had already witnessed myriad ways of development, with 600 years of urban history extending from the period of Rajput rule to the Lodi dynasty[2]. Shahjahan had not invaded this city. It was already an integral part of the Empire and its imperial history. However, when he shifted the capital city, the Emperor assisted in the development of a new spatial spread. He initiated a new method of dialogue among varied cultural groups through built architecture.

The difference was that the site chosen for the new city of Shahjahanabad was at a new space at a significant distance from the earlier cities of Delhi but close to Salimgarh, Firozabad, Humayun's tomb and Dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya. It was planned on a grand imperial scale, never seen before in the early modern period of Indian history. This imperial vision included the

[1] Bernier, Francois. (1989). Travels in the Mughal Empire AD 1656-1668. Low Price Publications, Delhi: 249

[2] Frykenberg, R.E. (1986.) Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society, Delhi.

plan to make the city the Centre of the Mughal Universe and ink the name of Shahjahan into annals of Indian history as one of the greatest who successfully integrated the politico-administrative forces with economic and financial needs of the royal family, ruling classes and the other elites that attracted merchants, traders, scholars, skilled and unskilled labour classes to become specialized residents of the new urban society.[3] The rise and expansion of the Mughal State into an Empire represented by ethnocultural and administrative complexity of the Mughal umara (bureaucracy), along with the development of the varied forms of cultural traditions, meant a period of development of hybrid structures and this hybridity was manifested in the city and bazaars of the Shahjahanabad. With its well-connected internal and external trade linkages, as Delhi was near the Yamuna-Sutlej and in the northwest close to the Yamuna-Ganga doab region, the city could secure an abundant supply of agricultural produce to meet the needs of the city dwellers.[4] The river Yamuna not only provided security to the Qila-i Mubarak (the palace city) but being an easily navigable river, the boats and ships being the most inexpensive form of transportation of goods, could supply essential goods and other commodities from the borderland of the Gangetic plains along with the well-laid out imperial roads and highways with sarais and kos miners (distance markers) that connected the newly established city with the prominent Subas (provinces) of the Empire. The extensive usage of water and land routes indicated the growth of integrated market network systems inside and outside the capital city. The ruler and the ruling classes used the available technological advancements in building activities by hiring specialized skilled labour classes that further provided an economic impetus to the city's growth and market economy.[5]

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[3] Bernier, Travels, I, p. 282.

[4] Naqvi, Hamida Khatoon. (2002). Shahjahanabad, The Mughal Delhi, 1638-1803: An Introduction. In Delhi Omnibus, 57-58.

[5] Chenoy, Shama Mitra (1998). Shahjahanabad: A City of Delhi, 1638-1857. New Delhi.

Another essential factor to consider is that the city was one of the largest in the seventeenth century, witnessing the rapid migration of specialized labour classes, merchants and traders. These elements gave the new capital a unique and intangible identity, making it a more vibrant and advanced walled city. The establishment of this new city assisted in developing new social-economic systems of urban development where religious boundaries were easily blurred to secure profits through active participation in the bazaar economy. The city eventually evolved into a culturally hybrid city where the movement of people and commodities and the spread of new cultural ideas rapidly generated enough capital resources and accumulation. The city also made the exchange system of products and capital more complex by developing bills of exchange, insurance and investment in craft and industrial activities by the ruler, ruling classes and individuals.[6]

City's Symbolisms

This new city established a symbiotic relationship between the three centres of power, with Qila-i Mubarak (the palace city) representing the politico-military space that also maintained dynastic legitimacy and political prestige of the Mughals; religious institutions and symbolisms like mosques, dargahs (sufi shrines), tombs, temples and ghats (river banks) that also represented the spiritual-religious realm of the Empire providing social legitimacy to the Mughal dynasty, especially after the construction of Jami Masjid along with madrasas and hospitals; and finally the bazaars that infused the economic spirit.[7] Development of bazaars established layers of integrative economic forces that bound the

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[6] Chenoy, Shama Mitra. (2004). Shahjahanabad: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries Symphony, Identities, Plurality. NMML. Monograph, 8. New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

[7] Echlers, Eckart, and Thomas Krafft. (1993). Shahjahanabad, Old Delhi: Traditions and Colonial Change. Stuttgart: F. Steiner.

merchant classes, ruling classes and royalty into a cohesive whole. In this sense, the city showcased a hierarchical transition from public to private spaces where the Palace, Havelis (villas) and houses of the general public became the private realm. In contrast, the city's public space consisted of bazaars, religious institutions, mohallas,[8] waras,[9] chattas,[10] katras,[11] kuchas[12] and madrasas (educational institutions).[13]

The age of the city's development coincided with a high point of Indo-Islamic cultural development as politically dominant communities came to identify themselves with the Mughal Persian culture.[14] In this predominantly Mughal cultural period, there was a gradual spread and growth of Braj bhasha. Its roots now extended to the Mughal court due to marriage alliances with Rajput princesses. Therefore, the city's demographic profile varied, ranging from royalty to bureaucrats, administrative personnel, religious scholars, mercantile classes, indigenous and foreign, artisans, servants and enslaved people. While the royalty and bureaucrats controlled the most desired spaces in the city, the city's core, where bazaars were situated, was inhabited by the general population. The heart of this city was divided based on the nature of the bazaar and the profession adopted by different classes living in the localities (mohallas). The town's spatial division of mohallas or localities was based on occupations. This fact is provided in the accounts of the foreign travellers who

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[8] Localities where the same professional or caste groups resided and traded

[9] Where a small lane could be a street or an alley

[10] Covered passage to carry out manufacturing

[11] An enclosed area with gates where people lived and had warehouses

[12] Street or lane

[13] Blake, Stephen P. (1991). Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1659-1739. Cambridge.

[14] Rezavi, Syed Ali Nadeem. (2011). 'Dynamics of Composite Culture: Evolution of an Urban Social Identity in Mughal India'. Indian History Congress, Vol. 72, Part I: 408-422.

mention the celebration of major religious festivals of different communities. The city had begun to witness the growing popularity of mushaira culture[15], and there are shreds of evidence of collaborative business ventures undertaken by Hindu and Muslim merchants. Before the city's construction, the existing temples remained untouched, and many more were developed by individuals, although ghats for Hindus were relocated as the site was close to the Qila.

The new city attracted varied classes of people. Some influential businessmen shifted into the city from the adjacent regions and built mansions for themselves on the land provided by the Mughal Emperor. There was a hierarchy and specialization based on different functions performed by the respective groups. The other important business community were the jewellers (jawharyan), who were given space to build an entire market, the Dariba or the Jauhari bazaar. The city attracted merchants from distant lands like the Armenians, Persians, and Central Asian merchants and traders. There were also substantial numbers of professional groups-the wholesale traders, shopkeepers, moneychangers-cum-moneylenders involved in fiscal transactions (sarrafs), some of whom had shops near the Qila that signified their importance. The city included gumashtas and dalals (agents and brokers), scholars, painters, good carriers, hordes of skilled and unskilled labour classes and banjaras who were experts in bulk transportation of goods. There were also merchants (beoparis) in the city whose status was equal to master artisans. Abul Fazl placed them below the nobility but above the religious and scholarly classes in his classification of social strata during the reign of Emperor Akbar.[16] The city had shops of vaid, hakims,

[15] This tradition of poetic symposium developed much later in the eighteenth century. Before eighteenth century, it was called Murekhta or Majlis-i Rekhta where Rekhta language was used and this was early form of Urdu language and meant 'scattered' or 'mixed' language with heavy use of Persian words.

[16] Allami, Abul Fazl. (1989). The Ain-i Akbari, Vol. I, translated H. Blochmann, ed. D.C. Phillott. Reprint.

pandits and mullah (physicians and teachers) employed in Maktabs and madrasas (educational institutions). According to Bernier, most merchants lived at the backside of their shops, which were well built and had sufficient space to store commodities, but the display method needed to be better.[17] A very significant uniqueness of the city was that it created liminal space – both aesthetically and professionally. The royal women stepped out into the public areas and contributed to the city's aesthetic urban and economic growth by constructing bazaars, mosques, sarais and gardens. This new development assisted in the structural evolution of the city based on gendered spatial identity and symbolisms.

The categorization and complexity of the bazaar economy reflected the interplay of socio-political factors that assisted in the growth of a workable space for the new urban community bound together by market forces. However, they still managed to retain their distinct socio-religious identities. Therefore, the markets of Shahjahanabad reflected complex political, economic and cultural elements as they significantly contributed to the city's cultural transformation, irrespective of whether this was planned or developed in organic forms and details.[18] These bazaars integrated and assimilated three factors into one cohesive space by bringing together local-regional-external economies of the Empire. The city eventually became the centre of manufacturing, marketing, banking, business activities, and economic linkages with the other regions of the Empire and beyond.[19] In other words, bazaars played a spatial and symbolic role in the process of cultural development

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[17] Bernier, Francois. (1989) Travels in the Mogul Empire AD 1656-1668. Low Price Publications. Delhi: 245-246.

[18] Dale, S.F. (2010). 'Empires and Emporia: Palace, Mosque, Market and Tomb in Istanbul, Isfahan, Agra and Delhi'. Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient, Volume 53, Issue 1: 212-229.

[19] Raychaudhary, Tapan, Irfan Habib, and Dharma Kumar. (1982). The Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol. I, c.1200-1750. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 434.

of the city and made it into a storehouse of economic and political power. Bazaars were, therefore, made into a social-cultural construct essential for the Mughals for the smooth functioning of the urban economy and to keep it safe and secure to maintain market relations and social divisions. In this way, the rise of a walled city operated through the administrative apparatus of the Empire—the safe and secure space assisted in the gradual growth of integrated cultural values, attitudes and mannerisms.

In common parlance, bazaars or markets are spaces where goods and services are exchanged between the buyers and sellers directly or through the agency of intermediaries. According to K.N. Chaudhari, markets represent the economic behaviour of the period and a space where the entire exchange process manifests into a dynamic system. It is also a sociological phenomenon as various social groups enact differentiated functions. This established power differentials and social stratification between the political rulers and merchants, merchants and brokers, and banjaras and peddlers.[29] Taking a cue from here, the bazaars of Shahjahanabad became a geographical space where the sellers competed for local and foreign customers. Products from across the world and within the empire were brought into these bazaars and sold to the buyers based on the cash nexus system. Evidence points to the development of three types of markets: one that trade in goods, financial markets and money markets. The complexity of bazaar forces led to the division of labour as demand for products from the Indian sub-continent reached unprecedented levels in Europe and other parts of the world.

Another essential factor that stimulated the growth of bazaars, according to Irfan Habib, was the usage and circulation of the Mughal imperial tri-metallic coins of excellent uniformity and purity, with the silver rupee as the primary currency to meet the

[29] Chaudhari, K.N. (1994). 'Markets and Traders in India during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, ed., Money and Markets in India 1100-1700, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p.259.

transactional demands of the commercial, fiscal and household economies. From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the monetary metals, especially gold and silver, came into India at their highest levels.[21] Abul Fazl writing in the sixteenth century stated:

> By the help of God's goodness this excellent precious metal [gold] has come to the shore of existence, and filled the store of life without much labour on the part of man. By means of gold, man carries out noble plans and even performs Divine worship in a proper manner. . . .To render it service, God has allowed silver and brass to come into use, thus creating additional means for the welfare of man. Hence just kings and energetic rulers have paid much attention to these metals, and erected mints, where their properties may be thoroughly studied.[22]

According to J.F. Richards, the Mughal monetary system by the eighteenth century had become robust, flexible and long-lasting as the Mughal monetary supply system was based on imports from east and west over both land and maritime routes. Indian goods were in high demand. By the sixteenth century, the inflow of gold and silver from the New World became more intensive in the seventeenth century when precious metals from the Mediterranean came to the Indian Ocean through trade transactions. With the emergence of East India Companies in Europe, they traded for textiles and spices in exchange for precious metals. He goes on to state that this precious metal was converted into imperial coins. The Mughal emperors issued three types – gold coin known as muhr or ashrafi, which was used for hoarding purposes; silver coin for commercial and tax payments in which the percentage of other metals never went above 4% and finally, for

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[21] Habib, Irfan, 'The System of bills of exchange (hundis) in the Mughal Empire', in Chandra, Satish, ed., Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History.

[22] Allami, Abul Fazl. (1989). The Ain-i Akbari, Vol. I, translated H. Blochmann, ed. D.C. Phillott. Reprint. 16-17.

small, petty payments used copper coins. The Mughal coins were subject to specific discounts based on age, and for this purpose, each coin bore the name of the mint and the year of issue. The new coins enjoyed total value compared to the old coins. The Mughal coinage was free as the three metals fluctuated in value in relation to each other. Irfan Habib stated that by 1595, the rupee began to dominate transactions and copper coinage was used only for petty payments. Mughal Empire made hundi system more widespread in nature (as it was in existence from the Sultanate era) that was issued by bankers known as sarrafs (Arabic word) and were also known as Khwastadar (financier) or in the local language as Mahajan. They were handling money movement by using hundis for individuals or institutions. Their services were used not only by the State itself but even by the jagirdars, European traders and trading companies in return for which they received commission or interests. Hundi was used not only as a promissory note but also as a system of bills of exchange.[23]

Moreover, the Mughals collected land revenue in cash, which encouraged market activity and increased demand for cash. Converting agricultural surplus into money led to the commercialization of agriculture, which led to intense circulations of capital from urban-rural areas.[24] According to Aziza Hasan, there was an increase of 200 percent in the seventeenth century in the circulation of silver.[25] Shireen Moosvi comes to the same conclusion, while according to Tapan Raychaudhuri, the growth of population, urbanization, an increase in land revenue demand and

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[23] Habib, Irfan, 'The System of bills of exchange (hundis) in the Mughal Empire', in Chandra, Satish, ed., Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History, p. 208. Prakash, Om, 'Sarrafs, Financial Intermediation and Credit Network in Mughal India', In Cauwenberghe, Van, ed., Money, Coins and Commerce. pp. 473-490.

[24] Chandra, Satish. (1966). 'Some Aspects of the growth of a money economy in India during the seventeenth century'. The Indian Economic and Social History Review, vol. III, (4).

[25] Hasan, Aziza. (1969). "Sliver Currency Output of the Mughal Empire and Prices in India During the 16th and 17th Centuries". Indian Economic and Social History Review. Vol. VI, No. 1. March, pp. 85-116.

volume of commerce began to be witnessed from the seventeenth century. The Mughals paid their troopers, and military officials cash salaries, spent on monument building and luxurious lifestyles, which could not have been possible without money circulation. The Mughal ruling class invested huge fortunes in trade by providing commercial capital to traders and merchants engaged in long-distance trade.[26]

The period saw the development of the hundi system, an indigenous bill of exchange that made monetary transfers easy over long and short distances. According to J.F. Richards, three factors combined in the eighteenth century assisted in the increased velocity of money in circulation – the land revenue on the agricultural productions, the institutionalization of the jagir system and increased commodity sales in the market system.[27] Stephen P. Blake has stated that the circulation of money from rural areas since the Mughals collected agricultural taxes in naqd (cash) stimulated the growth of rural haats (markets) and mandis (wholesale markets) where the peasant sold their produce to secure the money and paid the required sum of taxes to the state. A significant part of the collected taxes was spent on the salaries of the Mughal mansabdars. Still, a large sum of money went back into the rural economy by market forces and moneylenders. The entire process of collecting the taxes assisted in the rise of district towns (pargana) and scores of bigger cities (sarkar) that became the centre of trade and production. This process assisted in the urban growth and growing importance of independent traders and merchants.

This growth of merchant classes and the development of a financial economy was facilitated by the expansion of fiscal

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[26] Raychaudhary, Tapan, Irfan Habib, and Dharma Kumar. (1982). The Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol. I, c.1200-1750. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[27] Richards, John F. (1987). The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

functions across the Empire. This process juxta positioned itself with the increase in grain production and the development of grain marketing networks that facilitated the growth of finance and credit systems. Money was also used to make advance payments for textile manufacturing and encourage cash-crop production in rural areas.

In this manner, by the seventeenth century, the monetary economy had become embedded into the cultural realm of the rural society, evident through the application of the system of weights and measures, land measurement mechanism, and exchange of commodities taking place at the most basic level of the early modern society and according to Frank Perlin, the period from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries witnessed not only the growth of the commercial exchanges between the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia with East Asia but also a wide-ranging, differentiated rise in demand for money along with an increase in manufacturing, agricultural production and exchange of money that facilitated the flow of precious metals to the Indian subcontinent.[28]

The Typology of Bazaars

Scholars have identified three types of bazaars wherein bazaars developed in an organized manner for the royalty and the ruling classes. At the same time, the rest of the common markets grew organically over time.[29] The division of bazaars into three broad categories depended on three factors – the first primarily being the number of customers and classes it catered to, followed by the size of the market, and finally, the variety of goods and services the market offered to its customers.

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[28] Perlin, Frank. (1986). 'Monetary Revolution and Societal Change in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Times: A Review Article'. Journal of Asian Studies, Vol XLV, No. 5.

[29] Rezavi, Syed Ali Nadeem. (2015). 'Bazars and markets in medieval India'. Studies in People's History, 2, 1;61-70.

Central Bazaars

The central bazaar was two in number, spread from the Lahori gate of the Qila to the Fatehpuri Masjid (named after Shahjahan's wife, Nawab Fathpuri Begum) of the city.[30] The other near Akbarabadi masjid that was also known as Ashat Panahi, which meant place of great protection (named after Nawab Akbarabadi Begum), later came to be known as Faiz Bazaar (Bazar of Plenty), was built in 1650 that also had a sarai, hammam, and, in both the bazaars, Nahr-i Bihisht (Canal of Paradise) which flowed through the centre.[31] These types of bazaars provided the people with unique and luxurious commodities not available elsewhere. As they were in the straight line of the Qila, special provisions for adequate security of the market and its elite customers were put in place. Shops here were all symmetrical in nature, design and architecture, making this a beautiful shopping experience where the elites could sit and admire the commercial hub of the capital city. Shops sold rubies, gems, pearls, precious stones, best quality clothes from the other parts of the Empire and from outside, attars (perfume), Chinese crockery, glass huqqas, bowls, jugs, wine cups along with Persian and Kashmiri carpets, the best quality of kebabs, flowers, astrologers, coffee shops and other exquisite materials where the nobility and other elites conversed on matters of commerce, finances, trade and poetry.[32] Close to Chandni Chowk were Kucha Natawan shops that trained dancing and singing girls and other performing artists for the royal court and nobles. There was a fruit market here that brought fruits from Persia, Balkh, Bukhara and Samarqand during the summer months and in the winter, shops supplied grapes and other exotic

[30] Blake, Stephen P. (2002). Cityscape of an Imperial Capital; Shahjahanabad in 1739. In Delhi Through the Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society, ed. Frykenberg, R.E. p. 72-73.

[31] Blake, Stephen P. (2002). p. 72.

[32] Blake, Stephen P. (2002). p. 73.

fruits from Central Asia.[33] The area also had coffee shops and bakeries; Jauhari bazaar had shops of jewellers and sarrafs (money lenders); there was also Mandi Gulfaroshan (flower market) and Sharabhkhana (liquor house). Kutcha Natawan sold statues of deities for Hindu temples. Katra Nil, where Khattris lived and monopolized indigo products. Fathpuri bazaar was famous for grain and perfume shops; Khari baoli had many small bazaars like Gandhak gali or lane of perfumeries, then there was Bazaar Majid Parcha, where wool, silk, hemp and cut pieces were sold along with spice bazaar. There was also Katra Raughan Zard selling ghee or clarified butter. The Kalari bazaar sold liquor made by the Hindu caste Kalar who knew to distil liquor. Moti bazaar sold gems, and Kinari bazaar was famous for gold and silver. Between Moti bazaar and Maliwara, shops were for shoemakers, clothiers and handicraftsmen.[34]

Intermediary Bazaars

These bazaars were constructed near the imperial palace and the powerful nobles' mansions that served the nobility's large households and goods were qualitatively better and more expensive. Bazaars close to the buildings of power holders had adequate security measures in place. A separate category of merchants supplied goods in these markets procured from wholesale markets. These merchants had surplus capital and used this to their advantage to extend loans to the nobles, and they also gave advance money to banjaras to supply them with the required commodities. One example of this bazaar was the Urdu bazaar (Camp market) that extended from the Lahori gate of the fort to the edge of the Kotwali Chabutra (the Town's Magistrate's Platform

[33] Bernier, Francois. (1989). Travels in the Mughal Empire AD 1656-1668. Low Price Publications, Delhi: 249

[34] Anonymous Author. (1997). Delhi the capital of India. Revised and Enlarged edition of 'All About Delhi'. First Published in 1918. Reprint: 113.

where criminals were given public punishments).[35] The shops in this area supplied soldiers, enslaved people, servants, clerks, and artisans to the Emperor, imperial household and nobles. A unique bazaar catered only to the royalty inside the Qila was the Chatta Chowk that spread from the Lahori gate to Naqqar Khana (the music hall of the Qila), a long vaulted bazaar (bazaar-i musaqqaf) based on Safavid style. It was very similar to a bazaar built by Ali Mardan Khan at Peshawar that was seen and liked by Emperor Shahjahan in 1646. He ordered his chief architect of the Qila to copy the same inside the palace city.[36]

Four other bazaars existed in four directions of the Jama Masjid. The west side had shops selling liquor, opium, textiles, cloth, brass and copper utensils, printing press, sweetmeat or sugar cakes, bangles, grain, and exotic birds.[37] Then there were small markets selling reed grass used for thatching, rabri shops (thickened milk), shops selling samosas, flower shops, dal (lentil) bazaar, wholesale grain market, shoe bazaar and shops selling precious stones and jewellery.[38]

On the Southern side, known as Chitli Qabr, there were butcher shops (Qassabpura), arms and ammunition shops, candle shops, and bamboo sellers, and this bazaar was close to Dilli Darwaza (entrance door). On the Northern side were jeweller shops and shops of skilled artisans who did pachchikari, khurdakari, and khattamkari (different styles of engraving, inlay work on stones); at Dariba were shops of sarrafs and seal engravers. Then there were shops selling durries and wood furniture, firecrackers, and halwai (makers of sweets) shops.[39] In the East, the Khaas (specialized) bazaar connected the Jami masjid,

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[35] Blake, Stephen P. (2002). p. 72.

[36] Koch, Ebba. (2002). Mughal Architecture. Oxford University Press, p. 124.

[37] Shama Mitra. (1998). Shahjahanabad: A City of Delhi, 1638-1857. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers. p. 123-124.

[38] Trivedi, Madhu. (1992). 'Shahjahanabad' in Historic Delhi. Indian History Congress. 52nd Session: 28-29.

and the Qila was an area of storytellers, fortunetellers, handicrafts and physicians.[40] Chowk Sa'adullah Khan (he built the platform) was near this, where the sellers sold arms and clothes.

Local Bazaars

Nakhas, or neighbourhood bazaars (daily markets), developed organically over time. They supplied limited goods as they served the local population, primarily selling grain, cloth, salt, fruits, vegetables, spices, milk products and meat. These types of bazaars were set up either during the early morning or evening. They were significant in number as they served the localities and primarily constituted small shopkeepers who purchased the required goods from the wholesaler market like the one that existed in Paharganj that sold grain, leather goods, metal utensils, horned cattle, sheep, goats, horses, wood, soap, fireworks, fish, cheese and building material. Another such bazaar was Darya Ganj (a market along the river), where farmers came to sell their vegetables, fruits and milk products.[41]

The city's markets were also centres of manufacturing the finest quality cotton textiles, particularly of export quality like chintzes, quilts and tie-dyed cloths. The bazaar also had shops and karkhanas that manufactured copper utensils, weapons, paper, leather commodities, sugar and indigo. The city boasted the best masons and stonecutters known for their skills, building engineers, and architects. It was particularly these classes of skilled professionals and workers that Nadir Shah took away to Iran after he invaded the city in 1739.[42]

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[39] Shama Mitra. (1998). p. 125.

[40] Khan, Dargah Kuli. (1989). Muraqqa-e-Dehli. Translated by Shekharn, Chander and Chenoy, Shama Mitra, Muraqqa-e-Dehli, The Mughal Capital in Muhammad Shah's Time: 21-23. Shama Mitra. (1998). pp. 126-127.

[41] Naqvi, Hamida Khatoon. (2002). P. 59. Shama Mitra. (1998). Shahjahanabad: A City of Delhi, 1638-1857. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers. p. 119.

[42] Naqvi, Hamida Khatoon. (2002). Shahjahanabad. p. 59.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that studying bazaars is essential to understand people, their living standards, culture and cultural interactions. Bazaars of the city assisted in the investment of the accumulated wealth. In the process, it created a division of labour and demand for new and varied products. Even though powerful nobles and merchants in the city had their karkhanas (manufacturing units), they also required more specialized goods. In contrast, the highly stratified population required different types of markets to meet all their needs. The process helped more classes become literate as bazaars encouraged writing in complex and simple forms. It stimulated the development of a rudimentary form of economic management and facilitated craft production, diffusion of technologies and increase in agricultural production.[43] To manage the bazaars apart from Kotwal, there were headmen for each mohalla and scores of other Mughal officials whose task ensured that the market economy functioned unobstructed. The uniqueness of Delhi was that the city was also the foci of manufacturing as it produced for the local population and adjoining areas that made the city markets an entrepôt for many other cities. The presence of so many sarais that performed multi-dimensional functions as inns, banks, credit units and storehouses indicated the movement of merchants from inside and outside the frontiers of the Empire who came as temporary dwellers to the city. Some markets were developed outside the walled city, particularly if more space was required to manufacture products, for a storage facility or when the leather-making and fabricating units created enough pollution to be placed outside the city's walls.[44] The city contrary to the statement

[43] Blake, Stephen P. (1987). 'The Urban Economy in Premodern Muslim India: Shahjahanabad,1639-1739'. Modern Asian Studies. Vol.21. No. 3: pp. 447-471.

[44] Chenoy, Shama Mitra. (2004). Shahjahanabad: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries Symphony, Identities, Plurality. NMML. Monograph, 8. New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

made by Max Weber[45] that the Indian cities lacked corporate or municipal authorities had layers of administrative mechanism to govern and regulate the affairs of the city. Eight gateways controlled the movement of the people entering the city. The entire city was placed under the watchful eyes of the Kotwal (magistrate) and to manage localities, twelve thanas (wards) were established and each ward was supervised by the thanedar who maintained the register of people, tax collections and also supervised the night chowkidar (watchman) who was paid by each mohalla. In a further sub-division of the city administration, in each mohalla, there was a mahallahdar who supervised day-to-day functioning and since each mohalla could be easily sealed with a gate[46], it became a safe heaven secure from theft and outsiders.[47]

People inhabiting this city came from diverse cultural backgrounds. They created a complex geometrical web of inter-relations that gave the town a unique character. The urban family units blurred religious boundaries and cultural differences even though each locality was self-regulating with an organic identity based on multiple factors. New styles of selling commodities and varied communities of inhabitants made the bazaars of Shahjahanabad into a commercial-political space that further enhanced the economic power of the Mughal Empire. In this space, new social relations emerged influenced by the politico-economic culture of the Empire.

The study of different bazaars in Delhi points to the fact that by the seventeenth century, the Mughal Empire had transformed itself entirely with extensive use of money, cultivation of surplus

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[45] Weber, Max. (1969). "The Nature of the City". In Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities, ed. By Richard Sennett, 23-46. New York: Appleton-Century-Crafts.

[46] The system of Kucha bandi, the lane closure process.

[47] Mofussil Stations No. XI, Delhi, Asiatic Journal, May/August 1834, p. 2. Taken from Gupta, Narayani, 'The Indomitable City', Echlers, Eckart, and Thomas Krafft. Ed. (1993). Shahjahanabad, Old Delhi: Traditions and Colonial Change. Stuttgart: F. Steiner.

agricultural production, and production of manufactured goods for internal and external markets. All these factors combined to transform the city of the Mughals into an abode of intense commercial growth and development with all its complexities.

Offend, Shock, or Disturb: Free Speech under the Indian Constitution by Gautam Bhatia (Oxford University Press, 2016)

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The title of Gautam Bhatia's book draws from a 1976 judgment by the European Court of Human Rights that noted that the ambit of freedom of speech and expression is not restricted to uncontroversial ideas or information, but also extends to those that "offend, shock, or disturb". The promise of the title and its inspiration is, by and large, successfully kept by the actual fervor and academic rigor with which Bhatia has not only managed to explain free speech (in India), but has also sought to defend it by laying strong arguments over both normative and logical foundations.

The text can act as a rich resource for anyone interested in a thorough understanding of free speech and its history in independent India. With regards to this, the book accomplishes multiple tasks. First, it familiarizes the reader with the various theoretical and conceptual groundings upon which free speech and its debates rest. Second, it traces the evolution of free speech under the Indian constitution & the Indian legal framework, delineating along the way various issues that have been contested and interpreted in the courts over the years. Third, the book compares the prominent free speech cases from India with those from other common law courts in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, and Europe. Fourth, it effortlessly combines the aforementioned elements at various points in the

book to reach a holistic analysis of the issue at hand. Finally, it offers potential solutions or better frames of references to take the discussion forward on various aspects of free speech discourse in India that remain contentious.

The thoroughness of the book is in part the result of judiciously employed mix of qualitative methods. The work offers a comparative legal and historical analysis of the prominent cases that pertain to free speech in India and abroad. These case discussions are made richer by the useful elaborations and references related to the underlying theoretical and conceptual underpinnings that were deliberately introduced in the initial part of the book for this purpose. These latent theories and concepts around free speech make the case discussions richer and more insightful irrespective of whether the courts chose to explicitly refer to them in particular or not. Consequently, the book often ends up delving into the realm of legal and political philosophy. This includes the suggestions of various normative frames to better view the free speech issue at hand and also, the normatively justified solutions that Bhatia offers at different points in his diligent defense of free speech as a good worth protecting.

As mentioned above, the initial part of the book provides a background to the various theoretical understandings, conceptual frames, and justifications for free speech that become relevant for discussions later. Three broad justifications for free speech appear- a) Free Speech is essential for the pursuit of truth, b) It is important for individual self-fulfillment and self-determination, and c) Free Speech is indispensable to democracy. These broad justifications contain contestations and contributions of ideas from philosophers like John Stuart Mill, Thomas Scanlon, Immanuel Kant, Alexander Meiklejohn, Robert Post, Ronald Dworkin, and Jurgen Habermas among others. The ideas are presented with an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses along with examples of how courts across the world have used them in deciding important cases that involved certain peculiar free speech problems.

Similarly, the discussion of theories is followed by a discussion of crucial conceptual frames that regularly feature in free speech

jurisprudence. These include, for example, concepts like 'overbreadth', 'vagueness', and 'the chilling effect'. Overbreadth is a charge, often laid at statutes with such a broad or imprecise wording that they could potentially be interpreted, at convenience, to prohibit both constitutionally restricted as well as constitutionally valid acts of speech and expression. Overbroad statutes are poorly delineated and go beyond the intended scope of a legislation.

The related concept of vagueness is applicable to laws that are worded in such a confusing way, so as to make it incomprehensible for an ordinarily intelligent person-what is permitted under the law and what is not? Usually, laws that are *overbroad* and *vague* end up creating a 'chilling effect' among citizens. In simple terms, 'chilling effect' refers to the act of self-censorship, intended to avoid getting punished.

Next, the discussion moves to the doctrinal part of the book that focuses on the examination of the structure of the constitutional text. The entire discussion in the book hereafter, it could be said, emanates from Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(2) of the Indian constitution. Whereas the former grants to all Indian citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression, the latter imposes reasonable restrictions upon it on certain grounds including, 'public order', 'decency', 'morality', 'contempt of court', 'defamation' or 'incitement to offense'. These eventually take center stage in the book's discussions.

These constitutional provisions juxtaposed with various legal provisions or statutes raise tensions and important questions that have to be and have been tackled in courts over the course of decades. Borrowing one of such episodes from the book as a helpful illustration, the story of Section 124A of the IPC, popularly referred to as the law of 'sedition' could be cited. This particular provision originated in the colonial era. It was prominently used to suppress dissent against the colonial British raj and allowed the authorities to put people behind bars even if they showed dissent only through speech. Many leaders of the national freedom struggle were jailed using this provision.

It could then come as a surprise to many that despite its history, 'sedition' appeared in drafts of the Indian constitution, twice, as one of the reasonable restrictions on free speech and expression. This was proposed by some of the veterans of the freedom struggle in the constituent assembly- which fortunately also comprised other such veterans, who chose to oppose it. On both occasions, therefore, it had to be withdrawn amid an uproar in the assembly that pointed to its abject lack of necessity and its potential for misuse to stifle dissent. It was also acknowledged that unlike in a colonial regime, people in a self-governed democratic regime cannot be denied the fundamental right to "non-violently overthrow an entrenched government by exposing its faults and persuading each other that it ought to be removed" (Bhatia, 2016: 64). The word 'sedition' was consequently not made part of the constitution and thus, it could be argued that 'sedition' was inconsistent with the constitution's principles on account of its explicit rejection in the assembly on two distinct occasions. This further would have rendered section 124A of IPC void under Article 13 of the new constitution (which declares all colonial era legislations that are inconsistent with the constitution as void).

However, the usage of section 124 A continued at the ground level and contrary to two separate High Court judgements declaring it as unconstitutional, this section ultimately got upheld by the Supreme Court in its landmark judgment in Kedarnath Singh Case, 1962. The court read the provision of sedition in Sec 124A as consistent with the 'public order' restriction of Article 19(2). Unfortunately, the court even resorted to an overbroad assessment in declaring that sedition law, in so far as it was limited to cases with 'intention' or 'tendency' to create public disorder, was constitutionally valid.

The 'tendency' benchmark had been held as manipulative and overbroad by the same court in Lohia case (1960) not so long ago, where it had replaced the 'tendency' test with a stricter test of 'proximity'. This test, unlike mere 'tendency', required establishment of a tangible 'proximity' between causation of an event and the speaker's responsibility for it, hence, making it more speech protective.

Two certain themes in the whole episode, viz., the government's indifference or unwillingness to safeguard constitutionally guaranteed free speech rights of the citizens (by not repealing the sedition provision), and the contradictions in jurisprudence brought out by apex court's overlooking of its own precedent in *Lohia*, get repeated often in various discussions over the course of the book.

The particular case of sedition (though as a separate chapter) was dealt with by the author in light of the discussion on 'public order' as a reasonable restriction on free speech and expression. Similar cases and discussions based on other restrictions, namely, 'decency', 'morality', 'contempt of court', 'defamation' or 'incitement to offense' form a major part of the rest of the book. Notably, they are more enriching in terms of their philosophical insights and dilemmas. The dilemmas around them take the shape of chapters on 'Obscenity and Pornography', 'Hate Speech', 'Film and Internet Censorship', 'Defamation, Privacy, and Injunctions', and 'Contempt of Court'.

Then, towards the last part of the book, Bhatia touches upon the philosophical inquiry of what constitutes the meaning of 'speech and expression'. Flowing from this section is an extension of his 'equality'(as a normatively justified framework to deal with certain free speech issues like pornography and hate speech) argument to justify government interventions that are aimed at ensuring equal access to the free speech marketplace. He essentially proposes an argument of equality of opportunity that would enable a 'meaningful' access & exercise of free speech to all. This, he believes, is in line with Habermas' idea of 'discursive democracy' that requires everyone to participate in a free and open discourse on equal terms.

This suggestion is definitely pro-free speech, aiming to make it more meaningful. However, this egalitarian model is also, as Bhatia himself acknowledges (Bhatia, 2016: 165), contrary to a libertarian model of free speech for it opens up more scope for government intervention in the affairs of an individual and organizations of all kinds. But, if the discussions from this book are taken into account, skepticism is bound to seep in with regard to

such a suggestion.

In a position of power, even our freedom fighters, having realized their hard fought democratic dream, found it expedient to dwell on the idea of undermining their compatriots' basic freedom. The record of the government and even the Supreme Court, especially its stance in contempt of court cases, has also been poor when it comes to respecting free speech rights of its citizens. Bhatia's suggestion therefore, might invoke skepticism and precaution in some readers. His argument, though not entirely novel, is nonetheless thought-provoking and perhaps, worth discussing more in future academic works.

In the end, an important takeaway would be that free speech jurisprudence and enforcement in India is not a smooth terrain. It is instead a bewildering one with, sometimes almost astonishing, logical inconsistencies and contradictions. The courts may come out with a speech protective judgment today and overturn it to take two steps back tomorrow. The Indian courts have also been slow in adopting better, already available solutions from across the world. Perhaps, crucial factors like the political and cultural climate of the given day have something to do with it.

On a concluding note, it's worth mentioning that this book on Indian free speech jurisprudence showcases meticulous attention to the legal, political, and philosophical aspects. For this reason, and despite the visible attempts to keep the language accessible, this book is not one of those easy reads. However, if one wishes to understand about free speech in India in detail, they would be hardpressed to find a better book than this.

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Mandeep Punia, Kisan Andolan: Ground Zero 2020-21.

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India and the world witnessed the roar of the farmers' agitation of 2020-21, which was against the three farm laws that were passed by the Indian government to resuscitate the dying state of Indian agriculture. But these laws were at odds with what the farming community of the country was expecting from the government. Mandeep Punia's book *Kisan Andolan: Ground Zero 2020-21* is a detailed report of the events that took place right in front of his eyes as he himself was a part of the agitation as a journalist. The book places its readers at the core of the agitation from where one can visualise the events that happened in the agitation and can travel mentally with the flow of the incidents narrated by the author. Mandeep's book is a detailed report on the minutes (are you sure about using the word – minutes here?) of the agitation which is nowpublished in the form of a book. The author has dedicated the book to the martyrs of the farmers' agitation.

The book is divided into three parts and all the chapters in the book have been titled so creatively that the reader gets glued to the book right till the end. The first part is titled as *"toofan se pehle"* which means "the calm before the storm". Under this title, there are four sub-chapters and the first two are titled as *"Haryana ke barricade"* and *"Singhu border"* in which the author explores the efforts involved in gathering people from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh to reach Singhu border

which was the protest site of the agitation. It gives a comprehensive description about the efforts of the people who crossed and overthrew the barricades placed by the government at the state borders in order to stop them from reaching the Singhu border. The author gives its readers an inside view of the working of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination committee and the leadership under whose command the direction of the agitation was being decided. The author through his "ground zero" reporting provides a detailed and authentic account of the meetings held by the leaders of the farmers' agitation. The author argues that the representation of the farmers' unions cutting across ideological divides ensured a more democratic participation from various factions within the farming community.

The author in the third sub-chapter of his book titled *"Sarkar se baatcheet"* that is "talks with the government" highlights the earnest efforts made by the leaders of the agitation to get their demands fulfilled. There were many rounds of talks as mentioned by the author in his book which bore no fruit because people wanted the total repealment of the three laws, whereas the government was offering only suspension for a few years. The author here highlights the tussle between the leaders on the issue of the three farm laws. Some leaders of the unions agreed on the suspension of these laws for a few years, but were hesitant to talk about it openly or getting it documented due to public pressure,while others wanted the total repealment of these laws.

In the fourth sub-chapter titled as *"janwari ka garam maheena"* the author highlights the deepest fears which were lingering on the minds of the agitators, leaders of the agitation and also the Indian government as the protestors were trying to enter Delhi to get their demands fulfilled. There were leaders who wanted to adhere to the guidelines given by the government, but some wanted to enter Delhi and assert their demands in a far more effective manner. The author, while reporting from ground zero, was himself arrested by the police in January and was put in jail for four days. While being

thrown in the cell, the author bravely continued his journalism where he interviewed the jail inmates who were also part of the agitation and were arrested by the authorities. He wrote the details on his body parts so that later on these events and problems could be highlighted after he gets bail and the needful could be done to save people from the wrath of the government(157).

The second part of the book is titled as *"inquilab ki aahat"* which means "the sound of the revolution". Here, the author gives an in-depth description of the 26th January incident and its aftermath wherein the various morchas(fronts) of the agitation were openly criticising the incident and claimed that these mischievous elements were not part of the agitation. The author also throws light on the event of 26th January where the people who hoisted *"nishan sahib"* at the Red fort were labelled as Khalistanis and how these people were being funded from Sikh diaspora across the globe to support this notion. The apogee of the agitation was the 26th January incident where the author claims that the tides could have turned in favour of the government. In this part of the book itself, he narrates how he was released from the jail and came back to the protest site right away to continue his work. In the third and final part of the book titled *"ek kadam aage, do kadam piche"* meaning "one step forward , two steps back" the author weaves through the strain that leaders of the agitation were experiencing. Due to the hesitations amongst the farm leaders due to the 26th January incident, several decisions were pending which made the youth in the agitation restless. Also, the rise of Rakesh Tikait was troublesome for the Punjab leaders due to his crucial role in reviving the farmers' agitation from Ghazipur border. The author takes into account the several Mahapanchayats held in Haryana, Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh which united the farmers to a great extent. Several individual incidents have also been highlighted in the book wherein people were getting into a scuffle with the ruling party ministers at various places and were also successful in getting their demands fulfilled. This part of the book also delves into the problem within the leadership, young and old generation's tussle on the nature of the response by the leaders of

the agitation. Under the sub-title *"aakhiriladai"* meaning "the last battle", the author records the final details of the agitation which made the government to kneel down before the demands of the farmers.

Though the book provides a comprehensive detailedaccount of the agitation which are widely known, its unique contribution lies in highlightingcertain incidents which have thus far remained outside the glare of the public eye. One such incident related tothe conspicuous silence of the farmer union's leadership over the arrest of some of the labour union leaders despite their presence and support in the agitation since the beginning of the agitation. The book also highlights several incidents of clashes between the ruling party ministers and the local kisan leaders. The author reveals the failure of the senior leadership in resolving such disputes.Puniaalso highlights the important role of the youth leaders in the fulfilment of their demands. Additionally, the book makes some startling revelations. One of them being that the apex leadership of the farmers' union was holding secret talks with the government after the 26th January incident without taking other leaders of the unions into confidence (243). It was only after Prime Minister Modi announced to take back these laws that this incident was known to everybody.

Another startling revelation made in the book was that the apex leadership was not working for the release of the people from the jails who were arrested after the 26th January incident in order to safeguard their image from being scarred. They didnot want to give any chance to the government to make any hard decisions regarding the agitation which could disrupt the whole stage that was being set since long to fulfil their demands. That is why there was an ongoing tussle between the older generation leaders and the young leaders who were openly criticising the passive response of the leaders regarding the arrests made by the government. The author argues that it was due to open challenges and critical questioning from the leaders of Haryana's farmers' unions, youth leaders,and revolutionary farmer unions of Punjab

that the leaders were not openly adhering to the proposals of suspending laws for a few years by the Indian government. Himself hailing from journalistic background, Puniaalso highlights the issue of the growing nexus between the larger media house and the government agencies. While debunking the myth of a "Golden Stage" in the history of Indian media, Puniashows how themedia has traditionally been a tool in the hands of the ruling party. It has always been used either to propagate a certain narrative or to hide the repressive acts of the government(154). He further writes that even in the darkest of the times there have always been afew journalists or media houses that do their work honestly and diligently and serve the nation in the right way. It is only through honest reporting that justice could be done to the people. The author has highlighted several incidents in the book without filter which makes this work more authentic and to me it seems to be an obligatory reading for the ones who are keen to know about the details of the farmers' agitation.

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Anuradha Bhasin, A Dismantled State : The Untold Story of Kashmir After Article 370.Gurgaon : Harper Collins Publishers India.2023.385 Pages.

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"A Dismantled State : The Untold Story of Kashmir After Article 370" by Anuradha Bhasin attempts to explain the causes behind the deafening silence in Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370. Anuradha Bhasin has been the journalist for over three decades, and is the executive editor of Kashmir Times. She was a Commonwealth Fellow, 2016, and currently a John S. Knight Fellow (2022-2023) at Stanford University, California. The book is written in the backdrop of abrogation of article 370 followed by an imposition of strict curfew, detention of thousands, house arrest of mainstream political leaders, and complete clampdown of the internet and communication services in Kashmir. The book explores the nature and extent of change in the legal status of the state and highlights the impact of such changes on the geography, politics, society, identity, economy, and the lives of the people living in Kashmir. She provides a detailed and comprehensive account of events that occurred after the abrogation of Article 370.Through her book, she presents a refreshing and unaccounted narratives of the implications of the abrogation of Article 370 on the life of the people that is ignored by the mainstream media and is far away from the narrative of normalcy that is circulated in the official accounts. She divides the book in 12 chapters and each

chapter starts with a very intriguing quotation. The book focuses on a detailed analysis of internal conditions like stringent laws, legality of accession, exploitation of women and children, scale of militancy, disappearance of local youth, challenges of information gathering and new land laws. Bhasin's approach to the book is straightforward wherein she is primarily interested in capturing a nuanced understanding of the varied facets of changes underway and their impact on the lives of the people in Kashmir.

The deployment of extra troops and mysterious government circulars about stocking up essential goods for the next few months were leaked in social media. Additionally, regular chopper sorties coupled with sudden termination of the Amarnath Yatra induced fear among the masses. The fear further intensified when the local leaders were detained before the bill was moved in the Lok Sabha.The book details the elaborate preparations in anticipation, thinking of converting Kashmir into a "giant prison" with people trapped inside like "mice in mousetraps". The internet ban isolated an entire population from the rest of the world. The ban adversely affected the most vulnerable people. Social welfare schemes, including health coverage for the socio-economically deprived sections ceased to exist, and doctors complained that they had no access to much-needed research or medical experts outside J&K whom they frequently consulted in complicated cases. All of this served to reinforce the generally accepted view in Kashmir that the process of full integration was never about people, instead it was about occupying territory and land. Bhasin argues that walls are typically constructed to serve two functions: to confine people and to conceal some unpleasant reality. The author saw it as a physical, psychological, economic, and political siege with all forms of communication blackout. She questions the methods employed by a democratic nation to deliver the deed.

The author presents a tract of events that occurred after the abrogation of Article 370.One of the highlights of the book is her detailed interview with the only surviving member of the Jammu

and Kashmir constituent assembly Krishan Dev Sethi who framed the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir. He expressed his sadness by saying, 'Everything is finished...they have destroyed everything...my life's work is worthless...I wasted my life– went to jail, went underground, fought the powerful oppressors before and after 1947.'Public Safety Act (PSA)that allows the police to detain and arrest any person for up to two years and without a charge for six months is weaponized. Bhasin gives numerous accounts of people who were detained under PSA– be it famous journalists, lawyers or poor people who spent two years in jail without even a single visitor because their families did not know about their whereabouts and if they knew, they could not afford to travel to such far off places. Bhasin argues that suppression relies both on inflicting physical injury to those who are deemed a threat to the state or assaulting the psyche, be it by way of denying fallen insurgents the basic right of a funeral by their kin, random termination of suspect government officials, or pressurising local scribes with detention and trials.

Media, which is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy, was brutally crushed by the Central government. National media was used to establish the normalcy narratives of government, and regional media channels were suppressed to the extent that they were unable to report the actual atrocities committed by government officials. Bhasin quotes Yevgeny Yevtushenko in one of her chapters which aptly summarizes the sufferings of people in Kashmir: "When the truth is replaced by silence, then the silence is a lie". She also shows at length how the absence of internet connectivity, fear of detention, humiliation, and labelling of false charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) made it very difficult for media houses to survive in Kashmir. She argues that even in the decade of 1990s when militancy was it its peak in Kashmir, the landline phones were never banned. Kashmir, a place that was never short of stories, becomes a place of silence.

Bhasin shows how militancy has thrived in the aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370 with the local support which can be effectively countered only by reducing such support through engagement with the people. However, the disappearance of local people during this period increased manifold and it is widely suspected that they have all joined the militant fronts. The book presents an interesting and insightful comparative account of the prevailing situations in Kashmir during the Vajpayee and the Modi governments at the centre. While the Vajpayee regime witnessed a decline in local militancy because of its policies of dialogue and deliberation which provided an impetus to tourism, the current government through its close nexus with the media has been projecting a new narrative of normalcy in the aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370 which is evident from the increased tourist footfalls over the last two years. Furthermore, such a narrative is also used by the present government to justify everything that has been done in Jammu and Kashmir during this period.

In sharp contrast to such dominant portrayal in the media, Bhasin recounts a slew of issues which have left a deep impact on the psyche of the people: the new land laws and property rights; the impending threat of demographic change; and the rise of right-wing extremism; amongst others. All this has clearly induced anxieties among the people of Jammu as well as Kashmir who are increasingly worried about losing their monopoly over land and jobs. Such perceptions are far more prevalent in the Hindu majority belt of Jammu. Far from the claims of the central government that the abrogation of Article 370 has resulted in the integration of the people with the mainstream, Bhasin shows to the contrary that if anything people in both Jammu and Kashmir have only got further alienated from the mainland India. The book, however, is about more than just the government's policies in Kashmir. It serves as a warning to the rest of the country that a similar fate is on its way.

However, it is quite evident that in the last seventy years, the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir has been under constant attack not only from the government at center level but also from the government at state level. Further, the bifurcation of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into union territory and revocation of Article 370 was the final betrayal which shattered all the hopes of people of Jammu as well as Kashmir. Bhasin argues that the only bridge that unites J&K from India has been destroyed by Indian government, resulted in despair, anger and disappointment among people. The way by which central government abrogated Article 370, the author argues that even though for now Indian government can use all its power to suppress the voices of local people of J&K but it will not be able to contain dissenting voices till eternity. She argues that the long-term peace can only be established in Kashmir by acknowledging the grievances of local people and by solving the dispute in accordance with the aspirations and wishes of the people. Abrogation of Article 370 only aggravated the Kashmir issue as even though Indian government claims that everything is normal and peaceful in Kashmir, the rise in communally selective killings portrays a different picture. Nonetheless, Indian government has portrayed the new India as united and inclusive, Bhasin argues that instead of acknowledging and respecting the differences, Indian government is more concerned about assimilation. There is a deafening silence in Kashmir, however this silence doesn't validate the central government narrative of normalcy as there is some visibility of resentment of locals against central government which they expressed through social media, writings and small protests. Bhasin argues that nothing remains static and even the most powerful political discourse changes and it is the only hope Kashmiris have.

The author presents a minute account of day-by-day happenings in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and presents a ground reality after abrogation of Article 370. It is a must read for anyone

who is interested in knowing about the people of Jammu and Kashmir and how they are impacted by the central government's decision of abrogation of special status of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The interviews with the local people, journalists, lawyers and more specifically with the only surviving member of J&K constituent assembly, Krishan Dev Sethi make this work of Anuradha Bhasin more authentic. However, it is worth mentioning that this work of Bhasin successfully questions the dominant narrative of central government by giving detailed accounts of events which will definitely contribute in giving voices to the unnoticed and unheard narratives of native people of Jammu and Kashmir.

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